



OCCULTISM



Shadows of Esteren


3

OCCULTISM

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

"It seemed to me as if some unknown force were numbing and stopping me, were preventing me from going further and were calling me back."

Guy de Maupassant



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ForgeSongs is a collective of authors and illustrators gathered under the form of an association, whose goal is to create quality game material.



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Foreword



Dear Explorer of the Shadows,

What is visible is not the only reality, and there are many things beyond what the eyes can see. Occultists know how complex the world is and how unsatisfactory it is to only be given ready-made answers transmitted through religious traditions. They want to find their own truth. To do so, they will stop at nothing. Due to their poor reputation, they lay low in towns. Some of them carry out studies on the strange creatures of the peninsula, while others focus on the mysteries of the mind, or on phenomena whose origins, whether natural or supernatural, are a mystery...

Core Books and Themas

Shadows of Esteren features a complex universe with overlapping, entangled truths allowing many discoveries and revelations. Lifting the veil over a truth is never simple. The Characters inhabit a world colored in shades of gray, where moral issues cannot be answered with definite and obvious responses. Ambivalence and ambiguity will force them to reconsider the limits and classifications they are used to. To explore these aspects, related to both discovery and choice, the game series offers two types of supplements:

⊗ **Core Books.** These numbered books explore the fundamentals:

Book 0 – Prologue, Book 1 – Universe, Book 2 – Travels, Book 3 – Dearg, Book 4 – Secrets

⊗ **Themas.** The non-numbered books (such as this one) have a flexible framework so that Leaders can use them freely in their campaigns. They all explore one specific theme: monks in *The Monastery of Tuath*, ghosts and hauntings in *The Black Moon Handbook*, or occultism in an urban investigation setting in this book. They all feature the same elements: game aids related to the theme, a bestiary, figures, and a modular scenario or set of Canvases.

Playing Occultism

Although the contents of this supplement can be used independently, the suggested additions can be considerably enriched with the following supplements: Book 2 – Travels and The Black Moon Handbook.

Atmosphere

In this book, the Leader will find an initial section dedicated to various aspects of the occultists' activities in the Tri-Kazelian peninsula, along with concrete examples of their inner debates, skills, and working methods. Options will be offered to introduce the cabal of the Circle of Emergence, a small group of Occultists determined to explore the secrets of the world of Esteren and whose members can become ambiguous allies or fearsome opponents.

Finally, the Leader will find a scenario entitled "A Tidy Room." The sinister Aïndrid will be closely involved in the events, hiding behind a poisonous mask of warm simplicity. False pretenses and lies must be thwarted to uncover a truth that no one wants to acknowledge... The Characters will be led to understand some realities related to death and to question easy certainties and obvious facts about the nature of Good and Evil.

Acknowledgments

You will find, among the figures the PCs may meet, no fewer than eleven illustrations created in collaboration with our Patrons—generous backers. May they—allies and enemies alike—be a source for exciting adventures and intrigues!

I wish you many thrilling discoveries and chills in the Shadows of Esteren.

Iris



Prologue

“Edhene, the only sunshine of my life,
Edhene, the only light in my night,
You guide my heart and my conscience
With so much innocence.

Oh Edhene, your honey-colored skin so tender
Is the promise of a life of wonder.
I am yours and you are mine for life,
I will be a king if you become my wife.

My sweet Edh... Oh, is that you?”

There had just been a dull thump on the long wooden boards of the floor, a strange noise just like that of something heavy yet soft falling down. The young man, who had been repeatedly muttering the poem in a flat voice, was crouching in a corner of the room, facing the wall. He did not turn his head; only one person could have entered the room without a single creak from the stairs. The noise that had interrupted his droning was characteristic of her presence.

He had already seen her several times. The first time had been only three days after the tragedy that had struck the weavers’ district and the whole town. He thought he had seen her walk out of the washhouse toward him. She had been as beautiful as the day they had first met, and as terrifying as a ghost. Any time she appeared, there was that strange sound, just like that of a pile of soaked laundry falling on the ground. Once again, he could feel an intense and icy tingling run along his spine, and he felt as if his neck would explode under the pressure of that shiver. Each time he had approached her, hoping to catch up to her, wanting to talk to her... but he had lost sight of her as surely as if she had been made of moon-light shining through the mist...

Yet there she was, as intangible as a dream. Mad with sorrow for weeks, the young man had wanted to meet her, wishing to confess his feelings for her at last. However, right now, his muddled mind felt an instinctive fear before her eerie presence.

It was night. A cheap tallow candle on the small bedside table was dimly lighting the room. It gave a yellowish, hazy light, accompanied by wisps of blackish smoke smelling of burnt grease. When the young man dared to look behind him, he saw her as clearly as always –radiant and beautiful. She was wearing a long, white voile dress that fluttered around her legs. Her frail, pink shoulders were bare, as was her smooth, thin neck. Her hair was down, and locks of her black hair snaked down her chest and her arms, a vivid contrast with the pallor of her diaphanous skin. She was beautiful, very beautiful, certainly all the more so since she was now inaccessible, which also made her terrifying. Why, oh why had she come back?

