

SHADOWS OF ESTEREN



THE MONASTERY OF TUATH



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THE MONASTERY OF TUATH

A medieval role-playing game with a horrific and gothic influence

"Let your heart talk, interrogate the faces, do not listen to tongues..."

Umberto Eco



Credits

Shadows of Esteren is a role-playing game imagined and designed by the Forgesonges Collective.

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This third publication is dedicated to Delphine who has put together a superb album, giving a new dimension to Esteren. Many thanks to her; her compositions will continue to inspire the authors and illustrators of the series for a long time!



Forgesonges is a collective of authors and illustrators gathered in an association whose aim is to create quality entertainment products.

Check for news and the latest publications of the collective on: <http://www.forgesonges.org>



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Prologue



he pregnancy had been carried to term and the child was born with no apparent complications.

As custom required it, Demorthèn Déalgan had assisted the Dàmàthair, but he had almost nothing to do. A good thing, for he was still quite young and had only attended a few births. Still, it had been an opportunity for him to perfect his knowledge. After the death of his master, he had forthwith been considered the village's official Demorthèn, even though they all knew that his training was still incomplete. Not by much, but still...

Then, soon after, came the day when the child was named before the whole village. His parents, simple farmers, called him Beren. This name was not common in the Vale of Thoir, but some originality was nothing to be surprised about in that isolated region of Gwidre, very close to Taol-Kaer's border. When the Demorthèn took the child into his arms to give him his name, as was customary on such occasions, Beren stared at him with surprise, and at that precise moment, the C'maoghs spoke to Déalgan for the very first time. So great was his surprise that he almost dropped the infant. Never before had he been so aware of their presence, never before had he been able to understand what the spirits of nature expressed. He gave the baby back to his mother, and the strange sensation of the spiritual contact was suddenly lost. He told no one about it, but that day, he had truly become a Demorthèn. Over the years, he honed his science and performed his duties with great care and assiduity, but he never forgot the child through whom his revelation had occurred. And he always knew that a day would come when he would pass on all of his knowledge to him.

Thus, Beren became his Ionnthén, his apprentice, when he reached the age of fourteen. The young man learned the tasks, the songs, and the rites that would one day elevate him to the position of master of the tradition. He proved quite skilled and gifted with an excellent memory. One day, when the Demorthèn was absent, Beren treated a young shepherd who had hurt himself falling while looking for one of his goats. When the master came back, he was surprised by the quality of the care his Ionnthén had provided. He congratulated him while keeping to himself that he would not have been able to do so well, despite all his knowledge. The seasons passed, and Déalgan always let his apprentice tend to the wounded. Animals, adults, and children passed by his hands, under the watchful eyes of the Demorthèn, who thus confirmed Beren's incredible gift.

However, the youngster did not hold only pleasant surprises for the master: there were some fundamental principles of the traditional arts that he did not seem to understand. Whatever the manner or imagery Déalgan made use of to explain them to him, Beren remained totally deaf to them. These problems gradually became obstacles, then these obstacles turned into impasses and the Ionnthén stopped progressing. However, the more time passed, the more obsessed he became with what he considered his mission: he provided care for all the injured beings—whether humans or animals—that crossed his path.

Beren was never so sad as when one of his patients died despite all his efforts, and never so happy as when he witnessed a complete recovery thanks to his good care. People all around came to see him, and he sometimes obtained spectacular results. Such an advantage directly benefited his master, who thus consolidated his position in the village's council. Yet, he remained concerned that his apprentice limited himself to just one aspect of the role of a Demorthèn. Moreover, he still knew and understood nothing about the secret powers of the masters of the tradition, not even in medicine, and still less so in the other fields...

One summer, the yearly Tsioghair made Déalgan absent for almost a month. He hoped that his fellow Demorthèn could lend him some help and advice on how to make his Ionnthén progress. As for the young man, he remained in the vale to provide care for the villagers and not leave them without a guide should the need for one arise.

When Déalgan came back to the village, he was told that no one had seen Beren for several days, and a foreboding concern took hold of him at once. He went to his hut at the edge of the forest, but the fireplace was cold; he went to the river but saw no one; he came back home, took his walking stick, and went into the forest toward a circle of sacred stones, the existence of which he had revealed to the young man shortly before leaving.

Under the cover of the trees, the light was dim and the temperature remained cool, even in the middle of summer. It was near the sacred circle that he finally spotted Beren, surrounded by shadow and strangely motionless. His heart pounded at the thought that he might be dead. He moved closer and saw that his Ionnthén was crouching over the body of a strange-looking woman. She was as pale as a corpse, and her blood had spread, forming a long black trail that had already dried on the path to the sacred stones.

He came closer, called his apprentice softly, and tried to make him understand that the woman was dead, or would not survive such severe blood loss at any rate. Beren refused to listen, claiming he would save her. His master could see his face, wrecked by fatigue, fruitless efforts, and tears. Trying to reason with his disciple, he knelt, and took a closer look at the woman. She might have been roughly his age, was not really pretty, and was wearing a white habit with azure embroidery that was soaked with her blood. Beren was clutching her hand, holding a medallion fastened to a chain between their palms.

The Demorthèn understood with a shudder that she was a follower of Soustraine's religion—the very people brought up during the Tsioghair. It was said that throughout the kingdom of Gwidre, they were destroying the sacred places, breaking the lines of ancestral stones, and killing the Demorthèn, calling them demons! Déalgan remembered that the Temple had been proclaimed the kingdom's official religion on the same year as his Ionnthén's birth. He had only heard about it much later, as news was slow to reach the remote vale of Thoir. Many things had changed since that time, and now, with everything he had heard, he could only wonder with deep concern why this emissary of the continental religion was here...

"Come, Beren. There is nothing you can do for this woman... and this is probably just as well. Let us return to the village. We will come back with some help to bring her body back and perform the rites."

"Master," the Ionnthén answered, "I can save her. I will save her. She cannot die!"

"Beren, calm down. She was attacked, and there must still be danger around here. She is dead. Get up and let us come back."

"She is not dead!" the young man almost howled. "I have been keeping her warm for three days; I know that I can save her! Help me, master, give her some water."

Three days! The Demorthèn wondered. He knelt and laid his hand on the woman's cheek. She was cold, but not as much as the fern-strewn ground. Getting closer, he saw her chest heaving very slightly. She was alive. Déalgan stood up a little too quickly and rubbed his hand on his tunic, as if to cleanse himself of an unpleasant contact. Many emotions mixed in his mind: a bit of jealousy toward the gift of his apprentice, some fear regarding the reasons that had brought this woman to this sacred place, and a touch of hatred toward those who trampled the time-honored traditions of the Demorthèn guides in such a way...

"Master," Beren repeated, "give her some water!"

His voice was no more than a whisper. He had spent three days and two nights without sleeping, eating, or drinking, bent on trying to save the life of this woman he knew nothing of.

"I left without my gourd. Give me some time, I will go to a spring I know and bring some back."

He turned away, came back to the village, and stayed at home, leaving the two people to their fate, and trying to persuade himself that he had no other choice in order to preserve the traditions.



No more was heard of Beren for years, until the day when he came back to the village, wearing the garb of a monk of the One, proudly sporting a medallion with six branches, given by the woman who had opened his eyes to the True Faith, according to him. There was no longer a Demorthèn in the village: an epidemic had ravaged the region and taken his former master during the previous winter. Beren performed true miracles to save the sickest villagers. It was said everywhere that he had saved the Duke of Lightrock's heir from the same disease, and many converted to the new religion. The Temple's authorities decided that something should be done to bolster this rising fervor, and a monastery was built in honor of the new converts, as well as of the one who had become their guide. They called the place "Tuath," a word from the ancient tongue meaning "the people."

A few years after Beren's death, at the request of Tuath's monks, Ard-Amrach's Hierophant granted him the Posthumous Acceptation, which made him a saint. Tuath thus became the nexus of Beren's following, and the monastery quickly became famous for the quality of the care provided. Yet, the Tuathian brothers were not able to secure the return of Beren's remains to the vale. Indeed, he had been buried among the deceased of the Lightrocks' ducal family, who had held the healer in very high esteem.

Everything could have been forgotten when the War of the Temple ravaged the borders between the three kingdoms, sorely afflicting Tri-Kazel's peoples. During that time of great trouble, the Tuathian monks continued to provide care to everyone who came to them, without regard for their beliefs or origins. Thus, they perpetuated the altruistic and selfless act that had brought their patron saint his revelation, sustaining the reputation of the monastery of Tuath.



Religious Life in the Temple





The Six Prayers

The letter written by young adept Vona (see Book 1 - Universe, from page 148 to 155) provides a few details about the Temple's fundamental prayers. More information on the subject will be provided below.

An Organization of Spirituality

The Six Prayers are six formal times during which the clergy of the One performs daily devotions and invites all the faithful to do the same. As mentioned in Vona's letter, these prayers begin with a call made through the ringing of consecrated bells. As custom dictates, when the ecclesiastics gather to pray together as a mass, believers who are near a holy place generally join them, while the other faithful simply kneel down to pray. Another ringing signals the end of prayer after half an hour.

The Dogma and its Practice

Human reality is complex enough that, in everyday life, the Six Prayers are lived in a more nuanced way than the religious dogma professes. First of all, the many varieties of human activity make such a constraining, systematic interruption of daily routine difficult. This has strengthened the clergy's role, since its representatives have become intercessors between the divine and the faithful, whose piousness and grievances are expressed to the Creator through the ecclesiastics themselves. Thus, the Gwidrites are not required to attend every prayer time: the clergy does so in their stead. The staunchest believers try to be present at as many masses as possible, but a number of faithful whose devotion is not as strong benefit from such tolerance quite shamelessly.

This same clergy must also reconcile their ritual obligations with the reality of their own daily lives. A group of Blade knights can hardly be expected to cease fighting to pray. Similarly, a Sigire is not expected to dismount from his horse for half an hour, thereby allowing a heretic to escape...

Therefore, the first leaders of the Temple quickly came to distinguish prayer itself from its symbolical observance.

If cloistered ecclesiastics (monks, priests, and clerics) are able to fully devote themselves to the masses of the Six Prayers, more flexible ceremonial practices have arisen for the remainder of the clergy when circumstances make their full and exclusive participation impossible.

Therefore, it is not uncommon for a journeying ecclesiastic to only stop for a few minutes in order to pray and praise the One, when appropriate. Likewise, soldiers, messengers, and other types of travelers may do with a simple and silent meditation, head bowed, to mark the time for a prayer when they cannot fully observe it. Most of the Temple's devotees make do with such practices only when necessary. Deliberately missing prayer results in an Offence that the guilty one must expiate through penance (see Book 1, page 258).

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The Six Prayers' Names and Symbolism

 **Albines.** At daybreak, this prayer celebrates dawn, the return of daylight, revival, and the decline of darkness. It also symbolically focuses on creation itself.

 **Unicine.** Considered the most sacred of the six prayers, Unicine is celebrated at eight in the morning. It is evocative of the Creator's majesty and the divine revelation to the prophet Soustraine, a humble mortal.

 **Lumines.** Around midday, when the sun is at its apex and the light strongest, this mass symbolically represents the perfect accomplishment of the Creator's work.

 **Sextines.** Celebrated at four in the afternoon, Sextines focuses on the six orders of the Temple.

It celebrates the clergy's plurality, brought together in a single faith.

 **Vesperines.** Just before nightfall, this prayer celebrates the hope that the next day will arrive with dawn. With the gradual disappearance of the daylight and transition into darkness, Vesperines is used to reflect on the importance of prudence and moderation, while the world is subjected to the threat of Limbo.

 **Estellines.** The last prayer is celebrated when the first stars become visible. The fall in temperature highlights the cold purity that is the Creator's mark, urging wakefulness and alertness as night and sleep descend on the world.

The moon and the stars are regarded as the ultimate sentries, bringing succor to humans in the darkness where demons lurk.

Thus, each of the Six Prayers emphasizes specific notions:

- **Albines:**

The world's creation and its daily revival.

- **Unicine:**

The omnipotence of the One, creator of all things, and His love for humanity.

- **Lumines:**

His work's incommensurable perfection.

- **Sextines:**

The devotion of the six orders composed of His faithful servants.

- **Vesperines:**

Watchfulness, which must be exercised every day.

- **Estellines:**

Constancy in all trials, leading to self-fulfillment.

Religious Commitment

After six years as a novice, a young adept is welcomed into the order with a ceremony called Acceptation. In theory, the choice of the order made by the adepts is definitive, but in practice, things are slightly different. Indeed, there exist several possible cases in which a Temple's ecclesiastic may switch from one order to another, voluntarily or by force of circumstance.

A Matter of Age

The most common case concerns the orders of the Vectors, Sigires, and Blades, mainly because age first affects physical abilities. There obviously exist positions suitable for experienced ecclesiastics who are too old to remain active (supervisory or teaching positions, for example), but these orders only need so many of such veterans. Additionally, some seniors may ultimately feel the need to be in the One's service in a different manner. Thus, it is possible for ecclesiastics to change orders with the consent of their superiors. Some priests and clerics, as well as many monks, were formerly fervent defenders or missionaries of the Temple.

Disciplinary Measure and Monastic Commitment

In other cases, ecclesiastics may be forced to leave their order to join a monastic congregation because they betrayed a superior's trust, or committed acts detrimental to their order's reputation... Or they may simply have been part of the losing side in one of the Temple's inner struggles. Still, in such cases, they are more likely to be moved to an undesirable position and to be sent, for example, to a long-neglected parish at the back of beyond by their own order. Forced commitment to a monastic order is generally permanent and perceived—rightly so—as a punishment by most of those who experience it. However, some see it as the opportunity to forsake their own ambitions to focus back on a more natural practice of their faith.

The Order of the Monks

Compared to the clergy of the One's other branches, the Order of the Monks is characterized both by their withdrawal from temporal affairs and by their devotion to their very pragmatic daily lives. Indeed, monastic life is defined by social isolation and restrictions, but also by many chores of an extremely practical nature and most often physically taxing. In addition to the many rituals they attend, the monks deal in one or several handicrafts, and they are also responsible for the maintenance and repairs of their monasteries, except for intensive works requiring more skilled labor. Whatever the monastic congregation's vocation, religious ceremonies are as mandatory as daily chores for all of its members. According to the Temple's philosophy, being a monk means devoting one's body and soul to assiduous practice, most often impersonal and frequently thankless. However, at the same time, such discipline allows most of the followers to free themselves, to a certain extent, from human passions and obsessions.

Monastic Life

The order of the Monks is actually comprised of congregations of various sizes and seniority. The orders whose roots reach back to the continent are generally the most influential, notably the order of the Reliquary that traditionally represents all the monks in the Great Cenacle of Ard-Amrach. However, orders that originated in Tri-Kazel have slowly been gaining influence. The oldest is the order of the Corvusian warrior-monks, founded by the first Hierophant of Tri-Kazel. While the monks of the Corvus Abbey rarely deal with the affairs of other monastic congregations, they hold high prestige and moral authority within the Temple. Many other orders exist, most of them based on the adoration of a particular saint of the Temple, whether from the continent or from the Peninsula.

A Life in the Service of the One

Of all the branches of the clergy of the One, the monks are commonly considered those who practice Soustraine's Ordinances most strictly. In fact, for non-believers and pagans, it is often difficult to understand that monks simply follow the same precepts that the whole clergy must exercise, but with greater devotion and fervor. These precepts reinforce those of the Ordinances, for they aim to regulate the ecclesiastics' lives, and are not only directed to them as believers, but also as instruments of the Creator's will.

The Temple has always tried to promote a form of spiritual quest, encouraging believers to turn away from certain passions to be able to fully forsake them and protect themselves from the influence of the demons lurking in Limbo, who are always on the lookout for any weakness through which they can seep into human hearts and corrupt them. This purpose is strengthened within the clergy with the existence of the Six Vows, intended to help the ecclesiastics in their personal quest. Monks in particular try to assiduously follow most of these vows, if not all of them, through their discipline and selective isolation from the outside world.



The Six Vows

All throughout their initiation, young adepts are essentially made aware of the Ordinances, since these represent the core of the Temple's dogma and can be applied not only to the prospective ecclesiastics, but also to non-religious believers. Gradually, however, and regardless of the order the young adepts intend to join, they are told about the possibility of reaching a higher level of faith by embracing the Vows, which can help and support them in their inner quest.

Historically speaking, the Vows were established by Soustraine's first disciples because without the prophet guiding them constantly, they seemed to often feel the need to rely on simple precepts that they learned from Soustraine's many teachings, and which supplemented the Ordinances. The Vows that adepts may swear during their Acceptation (when they become part of an order for good) are the following:

⌘ Frugality:

The devotees shall moderate their wealth and luxuries, basing them strictly on their most essential needs. Everything in excess will be given to the community, the population, or their superiors, depending on the circumstances.

⌘ Abstinence:

The devotees shall abstain from any form of carnal experience.

⌘ Anonymity:

The devotees shall abandon their identity and adopt the one their superiors will give them.

⌘ Temperance:

The devotees shall never act under the influence of their own desires without at first considering the impact they will have on others and on their own piousness.

⌘ Abstention:

The devotees shall not covet or accept any responsibility, payment, reward, or position outside the Temple.

⌘ Obedience:

The devotees shall follow their superiors' commands and strive to carry them out to the best of their abilities.

Commitment to a Vow

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The choice to commit to a Vow is up to each adept. When one has solemnly sworn a vow, one cannot go back on it without ill consequences (see "Breaking a Vow" on p.14). Committing to several Vows at the time of one's Acceptation is obviously a way to prove one's sincerity, and many adepts display fervor in this matter. Paradoxically, this is sometimes regarded with suspicion by the superiors, for this commitment should not be driven by ambition, but only by the fervent wish to live in deeper faith. That is why committing to the Vows can be done over the years in an ecclesiastic's life, and is by no means obligatory at the moment of the Acceptation. On the contrary, waiting a few years after becoming a full-fledged ecclesiastic is often seen as a proof of one's wisdom and humility, as the core of the faith in the One consists of a sincere obedience to the Six Ordinances, which already requires a certain steadfastness.