He stood up awkwardly, his burning forehead dripping with sweat. He tried to take an unsteady step toward her, but the young girl’s voice stopped him abruptly.

"That is a lovely poem, Gliwi."

This startled him. He was speechless for a while, watching the girl with a mixture of suspicion and hope, searching her cold, beautiful eyes for irony. He saw none, and felt a vague sense of relief. Regaining some confidence, he dared to stammer.

"Do... do you really like it?"

Edhene smiled wistfully and answered softly:

"Of course I like it, but what a pity I'm not the first to hear it, right, Gliwi?"

In the space of an instant, Edhene's soft eyes and voice went as cold and hard as an obsidian ax, chopping at the boy's growing dreams, leaving him gasping and confused. A freezing cold clutched Gliwi's heart and soul. He stammered:

"Wh-what do you mean, Edhene? Of course you're the first to hear it! I composed it for you..."

"Come on, don't tell me you never used these words to lure others... But look at yourself! What has become of that angelic face that used to attract all the girls around?"

"Edhene, you were the only one ever to..."

"The only one? You mean none of those sluts that flocked around you all day have ever spread their legs for you in the washhouse?"

"I... You... You can't be speaking like that..."

"Why not? I can afford to now! Who will punish me?"

"No one," Gliwi said in a whisper, "but I did not, I never..."

"Oh, you certainly bagged a few, didn't you? You can tell me, you know!"

As he bowed his head, sighing, he saw a dark, indefinite mass squirming under her white dress.

"What's...?"

"This? Look, how funny. I think I have my revenge!"

He took the small candleholder from the bedside table and shakily held it toward the shapeless heap.

"Rats!" he said in disgust, moving back hastily.

"Calm down, you coward! I told you I would find those who did this to me and get my revenge. You see, after they brutally killed me, they dumped me in the sewers, and these damn rats feasted on me. Look at what they've done to me!"

The apparition gently lifted her white dress, uncovering her fleshless legs. Gliwi recoiled against the wall, then fell to the ground, his legs no longer able to carry him.

The swarm of rats spread on the floor in sickening proportions. Gliwi stared at the dozens of scratching, squeaking, scrabbling creatures, but he could not single out an individual in the swarming black mass, as if every rat was bound to the others by its skin, legs, or mouth. They seemed like one grotesque and unbelievable being. Gliwi convulsed and vomited on the floor.

"Why? Why are you doing this?"

"How rude! I thought you were my friend. Don't you enjoy my visits?"

"Edhene, you're dead!"

"And so you don't love me anymore? Yet you still took advantage of me, you sick little pervert!"

"What are you talking about? I want you to leave, you're scaring me!"

"I came to get my revenge, Gliwi. Someone has to pay for what was done to me..."

"But the Tarish was lynched by the mob. Didn't you see what they did to him? They beat him, hanged him, killed him, they... they..."

"The Tarish? Glazi? That old fool did nothing to me."

"Then who?"

"Oh! Don't tell me you don't remember, my dear cousin! You have wanted me for years—you just had too much to drink that evening..."

"No!"

"I wanted to help you get home, but you took me to the washhouse, you started to paw at me and you tried to kiss me..."

"No, no..."

"That's just what I said, but you probably thought I secretly wanted it because you went on and you tore my pretty dress."

"It's not true, it's not true!"

"You raped me, Gliwi, and while you were humping me, you put your hand on my nose and mouth to keep me from shouting!"

"You're wrong! I never touched you, I could never have hurt you, I loved you!"

"I suffocated to death by your hand, and you, you started reciting your pathetic poems to me!"

"No, you're wrong, you're lying!" Gliwi cried, lying on the floor, cradling his head under his arms.

"And even dead, I suffered your abuse again and again. You filled me with your seed before throwing me to the sewer rats!"

"Some people took me home, I remember! I'll find them, they'll tell you, they'll testify!"

"Really? Some people took you home? Yes, but that wasn't until the early morning... They found you in the washhouse, sleeping off your night of debauchery and the horrors you subjected me to. Go see them, yes! They must suspect something now. They'll question you, and you'll be forced to confess everything. Then you'll end up like mad old Glazi, your body sliced open and your private parts cut off and thrown to the ravens."

He was devastated, panting and crying helplessly, curled up on the floor in an uncomfortable position. After a couple of minutes, he took a deep breath and practically shouted at the ghost that was still standing before him:

"Why are you doing this? What do you want from me?"

"Take your knife, Gliwi, take it and avenge me of yourself!"

"What? Edhene, I didn't do anything, you know that. I didn't do it."

"Come, come and join me..."

"Kill myself?"

"If you lack the courage, go see them and confess your crime!"

"But it wasn't me! I could never have hurt you, I loved you too much!"

"Murderer! Rapist! Die! Die!"

For a long time, only Gliwi's sobs could be heard. Then he laid his hand flat on the floor and raised his eyes toward the ghost, tears rolling down his cheeks. Miserably, he stammered:

"You are not Her, you are not my Edhene."

At his feet, the candle was guttering out. He raised himself fully upright, worn out and haggard. On the bedside table, in the place where the candleholder once stood was his combat knife. His eyes wandered around the room before returning to his weapon, whose blade cast a feeble glint. The light of day-break was filtering through the room's small window.

He was alone.





Chapter I Occultism in Tri-Kazel



ysterious, secretive, dangerous, incomprehensible... there is no shortage of adjectives to describe the enigmatic occultists. Dwelling in dark laboratories or in labyrinthine libraries, exploring gloomy ruins, they strive to find what is hidden behind a too obvious reality. Certainty only leads to misunderstandings!





Occultists view all dogmas with equal distrust. The Temple's followers acknowledge the existence of Limbo, but they fear it and blindly rely on the writings of Soustraine and the Saints as the only sources of knowledge. The Demorthèn strictly adhere to all sorts of rules and taboos in their relationship with the spirits of nature and do not seem to show the least bit of curiosity. As for the Magientists, they claim to be rational, but that does not make them any less obtuse, strictly holding what is real to be what is measurable with imperfect instruments, and preaching opportunistic, materialistic atheism. They all have chosen the easy path, believing in a simple truth that is already known and defined. On the contrary, occultists are true adventurers of the mind, willing to take significant risks to achieve their goals and delve into the shadows of the peninsula. This chapter provides a general introduction to the approach and methods of the occultists, all the better to describe their practices and the various characters the Players can meet, whether allies or antagonists.

✦ Initially, occultists had developed a research method directly from scientific theories. From there, they perfected a wide range of disciplines. Some of them diverged considerably from the initial ideal, such as the meddling sorcerers, or the mediums who throw open the doors to madness.

✦ Except in the most tolerant towns, occultists are often at odds with the law, sometimes congregating into cabals with enigmatic projects. The Circle of Emergence is one such organization. This small, sparse, and relatively informal group has a very honorable purpose: to understand the world around them. Unfortunately, its members believe that the end justifies the means...

Aside from these unscrupulous occultists, others try to develop conceptual tools whose purpose is the betterment of society. Maaryan—called “the Dàmàthair” due to her former occupation—is one of the specialists of the mind who focus on the study of rare mental disorders observed among criminal personalities. She tries to promote occultism by showing everyone that it can be useful to society, and she endeavors to complete Ernst Zigger’s seminal works.

The following text is a game aid to understand what occultism is in Tri-Kazel, who its practitioners are, and how they use it. In the following chapters, the Leader will find information to design scenarios and encounters related to occultism. They will also find advice for leading their gaming sessions and incorporating the supernatural in encounters with sorcerers, as well as a new mental disorder exclusive to NPCs. Players will find new professions, a new narrative arc, and additional rules to develop both their Disciplines and their Mental Resistance. Everything revolves around the following themes:

✦ **Daring to wonder and question.** Occultists claim to be the equals of scientists and Magientists in how they approach things experimentally and rationally. The bad reputation of their subject of study—related to death and to the nature of the soul—makes things difficult and often leads them to face the hostility of the ignorant. This is why they must act with both stealth and determination.

✦ **The aspects of occultism.** A new narrative arc—that of the Occult—is offered here in order to live the life of an enthusiast of esotericism. There are several possible pathways to reach a better understanding of the mysteries. The Player can become an investigator of the occult or a medium; they may also focus on stranger and more twisted knowledge, like that of the sorcerers or the Tarish. This section also includes these professions and their game-related characteristics.

✦ **Disciplines.** The chapter ends with new or additional information about occult Disciplines such as Esotericism, Hypnosis, Dream Interpretation, and Mental Phenomena. Other Disciplines that are often useful to Occultists are also developed, such as Languages, Medicine, and Cryptography.

Deciphering Signs

A Continental Art?

What is the origin of occultism in Tri-Kazel? To answer this question, let us start by observing its current condition. Occultists are mostly Reizhites, with a high proportion of people of Continental or Tarish descent. There exist two types of occultists: those who rely on their intuition, following ancient traditions of unknown origin or more recent superstitions, and those who adhere to a rational methodology. I believe occultism is rooted in religious inspiration. Its metaphysical presuppositions are, to my mind, too prevalent for this not to be the case. Are these the remnants of ancient beliefs surviving as pseudoscience? Or do these mystical elements hold profound truths about our world? In any case, I have come up with two possible hypotheses to explain the emergence of occultism:

❖ Occultism was among the knowledge Goran Aznor brought with him when he reached the region of Gleb, in the principality of Farl, in 702. In some circles, I even heard that it was not by chance that this intrepid traveler brought occult know-how from the Confederation with him. On the contrary, he is said to have essentially been motivated by his research in this domain. Thus, Magience would have been but a technique, a tool to further an almost metaphysical quest.