The Vows in the Six Orders

The importance of each Vow is different according to the order the adept will join. The order of the monks is by far the one with the strongest ties to this theological aspect. Most of the monastic orders make it mandatory for adepts who wish to join them to take at least one Vow—if not several. Each order also encourages its members to take certain Vows rather than others, for they are considered more conducive for the performance of the tasks entrusted to the ecclesiastics. However, monks aside, it is rare that an order imposes commitment to a Vow on their adepts. Here are some of the most frequent choices, according to each order:

⌘ **Sigires:** abstinence, anonymity, abstention, obedience

⌘ **Clerics:** frugality, abstention

⌘ **Vectors:** abstention

⌘ **Priests:** frugality, abstinence, temperance

⌘ **Blades:** frugality, abstinence, abstention, obedience

⌘ **Monks:** frugality, abstinence, anonymity, abstention

It should also be noted that, among each order, there are people more demanding than others. Some parishes, fighting units, churches, congregations, and brotherhoods impose specific pledges on their members, which may include one or several Vows. The six orders themselves do not have particular requirements in this regard, but expect members who take such vows to abide by them strictly.

Use of the Vows

It is up to the Leaders and Players to determine whether the Vows should be part of the game. This dimension is entirely optional. Additionally, Leaders may well consider that a newly created PC belonging to the Temple has not necessarily been offered to take Vows by his mentors, but knows it is a fairly common practice. In order not to make the interpretation of the Player's characters too difficult, this optional dimension should simply offer Players the possibility to take up commitments to flesh out their characters; it should not be a constraining requirement.

The Vows in Daily Life

As can be seen, the Vows are designed so as to leave room for interpretation to those who follow them. Some of these interpretations ended up becoming rules and standards, having the same binding force as the Ordinances for the Temple's ecclesiastics. Some of these standards only concern those who have taken the Vow that led to their creation, while others have spread and must now be abided by the whole clergy of the Temple.

Sexuality

The clergy of the One allows its members who have not taken a Vow of abstinence to marry before the Creator, but it is very critical of extramarital relations. This is seen as an offense against the principle of restraint, set out in the Ordinances. In fact, most marriages occur between members of the clergy, more specifically of the same order. The vast majority of them are motivated by political or practical considerations, in which personal feelings are of little significance. Sexuality is not, strictly speaking, forbidden to those who have not taken a Vow of abstinence, but it is tacitly discouraged, in accordance with the principle of restraint.

Inheritances

The existence of the Vows of frugality and abstinence may lead members of the clergy of the One to formally renounce any kind of direct inheritance. This does not prohibit the clergy of the One from accepting bequests and donations from the faithful, but the institution, distinct from its members, is the only beneficiary. An ecclesiastic who wishes to inherit family property and titles must, in principle, renounce his religious life..

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Practical Considerations about the Vows

A certain permissive pragmatism has emerged in the interpretation of some Vows. Thus, in theory, an ecclesiastic cannot inherit a noble title or covet a secular position. However, the Temple is sufficiently involved in the everyday lives of people for the separation between the clergy and the rest of the world to be blurrier than it seems. Thus, in the kingdom of Gwidre, there exist, for example, military positions assigned to the Temple's Blade knights, which come with secular powers, titles, and prebends, by virtue of their political or strategic importance. Also, some monastic brotherhoods of healers are allowed to take part in the councils of large towns. Finally, the order of the clerics is, needless to say, closely involved in every matter related to official archives or to Gwidre educational institutions. Conversely, some positions in the service of the king are legally barred to a member of the clergy of the One.

Gwidre is not the twin-headed theocracy foreigners imagine it to be, but rather a complex mix of crossed influences between temporal power and spiritual power.

At a more local, or even personal level, the clergymen's opinions differ on how to live and interpret the Vows they take. These differences are not always visible at first sight, but the clergy of the One includes as many purist devotees—and even fundamentalist ones—as people who are more moderate, accommodating, broad-minded, and even sometimes deliberately hypocritical.



Breaking a Vow

Deliberately transgressing one of the Six Vows one has committed oneself to is almost always considered a Significant Offence (see *Universe*, page 259), and forsaking a Vow for good is considered a Major Offence. However, when a single breach is committed in good faith (out of carelessness or ignorance, for instance) or when it has been committed with the sincere idea of serving the One (for example, by accepting an official position in order to protect religious people from a major threat), it may only be a Minor Offence. Likewise, many clergymen—except the most rigorous ones—only suffer a Minor Offence when they break one of their Vows in circumstances related to tolerances established by the church. As noted previously, these tolerances mainly concern position or status issues distinct from the clerical hierarchy. In addition, when a clergyman is allowed to renounce one of his Vows definitely by his hierarchy, he only suffers a Minor Offence. It might be imagined, for example, that a clergyman who has taken the Vow of abstention could be forced to return to secular life by royal command, because she is the only living heir to a prestigious line.

Expiating Offences

Since the devotees are well aware that genuine commitment is required, justifying oneself hypocritically in no way diminishes the nature of the transgression. Neither does it when the hierarchy covers this transgression for reasons unrelated to faith (out of complacency, opportunism, greed, etc.) However, most offences can be expiated with acts of contrition, and so can transgressions of the Vows. Only people whose faith wavers or is nothing more than pretense may not obtain forgiveness. Concretely speaking, the Conviction of such persons is rather weak, and their abilities as Elect—if they have any—are significantly limited. The most powerful Elect may not be compassionate or good-natured people (faith in the One can easily be influenced by willfulness, fanaticism, and even by a bit of pride), but it is virtually impossible for a person who does not sincerely embrace Soustraine's teaching to become an Elect with great powers. Either the Conviction is strong—thus the ability to perform miracles—or the beliefs are weak—out of weakness or disillusionment—and the aforementioned ability is thus affected.

Optional Rule: Vows and Exaltation

Though the Vows are intended first and foremost to be role-playing tools, and also to reflect the structured dimension of religious life within the Temple, Leaders may decide that they have a concrete impact and that a PC can earn bonuses by accepting such voluntary constraints. If this option is chosen, for each Vow a character chooses, the maximum Exaltation increases by 2, for a maximum bonus of 12 points if the character has sworn the Six Vows with all the constraints this implies. However, in case of a Significant or Major Offence, the character will lose the bonus granted by the broken Vow until the Offence has been expiated. This loss in Exaltation is added to the loss caused by the Offence itself (see *Book 1 - Universe*, page 259).





Monasteries of the One



his chapter provides general information about monasteries and the daily life of their residents. It makes reference to some concepts described in the previous pages, notably that of the Six Vows.

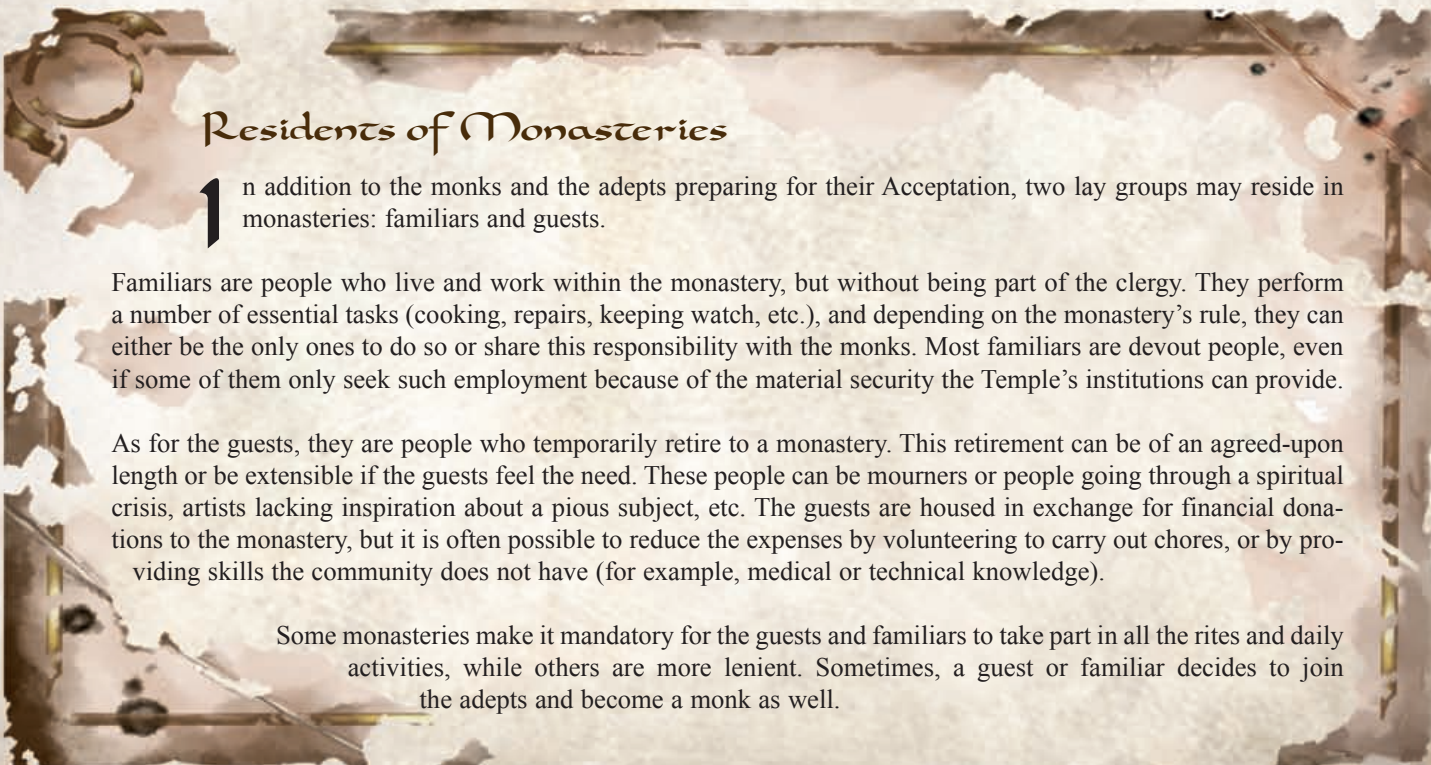
Being a Monk

The word “monk” (or its female equivalent, “nun”) describes a much more varied and complex reality than many people might think. In fact, the word “ascetic” would be much more appropriate to account for the various approaches: hermits, wandering monks, sedentary monks, etc. However, most monks are gathered in orders possessing one or several dedicated places of worship. Some minor orders, like that of the Tuathian Brothers, have but one modest monastery. Each order is organized around a core rule, usually inherited from its founder, or sometimes a reputed disciple.

Monks and Monasteries

Depending on the monastic order and individual commitment, withdrawing to a monastery can be temporary or permanent, partial or complete. Thus, it is possible for a layman of any age to be temporarily welcomed into a monastery to follow cultural and religious teachings, to rest his soul, or to spend his final days. Apart from the most remote monasteries (on islands, in marshes, in the mountains), all these institutions may house a fairly large population—up to several hundred individuals for the most important sites—engaged in a spiritual quest. This quest can be intentional, such as in the case of a widower mourning his beloved wife, or unintentional, an example being a newborn entrusted to monks to give the baby a chance to escape from the famine threatening a large family.

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Residents of Monasteries

In addition to the monks and the adepts preparing for their Acceptation, two lay groups may reside in monasteries: familiars and guests.

Familiars are people who live and work within the monastery, but without being part of the clergy. They perform a number of essential tasks (cooking, repairs, keeping watch, etc.), and depending on the monastery’s rule, they can either be the only ones to do so or share this responsibility with the monks. Most familiars are devout people, even if some of them only seek such employment because of the material security the Temple’s institutions can provide.

As for the guests, they are people who temporarily retire to a monastery. This retirement can be of an agreed-upon length or be extensible if the guests feel the need. These people can be mourners or people going through a spiritual crisis, artists lacking inspiration about a pious subject, etc. The guests are housed in exchange for financial donations to the monastery, but it is often possible to reduce the expenses by volunteering to carry out chores, or by providing skills the community does not have (for example, medical or technical knowledge).

Some monasteries make it mandatory for the guests and familiars to take part in all the rites and daily activities, while others are more lenient. Sometimes, a guest or familiar decides to join the adepts and become a monk as well.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, monasteries built in the wilderness or other remote areas are in total isolation, with sometimes only a handful of members surviving in austere, precarious conditions. It is not uncommon for monks who have decided to settle in a hostile environment to die. As hardened by their faith as they may be, they suffer from hunger, exhaustion, cold, humidity, and diseases. Their solace is the certainty that their efforts in contributing to make the world a better place will be rewarded in the Afterlife. Their work is not only spiritual, but also material; digging ditches for irrigation, carving usable mountain paths, building shelters against the dangers of nature, or draining wetlands, thereby reducing the risk of fever for surrounding people. Since the emergence of the Temple in Gwidre, many artificial channels in the region of Abundance have been dug or are maintained by monks of the One, often with much more efficiency than the lords governing this land. Some monasteries built in inhospitable areas eventually become religious centers or important housing sites along pilgrimage routes.

Renunciation and Rebirth

Aspiring monks have the rank of adept, an important first step supervised by mentors whose purpose is to give real meaning to the Acceptation. During this time, the adepts have to part with everything that ties them to the outside world and, first and foremost, to the characteristic elements of their individuality. This process requires that the postulants fully abide by the established rule within the monastery. This rule imposes restrictions that are close to the Six Vows, and sometimes even strongly encourage members to commit themselves to at least one of them. Still, in practice, the Six Vows are always considered a personal choice, and although some monasteries may require their members to embrace one Vow—most often the one of frugality or anonymity—respecting the monastery's rule is usually considered sufficient.



There also exist some personal Vows specific to some monastic orders, such as the vow of silence, for example, but they do not have the same meaning as the Six Vows that all the members of the Temple can embrace. Again, it is above all a personal commitment rather than a rule defined by the community. Depending on the tolerance laid down in the rule, the postulant may keep only a few personal belongings, or even none at all. Titles and other distinctions no longer apply when one becomes a monk, even though some congregations allow their members to write letters to their families. It is also common for adepts to change their names by taking up a new identity, this being part of the symbolic process of being reborn, of becoming someone different within a new community. The adepts' perception of themselves changes: they lose the marks of their former lives, and it is often hard to return to existence outside the monastery after having adapted oneself to this environment. For those who sincerely look for a spiritual refuge, monastic life allows them to become different persons, fully devoted to looking for ways to elevate their souls and be accepted within a new family, a spiritual kinship that substitutes a bodily one. Monks are expected to adopt a humble attitude that detractors deride as submissive and obedient.

The most obvious characterization of this humility is the use of the color brown, along with the white of the Temple's clergy, in the monks' clothing. There is no "monastic brown:" each order, and even each monastery, simply uses the materials they can find easily. For those who have been made to join a monastery rather than choosing to do so, this forced humility may be a painful experience. They may suffer bullying from their peers, mortifications of the flesh, severe diets, violations of their privacy, enforced isolations, confessions in groups, the duty to report one another's faults (and to endure the same public accusations and ensuing punishments), etc. Yet, they will never openly oppose what they have to endure, considering these hardships part of their lives.



Living in a Monastery

Being cut off from the outside world, the monks lead a communal life, the conditions of which are explicitly and thoroughly defined. They perform consecutive tasks in accordance with a predetermined pattern, everyone going about their daily business under the scrutiny of the others. This method takes into consideration all the needs of the monastery's members. The various aspects of daily life are assessed and justified by reference to the established dogma.

The rector is the highest authority, and it seldom happens that his commands are contested.

Apparent Rule and Subversion

However, in all monasteries, there also exists a clandestine, and even sometimes subversive, form of life. The rule is subverted, circumvented, relaxed, and some arrangements allow everyone to keep their distance from a whole in which they would otherwise disappear altogether. For instance, the herbalist brother takes care of growing herbs and brewing plant-based preparations, excusing him from attending every mass; monks in charge of welcoming visitors or taking care of guests are in contact with the outside world and can thus share news with lay people; the rector plays a highly political role toward the local communities, etc. On an even more serious level, the lack of privacy between young children and the brothers responsible for their education may lead to abuse. Also, chronicles occasionally mention in great detail some scandalous cases of monasteries, fallen into debauchery and lust, housing prostitutes and feasting until their licentious behavior is discovered and brought to a halt by the religious authorities.

Sanctions

Depending on the abuses reported, the order can decide to sort things out by themselves, by expelling some monks or forcing them to join a particularly remote monastery and going through acts of repentance (flogging, vow of silence, degrading work, etc.) However, in some cases, the problem will be dealt with by the Sigires, which often results in a trial leading to severe punishments: forced labor, whipping, mutilation, or even a death sentence, according to the gravity of the case. The Sigires are also likely to get involved on their own initiative, and take to the field without informing anyone about their arrival. This can create complex political ripples within the Temple, notably if a monastery affiliated to an influential order is involved.



A Haven in the World

The monastery's walls make it a sacred place cut off from the world, its hustle and its temptations, but more importantly, its dangers. Even in the harshest regions, a monastery is a shelter from bad weather, privation, and natural, human, or supernatural threats. Monks work hard for their community, and they share all the products of their labor with the most rigorous equality and frugality. Thus, even though monks rarely have much at their disposal, they rarely suffer from hunger. Religious law also specifies that every monastery can be a sanctuary for anyone who is pursued: whatever their crime, whatever the rank of those who hunt them down, they will be untouchable as long as they stay inside the monastery. Of course, they will stay there only if they adopt the same regular lifestyle as the monks. Therefore, bandits fleeing into a monastery to escape justice would avoid the gallows, but they would be sentenced to a form of life imprisonment, expiating their sins every day. However, this notion of asylum only concerns the crimes of lay people and only holds within the kingdom of Gwidre. It offers no protection for those who have been found guilty by a religious court, nor will it prevent the Sigires from catching those they hunt down.

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Discipline of the Mind and Body

A monastery is a place of prayer, but contemplation and meditation have many forms. Manual labor is essential to stave off boredom or apathy, which are considered dangerous for a monk. Indeed, idleness, the weight of daily routine, and the need for novelty can weaken the monks' spiritual determination, leaving them vulnerable to the influence of the demons from Limbo. Monks have understood long ago that their life, withdrawn from the world, is both a defense against and the source of a certain type of vulnerability in this regard, hence the organization of their disciplined daily lives.

Curing Mental Disorders

The reputation of some monastic orders—such as the Tuathian Brothers in this supplement, or the Velathyan Brothers of the Windy Peak (see Book 2, page 11)—concerning healthcare is well-established. However, there is also much to say about the places to which mentally ill people are sent. Indeed, many believers think that mental disorders result from the influence of Limbo's demons on weak souls. Therefore, they do not like to talk about insane people and all that concerns them. However, there exist some monasteries that are equipped to house mentally ill people. They try to offer them help by encouraging firm and rigorous religious practice under the auspices of a spiritual guide whose duty is to help them recover some mental balance. Rules-wise, these efforts boil down to Mind Treatment (and the reduction of Trauma points) through the "Spirituality" Discipline, as described in Book 1, page 280. The process often starts with the invocation of a Miracle of Purification—when monks are capable of performing it—to cleanse the patient from demonic influence.

The idea eventually emerged that some psychic disorders are in no way linked to Limbo, and although the Temple does not heed alienist theories, many monks who care for mentally ill people have learned that simply being attentive to the patient's needs improved the effects of the rites and prayers aiming at restoring their spiritual balance. Some monks have attempted to establish a classification of mental disorders, but their knowledge has been carefully kept secret up to now. Indeed, the most conservative upholders of the clergy of the One find it most distasteful that sacred rites should be mixed with secular practices of dubious effects.

Manual Labor

The exact nature of the manual labor depends on the religious order and on the seasons. It may be major construction projects, cultivation, care for the sick and destitute, creation of manufactured goods to be resold, etc. Life within a monastery is dictated by religion, but obeys pragmatic considerations as well. In summer, days are longer and field-work is significant. Therefore, in monasteries that must support themselves, mass times are adapted so that plowing, sowing, harvesting, and other activities, depending on the circumstances, can be completed. In winter, days are short, and there is very little that can be done outside. However, there is much to be done inside, such as repairing furniture, or preparing wool by carding, spinning, and weaving it, among many other tasks.

Religious Ceremonies

The Temple's six main prayer times are usually organized in masses, each of which lasts half an hour. However, there exist many other religious ceremonies of variable length. Each of the six orders has its own ceremonies, and among the monks, many congregations also have specific rites. Contrary to common belief, prayers make up a large part of the day only in the most prosperous monasteries, the ones that can rely on income from renting their lands. However, prayer is not the only exercise of mental discipline. It is thus customary that all monks pick a book for a given time to study it by themselves in depth, focusing on its essence, meditating on the author's analyses, and seeking to overcome its conceptual and logical difficulties. The best copyists and illuminators are often in direct contact with the local library. Since monasteries house knowledge that has been accumulated over centuries, their archives contain not only sacred texts, but also land titles, contracts solemnly agreed upon before the rector, encyclopedias, and treaties of all kinds, insofar as they relate to human knowledge. It is also not impossible that some contested versions of religious texts are among other fully orthodox scrolls or codices...

Contemplation

Finally, many monastic orders encourage the practice of a particular type of meditation that can rarely be found in the clergy of the One's other branches. In addition to the Six Prayers, monks are trained to practice simple contemplation.

This silent meditation goes hand in hand with the principle of humility, which must guide the spiritual journey of monks. On these occasions, they do not behave as devotees who praise the Creator or beg for His intercession, but simply as creatures of the One who peacefully contemplate their own imperfections as well as their own place in creation, the great all driven by the divine will. During these moments, their silence is that of the most absolute respect, for even the most sincere prayer is no more than the very essence of an imperfect soul, threatened by erring and temptation.





The Monastery of Tuath



his chapter will describe a typical monastery in Gwidrite territory: the Monastery of Tuath. It will be the setting for the events described in the “Vengeful Words” adventure.

The Vale of Thoir

Located in the far south of the kingdom of Gwidre, the Vale of Thoir is close to the Talkéride border. From Dearg, it is accessible by heading west through the Pass of Lantrecht, behind the fortress of Smiorail, which stands at the border. In winter, the awful weather makes such a journey all but impossible.

Royal authority barely reaches this border vale. It is ruled by Lord Irvan Mac Snòr, an insane man versed in dark arts. Not only does he mercilessly rule over the villagers under his control, he occasionally takes a tribute of human lives to practice bloody rituals. People are thrown in jail for trifles, and some of them never leave Mac Snòr’s dungeon. Travelers who are lost or too weak to defend themselves fall prey to the lord and his henchmen. The region has become a place of very ill repute, carefully avoided by many Varigals and most merchant convoys.

The Village of Thòl

A village of about 300 souls who live on hunting and harvesting, Thòl has no significant source of tradable wealth, and Mac Snòr’s tyranny is hard. Thòl’s burgomaster is appointed by the lord and strives to fulfill his orders for fear of cruel retaliation. The villagers’ only comfort is in religion. Thòl has a little church, the priest of which preaches patience and constancy in the face of hardship. In the valley, there is also a monastery, the pride of the vale’s inhabitants.

*On the left:
the village of Thòl
and Mac Snòr’s fortress*

The Monastery

Located on the opposite side of the Vale of Thoir, the monastery has always been a source of comfort for Thòl's inhabitants, since the monks generously share their healing skills, asking only for a symbolic offering in return. They worship a local saint, Beren. This devotion, and the saint's strong aura among the vale's inhabitants, have caused the monastery to receive strong admonitions from the Great Cenacle of Ard-Amrach. Five years ago, former Rector Tadeq, who overzealously preached the saint's merits, was even removed from office and taken by the Sigires. Even to this day, tensions exist between the orthodox monks, led by Rector Garan, and the Berenians, who wish to perpetuate the cult of the saint.

During its heyday, the monastery housed about 40 residents. Since then, the number has decreased: one rector, only five monks, three adepts completing training, two familiars in charge of common tasks, and two guests sharing the life of the community without belonging to the order of the monks. This situation essentially results from Rector Garan's schemes, as well as from the intervention of a more sinister protagonist. Concern within the community is growing—a feeling that is one of the most important setting elements in the “Vengeful Words” adventure.

A Typical Day

Monks use the holy calendar, which starts in the year of Soustraine's revelation, the year 503 Before the Oath. For the Tuathian Brothers, we are in the year 1410, not 907.

Each day in the monastery is marked with six prayer times announced by the ringing of the chapel bells. Each prayer consists of a mass strictly attended by the monks.

- **Sunrise.** At dawn, the monks head for the chapel for the first mass, Albines. The guests, the familiars, and anyone else living in the monastery are required to do so. The chapel bells ring to announce the beginning of the day.

- **Morning.** The monks go about their daily duties. Calligraphy and tending to patients, as well as the growing of medicinal plants in the cloister garden, make for most of these activities. The guests and familiars carry out common tasks: supplies, stables, hunting and gathering, etc. About three hours after Albines, the whole community assembles for the second mass of the day, Unicine.

- **Midday.** Everyone gathers for Lumines and then heads to the dining hall. The meal is eaten in silence, while listening to a monk singing or reading liturgical excerpts out loud. Serving is done jointly by familiars, guests, and monks who take their turn every week. Under the auspices of former Rector Tadeq, Lumines was also the occasion to talk about Saint Beren to a great extent, but Garan has put an end to that.

- **Afternoon.** The monks resume their activities. The afternoon is interrupted by the Sextines mass. Mostly referring to the Six Orders of the Temple, it is the least attended celebration by lay people, who often take the opportunity to have a break instead.

- **Dusk.** When night comes, the chapel bells ring to signal the end of the workday and the Vesperines mass.

- **Evening.** The evening is dedicated to contemplation and conversation among the monks, while the meal is once again prepared and eaten in silence. The Estellines mass is celebrated just after dinner.

The Tuathian Order and Saint Beren

A native of the Vale of Thoir, a renowned healer, and even a former Ionnthén according to some, Beren was devoted to the care of others. He traveled across the nearby valleys and shared his knowledge with everyone. No one knows under what circumstances he converted to the One, but everyone agrees that he quickly became an Elect, devout and sincere, able to perform Miracles. However, it was in 812 (1315 for the holy calendar of the Temple) that Beren became truly famous, when an epidemic struck the town of Lightrock—known today as Expiation. With the One's blessing, he saved the Duke of Lightrock's heir from certain death. After this, he stayed beside the Duke, and his presence helped the rise of the Temple in the nearby valleys, so much so that the Monastery of Tuath was erected in his honor. The very name of the place, Tuath—meaning “the people” in the ancient tongue—shows how concerned the Temple was at that time to rely on the goodwill of local people and to make them part of the followers of the One through one of their own. As it was, the Tuathian Brothers formed a very small order devoted to the healing arts, but many years later, when Beren died, the ducal family refused to give the body back to the monastery. The new duke wished to keep the remains of the saint who had once saved his life, and his influence led the Hierophant of that time to comply, much to the chagrin of the Tuathian Brothers. This caused some resentment among them toward orthodoxy and the authority of Ard-Amrach. Since then, the Berenians have unsuccessfully been trying to have their patron saint's remains returned to the monastery and the systematic refusal only fuels their insubordination more.

Map of the Monastery of Tuath



The Monastery of Tuath follows the classical architecture of the Temple's religious buildings. The numbering of the locations corresponds to the map of the monastery included with this supplement

1. Chapel

It is composed of a long nave with benches for the faithful, which opens into a hexagonal room holding the monastery's altar. The walls feature sacred paintings and three beautiful stained glass windows that bring daylight.

2. Garden and Stable

The stable is modest and only houses the mounts of wealthy visitors. Thus, Jakez, the handyman, has plenty of time to contribute to the upkeep of the adjoining vegetable garden.

3. Storage

This small room contains the tools and materials that the monks use on a daily basis.

4. Prayer Room

This room devoted to contemplation has several benches, candles, and a stained glass window depicting Soustraine. Here, prayers for the sick are made. The offerings are left in an urn.

5. Beren's Sacred Alcove

This room is dedicated to the worship of the Saint. The only pieces of furniture are a small altar and a statue representing Beren.

6. Cellar

A room where food is stored, protected by a heavy hinged door.

7. Great Scriptorium

Also called "Scriptorium of Dawn" since its windows face the rising sun. This room can house a dozen scribes, with desks and all the materials necessary for calligraphy and copying books.

8. Small Scriptorium

A very small room for a single copyist. A quiet place filled with the smell of old candles and stacks of parchment.

9. Library

This tiny room holds the monastery's book collection. The number of books is limited, but it is already a treasure in this remote region. Most of them are the work of Tuathian copyists and deal with religious subjects, herbalism, and medicine. Several registers, the updating of which is not always exemplary, contain the monastery's archives.

10. Dining Hall

An austere room with three long tables at which about 40 people can sit. The meals, eaten in silence, are rather gloomy, since there are only a dozen people in the community at present. The southern table is left empty, and the other two tables are used by the monastery's residents, set apart because of the current tensions. Garan is at the northern side and those who are devoted to him—Fergal, Selwyn—sit near him. On the contrary, Teda and Meiriadog sit as far away from the Rector as possible. Jakez seems to prefer being alone, and so does Brother Eber. The others mainly try not to stand out.

11. Kitchens

They include a small storage in the basement with food supplies and equipment. Some ill-maintained weapons can also be found, in case the need for defense arises. However, the Tuathian Brothers are poorly versed in the fighting arts, so their presence is no more than symbolic.

12. Men's Dormitory

A large dormitory room, almost empty today since it only houses Eber, Selwyn, and Fergal, as well as the adepts Alan and Meiriadog.

13. Women's Dormitory

The only occupants are Teda, Erwen, and the adept Loeiz.

14. Guests' Dormitory

It is reserved for the guests and familiars of the monastery. This is where the PCs will stay and where Dalaigh the Varigal, Seane the bard, and the familiars Jakez and Madel sleep.

15. Rector's Room

Occupied by Garan, it contains a bed, a desk, and a closet with the Rector's personal belongings.

16. Cloister

Hexagonal in shape, the cloister opens onto a medicinal plant garden with a well in the center.

17. Chapter Hall

A large room where official gatherings take place. Distinguished guests are welcomed here. If needed, this room can also be used for trials.

18. Apothecary's Room

Here, the monks make their salves, herbal teas, and poultices, and store them on a multitude of shelves.

19. Care Room

A dormitory with about 15 beds and several curtains to provide a modicum of privacy to the patients.

20. Mortuary

This small stone building has but one room with two large tables, on which the bodies to be buried are laid. It is very rare for a body to stay here more than one day, the time for the deceased to be washed and put into a basic coffin made by the adepts.

21. Graveyard

The monks and the wealthiest believers are buried individually under a very simple gravestone, decorated with the Temple's hexcelsis. Most of the others are buried under the ground in graves that can contain several coffins.

The destitute and the dead who were afflicted with a contagious disease are cremated on a pyre, and their ashes are transferred into a special single pit.

The Monastery's Residents

Here are descriptions of the residents of the Monastery of Tuath. Each of these characters has been given a telltale nickname. Indeed, in gaming sessions involving many characters, Leaders as well as Players may sometimes have difficulties remembering some names whereas character traits, jobs, or physical details often turn out to stick much better. These nicknames will thus serve as reminders for the Players. They may also be used by some of the NPCs, if appropriate.

Garan, the Rector
Male, Gwidrite, 37 years old

- ⌘ **Ways:** Combativeness: 2. Creativity: 1. Empathy: 5. Reason: 3. Conviction: 4.
- ⌘ **Skills:** Close Combat: 3, Craft: 4, Erudition: 5 (Herbalism: 8), Prayer: 5 (Knowledge of the Temple: 8, Miracles: 8), Relation 5 (Command: 10, Diplomacy: 8), Science: 5 (Medicine: 6).
- ⌘ **Character Traits:** Persuasive/Cowardly.
- ⌘ **Sanity:** Mystical Delusion (Mysticism).
- ⌘ **Combat:** Attack: 5. Defense: 13. Speed: 7. Potential: 1. Damage: 1.
- ⌘ **Health:** 19.
- ⌘ **Exaltation:** 27. Miracles: Litany, Miraculous Healing.



Garan is close to 40 years old. He is tall and rather lean, with a pleasant face and piercing eyes. He is an intelligent and charismatic man, and he makes use of these qualities to manipulate the other monks. His nature is torn between ruthless ambition and a sense of guilt instilled through the teachings of the One and magnified by his own actions. Garan got his position by orchestrating the former Rector's downfall and by presenting himself as the keeper of Orthodoxy. He does not intend to stop at that, and continues to scheme to obtain a more important position, despite the opposition of some leaders who have recognized him as a careerist. He is well aware that a perfect reputation is essential to achieve his own ambitions, and he uses his charisma to attract the gratitude of the patients' family members. He also did not hesitate to divert part of the donations made by the faithful under the pretense of helping some of the families. At the same time, he does not tolerate any opposition to his authority and is worried that his wrongdoings may be discovered, which has led him to call upon henchmen to get rid of troublemakers. As a result, several of the monastery's residents died by the Rector's order over the last few years. Garan minimizes the seriousness of his acts: he does not see himself as a criminal, and hides behind theological justifications. He convinces himself that he acts for the good of the Temple, simply removing the bad apples. The Rector had the misfortune to fall under the sway of Lord Mac Snòr who coerces him into delivering some patients in exchange for his silence. This blackmail is more fully described in the adventure entitled "Vengeful Words." Mac Snòr has two major assets against Garan: his spy, Jakez, who has discovered that the Rector has been orchestrating murders, and a witness who can attest that Garan is diverting money. Mac Snòr simply had to offer some recognizable jewels to the monastery, then order his soldiers to search the travelers who were leaving the vale until one of them was found with one of the jewels on him. Then, all that needed to be done was to force the man to write a confession accusing Garan, then let him go. This way, Mac Snòr secured a greatly embarrassed witness that he could call upon whenever needed. In the end, the Rector is doubly trapped: he knows that the lord's spy can testify about his schemes, but also that Mac Snòr has another witness should Garan plan to make Jakez disappear. Since the Rector has fallen into Mac Snòr's trap, he has been so anguished that he is sinking little by little. Garan quickly understood that if he did not give in to Mac Snòr's blackmail, he would die by the hands of the insane lord, or those of the Sigires. He has resigned himself to honor the pact while denying a part of his crimes, and he continues to justify his other deeds, rationalizing that the victims deserved such punishment... on imaginary charges. Garan has become an extremist in the practice of the One's worship, enduring harsh repeated penances to ease his anguish and guilt. The recent deaths of his

henchmen greatly perplex him and intensify his mystical fears. He is completely overwhelmed by the events. In spite of his broken sanity, Garan is still able to seem credible before the visitors and most of the monks. He eloquently defends the theory of a divine punishment caused by the lack of sincerity too many wavering faithful still show. His conviction is sincere in his sermons, and it is not rare for Garan, when carried by his faith, to invoke a Miracle of Litany without even realizing it.

The Other Monks and Adepts

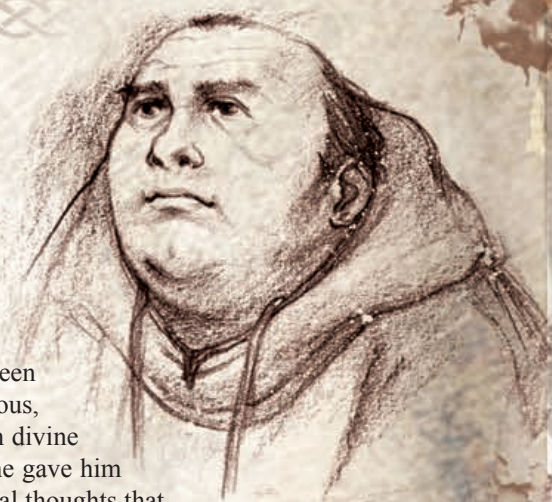
Note that they usually only have improvised weapons (kitchen knives, agricultural tools, etc.) available, and that most of them are reluctant to take a human life.

Eber, Monk - The Taciturn Physician

Male, Gwidrite, 46 years old

- ⌘ Ways: Combativeness: 2. Creativity: 2. Empathy: 1. Reason: 5. Conviction: 5.
- ⌘ Skills: Close Combat: 1, Craft: 4, Erudition: 5 (Herbalism: 7), Prayer: 5
(Contemplation: 9, Miracles: 7), Relation 3, Science: 5 (Medicine: 9).
- ⌘ Character Traits: Devoted/Cold.
- ⌘ Sanity: Reference Symptom (Mimicry).
- ⌘ Combat: Attack: 3. Defense: 11. Speed: 3. Potential: 2. Damage: 1.
- ⌘ Health: 19. ⌘ Exaltation: 25. Miracles: Miraculous Healing.

As an orphan, Eber was taken in by the monks at a very young age. His life has been shaped by religion. He is a man of few words, pious, meditative, and very rigorous, spending a lot of time praying and worshiping the One, who continues to grant him divine powers. He is also a devoted healer who prefers to keep the miraculous gift the One gave him for the most serious cases. However, Eber is a taciturn man, focused on metaphysical thoughts that keep him away from his peers. Most of the patients thus appreciate his assistant Selwyn more.



Selwyn, Monk - The Nurse

Male, Talkeride, 23 years old

- ⌘ Ways: Combativeness: 2. Creativity: 2. Empathy: 4. Reason: 2. Conviction: 5.
- ⌘ Skills: Close Combat: 2, Craft: 4, Erudition: 5 (Herbalism: 7), Prayer: 5
(Contemplation: 6, Miracles: 6), Relation 3, Science: 5.
- ⌘ Character Traits: Sincere/Impulsive.
- ⌘ Sanity: Balance (Mysticism).
- ⌘ Combat: Attack: 4. Defense: 11. Speed: 6. Potential: 2. Damage: 1.
- ⌘ Health: 19. ⌘ Exaltation: 20. Miracles: Miraculous Healing.