❖ Occultism may also have been born from the contact between the first Tri-Kazelian Magientists and the Tarish people. Elements from their beliefs and way of life, their stories about ghosts, guardian ancestors, and blood-borne curses mingled with a quasi-rational approach to result in the practice as we know it today. As for me, without going so far as to believe that Goran Aznor crossed the Continent aboard his three flying ships to chase after ghosts, I am more convinced by the theory of occultism having a Continental origin. Were it just the love child of

Magience and Tarish beliefs, it seems to me that the parents' traits would be more visible in their progeny. I do not dismiss the influence of either, but I find it more likely that occultism had an origin of its own, which reveals a lot about the speculations, fears, and hopes of the Continentals of 200 years ago.

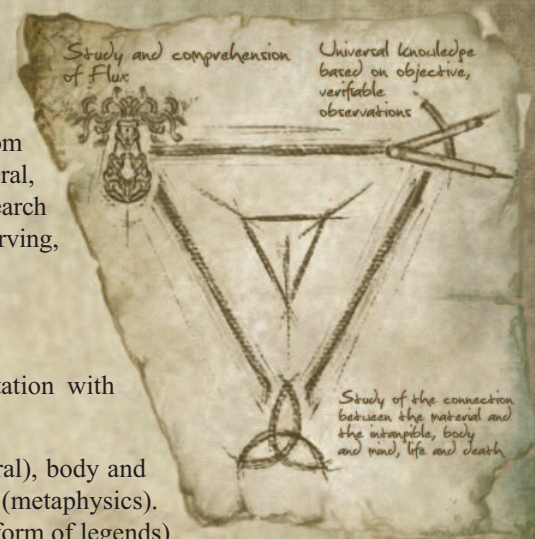
The fact that not a single one of them has ever reached us since then makes me suspect the worst for their civilizations.

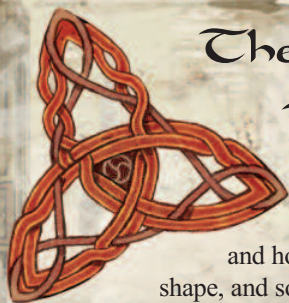
From the journal of Hadrian, Magientist.

Two approaches to knowledge: Reason and Belief

The Demorthèn art and the miracles of the Temple come from a revelation, from a spiritual gift. Conversely, occultism, just like Magience or science in general, is the result of humans questioning the nature of the world. These three research fields are comparable in that they share the same mindset, the same need for observing, experimenting, and organizing what surrounds them through theories.

- ⊞ Sciences focus on situations that occur spontaneously and regularly.
- ⊞ Magience is dedicated to the extraction of an energy source and its exploitation with specific machines that refine its potential.
- ⊞ Occultism concerns the link between the material and the intangible (supernatural), body and psyche (psychology), and the world of the living and the spirits of the dead (metaphysics). More widely, it deals with all the theories (whether transmitted as such or in the form of legends) that are related to these subjects, and with all the stories about abnormal facts.





The occultist triquetra

The triquetra is a symbol made of three loops forming a triangular shape. It is sometimes used by occultists as an emblem for their faction. What it represents is subject to many interpretations that reflect the diversity of the various schools of thought. Those most rational and closest to the Magientist schools—in particular the advocates of the Theory of Everything (see Book 2 – Travels, p.31)—tend to draw a parallel with the three types of Flux (mineral, vegetal, and organic), and hold that one must learn to see beyond apparent limits to reach the truth. Others see lunar aspects in this shape, and sometimes call the triquetra “the Three Moons,” with the moon being full, crescent-shaped, or invisible (it is then called a new moon or a black moon). However, despite these apparent changes, the moon remains the same, which shows how one must not draw hasty conclusions from a partial perception of the situation. The circle connecting the whole symbol is here precisely to symbolize unity underlying any apparent changes.

General knowledge of these fields makes it possible to understand phenomena and put into practice principles related to each of the three branches. The difference between these three ways of thinking and the Demorthèn mysteries or the miracles of the Temple is fundamental, even ideological. Indeed, there are two main methods of transmitting knowledge, and thereby, a vision of the world:

⌘ Faith.

Those who have received such a message know that they will not be able to verify its reality, but this is a secondary concern. Deep within them, with unmistakable intensity, they feel that it is the truth, unless they simply trust their brethren, just as children believe their parents without giving thought to the possibility of being lied to or manipulated. A fundamental inequality among humans results from this system. Some have been chosen; they are able to live something extraordinary and bring their experience to their fellow believers, who can only accept it and trust them. For example, having faith in the One means believing that Soustraine had a revelation, understood it, transmitted the truth about it, and that the Temple did the same afterward. As for the traditional religion, the Demorthèn are the intercessors between the humans and the spirits. They can use the Sigil Rann after years of training. Their word is never questioned, as it expresses the truth about the immaterial and about the world as a whole.

⌘ Rationality.

Scientific, experimental logic says that the truth is and must be verifiable. All human beings can see for themselves, they are all equal in the face of a revelation. As a result, belief without evidence or without having access to it is superstition. Additionally, it is necessary to accept the possibility of a mistake and to change one's system of thought. This implies being able to face the refutation of one's ideas. For example, saying “The One moves in mysterious ways” is unfalsifiable, since whatever happens, it will prove the believer right. An unfalsifiable concept is unacceptable for a rational being.