Selwyn is full of ideals and has great respect and unfailing confidence in Garan. Last year, he performed his first Miracle, genuine proof of the worthiness of his spiritual master's teaching. Selwyn will react poorly to any assumption about his mentor's integrity. He is aware that his knowledge is far from being equal to Brother Eber's, but his compassionate nature makes him very appreciated by the patients. Regarding the monastery's troubles and the Rector's theory about a divine punishment, Selwyn is pretty reserved, even if he secretly suspects the presence of evil within the monastery.

Teda, Nun - The Herbalist

Female, Gwidrite, 30 years old

- ⌘ Ways: Combativeness: 2. Creativity: 3. Empathy: 5. Reason: 3. Conviction: 2.
- ⌘ Skills: Close Combat: 1, Craft: 4, Erudition: 5 (Herbalism: 9), Prayer: 5, Relation 3, Science: 3.
- ⌘ Character Traits: Intuitive/Doubting. ⌘ Sanity: Symptom of Agitation (Hysteria).
- ⌘ Combat: Attack: 3. Defense: 13. Speed: 7. Potential: 2. Damage: 1. ⌘ Health: 19.

Teda came to the monastery of Tuath at the same time as Garan. Her faith quickly succumbed to the charm of the one who was going to become the Rector, and she betrayed her monastic vows. She was Garan's lover for some time before he shut himself into his mysticism and self-inflicted rituals of penance. She still has feelings for him, even though she has become a Berenian, and he despises her for that. For some months, she has suffered from insomnia, spending hours pondering gloomily. She regrets her faults and feels ashamed, because she realizes her faith has never been sincere and she just wanted to escape from her family. Even though she is a very competent herbalist, she feels guilty for finding her current life so repetitive. It is in the hope of finding a more authentic faith that she has joined the ranks of the Berenians.



Erwen, Nun - The Copyist

Female, Gwidrite, 21 years old

- ⊗ **Ways:** Combativeness: 1. Creativity: 4. Empathy: 3. Reason: 2. Conviction: 5.
- ⊗ **Skills:** Close Combat: 1, Craft: 5 (Illumination: 7), Erudition: 5 (Herbalism: 7), Prayer: 5, Relation 3, Science: 3.
- ⊗ **Character Traits:** Peaceful/Naive.
- ⊗ **Sanity:** Balance (Mental Confusion).
- ⊗ **Combat:** Attack: 2. Defense: 10. Speed: 4. Potential: 2. Damage: 1.
- ⊗ **Health:** 19.

Until last year, Erwen was an adept. She has recently arrived in the monastery and feels overwhelmed by the current events. She does not understand how so many misfortunes could have stricken a single place and why. She is good-willed, but completely blinded by her faith and naiveté. She has no affinity with the Rector, whose behavior she finds odd, though she would never dare question his authority. Erwen spends most of her time with Eber. The monk's taciturn nature soothes her, and she finds comfort in prayer. She also greatly appreciates illumination works and likes the reassuring smell of paper, which has led her to discover her undeniable talent as a copyist and illuminator.



Fergal, Monk - The Right-Hand Man

Male, Gwidrite, 37 years old

- ⊗ **Ways:** Combativeness: 4. Creativity: 3. Empathy: 3. Reason: 4. Conviction: 1.
- ⊗ **Skills:** Close Combat: 5 (Swords: 7), Craft: 3, Erudition: 4, Feats: 5, Prayer: 4, Relation 3, Science: 3, Travel: 5 (Riding: 7).
- ⊗ **Character Traits:** Willful/Cynical.
- ⊗ **Sanity:** Balance (Frenzy).
- ⊗ **Combat:** Attack: 9 (Swords: 11). Defense: 12. Speed: 7. Potential: 2. Damage: 1.
- ⊗ **Health:** 19.

Few people appreciate Fergal, due to his overbearing and patronizing nature. He ensures that the monks and adepts perform their tasks efficiently and promptly.

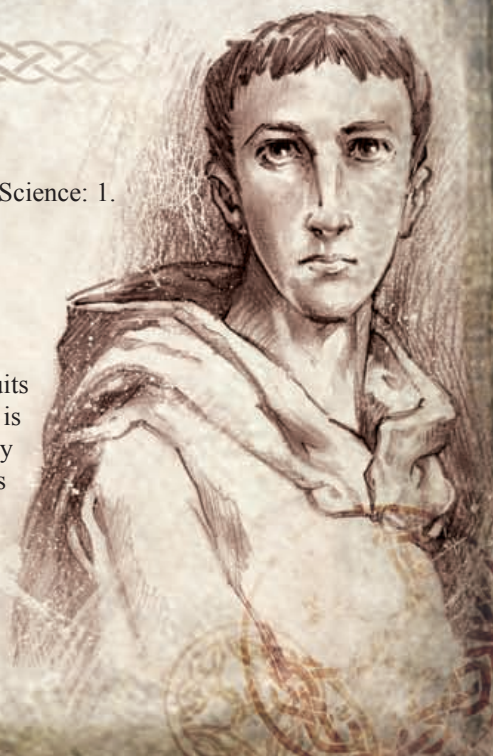
However, anyone who has known him for a while can guess a hidden side behind this facade of intransigence. More than 10 years ago, Fergal had a different name and lived by his wits in a dubious, if not criminal, manner. He got himself into huge trouble, and decided to escape the authorities by embracing religion, even though he knew that it was a choice he could not take back. Since the brutal deaths of Brother Maec and Brother Uvelan, he is Garan's only ally. He shares the same cynicism and ruthless ambition as the Rector, and until recently, he saw in him a man capable of reaching the highest spheres of power. Fergal supported him, with the idea of taking revenge on life by becoming an influential clergyman himself. However, the recent events have cast a shadow upon his dreams of grandeur. Of all the monastery's inhabitants, Fergal is undoubtedly the most merciless and the most cynical. He even takes a certain malevolent delight in "punishing the heretics" with a faith that is just a tool of power for him.

Alan, Adept - The Apprentice Herbalist

Male, Gwidrite, 22 years old

- ⊗ **Ways:** Combativeness: 2. Creativity: 2. Empathy: 3. Reason: 4. Conviction: 4.
- ⊗ **Skills:** Close Combat: 1, Craft: 5, Erudition: 5 (Herbalism: 7), Prayer: 3, Relation 3, Science: 1.
- ⊗ **Character Traits:** Sincere/Withdrawn.
- ⊗ **Sanity:** Reference Symptom (Mimicry).
- ⊗ **Combat:** Attack: 3. Defense: 12. Speed: 5. Potential: 2. Damage: 1.
- ⊗ **Health:** 19.

Alan is a withdrawn, serious-looking young man who rarely attracts attention, which suits him. He dislikes human contact, but is fascinated by all matters of herbalism. He is convinced that the controversies between Orthodox and Berenians are completely irrelevant. More precisely, they have nothing to do with what Alan considers a monk's duties: praying, acting with humility, and performing even the hardest chores without complaining. It is only in this purity of action that the approval of the One can be found. He never talked to Teda about it but he knows about her Berenian convictions and he thinks they play a part in her lack of commitment.



Loeiz, Adept - The Marked One

Female, Gwidrite, 32 years old

- ⊗ **Ways:** Combativeness: 2. Creativity: 1. Empathy: 5. Reason: 3. Conviction: 4.
- ⊗ **Skills:** Close Combat: 1, Craft: 4, Erudition: 5, Prayer: 3, Relation 3, Science: 1.
- ⊗ **Character Traits:** Receptive/Fearful.
- ⊗ **Sanity:** Balance (Mysticism).
- ⊗ **Combat:** Attack: 3. Defense: 13. Speed: 7. Potential: 1. Damage: 1.
- ⊗ **Health:** 19.

Loeiz has often been the object of suspicion because of the purplish birthmark on her face, and she entered the monastery of Tuath with the hope that this stigma could be cured. As it turned out, the home-made remedies applied on her face had a significant effect. Filled with gratitude toward the monks, Loeiz decided to repay the One's blessing by entering His service. Her birthmark is much less apparent than when she entered the monastery nearly two years ago, and she does her best to meet Garan's expectations. However, even if she is not an avowed Berenian, she cannot help but feel a certain fascination toward the Saint, perhaps more than expected. Furthermore, she is well aware that Fergal is a dangerous man and that the respect Jakez shows to Garan's authority is nothing more than pretense.



Meiriadog, Adept - The Dissenter

Male, Gwidrite, 37 years old

- ⊗ **Ways:** Combativeness: 4. Creativity: 2. Empathy: 3. Reason: 2. Conviction: 4.
- ⊗ **Skills:** Close Combat: 3, Craft: 4, Erudition: 5, Feats: 4, Natural Environment: 3, Prayer: 3, Relation 3, Science: 1.
- ⊗ **Character Traits:** Loyal/Uncompromising.
- ⊗ **Sanity:** Balance (Obsession).
- ⊗ **Combat:** Attack: 7. Defense: 10. Speed: 7. Potential: 2. Damage: 1.
- ⊗ **Health:** 19.

Born in the vale, Meiriadog is a determined man who does not mince his words. He hates and despises Orthodox believers as he considers them to be narrow-minded, hypocritical people. As a devout Berenian, he knows that his opinions may prevent his final acceptance into the Clergy of the One, but this will not deter him. For him, faith exists through sincerity and truth because the Creator knows each man's faults. Of course, he does not realize how dangerous those he scorns can be.



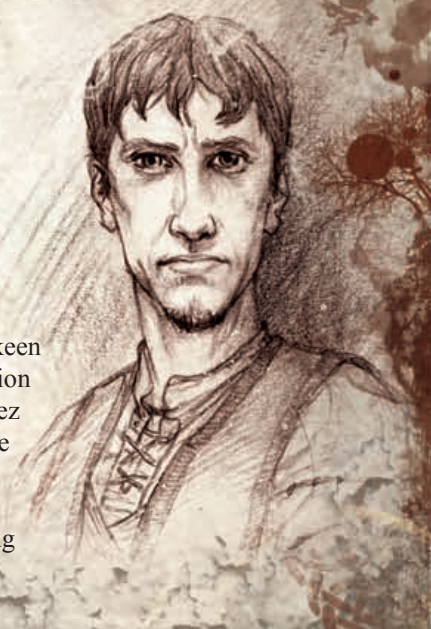
The Other Residents of the Monastery

Jakez, Familiar - The Stableman

Male, Gwidrite, 28 years old

- ⊗ **Ways:** Combativeness: 3. Creativity: 2. Empathy: 4. Reason: 4. Conviction: 2.
- ⊗ **Skills:** Close Combat: 5 (Short Blades: 7), Craft: 4, Feats: 3, Natural Environment: 4, Occultism: 2, Perception: 5 (Observation: 6), Prayer: 2, Stealth: 5.
- ⊗ **Character Traits:** Even-minded/Immoral.
- ⊗ **Sanity:** Symptom of Illusion (Hallucination).
- ⊗ **Combat:** Attack: 8 (Short Blades: 10). Defense: 13. Speed: 7. Potential: 2. Damage: 1.
- ⊗ **Health:** 19.

Jakez always comes off as affable and cheerful, but he is in truth a ruthless man, gifted with a keen sense of observation. He is Lord Mac Snòr's spy within the monastery, and he feels both devotion and terror for his master, fascinated by all that concerns magic and supernatural phenomena. Jakez is officially in charge of the monastery's stables. He also helps Madel with the cooking, and more generally speaking, he is the handyman. He is the one who unmasked Garan and gave Mac Snòr information to trap the Rector. He now serves as an intermediary between the Lord and the Rector. Garan hates Jakez, but he is afraid of Mac Snòr's reaction should anything happen to his agent.



-The Monastery of Tuath-



Madel, Familiar - The Cook

Female, Gwidrite, 33 years old



- ⊕ **Ways:** : Combativeness: 3. Creativity: 4. Empathy: 3. Reason: 3. Conviction: 2.
- ⊕ **Skills:** Close Combat: 2, Craft: 5 (Cooking: 7), Feats: 4, Natural Environment: 3, Prayer: 3.
- ⊕ **Character Traits:** Inventive/Liar.
- ⊕ **Sanity:** Balance (Mental Confusion).
- ⊕ **Combat:** Attack: 5, Defense: 11. Speed: 6. Potential: 2. Damage: 1. ⊕ **Health:** 19.

Madel is responsible for the cooking and the laundry. She is worried about the recent deaths, but continues to believe the Rector's speeches, especially since he has proven generous with her pay to reward her involvement in the monastery's life. Madel has always known that besides faith, money makes the world go round. She will be rather suspicious of the PCs and will not hesitate to report to the Rector what she might hear here and there. At the same time, if they know what they are doing and bribe her to alleviate her scruples, she can show some cooperation and keep things to herself. However, she will never oppose a direct order from Garan.



Dalaigh, Guest - The Varigal

Male, Talkeride, 49 years old



- ⊕ **Ways:** Combativeness: 4. Creativity: 2. Empathy: 4. Reason: 3. Conviction: 2.
- ⊕ **Skills:** Close Combat: 4, Feats: 4, Perception: 5 (Alertness: 7), Prayer: 3, Shooting and Throwing: 5 (Bows: 8), Stealth: 4, Travel: 5 (Riding: 7, Signs: 8).
- ⊕ **Character Traits:** Serious/Suggestible.
- ⊕ **Sanity:** Balance (Hallucination).
- ⊕ **Combat:** Attack: 8 (Bow: 12), Defense: 12. Speed: 8. Potential: 2. Damage: 2. ⊕ **Health:** 19.

Dalaigh is an old Varigal, worn out by his travels throughout Tri-Kazel. He has come close to dying several times, and only owes his survival to a series of extraordinary strokes of luck, particularly when he collected a set of documents related to Feondas on the behalf of a lord (see Book 1, pages 34-39). His meeting with the monks of Tuath was critical, as they treated the pneumonia that would have otherwise been fatal to him. Dalaigh is truly convinced that he has been saved by the Creator and that he owes Him his life. He has embraced the Temple's theory, interpreting Feondas as the evidence of the influence of demons on the world. The elderly Varigal has become a meditative man, pondering about the meaning of his existence. He has been living in the monastery for some time, making use of his hunting skills for the community. He feels indebted to the Rector, who has been involved in his care, while also feeling uneasy toward him.

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Seane, Guest - The Bard

Female, Gwidrite, 20 years old

- ⊕ **Ways:** Combativeness: 2. Creativity: 5. Empathy: 3. Reason: 1. Conviction: 4.
- ⊕ **Skills:** Close Combat: 4, Erudition: 5 (Herbalism: 7), Perception: 5, Performance: 5 (Singing: 9, Lute: 7), Prayer: 4, Relation 4, Science: 3, Stealth: 4, Travel: 4.
- ⊕ **Character Traits:** Inspired/Prideful.
- ⊕ **Sanity:** Symptom of Illusion (Hallucination).
- ⊕ **Combat:** Attack: 6. Defense: 9. Speed: 5. Potential: 3. Damage: 1. ⊕ **Health:** 19.



Seane is a young Gwidrite bard. She is the daughter of an apothecary who found a religious and musical vocation. According to her, arts should praise the Creator before all. She decided to stay in the monastery for a few years to devote herself to prayer and to find inspiration. Seane is rather idealistic: she cannot consider that evil comes from inside the monastery, despite all the tensions and quarrels she witnesses. However, she is prideful and hides great ambitions regarding her career. In her dreams, she imagines that she is the creator of a reform that will significantly change the status of bards, so that they become cantors fully devoted to the One.

The Deceased Monks

The "Vengeful Words" adventure is based on several events outlined here that have caused, among other things, the death of three monks. Jalan, a young and talented illuminator, had the misfortune of becoming aware of some dark doings, which turned out to be fatal for him. Among the reasons that can lead the PCs to the monastery, it is possible that Jalan's family sent them there, as they have not heard from him lately. Jalan may be described as a rather shy person who only got along well with Erwen, the copyist. As for Maec and Uvelan, they were Garan's followers. They were killed by a very particular murderer, which can prove to be an unexpected obstacle for the PCs in the adventure. Maec was one of the two trained physicians of the monastery, along with Eber. He was considered more amiable than his colleague, but also somewhat two-faced. Uvelan was a rather impulsive and aggressive herbalist. With these two men, Garan and Fergal formed the Orthodox cabal at the monastery's head.

Vengeful Words

rologue

- **Style:** Investigation
- **Setting:** The Monastery of Tuath, described in the previous pages
- **Season:** Fall or winter
- **Length:** 5 hours or more

Summary of the scenario: The PCs discover that suspicious deaths are occurring in a Gwidrite monastery at the hands of various perpetrators, one of whom uses supernatural means, operating beyond the veil of death.

Stakes and Goals: The goals of this scenario are multiple: understand the causes of the deaths that occurred in the monastery, reveal the wrongdoings of Rector Garan, and understand the threat on the Vale of Thoir.





The Characters' Involvement

The PCs may become involved in the adventure in several ways. Differing introductions can influence the length of the game since they will determine how much information the PCs start with.



The PCs are hired by Occultist Aodren Floyd (see Book 2 – Travels) who is traveling through the region of Dearg to go to the monastery of Tuath. A young monk, Jalan, has stopped sending news, and in his last letters he wrote about strange deaths. The occultist has been hired by Jalan's family in order to shed light on the matter. He will ask the PCs to help him in his mission. This introduction gives the PCs several assets. First, Aodren Floyd can help them further the investigation if they do not make progress, and they will have Jalan's letter (see the "Jalan's Letter" game aid), the content of which gives clues about the situation in the monastery. The Players will also start the adventure with the Clue Card "Jalan."



The PCs are sent by a wealthy book collector, Garrick Mac Harvon, a bard who wishes them to pick up a collection of well-known hymns commissioned to a copyist of the monastery—none other than Jalan. The bard sends the PCs to the monastery with a reward left to the Leaders' discretion (see Average Daily Wages on page 219, Book 1 – Universe). This introduction offers the PCs simple motivation to investigate. However, although they will not know of the situation in the monastery, they will immediately be on Jalan's track. The PCs will start with the Clue Card "Jalan."



This adventure is particularly well suited to a group of characters belonging to the Temple. The PCs can be sent to the monastery for different reasons: a pilgrimage, an investigation ordered by a superior... Depending on the choice of the Leader, the PCs will be more or less aware of the situation when they arrive: they may know nothing of what is occurring in the monastery, or they may be specially recruited in order to investigate and therefore possess ample information.