Occultism in the Shadows of Esteren series

Occultism touches on subjects related to madness and to the world's mysteries, two prevalent themes in the Shadows of Esteren series. Some of the notions detailed in this supplement are expanded upon in other books, and several of the official scenarios are particularly occult-oriented:

⌘ **Objects of Power.** These objects are shown to be connected to violent emotions in the “Vengeful Words” scenario (see The Monastery of Tuath, p.35). One of them, Jalan's book, is even one of its central features. The same goes for the book titled “Memory of the World” in the “Red Fall” scenario (see Book 0 – Prologue, p.73). Leaders may draw inspiration from the options suggested in the section dedicated to Zaïg's shop (Dearg's secondhand dealer), more precisely to Amro's pendant (see “The Vale and its Surroundings” in Book 3 – Dearg). The scenario about this Object of Power may even be an opportunity to meet the investigator Aodren Floyd (see Book 2 – Travels, p.146). Owning an Object of Power is sometimes akin to a Faustian pact, as illustrated by the case of Lyrielle of the Finery (see Book 2 – Travels, pages 40 and 160), who makes use of forces she does not really control to bring the hardest negotiations to a happy conclusion. In this way, she helps as many people as possible, but in return, she goes through trance-like, murderous spells.

⌘ The Black Moon Handbook

This book is written from the subjective point of view of the occultist / exorcist Steren Slaine. This supplement can be read by any Player whose Character possesses the Esotericism Discipline. For Leaders, it includes a game aid on haunting phenomena, rules to depict an exorcism, five friendly or hostile figures through which the Players can be faced with mysterious, supernatural forces, five canvases

that can be simply played out as mundane, though strange, cases, or involve invisible powers, and a bestiary describing violent or subtle entities like the Claws of Limbo or the Bodysnatcher.

⌘ **Sorcery.** This forbidden art represents a fearsome peril, a power eating away at those who are granted such blasphemous boons, those who make a pact with cruel and unknowable despots. They can be used as anonymous antagonists, consumed by monstrous and abject passions (see Act II, Scene 6 of the Focus “Mac Thogail” in Book 3 – Dearth). This will offer a contrast with the Temple, whose dogma firmly encourages measure and moderation, and put its purifying battle in a positive light. Leaders may also go for more ambivalent and nuanced depictions by using figures such as Ciany Lorn (see Book 2 – Travels, p.156) or Eberict, “the Shadow” (see Book 2 – Travels, p.172).

The rational method

Striving to be rational has many concrete implications on one's method for grasping the truth and understanding the world. The following principles illustrate the rigor a “true” occultist should exercise:

- ⌘ **Observation.** A phenomenon that cannot be explained by existing theories must be identified. To that effect, it is examined as carefully and fully as possible. To make useful observations, occultists must have good theoretical knowledge, but should not consider it the definitive truth. They must always be alert and seek to verify, understand, see for themselves, etc.
- ⌘ **Hypothesis.** From the observed facts, proven elements, and their own creative logic, occultists make one or several hypotheses to draw a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon and integrate it into a more or less broad paradigm.
- ⌘ **Experiment.** Occultists perform tests on the phenomenon, following a protocol that will allow them to check their hypotheses, proving or disproving them. They must try to control the involved factors to identify them precisely within the context of the phenomenon.
- ⌘ **Theory.** Thanks to the experiments performed, occultists can identify the different factors and the key mechanisms. With this knowledge, they can propose a theory that explains the connections between the different phenomena. To be valid, a theory must be falsifiable; this is the crucial criterion that distinguishes it from religion and superstition. Finally, the theory must be critically observed once again.

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Here is a concrete example of the application of this method. Steren Slaine has pored over many testimonies from Varigals and travelers about strange events. By scrutinizing them and comparing different sources, she has ensured that the cause was neither Feondas, nor brigands, nor mere tall tales. Thanks to the data at her disposal, she was able to identify some places she considers haunted. Since her goal is to understand hauntings, she works on hypotheses regarding the problem's origin. For her, the answer lies either in past events or in the nature of the location. In the end, as she cannot make any geological or geographical correlations between the sites, she favors a purely historical explanation: something terrible has occurred. Out of methodological rigor, she should test her theory with an experiment; however, committing crimes for the sole purpose of attempting to create a haunting is out of the question. Therefore, she chooses to test her hypotheses empirically, which means she intends to verify that all the haunted places meet the same criteria. Any exception is both a threat for her whole theory, and an opportunity to deepen her knowledge and develop a new theory, more complete and closer to the truth.

On occultists and society

⌘ A tense relation with dogmas

Occultists have an unsavory reputation, partly due to their position on religious and philosophical matters. They are in conflict with the Temple's dogma as much as with that of the Demorthèn or with the Magientists' materialism. Moreover, as opposed to each of these three factions, they have no political and social sway. They are individuals who sometimes have to work on their own, developing theories that may have little to do with those of another occultist.

The best chance for an important change for occultists would consist in obtaining official recognition of the legitimacy of their works and the validity of their methods, in at least one place. The creation of a university chair in Farl or Baldh-Ruoch would be a very meaningful achievement. Outside of Reizh, the only town that may be receptive to such an approach is currently Kel Loar. These towns are probably the only ones in all of Tri-Kazel to be sufficiently open to new ideas for no-nonsense, savvy occultists to actually have a chance to make themselves heard.

The occultists' interest in cities

Most of the time, occultists choose to settle in cities. It makes it easier for them to go through their daily activities without attracting too much attention. In addition, such an environment is more plentiful in professional opportunities for scholars and merchants. Proximity to libraries and scholarly societies is also a means to learn a Discipline or to hone their knowledge. Finally, for more amoral occultists, towns are the best place to be in contact with unlawful groups.

When occultists are mistaken for sorcerers

In exceptional cases, by dint of research and experimentation, occultists end up mastering powers similar to those of sorcerers, like Eberict, "the Shadow" (see Book 2 – Travels, p.172). Unfortunately, most people do not make any real distinction between the two, and the fact that some occultists become sorcerers does not help their reputation.

Sorcerers are much more well-known than occultists, due to how infamous they are. It is said that they are sadistic madmen, the human equivalent of Feondas, and that they congregate to dominate the world, enslaving it with their power. They are rumored to be able to influence emotions, desires, and thoughts, and even to control minds. They can inflict terrible, unceasing nightmares to make their victims sink into madness, or just drive them murderously insane.

All these stories explain why it is not uncommon for occultists to be approached by clients seeking their services, just as they would do with a criminal. It is generally a matter of love (the person's beloved is uninterested, already married, gone, etc.) or money (a great-great-aunt who is long to die, a blackmailer who is getting too bold, etc.).

What will occultists do with such clients, who are ready to pay considerable sums of money to solve a problem that will involve immoral, illegal, or even criminal action?

Asking the right questions

Occultists are convinced that they have the best conceptual tools to uncover the truth about the world of Esteren. In the interest of learning, they try out many different approaches and give great importance to atypical experiments:

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A spiritual dimension.

To what extent are dreams unique to each individual or the reflection of a mysterious parallel dimension? What to think of several people dreaming the same events and feeling perfectly awake as they experience them (see the "Loch Varn" scenario in Book 0 – Prologue)? Can it be deduced that there is an immaterial reality confusingly similar to our tangible lives? Could some events believed to be related to material reality be, in fact, manifestations of this immaterial reality?

Inhabited or haunted places.

Can the tangible and the intangible mingle, just like body and mind? Are there "incarnate" locations (see The Black Moon Handbook)? Are the Demorthèn sacred sites, the Liagcal and the Cinthareid, such locations, even haunted places?

The mysteries of time.

What is the nature of time? Can time be navigated just like a river? Does it go faster or slower depending on the location (see Book 2 – Travels, "Calhtair's Wood", p.29)? And under what circumstances?

The power of emotions.

How can an object be filled with the desires of a person, even beyond death (see the "Vengeful Words" scenario in The Monastery of Tuath, and The Black Moon Handbook)? Is it an ability of the deceased to act, or are desires an energy in themselves? How does this energy work? What of the desires of the living? Is the refusal to die a desire, a source of energy (see the scenario "A Tidy Room," p.60 of this book)?

Explaining supernatural powers.

What abilities go beyond the laws of nature? Is there a similarity between miracles of the Temple, Demorthèn arts, Tarish curses, sorcerous spells, and possibly even Feondas and hauntings? Are they all particular forms of occultism, manifested intuitively? How can they be methodically connected and compared?

The essence of life.

What is the essence of life? What of ghosts (see the "Loch Varn" scenario in Book 0 – Prologue, the "Slope of the Fallen" on p.44 of Book 2 – Travels, and The Black Moon Handbook)? Is it right to make a binary distinction between life and death? Flux extraction causes the death or destruction of the drained animal or plant. What force is there within this fuel that Magientists use to make their machines work?

The four schools of thought of occultism

Occultism is manifold due to the answers it proposes to the existential questions it poses. It is, however, possible to identify a few main trends that gather together people with roughly the same approach to these immaterial dimensions that they want to understand and master.

The metaphorical cant of occultists

Being the subject of prejudice, occultists and other practitioners of esoteric sciences often make use of an obscure, figurative, poetic, or cryptic language that most people cannot understand, in order to protect their works. Metaphors, comparisons, and analogies abound. This chapter uses several typical expressions as examples.

One of the most common metaphors consists in describing occult knowledge like a mysterious house, a domain to be explored. The threshold of this imaginary place marks the boundary as clearly as death separates life from something else. Just like in a real home, there are several means to describe what occurs inside, and each one represents a particular state of mind. They are as follows:

⊞ Occultists.