The monastery of Tuath is located close to the Talkéride border, on the other side of the Vale of Dearg. If the Leaders and the Players use the templates from Book 1 – Universe, the scenario may thus be related to the young adept, Joris. His mentor, Firmin, may have heard of his colleagues' troubles and send him there, or it may just be a pilgrimage with the goal of furthering the aspiring cleric's acceptance into the clergy.



This last introduction is the most challenging one to orchestrate, while providing greater potential for the PCs' involvement: they go to the monastery to receive care from the Tuathian Brothers. One of them may have heard about the monastery's healers and wishes to remedy the persistent effects of a wound or chronic health problem (such as the Aftermath Disadvantage, for example).



The journey to the monastery is left to the Leaders' judgment. It can be a full episode, or the adventure can start promptly at the monastery's doors.



To strengthen the PCs' involvement, the Leaders could insert one of the characters of "Vengeful Words" in a previous scenario.

For example, the PCs may have met and befriended one of the hosts before meeting him or her again in the monastery.



The Horrific Side

The discovery of Rector Garan's wrong-doings and the emergence of a supernatural manifestation through an Object of Power will be the main sources of horror in this adventure.



Aid Sheets: Appendices, Clue Cards, Pictures, and Map

Note that this scenario includes aid sheets to help the Players navigate through the Monastery's mysteries and allow the Leaders to optimize the atmosphere.



Appendices:

They are intended for Leaders and were made to be kept close at hand during the game. They sum up the core information: for experienced Leaders, they may be used as a basis for improvisation; for beginners, they will be used as memos to keep track of all the characters and events in "Vengeful Words."



Jalan's Letter and Jalan's Will:

Two aid sheets to cut out from their support.



Pictures:

"Vengeful Words" is an adventure involving a great number of protagonists. One of the scenario's keys is to pay attention to every character. These four sheets gather the main actors. As the PCs meet the monastery's various residents, they will be given the corresponding pictures. This way, it will be easier for the Players to remember those they will interact with.



Map of the Monastery:

A large poster picturing the monastery is included, which will be useful for both Players and Leaders during the game to make the investigation easier.



Clue Cards:

There are eight of them on two boards to be cut out before the game. These cards will be progressively given to the Players who will thus have the main elements of their investigation in front of them.

The scenes in which such cards can be acquired are indicated with this symbol.

By including several game aids, the Shadows of Esteren team has assumed that it would be better to provide the Leaders with a set of tools. However, it may be that not all of them are necessary.

Some groups of Players like to solve a mystery together and manage to connect the dots by themselves by comparing their notes and deductions. On the other hand, others prefer a game with a different type of dynamic, and it may be useful to help them not lose sight of the important points of the current scenario. For beginner Players, the aid sheets will help them put the pieces of the puzzle together in this complex investigation involving a great number of protagonists.

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Likewise, the Leaders may want the Players to try to solve the scenario by themselves, which is indeed its core and purpose. Conversely, they may prefer more interactions and action around the table; solving the plot then becomes a means for the Players to be fully immersed in role-playing their Characters.

The Leaders are therefore encouraged to use the proposed aid sheets as they see fit, and to adapt their use according to their own needs. One of the cards has been left blank for the Leaders to make custom aids.

Modular Scenario

The Shadows of Esteren scenarios use the specific system of "modular scenes." At some key moments, signaled by icons, inserts will suggest various optional scenes, allowing the Leaders to develop the type of atmosphere they wish: gory, suspenseful, psychological, and supernatural. Of course, they are only examples, and Leaders are encouraged to design other alternative scenes as a way to fine-tune their storytelling.



Gore



Suspense



Psychology



Supernatural

The atmosphere around an RPG table mostly depends on the Players' involvement and on the Leader's work as the scenario's director. The following icons indicate technical aids for an easier management of the game.



This icon indicates inserts that provide Leaders with tips and advice to optimize the atmosphere of the scene.



This icon stresses any important information so Leaders can quickly identify



This icon provides musical suggestions to illustrate a scene. The Esteren universe gives great importance to music, as shown in "Of Men and Obscurities," the music album included in this supplement.



The Monastery's Recent History

For some years, Lord Mac Snòr has found a suitable ally in Garan, the Rector of the Monastery of Tuath. Thanks to a spy, the insane lord has uncovered the schemes Garan contrived to further his ambitions. This has allowed him to entrap the Rector before approaching him. Mac Snòr asked Garan to hand him over some of his patients, faking their deaths and not asking questions about what would become of them. In return, the lord of the vale has been keeping to himself certain testimonies, and even gives money to the Rector, which is a means to finance his ambitions. If Garan fails in the pact, his acts will be immediately reported to the inquisitors of the Temple... or the Rector and all the monastery's monks may also be the next ones to rot in the Lord's dungeon...

To honor his agreement, the Rector had his accomplices within the monastery drug some of the patients. Once the victims have been selected, they are put into a comatose state and then reported dead before being taken to the mortuary. From this isolated building, it is easy to make

the bodies disappear and safely put them in a secret hiding place. All that remains to be done is to fill the coffin with earth for the burial and give the unfortunate soul to Mac Snòr's henchmen. However, the Rector also had to deal with some nosy residents. The last one was Jalan, an unfortunate copyist who understood that he was in danger. However, he had the idea of hiding information about what was going on in the monastery in his last work, with the hope that the one who commissioned it could pass the information on.

Soon after, Garan had him killed by his henchmen, and claimed that the young monk had fled because of a lack of fervor. But so great was Jalan's determination that a part of his soul survived and haunted the book he was copying, driven by a need for justice and revenge. The presence of Jalan's tormented soul has made the monastery a haunted place, with the Rector and his accomplices being the objects of the young monk's posthumous revenge. Unfortunately, the other residents of the monastery are not safe either...



Using Miracles

Some of the monks can use such powers (see Book 1 - Universe on page 256), which are considered proof of the One's power. However, according to how supernatural the Leaders want the setting to be, the monks can master more Miracles than proposed, or, on the contrary, be unable to perform any one. If the "Miraculous Healing" Miracle is left within the Tuathian Brothers' capabilities, Leaders are encouraged to decide whether they can heal a chronic health problem or not, an example being the "Trauma" Disadvantage. This may even be the reason for the PCs to go to the monastery, hoping to find a cure—the Power Stanza required can then vary highly according to the affliction's seriousness. At any rate, Miracles can play an important part during the investigation. Indeed, when the Characters become aware of Garan's true colors, they will certainly be very surprised that such a man can be granted the One's favors.

On the other hand, the fact that Garan is capable of Miracles should keep him away from suspicion, at least to begin with: after all, an Elect is supposed to be someone whose morality is exemplary and who strictly follows the Ordinances.

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The Situation in the Monastery

When the adventure starts, the whole community is under pressure. The rivalry between the Orthodox and the Berenians—Saint Beren's followers—has caused deep changes in mentalities, and the deaths that have occurred in the last few years have aroused great fear. Despite all this, many monks have preferred to remain blind to the truth: they would rather believe that the One is putting them to the test than consider the possibility that some of their brothers are involved in these events. However, the influence of Jalan's book leads to deaths that are as suspicious as unexpected, shaking this conviction.

With these new deaths, anxiety is at its apex, even though Rector Garan's charisma and the force of habit allow the monks to take refuge in the reassuring routine of the daily rituals. Still, the uneasy atmosphere may lead the monastery's residents to divulge some secrets they would usually keep to themselves. In this troubled time, the PCs will not be the only ones to go to the monastery. Indeed, a Sigire and his bodyguard, both from Ard-Amrach, will arrive soon after them. The authorities of the capital city have not heard about the recent deaths yet, but they know something is awry in the monastery. They were also made aware of some disappearances in the recent years. Amidst the complex bureaucracy of the Temple, some information finally reached someone who knows the monastery.

The Reactions of the Monastery's Residents

Garan: He is convinced that his accomplices' deaths are a divine punishment, and this only worsens his already damaged sanity. He will let the PCs investigate because he is convinced that they cannot change anything, but his distrust will lead him to watch their actions carefully. He wants to prevent them from finding out about his crimes. Sigire Serven's arrival will puzzle him, as the inquisitor seems to trust him at first. The death of Ard-Amrach's emissaries (Act 2, Scene 3) will leave him completely at a loss.

Fergal: He is looking for a way out of this whole mess. He knows that he can expect nothing from Mac Snòr or Jakez, and Garan will not be able to fool the others much longer: it is obvious that he is losing his mind. Having seen his accomplices die one after the other, he dreads that there are evil powers at work, but he is unable to find a likely suspect. If Fergal thinks he is threatened, he will not hesitate to resort to violence.

Eber: He supports the theory of a divine punishment. However, since he has nothing to feel guilty about, he deduces it is a consequence of the "Berenian heresy:" the recent deaths prove that the problem is far from being solved. In fact, Eber could not bear the truth, and it is as if his subconscious drove him to overlook his doubts about Garan.

Selwyn: He denies the truth, ignoring the few clues that could have put him on the right track. His belief in the presence of a demon within the monastery confirms his first intuition in a distorted way. He will be cold and distant toward the PCs and will seem ill at ease before the Sigire and the Blade knight. For Selwyn, the fact that he was granted a Miracle is the tangible evidence that Garan's teachings are worthy of the One. He will therefore protect the Rector's reputation vehemently.

Teda: With her past intimacy with Garan, she is aware of part of the Rector's schemes and knows that he is in cahoots with Jakez. However, she does not know that some patients are sent to Lord Mac Snòr. She sometimes wishes she could just run away, but where could she go? Moreover, Teda feels watched... with good reason, since Garan spies on her and will not hesitate to kill her if he has anything to suspect from her.

Erwen: She is lost and feels the need to be reassured. She will support all the explanations a representative of authority—or simply someone persuasive—can provide. Thus, Erwen may switch from one conviction to another and get into trouble. She holds an important clue: notes written by Jalan showing a riddle (see the Clue Card "Jalan's Riddle") leading to the murdered monk's will (see Aid Sheet "Jalan's Will"). She will not think about it at first, but if she feels a PC is trustworthy, or if the situation seems completely desperate, she could mention this riddle.

Alan: He firmly believes that the monastery is undergoing divine punishment and expects Teda or Fergal to be the next victim. Alan is convinced that the other residents are safe.

Loeiz: The young woman is suspicious of Fergal and Jakez, whom she instinctively distrusts. However, she does not actually consider them likely murderers because she cannot see why they would act in such a way.

Meiriadog: A villager who took his vows at a rather late age. He was the lover of Sister Redia, who died under strange circumstances. He is convinced that Garan knows more than he says, and that Fergal has a lot of influence over the Rector.

Jakez: The strange deaths of Brother Maec and Brother Uvelan have aroused Jakez's concern, as well as his interest in occult matters. The spy will not be led away from his first mission: keeping his eyes open and his master informed about the events in the monastery (including the PCs' arrival). Jakez will not hesitate to shed blood in case of absolute necessity since he knows that it will be easy for him to disappear afterward.

Madel: She hopes that the situation will sort itself out, and she strongly believes that everything can be solved through prayer and adequate rituals. This way, the monastery will find its lost grace again. Madel thinks that those who, like her, have a clear conscience are safe from divine punishment. The cook heeds Garan's speeches, which reinforce this opinion.

Dalaigh: He knows nothing about what is brewing in the monastery, but he would like to help in one way or another. The life of a Varigal is rather hectic and Dalaigh sometimes had to go about things the hard way, especially when he was younger. Since he uses his skills as a trapper regularly, he knows the surroundings quite well and suspects Mac Snòr's henchmen or bandits much more than hypothetical Feondas to be responsible for the deaths of Redia and Joel.

~ Ard-Amrach's Emissaries ~

Serven, Sigire

⊕ **Attack:** : 8 (Swords: 11, Unarmed Fighting: 9).

⊕ **Defense:** 12.

⊕ **Speed:** 6.

⊕ **Potential:** 2.

⊕ **Damage:** 3.

⊕ **Health:** 19.

⊕ **Ways:** Combativeness: 3. Creativity: 2. Empathy: 2. Reason: 4. Conviction: 4.

⊕ **Exaltation:** 12.

⊕ **Miracle:** Castigation.

⊕ **Skills:** Close Combat: 5 (Swords: 8, Unarmed Fighting: 6), Erudition: 5 (History: 7), Feats: 4, Natural Environment: 3, Perception: 5 (Alertness: 7, Observation: 7), Prayer: 5 (Contemplation: 8, Miracles: 8), Relation: 5 (Command: 9), Travel: 5 (Orientation: 8, Riding: 7).

Serven is an upright and intransigent servant of the Creator who embodies the order of the Sigires in many respects. Still, he is not bereft of compassion. He believes that men are imperfect by nature and that the One can offer them the possibility of correcting their mistakes. He does his best to incite suspects to confess their faults and work for their redemption, rather than directly thinking about punishing them. However, those who do not repent for their mistakes will get no mercy. He is an experienced man and knows that evil comes from inside the monastery, but he is wrong to believe it results from the acts of a hidden Berenian who would offend the Creator. Serven led the Sigires who came to arrest Rector Tadeq, and he has no reason to suspect Garan, whose promotion he supported.

-Vengeful Words-





Bastian, Blade knight

⌘ Attack: 9 (Swords: 13).

⌘ Defense: 12.

⌘ Damage: 3.

⌘ Ways: Combativeness: 4. Creativity: 2. Empathy: 2. Reason: 3. Conviction: 4.

⌘ Skills: Close Combat: 5 (Swords: 9), Feats: 5 (Running: 7, Swimming: 6), Perception: 3, Prayer: 5, Shooting and Throwing: 5, Travel: 5 (Riding: 8, Orientation: 6).

⌘ Speed: 6.

⌘ Potential: 2.

⌘ Health: 19.

Bastian has been escorting Serven for two years and respects his righteousness. The Blade knight is a very competent fighter, but he will never resort to gratuitous violence. He abides by the Ordinances and will obey the Sigire's orders, which does not make him a brainless brute. Indeed, Bastian does his best to perfect his aptitudes as well as his faith, considering faults and blasphemies revealed by Serven as so many lessons he must remember as well.



Music in "Vengeful Words"

The "Vengeful Words" adventure makes special use of music, putting a particular stress on some scenes through a specific track from Shadows of Esteren's original soundtrack. The murders occurring in the monastery will always be accompanied by the track "Different Paths." The aim is to create an effect of recurrence that will become more and more striking as the scenario progresses. By recognizing the first notes, the Players will feel that a new death looms. Used appropriately, such a process can greatly reinforce the atmosphere around the gaming table.

Chronology of the Disappearances in the Monastery

Here is an overview of the disappearances that have occurred in the monastery the last five years, as well as the events they are related to. The Leader can find a summary in the Aid Sheets.

Before it fell under Mac Snør's yoke, the monastery went through a long period of internal conflict, the instigator of which was Brother Garan. To this first cause of deaths, the ones caused by the effects of Jalan's cursed book have been recently added. The following chronology shows the dates according to both the Tri-Kazelian calendar and the Temple's.

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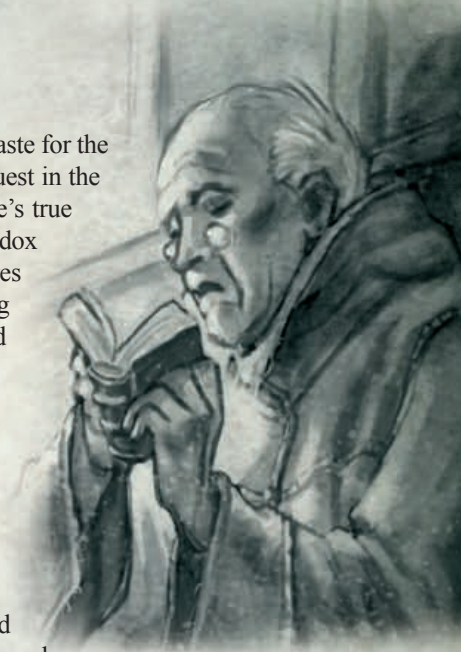
First Time: Religious Struggle

902/1405:

Brother Garan reports Rector Tadeq—a staunch Berenian—to the Sigires. Informed about Tadeq's taste for the pleasures of the flesh, Garan traps the old man with the complicity of a prostitute housed as a guest in the monastery. The Berenians are portrayed as people with little virtue and no regard for Soustraine's true teachings. The Sigires, led by Serven, take Tadeq with them. Garan, stepping in as the Orthodox leader, asks Ard-Amrach to leave the monastery's fate in his hands. He is supported by the Sigires who have come for Tadeq, with Serven among them. The new Rector devotes himself to gathering followers around him, namely Brother Fergal, Brother Maec, and Brother Uvelan. Before the end of the year, six monks and three adepts are expelled or reported to Ard-Amrach.

903/1406:

Garan tries to take advantage of his new status and of the gratitude of the patients treated in the monastery to strengthen his influence. He embezzles some of the donations and mainly shows concern for the patients to have their families spread flattering rumors about him. His little game does not escape Jakez, Lord Mac Snør's spy. Brother Pasker, a Berenian who threatens to take up Tadeq's torch, greatly irritates Garan, notably because he is subtle and diplomatic enough to avoid any confrontation about his doctrinal differences. Having no grounds on which to report him, and feeling his position threatened, Garan decides to act and to poison him. Pasker is known for his love of good food, and his sometimes gluttonous behavior earned him reprimands both from the current Rector and from his predecessor. Garan elaborates on the idea of a fatal indigestion, a divine punishment inflicted on Pasker, and Maec, the most renowned healer of the monastery, supports this story. A few months later, Sister Erle is dumped by Fergal in a nearby ravine. A true Orthodox, Erle's only mistake was to question the cause of Pasker's death and to tell her "friends" about it. These two deaths, which strike the two factions of the monastery, lead those who are not part of Garan's clique to overlook the possibility of murders, and to favor the hypothesis of accidents, or that of divine punishment for the most superstitious among them. Garan encourages this last explanation in order to support his authority, and also because it justifies his actions in his own eyes. This same year, Jalan and Magar enter the monastery as adepts.



904/1407:

Brother Lormel, the last survivor of a monastery annihilated by a Feond attack, becomes a member of the Tuathian Order by decision of Ard-Amrach. He attracts pity, a deeply upset soul in a frail body, traumatized by the slaughter. To no one's surprise, he dies in his sleep soon after his arrival. However, he was actually strangled to death by Fergal because during his lucid moments, Lormel turned out to be very perceptive and had understood that Garan was manipulating the congregation. The Rector disapproves of this murder, but Fergal justifies his preventive act. Unfortunately, the murderer was seen by Jakez, who was even able to spy on his conversation with Garan right after the crime.