They proceed like cautious spies, watching from the windows and trying to see or hear something. From these fragmentary clues, they devise theories.

⊞ Mediums.

Contrary to occultists, mediums stand directly on the threshold and personally expose themselves to anything that may get out of the house. They are like a guest waiting to come in... or waiting for something to come out into them!

⊞ Sorcerers.

They are akin to thieves who dig through the wall, pry open window bars, or widen cracks to draw from the energy inside. By doing so they generate and develop within themselves, in their minds and sometimes in their bodies, similar tears.

⊞ Tarish.

Literally deprived of a house due to their culture, but possessed of a strong traditional affinity with the occult, they are a mystery for the other Tri-Kazelianians. The loss of their origins and home intertwines with how they internalize their beliefs and practices related to spirits. They are analogous to an injured man who has been stabbed with a dagger, but must absolutely not remove the blade lest he start bleeding to death. The Tarish must live with their wound, their connection with the other world.



The narrative arc of the Occult

The narrative arc system is related to the Advanced Character Creation (see the eponymous chapter in Book 3 – Dearg). Its purpose is to explore a strong theme that constitutes the essence of a character's quest, such as Vengeance for the premade character Sid, or Love for Eoghan. The main narrative arcs are directly connected to the official campaign, Dearg, and they all have an associated Focus. However, other narrative arcs can be created (see the chapter “Creating New Narrative Arcs” in Book 3 – Dearg) and used in any campaign. The purpose is to make the PC's theme all the more telling and involving, in order to heighten the Player's interest and enrich the gaming experience. If a Leader has a Player who is very interested in the occult aspects of the game, they can propose them to play the narrative arc of the Occult. This arc is illustrated by Steren standing on the threshold of a decrepit, ivy-infested building, which are signs of abandon and death, but also of rebirth and perseverance. Steren holds a torch in one hand and a book sticks out of her satchel, both symbolizing her determination to unveil occult mysteries. Above her, a cat represents the ability to see the unseen.

⌘ **Profile:** This narrative arc is not directly associated with any premade character. It can easily be attributed to any Character who experienced a sudden loss or extraordinary events with mystical or occult overtones. The signature NPCs Aodren Floyd and Steren Slaine are examples of such Characters.

⌘ **Faction:** Any.

⌘ **Theme:** This narrative arc is about the borders between the tangible and the intangible, the seen and unseen, the rational and the emotional. It covers questions about the nature of life and death, spirituality, reality, the power of passions, and truth hidden behind a veil of mysteries.

⌘ **Prerequisites:** The Character has developed an irrepressible fascination for all that is concealed and eludes comprehension, seeing such mysteries as intellectual challenges. The PC's motivation can be innate (they have always been different from others, who do not understand their mindset), the result of a confrontation with an unfathomable mystery of supposedly supernatural origin, or the fruits of a dramatic event such as the loss of a loved one, which resulted in the need to understand in order for life to have a meaning despite its tragedies.

The elements detailed in this book and in *The Black Moon Handbook* can serve as a basis for adventures and considerations related to this narrative arc. The investigations and cases presented in these books will thus not be just simple contracts to earn money or opportunities to do justice. They are also steps upon a long journey whose ultimate goal is to face true reality without being destroyed by the revelation, to reach the threshold of a new world, symbolically speaking. Metaphorically, truth is like a sanctuary with a treasure locked inside; a stately, secured, and dangerous place.

Here is an overview of the possible path of a Player following the narrative arc of the Occult. It features questions and ordeals that will lead such PCs to second-guess themselves, changing and revealing themselves at the same time:

⌘ **Focus:** A Focus is a scenario with a particular structure, centered on a narrative arc and providing the Players with opportunities to explore it (see the chapter “The Focuses” in Book 3 – Dearg, Episode 1). Before deciding to become an occultist, the PC led a normal, presumably satisfying life. Then an event occurs that makes the PC aware, more or less painfully, that the world is much bigger than it seemed. This is the start of a quest to find rare books or insiders who will agree to teach the PC until the Character is able to work independently.

⌘ **Research:** The novice occultist investigates strange cases, both supernatural and mundane, developing valuable skills and networks of correspondents.

⌘ **Pragmatic considerations:** Sooner or later, all occultists meet the same problem: the need to earn money catches up with them. The decisions they make will renew their bonds with society or keep them further estranged from it.

⌘ **The price of truth:** Truth is not universally appreciated, and the occultist will have to face revelations that will cause them ethical or political problems. How they react (isolating themselves, running away, facing the problems, or finding a creative solution) is a major decision that will speak volumes.

⌘ **Revelation:** By persevering despite all the difficulties, the occultist will be rewarded with important breakthroughs. However, they are often by themselves, with no one outside of their peers with whom they can talk about their works, which are generally considered disquieting, if not downright blasphemous.

⌘ **The taste of power:** Throughout their discoveries and experiences, they encounter Objects of Power, and may even acquire spells that grant them superior abilities, but at what price? What does power mean to them? How do they find a balance between truth and power? How do human beings, finite as they are, stand in front of the infinite? Once they have acquired a power beyond them, will the occultist engage in a new quest to rid themselves of it? Will they try to right the wrongs they have done during their quest, tormented by their conscience?