905/1408:

The Pact with Mac Snòr

The lord of the vale accumulates blackmail material, tightening his grip on Garan. During this year, five patients fall into Mac Snòr's clutches after being reported dead. However, Brother Joel and Sister Redia become suspicious when they realize that the patients they were tending to and who seemed to be recovering are suddenly reported dead by Maec and buried by Fergal or Uvelan. Unfortunately, they tell Garan about their doubts because they fully trust him. The Rector has no choice but to organize their deaths with Lord Mac Snòr. He sends the two curious monks to gather medicinal plants and asks his blackmailer to have them killed. Then, the hacked bodies are made to look like the victims of a Feond attack. As the rest of the valley is not subjected to such horrors, Garan seizes the opportunity to stress the risk of a divine punishment once more, and he insinuates that the two late monks had carnal relations. But Garan does not know that Joel and Redia were close friends and that Joel actually covered up the relationship Sister Redia had with a villager well-known for his piety: Meiriadog. This same year, a young adept, Magar, believes he has heard muffled cries from the mortuary one night. Dismissed by Garan, he reacts vehemently, then leaves the monastery out of bitterness. However, Fergal runs after him under the pretense of reasoning him. Fergal knocks Magar out and gives him to Mac Snòr. Then he returns to the monastery and claims he was not able to catch up with the adept.

Characters from "Vengeful Words" as part of the Shadows of Esteren series

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Irvan Mac Snòr

The lord of the Vale of Thoir is not intended to appear in this adventure, but he will be a background character in the official campaign. Leaders can use him in follow-up scenarios, but should make it so he does not die. He can be described as a dangerous psychopath, a capricious tyrant who sometimes acts in bouts of violent anger. However, most of the time, Mac Snòr is a much more dangerous antagonist since he is no fool, being very shrewd and patient. He is also fascinated by occultism, and is a practitioner of black magic (see Book 2 – Travels, page 179). On the whole, Irvan Mac Snòr should remain essentially uninvolved during the "Vengeful Words" adventure and should only appear as a sinister threat. The short story following "The Monastery of Tuath" provides additional information about the insane lord.

Varigal Dalaigh

Dalaigh is the Varigal mentioned in Book 1 - Universe (see the "Feondas" chapter), hired by Lord Wylard to gather information about the Feondas. Leaders are advised to let him survive the scenario because, like Irvan Mac Snòr and Lord Wylard, Dalaigh will be a secondary character in the official campaign. After the "Vengeful Words" adventure, Dalaigh will distance himself from the Tuathian Brothers and the PCs will cross paths again with him much later.

906/1409:

Jalan is granted the Acceptation and becomes a monk. One of the recent patients, suffering from tuberculosis, as well as three other sick people, two adepts, and a monk die in a few weeks. However, half a dozen other patients are saved. Two of the victims are actually taken away and delivered to Mac Snòr. During this year, the lord of the vale abducts a total of six people. Meiriadog becomes an adept, and quickly proves to be a fervent Berenian.

The rumors of divine punishment—or of a curse according to some others—resurface. They reach Ard-Amrach, but they are disregarded when Garan writes in a letter that the problem is solved.

907/1410: *The Cursed Book*

Ten weeks before the PCs arrive, Jalan discovers the truth about Garan and Mac Snòr's dealings. He is murdered, smothered with a pillow, but his book becomes a tool for his revenge. Four weeks before the PCs arrive, Seane the bard reads Jalan's book and is taken over by the murdered monk's vengeful impulses. At the same time, Sigire Serven discovers letters mentioning the deaths in the year 906. He is driven by his intuition and wonders if a radical Berenian could have caused these events by offending the One, or even acting more directly. In the end, he decides to investigate this himself. Nine days before the PCs arrive, Maec is murdered by Seane. Two days before the PCs arrive, Uvelan meets the same fate.

Jalan's Book: An Object of Power

Objects of Power are often mentioned in Tri-Kazelian legends. Yet, they are not always just tales or superstitions. Some objects can be invested with the vital energy of a living being, sometimes to the extent that they can develop extraordinary properties. Such is the case of Jalan's book. This young monk had genuine faith in the Creator and was deeply shocked when he discovered the true face of Rector Garan, especially as he held him in great esteem. Driven by anger, fear, and despair, part of his vital energy imbued his work as he gave his last breath, murdered by Garan's henchman.

Description:

Originally, the book gathered a collection of hymns and holy songs inside a thick leather cover stamped with the iconography of the Temple. Now, part of its contents have changed: it contains a collection of verses full of hatred with dreadful illustrations depicting the crimes of Garan, his accomplices, and Mac Snòr. Nevertheless, it is impossible to identify anyone, except symbolically (see the page depicting Mac Snòr, the "Ogre"). Other pages have changed, picturing the theme of Divine Judgment and offering a horrific vision of Limbo. Some pages of the book are missing, with only a few burned remains left.

Characteristics:

The book stokes the bearer's yearning for justice, providing a +1 bonus in Conviction. Moreover, if the Character is one of the Temple's faithful, a 5-point bonus is granted to Exaltation.

Influence:

Anyone consulting the book will be struck by its illustrations, which will prick their conscience with reminders of their wrong-doings and faults. The readers relive the moments when they behaved immorally and their minds are assailed with dreadful images of their future punishment, accompanied with a powerful feeling of guilt. A Mental Resistance roll must be made, with a Difficulty Threshold proportional to the importance of the wrong-doings committed: from a Standard (11) roll for some minor wrong-doings to an Exceptional (25) roll for the most abject crimes. The visions are dreadful, and only truly pure people are exempt from such a roll. The Trauma points suffered (see Book 1 - Universe on page 270) are permanent and the reader automatically suffers a "Nightmare" Scarring (see Book 1 - Universe, page 271), which can be recovered from normally. Within the monastery, the influence of the book is much stronger. Reading it triggers a second, Difficult (17) Mental Resistance roll. On a failure, the reader is possessed by Jalan's desire for revenge and endeavors to satisfy it. The possessed individual will first strike at the monks—except Erwen, who was the only one Jalan considered pure—then the other monastery's occupants until nobody remains but Garan. Indeed, Jalan wishes to torture the Rector to the very end, hoping that he will sink into madness and terror as the deaths grow in number. Each time someone dies because of the book, one of its pages will burn to ashes. The possessed victims will have no memories of the murder. They will put the book in a safe place, and will take it right before acting. If someone else reads the book and fails the Mental Resistance roll, the first reader's possession will fade in 1D10 hour(s) and will shift to the new reader's mind. Destroying the book immediately frees the possessed, but the vengeful force will filter into another book that Jalan has read or worked on to continue his work. The pages of the new book will change, revealing the number of culprits who must be punished, as well as the pages dealing with Judgment and Limbo.

Once Garan dies, there will be one page left, depicting an ogre, and the effects of the Object of Power will disappear for good only when Lord Mac Snòr dies.



It is quite possible that the PCs will be confronted with Jalan's book sooner or later. To maximize the effect of these scenes, the Leader should prepare in advance what the vengeful spirit could blame the PCs for and what details of their lives she could draw inspiration from. Any scene involving human passions can work.





Act 1: The Threat Looms



Setting Up the Scenario

Due to its structure, the course of the scenario is not linear and will mostly depend on the way the Players take on the investigation. A condensed sequence of the events is provided in the appendices (see Appendix "Summary of the Events,") but it is mainly intended to provide support to the Leaders for the organization of the session.

Keeping in mind the chronology of the events and referring to the gallery of the characters who live in the monastery, the Leaders will be able to improvise scenes according to the initiatives taken by the Players. The three following acts describe several scenes, the recurring theme of which are the effects of Jalan's cursed book. The most experienced Leaders should use them at their discretion when they think it is most appropriate, in order to revive the pace of the action, give a clue to the Players, heighten the tension, etc. Beginner Leaders who do not feel quite at ease with improvisation can stick to the default sequence.



Night Haunting

At the beginning of the adventure, the Leader will ask the PCs to make a Luck roll. The most unfortunate one will be plagued by recurring nightmares. Nothing serious, but the PC's nights have been troubled with bad dreams for some time. During these moments, taking a quick walk and getting some fresh air is all the Character needs to get back to sleep. The Leader should try to draw inspiration from an element from the PC's story to justify the disturbed nights. If a PC already suffers from the Nightmare Scarring, this Character can be picked automatically.

The series of nightmares may be no more than a diversion in order to strengthen the atmosphere, or it may, on the contrary, be a tool for the Leader to lead the concerned Character to witness Brother Fergal's death (see Act 2, Scene 1).

Scene 1: The Arrival at the Monastery



Delphine Bois - Of Men and Obscurities - 18 -
Under the Black Foliage

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As the PCs reach the surroundings of the monastery, the atmosphere is heavy. They will notice a few ravens circling above a recently dug hole, from which an observant PC will easily deduce that a death has recently occurred in the monastery. Gloomier still, they can see two figures (Jakez, the stableman, and Varigal Dalaigh) digging a new grave.



During this opening scene, the Leader should take time to describe the atmosphere around the monastery through the five senses: the smell of damp earth, the mist shrouding the place in a ghastly light, the cawing of the ravens, and the bone-chilling, omnipresent cold leaving a crisp feeling on their numbed lips and tongue.

The PCs will be welcomed by the monks no matter the initial reason for their visit. If they seem concerned about the future of the community, their desire to do right will be outwardly appreciated. Of course, Rector Garan and Fergal will be very watchful of any of the PCs' doings. As for Jakez, he will slip away to warn his master.

The PCs will be accommodated in the guests' dormitory. In addition to the usual occupants (Dalaigh, Seane, Jakez, and Madel), the dormitory of about 20 beds also houses a couple: Padraig and Mag Donraic.

Although the monastery's members will be rather welcoming, the PCs will not be allowed to tend to the sick. The monks are fully competent on the matter, and some of them have even been granted the Miraculous Healing Miracle. According to them, when they cannot save a patient, it is simply because the Creator has decided that it should be so. At the present time, this concept is, of course, distorted with the idea that the monastery may be stricken by a divine punishment.

The Donraics

They are both weavers in their early thirties who have come from Expiation in the hope that the monks can cure their 10-year-old daughter, Elia. The child is in the Care Room at the moment and is suffering from a chronic lung disease, which has been getting worse with time. They have been here for two days. They know nothing about the monastery's past troubles and are frightened by the deaths that have occurred in the monastery these last weeks. The couple fears the possibility of a divine punishment and prays for their child's well-being.

They only wish to take their daughter with them and to leave as quickly as possible, but the journey has proved taxing for Elia, and her health has been deteriorating. Apart from the other occupants of the dormitory, they have only been in direct contact with the uncommunicative Eber. Padraig tried to speak to the Rector at the end of a mass, but he was intimidated by Garan's presence.

Scene 2: Uvelan's Body

If the PCs ask for information, they will be reluctantly told about the recent deaths of two monks: first Maec, then Uvelan. They may visit Eber, who is preparing the most recent body in the mortuary. In the center of the drab room, on one of the two tables where the dead are laid, lies Uvelan's body. Having just washed it, Eber is about to cover the corpse with a shroud. He will not be very talkative, but will still answer questions. This is the right moment to learn more about the death.



Clues Held by Eber

This scene allows the Players to get the "Jalan"—if they do not already have it—and "Burned Paper" Clue Cards. Just like Maec a week before, Uvelan was found dead during the night, his purplish face frozen in a hideous grimace. According to Eber, the monk was struck by divine punishment. "Another one," Eber might say with a sigh. If he is asked about this statement, he will tell about the death of the other physician monk, Brother Maec, which occurred a week before, and will also mention the latest years' deaths. Most importantly, he will speak of Jalan, found suffocated to death less than three months ago. Eber firmly believes in the theory of a divine punishment. If he is questioned tactfully, the monk may reveal that Maec and Uvelan's bodies were found surrounded by ashes and some burned pieces of paper. The amount of ashes is equivalent to one page (indeed, one page of Jalan's book burns after the death of each victim).

Examining the Body

This scene allows the Players to get the "Injection" Clue Card.

- A Difficult (17) Medicine or Traditional Medicine roll will lead the Players to suspect the effects of a particular poison: Violacine.
- On the back of the deceased, it is possible to find a red spot, the prick of the needle with which an injection of Violacine was made.
- Eber did not make this discovery, as he was too convinced of his theory to perform a proper clinical examination.

Violacine

Violacine is a poison made of rare berries, similar to blackberries, but toxic to human beings. These berries can be found in very damp places, mainly near the channels of the region of Abundance. Ingesting Violacine leads to painful stomach ache, but if the poison is in direct contact with blood (by injection or in a wound), it is much more harmful and violent. However, a sufficient dose must be injected. For example, coating a weapon with Violacine would not be enough to provoke these deadly effects.

- By ingestion: Mild Virulence (14), takes effect after 2D10 minutes.
- By injection: Deadly Virulence (20), takes effect after one Round.

Despite their strong resemblance to blackberries, it is possible to identify the toxic berries with a Complicated (14) Natural Environment (or the Herbalism Discipline) roll.

Seane's Possession

A few weeks prior to the arrival of the PCs, Seane the bard found Jalan's unfinished book, which was stashed in a corner of the Great Scriptorium. Overwhelmed by the mystical imagery and by the weight of guilt, her mind was filled with the vengeful power of the late monk.

Thus, Seane worked on poisoning first Maec, then Uvelan, with Violacine. Being the daughter of an apothecary, she took the precaution of taking a few doses of the poison on her travels. A single woman is sometimes the object of dubious attention... and a small dose of Violacine in the glass of an insistent man is enough to give him debilitating stomach aches.

Seane has no memories of her murderous actions. Only a powerful hypnosis or a similar process can make her remember everything. Her modus operandi is simple: just before bedtime, or very early in the morning, she arranges a meeting with her unsuspecting victim under the pretext of talking to him about an old book. By reading the cursed book, the victim is hypnotized in his turn and falls into a trance, which allows Seane to inject him the poison with an old syringe.

Here are some clues that could lead the PCs to suspect Seane:

- Her dormitory companions, Dalaigh, Jakez, and Madel, can testify that Seane has been sleeping uneasily for a few weeks. The young woman looks tired, and will confess that she does feel under the weather. She has fleeting remembrances of horrible nightmares, but that is all she can recall.
- Some residents of the monastery (see the summary of the clues in the "Clues" Appendix) know that Seane is quite learned in herbalism. In fact, the young woman never hid the fact that her father was an apothecary and that she had intended to take over his business before discovering her passion for tales and the subtleties of etiquette. Since she does not know she is guilty, she will honestly answer any question. She can even say that Uvelan has most likely been poisoned if she is shown the body. However,

she will not admit that she has some Violacine unless a PC who is on good terms with her manages to persuade her... or the PCs simply rummage through her belongings. Indeed, letting it be known that she has poison with her would arouse suspicion. If the PCs suspect the bard too quickly, the Leader can make her identification more difficult; for example, by deciding that she hides her Violacine in a more secure place than in the bags near her bed.

~ Scene 3: Investigating the Deaths ~



This scene allows the Players to get the “Tadeg” Clue Card. Very quickly, the PCs will realize the extent of the conflicts that have been festering in the monastery for some months, centered around the struggle between Berenian Tuathians and Orthodox Tuathians. Putting the course of the events and the various deaths in chronological order will require thorough investigation and a good sense of diplomacy from the PCs. Giving the PCs the “Tadeg” Clue Card will encourage them to understand what happened to the former Rector.

This investigation will provide them with the first elements to understand that there are three types of deaths: the murders committed by Garan and his accomplices, the deaths connected to Mac Snòr’s trafficking, and the recent deaths caused by Jalan’s cursed book. Of course, at this point of the scenario, it will be difficult for them to clearly understand all of this, but this will be a good starting point.



Relying on the chronology of the deaths, as well as the summary of the clues, the Leader will have a clear idea of what information each NPC holds. Leaders should not be afraid of giving additional information to revive the Players’ interest if they feel they are getting bored. Conversely, the investigation can be complicated by making the interactions with the monastery’s residents a little more difficult if the Leaders feel that their Players like this aspect of the scenario. At the same time, the atmosphere should get heavier and heavier: as welcoming as the monks may initially seem, they look concerned. Some tensions can be perceived as they take sidelong glances at each other on the occasions when they are all gathered, notably during the masses. Any PC who would seem to clearly take sides with the Orthodox or Berenian factions—for example, by spending more time with their members—will notice afterwards that those of the opposing faction have become much less cooperative toward him.

~ Scene 4: Garan’s Sermon ~

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In this scene, which takes place during one of the masses, the PCs will attend one of Rector Garan’s sermons. The monk preaches a strict obedience to the Ordinances and develops his theory, according to which the monastery and its residents are under a divine punishment, linked to the excessive worship of Saint Beren by the Tuathian Brothers. Garan calls for everyone’s devotion for the monastery’s redemption. A Complicated (14) Perception roll will reveal that Teda sheepishly looks away while Adept Meiriadog shows thinly-veiled aversion.

This scene will highlight the Rector’s charisma and his influence over the other monks. During his sermon, he will speak to the newcomers (the PCs) and ask them in a peremptory tone if they want to confess an evil act in order to cleanse themselves of it. If the Leaders have opted for a strong supernatural feeling, the PCs may even be subjected to the effects of a Litany Miracle.

~ Scene 5: A Mourning Family ~

In the morning, Garan announces to little Elia’s parents that she died of exhaustion during the night despite all the care provided. The Rector will arrange a meeting with the parents, and as a token of regard for their suffering, he will ask Fergal to be personally in charge of the burial. In fact, Jakez told the Rector that Mac Snòr needed another victim quickly. Fergal is the only one left among Garan’s accomplices to take care of spiriting away the “dead.”

If the PCs are on good terms with the Donraics, they will likely wish to comfort them when they go and pay their respects to their daughter’s body one last time in the mortuary, unless one of them volunteers to help Fergal and manages to overcome his reluctance.

A thorough clinical examination of the child—through a Complicated (14) Medicine roll—will allow a PC to notice that she is still alive. Fergal will immediately walk away, shouting that a miracle has taken place. However, a Difficult (17) Relation roll will show that his surprise is feigned. A Difficult (17) Medicine roll will confirm that her

catalepsy is certainly due to the use of a powerful sedative, a blend of herbs such as those that can be found in the monastery’s pharmacopoeia.

If the monks’ plan remains unhindered, Jakez will go to the mortuary during the night and will stealthily take Elia to a secret cellar, not far from the monastery. Fergal will fill a coffin with stones from the garden, and all that will remain to be done will be to arrange the funeral the following day.



The PCs will be given another opportunity to notice the monks’ traffic later. If this scene comes too early in the adventure, the Leaders can stall the PCs’ investigations for the time being.

On the contrary, this scene can be very useful to further the plot if the Players are making no headway.

In this case, the Leader should not hesitate to help the Players by encouraging them to examine the little girl more closely. It is all a matter of pacing, and the Leaders should be very careful about the atmosphere at the table.



The Secret Cellar

Note that this discovery is important to make sense of the monastery's secrets, and should therefore only be used if appropriate.

Not far from the monastery, there is a small underground hiding place, likely dug by shepherds or brigands in the past. It is now used by Garan and his accomplices to hold their victims prisoners until they are taken to Lord Mac Snòr.

Through efficient investigations, the PCs may discover this sinister place: a small corridor leading to three rooms barred by heavy doors, which muffle most of the noises. The prisoners are kept here, bound and gagged.

~ Scene 6: Emissaries from Ard-Amrach ~

The small community of the monastery is shaken by the arrival of a Sigire escorted by a Blade knight (see the following spread).



The Leader should take time to describe this arrival and what it entails. First, the two riders emerging from the mist, then the discovery of their rank, and lastly, the aura surrounding the Order of the Sigires, dreaded in Gwidre due to the strong judicial powers held by their representatives. Therefore, the simple visit of a Sigire inspires fear of torture and death. The fact that Serven has already come to the monastery in the past, at a troubled time, will put everyone ill at ease, except for Garan, who will very quickly understand that the Sigire considers him trustworthy.

The movie "The Name of the Rose" gives a very good illustration of the aura of such a character. Moreover, although Serven is largely inspired by Inquisitor Bernardo Gui, he is also a subversion of the character since in the end, the Sigire is a rather merciful man.

The Sigire and the Blade knight will start their investigations without delay. They will be active from before dawn through the whole day. They have little exchanges with the monastery's residents, apart from the questionings they do methodically with the aim of identifying the Berenians and testing their resolve. Meiriadog will quickly be considered a suspect. The adept actually thought about confiding his suspicions to the Sigire, but he has heard that not only does he hate Berenians, but he also contributed to Garan becoming Rector five years ago.

The two newcomers insist on sleeping away from those they are investigating, so Garan has two straw mattresses set up in the Small Scriptorium, the only sheltered and isolated place that suits the newcomers. The Sigire and his companion will show themselves cold and suspicious, but Serven will quickly demonstrate unfeigned respect toward the Rector.

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Act 2: Deaths

~ Scene 1: Fergal's Death ~



Delphine Bois - Of Men and Obscurities - 7 - Different Paths

Seane will now take care of Fergal, the next victim on her list. She arranged a meeting with the monk under the pretense of a deep anguish since the Sigire's arrival. As with the two other victims, she will have Fergal read Jalan's book, then she will stab him with her Violacine-filled syringe. Fergal will collapse on the ground and die, while another page of Jalan's book burns.

This time, another monk will witness this murder, but he will follow Seane and will see her hide the book. The witness will have the unfortunate idea of looking at Jalan's book, which will make him or her the new murderer (see "Jalan's Book: An Object of Power" on p.35). Seane will be found half-senseless in the monastery, with a syringe half-full of Violacine in her hand, which will make her the obvious culprit in Fergal's death. As for the new murderer, the Leader can choose any of the monks or adepts, preferably one the PCs are on good terms with, or would simply never suspect.



Caught Red-Handed

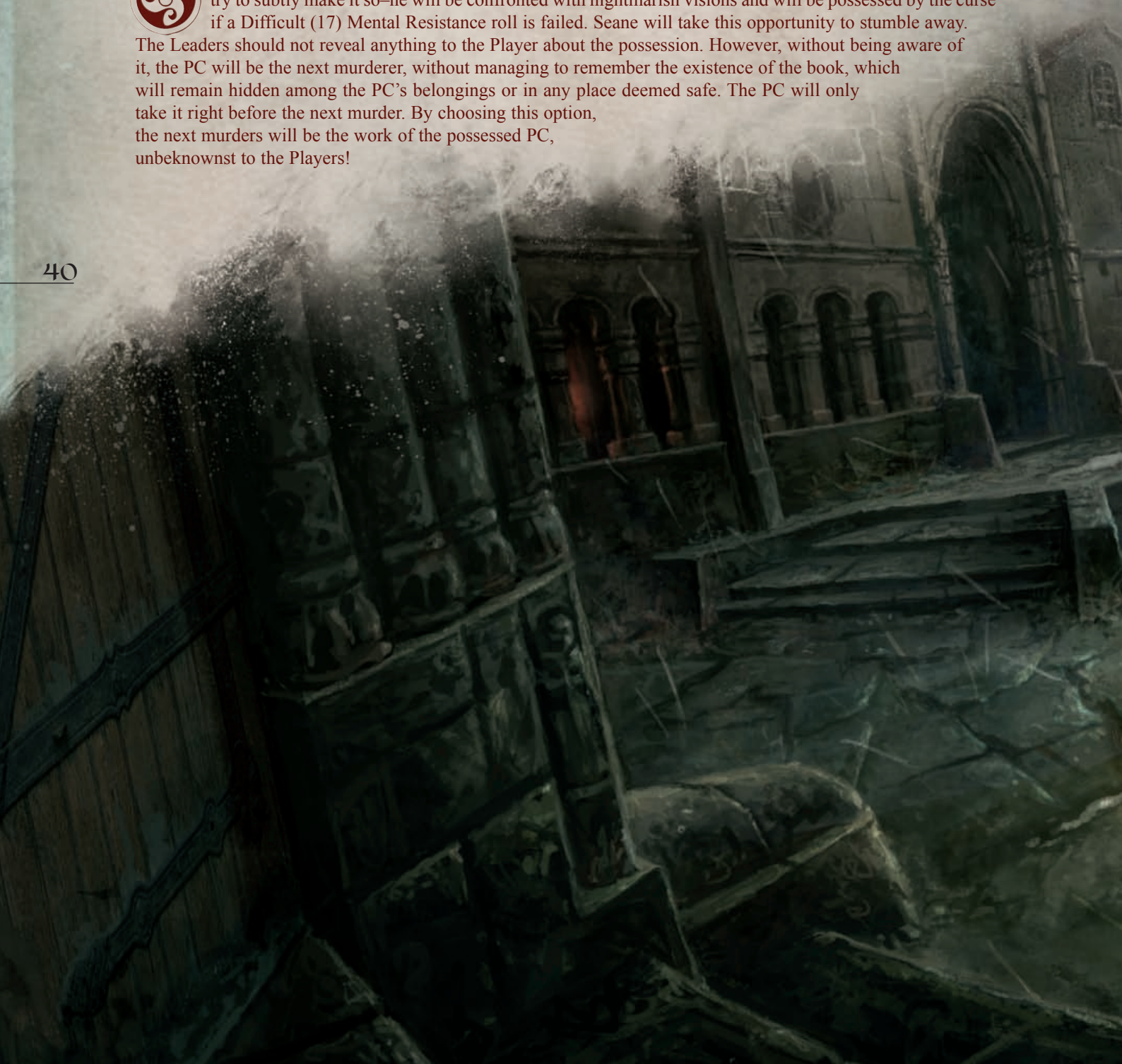


Delphine Bois - Of Men and Obscurities - 7 - Different Paths

By using this optional scene, Seane will be caught red-handed... by a PC! Leaders should tread carefully: this scene implies partial amnesia caused by the book. If a similar trick has already been used in one of the Leader's sessions, for example if "Loch Varn" or "Red Fall" has previously been played, it may be better to not go for this option. Insofar as the Leaders decide to use it, this scene is very important and the scenario will take a sudden twist. The Player who was designated to be suffering from nightmares at the beginning of the adventure should then be taken aside. The Leader will describe the following scene to the Player: he has another nightmare and goes for a walk near the cloister. At that moment, the PC sees a light coming from one of the monastery's rooms. As he is coming nearer, he can see Seane with a syringe in her hand, leaning over Fergal's body to grab hold of a book. The young woman is in a trance, her eyes glazed; her appearance is deeply unsettling, and the scene may require a Standard (11) Mental Resistance roll for the witness. If the PC speaks to her, she will confess her crime in a monotonous voice and will state that Fergal had to pay for his transgressions, and so will all those who have performed evil acts, including the PCs if need be. There is the smell of smoke in the room: Jan's book has lost another page, which has burnt with Fergal's death.



The most important element of the scene concerns Jan's book. If the PC consults it—the Leaders should try to subtly make it so—he will be confronted with nightmarish visions and will be possessed by the curse if a Difficult (17) Mental Resistance roll is failed. Seane will take this opportunity to stumble away. The Leaders should not reveal anything to the Player about the possession. However, without being aware of it, the PC will be the next murderer, without managing to remember the existence of the book, which will remain hidden among the PC's belongings or in any place deemed safe. The PC will only take it right before the next murder. By choosing this option, the next murders will be the work of the possessed PC, unbeknownst to the Players!





Nightmares

In case one of the PCs is possessed by the book, he will have dreadful, abstract, and harrowing nightmares.



The Results of the Investigation

Since Seane's guilt is established, the PCs will probably believe at first that the case is solved. However, and especially if they played a part in the identification of the culprit, the PCs will be "asked" by the Sigire to remain in the monastery for a few days, since he wants to take note of their testimonies and get to the bottom of the possible connection between these deaths and that of Jalan. According to Serven, it should not take more than a day or two, the time to drag a complete confession out of the young bard. Once more, the Leader should make sure that the possessed PC—if such is the case—keeps the existence of the book secret. It is, after all, a piece of information "too important to be shared with others."

If the PCs get stuck during their investigation, the Leaders can use one of the NPCs to provide food for thought. Here are some clues and elements to think about:

- Seane makes for too unlikely a culprit, and her motive is unclear. For what reason could she have killed people she had apparently no grudge toward?



- Remains of burned paper were found at the location of each murder, which cannot be a coincidence. When the Players come to this realization, the “Burned Paper” Clue Card can be given to them.

- Do these mysterious deaths have a connection with the deaths that occurred these last years?

~ Scene 2: A Wounded Traveler ~

The day Seane is arrested, a lone traveler reaches the monastery’s doors. He is wounded and he has lost his companions during the travel: Varigal Saundra and Herbalist Garalt. The man is called Jorm and he is a mercenary who was escorting Garalt while Saundra was taking them to Ard-Monach in Taol-Kaer, where Garalt was to meet some relatives. The three of them were attacked by a group of armed men after passing through the valley. Only Jorm escaped, running through the woods until he got lost. His feelings for Saundra can easily be guessed. What Jorm does not know is that she and Garalt are held prisoner in an Inguard, waiting to be taken to Mac Snòr’s castle. Indeed, he believes they have simply been assaulted by highwaymen.



Jorm will describe the Varigal to the PCs: a young red-haired woman with very dark eyes. Just like the scene of Elia’s “death,” this scene is intended to prepare one of the final revelations concerning the traffic organized by Mac Snòr. The warrior will not stay at the monastery for long, as he adamantly wishes to pick up the trail of his attackers as soon as possible.

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~ Scene 3: The Sigire's Death ~

A new macabre discovery will shake the monastery. One morning, in the Great Scriptorium, Sigire Serven and Blade knight Bastian are found hanged. This is a dire shock for the community.

The possibility of a suicide is considered at first, but it will quickly be replaced by what is obviously a double murder. But who would dare kill these two emissaries from Ard-Amrach? And in such a grossly shocking way? Some begin to dread the intervention of an entire troop of Sigires slaughtering all the monastery’s residents.



There are no signs of struggle in the Great Scriptorium, but near the door, a jacket button and a few drops of blood can be found on the ground. Blade knight Bastian’s head bears a hidden wound, a purplish bruise caused by a blunt instrument. A Standard (11) Medicine roll will show that he was not killed by this blow. He likely died from the hanging while he was unconscious.

On the other hand, another, a Complicated (14) Medicine roll will reveal that the rope marks on Serven’s neck partly hide those of a strangulation by bare hands.

Here is what an investigation among the monastery’s residents will provide:

-The Sigire and Blade knight were very interested in the scribes and their works, particularly that of the late Jalan. For two days, they had been consulting the records in the Great Scriptorium.

-Varigal Dalaigh awoke and noticed that Jakez was not in his bed. If the PCs question the stableman, he will admit that he got up, thinking he had heard shouting coming from the cloister. However, it was empty when he reached it.



What Really Happened

The Sigire and the Blade knight were killed by Jakez and two accomplices by Mac Snòr’s order, and without Garan’s knowledge. The insane lord heard about Serven’s arrival while he was in one of his intense phases of elation, and impulsively made a decision that was as radical as it was rash.

During the night, Jakez led his accomplices into the monastery and they took the two emissaries of Ard-Amrach by surprise in the Small Scriptorium where the two men had settled. They knocked Bastian out, but Serven had enough time to defend himself, hurting one of Jakez’s accomplices (the drops of blood) and pulling a button off the handyman’s jacket (the one the PCs could find). Serven was strangled, then the murderers hanged Bastian before he regained consciousness. These murders are a huge mistake that will spread confusion among the monks (Garan in particular), but they should also confuse the PCs.

-Vengeful Words-



≈ Scene 4: A New Victim ≈

This scene is left to the Leader's initiative and should be set when it seems most appropriate to create some action after Fergal's death. Seane's successor will kill another resident of the monastery. The murder will be more spectacular since physical violence will most likely be used instead of poison. This scene may be repeated several times if the PCs remain indecisive for too long.

≈ Scene 5: Redia's Grave ≈



This scene allows the Players to get the "Redia" Clue Card.

One or several PCs may go to the monastery's graveyard where the victims of Jalan's revenge and the two emissaries of Ard-Amrach will be buried. If they attend one of the funeral ceremonies, they will notice that one of the nearest graves—Sister Redia's—is carefully maintained. They can even find a small Hexcelsis made of varnished wood inserted into a gap if they take a closer look at the grave. On the back of the medallion, the letter M is engraved.

It is the medallion Meiriadog was wearing before he became an adept; one Redia had given to him as a present. He visits his late lover's grave as often as possible, with the excuse of cleaning and maintaining the small graveyard. The other members of the congregation let the dead rest and are

satisfied to see the usually virulent adept voluntarily accept this humble task.

If the PCs do not identify Meiriadog with the "M" clue, they may learn that he is the one who takes care of maintaining the graveyard most often. Alternatively, they may simply hide and watch the graveyard.

If the adept is questioned, he will not deny his love for the late nun and will share his doubts: she was certainly not killed by Feondas—of which no one found any trace anyway—and Meiriadog is convinced that Fergal exerts a sinister influence over the Rector (see "Chronology of the Disappearances in the Monastery," p.34, paragraph "905/1408: The Pact with Mac Snòr" which describes how and why Redia was killed).



Act 3: Revelations

This third Act is not a straight succession of events. Rather, it gathers various scenes that may lead to the end of the scenario. They can be used as important clues to nudge the PCs' investigation in the right direction, or be played one after the other at the end of the scenario to create a climax. The Leader should carefully consider when to use these scenes. Keep in mind that they can also be considered optional.

Scene 1: Garan's Flogging

In this scene, the PCs will be informed of Garan's self-inflicted rituals of penance. There are several ways they may notice this disturbing fact.

First of all, going past Garan's room and succeeding a Standard (11) Perception roll means that a PC will hear the recognizable sound of flogging, accompanied by muttered prayers. The Rector is bare-chested, flogging himself while imploring the Creator to save him and guide him in the righting of wrongs done by the other monks.

Another possibility: noticing during a mass or during any other public occasion that the back of Garan's robe bears suspicious stains. A PC belonging to the Temple will know that they may correspond to marks of flogging, which is generally a treatment that is self-inflicted to cleanse oneself of one's faults. This would come as a rather surprising realization, considering the Rector's confidence.

With the deaths of the Sigire and his companion, Garan has gone one step further in his insanity. The sudden death of one of the architects of his appointment has caused the Rector's guilt to resurface, and Garan sinks into the conviction that there really is a divine punishment at work. Indeed, all those who have helped him, deliberately or not, to establish his power are killed one after the other.

If the Leader thinks it appropriate, Garan can indirectly reveal his crimes and the fact that he sees them as punitive acts ordered by the One, as well as a test of his faith. Garan will refuse to say more, and may even go as far as to threaten inquisitive PCs with the consequences of their excessive curiosity. After all, how can they prove their innocence concerning the last deaths that occurred in the monastery? How can they defend themselves before the Sigires? This talk will betray the insanity of the Rector who is losing his grip on reality.

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Scene 2: Mac Snòr's Soldiers



This scene will allow the Players to get the "Mac Snòr's Soldiers" and "Saundra" Clue Cards.

This scene will allow the Leaders to give their Players a decisive clue about Mac Snòr's trafficking. It should be set after the deaths of Serven and Bastian.

At nightfall, a carriage escorted by a dozen soldiers wearing Mac Snòr's coat of arms—a snake and stars on a field of navy blue—makes a halt at the monastery, not far from the stables. The carriage with barred windows is covered with a thick sheet that hides the inside. The soldiers are sturdy fellows who all wear chain mail or studded armor. Their equipment is shabby, and they protect themselves from the wind with furs or thick cloaks.

One of the soldiers goes to Jakez about a lame horse, and while the stableman pretends to examine the animal, he confirms to the newcomers that a victim is in the secret hiding place. The convoy will stop a little farther on to pick up the unfortunate Elia, currently drugged, and take her away.

With the odd gust of wind lifting the thick sheet, one of the PCs may catch a glance of a red-haired woman with dark eyes, prostrate inside the carriage (she has been drugged by the soldiers and is unable to speak). From Jorm's description, the PCs will be able to identify her as Saundra.

Garalt and she have been "arrested for robbery," and the soldiers will refuse to allow anyone to talk to them. Resorting to force is a very risky option. Demanding an audience to see Mac Snòr, who must judge these "bandits," will make the soldiers burst out laughing, and they will say to the nosy ones to mind their own business.

The Soldiers

There are a dozen of them.

⊕ Attack: 11. Defense: 10. Speed: 6. Potential: 2.
Damage: 2. Protection: 3. Health: 19.

-Vengeful Words-



Scene 3: Jalan's Will

The monk prays before
the chapel's altar.

He goes to the small
scriptorium for his
daily work.

Comes a Parigal to the
doors of the monastery.

He goes to the kitchen
to ask for sustenance.



This scene will allow the Players to get the "Jalan's Riddle" Clue Card.

Seeing the turn of events, and if the PCs have behaved honestly enough to earn her trust, Erwen will entrust them with the handwritten document Jalan had given to her before he died. It reads as a few sibylline sentences. Erwen thinks that they may conceal a coded message, but she did not succeed in solving the riddle. For the one who can manage to decipher it, this document will allow her to discover Jalan's will (see the "Jalan's Will" Aid Sheet). If the PCs are sent by Aodren Floyd or Jalan's family, the Leader may assume that he had the time to send a last letter, which will be in their possession (see the "Jalan's Letter" Aid Sheet). If not, this letter will be hidden with the will.



Solving the Riddle

In fact, the four sentences hold geographic data. To solve the riddle, the Player must draw a straight line between the chapel's altar (1) and the Small Scriptorium (8), then a second straight line between the monastery's entrance and the kitchens (11). Where the two lines cross (the Apothecary's room(18)) is where the will can be found.

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Scene 4: The Argument

In this scene, one of the PCs witnesses an argument between Jakez and Sister Teda. The stableman accuses the nun of worming her way into the Rector's good graces again out of cowardice. He will talk about the past love affair between Garan and Teda, which will trigger her anger. She will snap at Jakez, telling him to mind his own business, to which he will retort that he does not take orders from a lustful Berenian. The argument will stop at this last reply: livid, Teda will leave on the spot. The facts are that Jakez knows that Garan is getting more and more unstable, and fears that Teda might make things worse.

This scene gives the Players two major clues:

- A lead about the prohibited relationship between Teda and Garan, and thus a means of pressuring Teda. She may reveal to the PCs what she knows, but Jakez may try to kill her if he hears about her meeting with the PCs or conveying information to them in any other way.

- A clue about the deaths of the Sigire and the Blade knight. During the argument, Jakez is wearing the same jacket as when he killed the two clergymen, and a watchful PC may notice that one button is missing... the one that was previously found.



-Vengeful Words-

Scene 5: Facing Death



Delphine Bois - Of Men and Obscurities - 8 - The Revelation

The purpose of this final scene is to directly confront the PCs with a death caused by Jalan's cursed book. According to the Leader's choices and the way the scenario has progressed, there are two main possibilities:

⊕ If one of the PCs is possessed by the book, another member of the group will be the next target. Eyes glinting with madness, holding Jalan's book in one hand and a weapon in the other, the possessed PC will shout at the victim-to-be, exhorting her to confess her faults on the spot.

For this scene to be successful, the Leader should take the possessed PC aside and explain in advance what will happen. Thus, the Player will be able to perform the role of the possessed well, and directly talk to the other Player. A good example may be the following speech:

"Minion of Garan! Minion of the ogre! Minion of the devil! The time to expiate has come for you! Read this book and look at the blackness of your own soul!"

If the other Player reads the book, she will suffer the mental consequences (see "Jalan's Book: An Object of Power," p.35) and her torturer will try to kill her at this moment.

Of course, the PCs can and will certainly try to restrain their possessed companion who will struggle wildly, raving unceasingly.

⊕ The other option is that instead of a PC, another resident of the monastery is possessed and targets one of the PCs. The sequence of actions will then be the same until the confrontation with Garan and the likely ensuing all-out brawl.

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Some monks will arrive, with Garan in the front. Total confusion will break out: the possessed Character will try to leap at the chosen victim's throat. Hearing the accusations against him, Garan will reveal his insanity: he will rave about his divine mission and the necessity to cleanse the monastery of filth. As for his alliance with Mac Snòr, the mere suggestion of it will send him into a rage, without managing to justify his own acts. An insane and desperate atmosphere will then spread throughout the monastery, a violent and disorderly fight breaking out with everyone trying to settle his or her grudges.

Meiriadog will attack the Rector and all his followers, supported by Teda who will break into a fit of total hysteria toward her former lover Garan. Madel will try to attack Teda while Dalaigh will do his best to restrain the two women. Selwyn will help as he can. Erwen will be paralyzed with indecisiveness whereas Alan will throw himself at Jakez. Eber and Loeiz will fruitlessly try to intervene between the fighters to separate them. Finally, Jakez will take this opportunity to kill the Rector because he has simply had enough of this madman and his delusions. The other present protagonists will act as the Leader deems fit, provided it increases the confusion.



This final scene will mostly depend on the previous events of the scenario. The Leader may draw inspiration from the accumulated tensions between some Characters. The aim is to throw the monastery into chaos with the feeling that there is an eerie influence behind this outburst of violence. If deaths occur, some pages of Jalan's book will burn. The use of music will be a good tool to sustain the atmosphere of this scene.



Until the final scene, the possessed person will focus on other targets than the Rector, but when Garan confesses his crimes, the Character will lunge at him to end his life.



-Vengeful Words-

However the scenario ends, several things are to be kept in mind for further development.

Garan

If the PCs have discovered the blackmail the Rector is subjected to, they may consider that his insanity and Mac Snòr's pressure have led him to commit his most abject crimes. However, it will remain that he has truly ordered the deaths of those who opposed him, and they may discover that he ruthlessly plotted his way to higher reaches of power. If, against all odds, the Rector has survived the adventure, several possible solutions are available to the PCs. Although Garan is fundamentally a liar, a careerist, and a murderer, he is also torn inside by his high mystical aspirations. An honorable or devout PC may manage to convince him to surrender to the religious authorities in order for him to expiate his faults. This solution is conceivable, but as described hereafter, it will not solve everything, even though Garan will indeed be punished for his crimes.

Jalan's Book

The effects of the book will only disappear when Lord Mac Snòr, the Rector, and all his accomplices die. If the PCs leave the monastery with Garan still alive, the possession will go on, potentially focusing on another book if the original one is destroyed.

Once Garan and his accomplices are all dead, the only pages left in the book will be the ones depicting Judgment, Limbo, and the ogre—a monstrous depiction of Mac Snòr. If one of the PCs is possessed by the book, its effects will be much less violent outside the monastery, but the Character will remain obsessed by Mac Snòr's fall, and will seek to kill him, some way or another. The possessed person will not try anything suicidal, but will seize any perceivable opportunity.



The Temple

The deaths of so many ecclesiastics, and particularly that of the Sigire, will cause an uproar from the Temple's authorities as soon as they are informed. From the moment the events are known by the Temple—which may take some time considering the traveling difficulties and how remote from Ard Amrach this region is—it will be less than a week before a detachment of Blades led by two Sigires arrive. All the monastery's residents will be held in custody, the time for the Sigires to organize their questioning.

Only the bedridden patients will be spared, not out of compassion, but simply because their condition is such that they are unlikely to have played the slightest part in these dramatic events.

Unless they already have a good reputation with the Sigires, the PCs—especially if they are not Gwidrites—would do well to leave the region as quickly as possible. Any Berenians who may have survived—Teda and Meiriadog—will give some serious thought to doing so, and will urge the PCs not to linger.

A Possible Sequel: Mac Snòr the Damned

The PCs may understand that Mac Snòr is “the ogre” pictured in Jalan's book and mentioned by the possessed character in Scene 5 of Act 3. Alternatively, their investigations may have led them to understand that the lord is involved in the acts carried out by Garan and his accomplices.

Questioned about Mac Snòr, the monastery's residents will reveal that he is a tyrant and that he sometimes goes through demented fits of violence. However, the lord of the vale is surrounded by dedicated henchmen and benefits from his perfectly legal status as a noble. As many of Tri-Kazel's lords, he is essentially free to behave as he pleases as long as he fulfills his tax obligations toward his kingdom's ruler.

Therefore, if the PCs wish to meddle in the business of the Lord of the Vale of Thoir, they will hardly have any choice but to flee and return to fight later, since facing the lord on his land and with his retinue of cutthroats would be suicidal. In the long run, the PCs could try to besmirch the lord of the vale's reputation among more influential noblemen, or resort to royal justice. Since the PCs are going against a lord, the question of who exactly makes the accusation is of great importance here. For example, it will probably be dismissed as slander if it comes from a foreigner. This possible storyline will entail long-term plans to trap Mac Snòr while navigating through schemes between the nobility, the clergy, and the king. Short of a direct offense to royal justice or the sovereign's authority, the wrong-doings of a minor lord in remote lands are far from being a priority for the authorities. Mac Snòr has few friends among the neighboring noblemen, but in the end, his lands are of little interest and are located too close to the border to attract the attention of the other local lords.

Shadows of Esteren's official campaign will provide the opportunity for the Players to cross Mac Snòr's path once more, which may be the chance for them to bring about the insane lord's downfall.

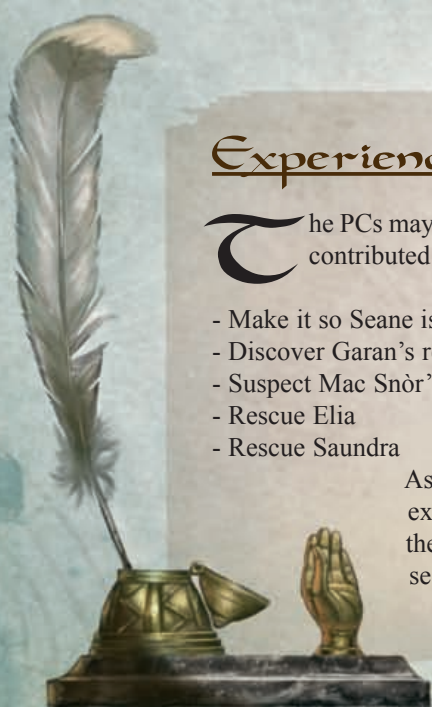
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Experience

The PCs may get one experience point for each of the following actions they have contributed to (as far as the “Progression of the plot” criterion is concerned):

- Make it so Seane is not considered guilty
- Discover Garan's responsibility before Act 3 Scene 5
- Suspect Mac Snòr's involvement
- Rescue Elia
- Rescue Sandra

As usual, the Leaders should also make sure that they distribute experience points according to the quality of each PC's portrayal by their Players (1 to 5 points), as well as for confrontations (1 to 5 points, see Book 1 – Universe, page 228).





Epilogue



here he is, nestled in the same large armchair.

Sitting on the same dark velvet cushions.

Leaning against the same pelts.

In the great hall of his residence where light hardly penetrates.

Behind him, the constantly burning fire in the huge fireplace only dispenses slight warmth and casts disturbing dancing figures on the walls covered with faded hangings.

All those who had the misfortune of appearing before him told afterwards of how these shadows seemed animated with an inhuman life of their own, and how the arms of the throne made of carved wood tried to clutch them to tear their flesh to pieces.

No one knows what he ponders in his motionlessness, or what perverse dream he takes delight in when an awful grin twists his mouth, or in which hell he sees himself burning when he suddenly starts, looking around for a way out for his black thoughts.

The armchair was his father's, and before him his grandfather's, who heroically gave his life not far from his lands for the glory of the One during the War of the Temple. For the lords of the kingdom of Gwidre, the name Mac Snòr was worthy of praise for a long time.
No longer.

Not since he snatched the reins of power from the still warm hand of his late father. Some know everything, others suspect the horror lurking in these lands, but so far, no one has dared to rise up against the name of Mac Snòr. Is it fear that binds them? Is it the memory of past glory? Is it the miracles occurring in the Monastery of Tuath that keep him safe from the suspicion of his peers?

He cares not. The ones who serve him are either too frightened to dare denounce him, or have knowingly accepted their responsibility, giving free reign to their bestiality. Of course, before public eyes, they put on white clothes to better conceal the blackness of their ungodly acts, and many of them are silent accomplices who will claim, on Judgment Day, that they have never been aware of the evil exuding from his mere presence.

This has not always been the case, and when it comes to pass that the storm wracking his mind abates, he occasionally thinks of the child he once was, playing with his elder brother on their father's hunting lands.

Then, inevitably, he remembers, as caught in a waking dream, that terrible day when he ventured too deep into the forest. He has taken one of his father's hunting knives, his favorite one inherited from his forefather; he knows the anger it must have caused and would rather hide than face his wrath. His brother saw him, reported everything, and now, there he is, striding through the ferns, beating the ground with his stick in search of the culprit. His brother is their father's favorite... it makes sense, after all: as the elder, he will one day rule over the estate. He is jealous of this elder brother, whose destiny is power, and shivers with fear, not knowing what his own destiny will be. Sometimes, he actually wished for his brother to die, so that he might take his place... but he remains his brother, and their petty rivalries are only games, fantasies they innocently nurture. But still...

In order not to be caught, he runs deeper and deeper amidst the large trees, taking care to make enough noise for his brother to hear him and follow him; he does not want to be alone. Remaining hidden, he playfully draws gashes on the trunk of a tree with his knife when he feels his shoulder suddenly clutched by an iron grip; he turns around, hoping it is his brother, but it is not...

He emerged from the forest without any memories, covered with blood, but with no wound except for a black mark on his shoulder. Neither brother nor knife were ever seen again, and even he has no idea of what has happened. However, he came back a different person.

When a priest claimed that he was bearing the ominous mark of the demon on his shoulder, his father had the holy man killed. Thus, no one ever suspected anything... until he shed blood for the first time...

He would be a man soon, and he had already been fooling around several times with young maids, coerced by his position as future master of the house. This time, he intends to go all the way. She is nervous; so is he. He took her into the cellars where no one ever comes, where he will not be bothered. She has unlaced her blouse, and he is fondling her small breasts with both hands while kissing her. When she puts her tongue in his mouth, he is surprised to feel an excitement and appetite that are far from sexual, but he completely gives in to this sudden passion. He suddenly closes his jaws and cuts the girl's tongue with his teeth.

The blood pouring into his mouth has an exquisite taste, the flesh of her tongue more delicious and tender than anything

he has eaten until now; and the scent of the shocked body squirming in spasms of terror is the sweetest he has ever smelled. He kneels by her side, still caressing her while she is sinking into madness little by little. Then, voracious and hungry, he ends what he has begun.

From then on, he has felt his strength multiply. He has seen himself taller and stronger than any other man, and he has been able to sense and stoke the vilest feelings of all those he is surrounded by. The ones who meet him take fright when their eyes meet his, and this fear never fades. Only the bravest and the most rapacious can bear staying by his side. They acknowledge his power, accept his oddities, and are always disposed to speak in his favor and defend him so that they can continue benefiting from his generosity.

It was only much later that the voices came. Whispers in the long corridors, muffled words rising from behind the draperies; he believed he was going mad. Then, at the end of one of his meals of human flesh, he began to hear the words more clearly. It sounded like the voices of the dead, cold, mournful, and hollow, as if coming from the Limbo of oblivion; but what they said eventually made sense to him, he who had the power to hear them. They urged him to become stronger, to forge a soul of steel for himself, harder than the will of all the demons and more dazzling than those of all the prophets. The soul of a leader, of a guide everyone would blindly follow into the darkness, at the same time dazed with terror and filled with admiration. The voices also explained how to proceed, in thousands of ways at once; how he should kill his swine of a father to seize power, and all the methods to drive away from his path both the meddlers and those who would be a threat to his dreams of glory...

However, little by little, the voices began to tell him stranger things as he paid them heed and obeyed their commands; and since he did not understand what they expected from him, they took control of his hands and legs, and spoke through his mouth while he remained a powerless witness to this intrusion. Thus, he saw himself draw strange symbols with the blood of a man whose throat they made him slit—but not without letting him quench his thirst as he did so—then he heard himself utter words in an unknown language. One by one, knowledge of odd rituals penetrated his mind, and when he was able to recover complete control

of his body, he understood that he had become an adept of black magic. His plans became even darker, and although he henceforth forbade the voices from coming inside him again, he now understood everything they told him. Progressively, he learned new dark rituals from age-old times.

Very quickly, his father turned weaker. He made him wither from the inside and dry out so that he soon became as parched as a mummy and as brittle as a heap of piled dust he could throw away to the cold winds of winter.

The old man often stared at him and both of them could see in the other's eyes all the rancor and hatred they now shared. Indeed, the father had understood what had become of his son, but too late. He paid for not ever considering him a worthy heir, and he would soon abdicate in his twilight years without the right to see all the glory his son would bring upon his line. Yet, the old man resisted, proving slow to die. Not a single day went by without the Tuathian Brothers coming to pray by his side for his recovery, and they managed to improve his condition, so that in the end, he almost remained stable. One night, he had enough and, driven by the invisible voices, went to his bedside and ripped out what was left of his father's life with his own hand. On the following morning, while his father's servants were bustling about him, he chose among them the ones he could keep in his service and the ones he would have to get rid of. At the beginning of his rule, he considered eradicating the monastery of Tuath as quickly as possible, but he very quickly changed his mind.

The miraculous healings were known far and wide and brought their share of travelers, profits, and pious fame to his lands. With such a sacrosanct bulwark to hide behind, no one in the rest of the kingdom would be concerned about a few disappearances and tragic stories; he would just have to blame Feond attacks to avoid suspicions and intruders. Thus, he patiently gathered followers, appointing some people himself to be his eyes and ears in every nook and cranny of the vale.

Just like a spider, Mac Snòr waits for one strand of the web he has spun over his whole domain to twitch, showing him the presence of some new defenseless prey he will be free to throw himself at with the ferocious appetite of a monstrous ogre...



A medieval role-playing game with a horrific and gothic influence

"The Vale of Thoir? It is just on the other side of the border. From Dearg, you can go west to reach it through the Pass of Lantrecht... But why would you want to go there? It is a grim place, and its lord is infamous for being a bloodthirsty tyrant. Oh! Of course! You want to meet the Tuathian Brothers and receive their miraculous healing! Then, good luck foreigner, may the Creator guide your steps..."

The Monastery of Tuath is a supplement for the Shadows of Esteren series intended for Game Leaders. Contents include:

- The Temple and Religious Life:

A game aid detailing the commitment to one of the clergy's six orders, the organization of spiritual life, and an optional rule, the "Six Vows," with its possible impact on the Characters.

- The Monasteries of the One:

An in-depth look at the daily life of the monks and the organization of the monasteries.

- The Monastery of Tuath:

A religious institution of the Temple in a Gwidrite valley, near the Talkéride border, described along with all its inhabitants.

- "Vengeful Words:"

An investigation scenario in the monastery of Tuath, inspired by The Name of the Rose; a thrilling adventure set behind closed doors that will lead the Characters to uncover several sinister secrets.

- A Map of the Monastery of Tuath:

A color map depicting the monastery where the "Vengeful Words" adventure is set.

- A Set of Aid Sheets:

A deck of Clue Cards and game aid sheets for "Vengeful Words," including technical sheets to optimize the gaming experience for both Leaders and Players.



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