Occultists: The window

Since occultists methodically study the link between the tangible and the intangible, the methodology of their field finds relative acceptance by society, particularly in Reizh and in Talkéride cities, even though they will always face prejudice and hardships. They will encounter casual listeners, clients, or a curious audience in friendly, scholarly circles that develop, sometimes illegally, in most medium-sized or large-sized towns. In such places, they can find a mentor or peers with whom they can learn by following tried-and-true lessons, or through more disorganized experiences. In the end, even though cities are less constrictive, an occultist should always exercise caution.



The life of an investigator of the strange

Investigators specialized in occultism are generally driven by one of these two stimuli:

☯ **Curiosity.** Such Characters likely have a high Creativity, and have probably always been attracted by strange things. Before they become occultists, they may have been Scholars or Investigators (see Book 1 – Universe, p.204-205). They may also have had no choice but to take over their parents' profession as a Merchant or Craftsman, for example, providing them with a stable job to pay for their passion.

☯ **Traumas.** A dramatic event has painfully marked the Characters, so much so that they have never been able to get on with their lives. The Disadvantages Phobia, Addiction, and Trauma (see Book 1 – Universe, p.214) can be used to illustrate the in-game consequences of this life-altering shock.

Due to the scarcity of knowledge about their passion or obsession, the daily lives of occultists are fraught with difficulties. Their occupations and goals are shared between several recurrent activities:

☯ **Funding.** They need money to pay for their trips to isolated, presumably haunted places, or to buy the necessary materials for their studies (paper, ink, rare books, etc.) Some have a bread-and-butter job that relies on a secondary skill they are proficient in, and which is most often intellectual: preceptor, tutor, pen-

man, archivist, copyist, bookseller, shopkeeper, trader, etc. Others seek a patron, someone wealthy they may not necessarily see eye to eye with, but who will nevertheless be disposed to finance their activities. Some join secret societies, earning money through criminal activities, as in the case of the Circle of Emergence.

⌘ **Research.** Knowing, understanding, and discovering are the main motivations of occultists. Such aspirations take their toll on time and money, but also on other things. The sacrifices made in the name of science may lead stubborn eccentrics to refuse to have a family in spite of social pressure, or even to leave their spouse and children in search of a higher truth. Sometimes, on the verge of madness, they squander all they have, refusing to come to terms with their repeated failures and going on with their obsessive work until they meet a miserable end. The idea of a price to pay is a classic narrative theme, and thinking in such terms gives an idea of how powerful one's obsession can be. In that regard, the story of Vaughn Elarig is a good example (see Book 0 – Prologue, p. 71).

⌘ **Running away.** Laying low is rule #1 for occultists in Gwidre and most anywhere else. Getting involved in strange, baffling cases inevitably leads to making enemies. Those may be clients unhappy with the solution provided, or furious about the consequences of an investigation, such as an exorcism that resulted in the death of the possessed person. For example, Aodren Floyd had to deal with a client who refused to believe him (see Book 2 – Travels, p.146). Thus, many occultists' lives are endangered by very ordinary human beings, whom they must run away from or somehow elude. The most unfortunate of them even have to suffer retaliation for the crimes and mistakes of some of their peers whom they do not even know but who have been there before them and have left a poor impression.

⌘ **Revelation.** When the quest for truth does not lead to death or madness, it may bring mindboggling revelations that go beyond everything one could have hoped for. At this point, occultists do not know whether they are really rewarded for their efforts or if they would have been better off living a peaceful life with their loved ones. In the end, occultists had better develop throughout their quest a set of ethics or a philosophy that gives meaning to their experiences and to their long and often painful initiation. Only in this way will they be truly prepared to go through the ordeals that await them once the veil is lifted, cloaked in serenity and shielded by an inner strength.

Occult investigators: professions

Occultist is among the professions listed on pages 203 to 205 of Book 1 – Universe. This supplement introduces additional professions to propose more variety to the Players who wish to create an occultist. Since the study of occultism is not an insignificant endeavor, several professions include background information matching the archetype.

⌘ Curio shop owner

Buying and selling are part of their daily lives. They can use trade as a cover (whether they are sedentary or itinerant), a means to earn money, and an opportunity to set up a network of correspondents. They can also become collectors of strange trinkets and develop a passion for Objects of Power. They are publicly known as antique dealers, booksellers, penmen, or secondhand goods dealers.

⌘ **Primary Domain:** Occultism

⌘ **Secondary Domain:** Relation

⌘ Occult trafficker

Fascinated with mysteries, these esoteric enthusiasts believe that the end justifies the means as they look for easy money to finance their studies. They have made contact with unsavory people and are involved in all sorts of occult-related traffics: forbidden manuscripts, Objects of Power, sacred relics, bones from the Aergewin, Flux of dubious origin, etc. They may be an agent of a secret congregation like the Circle of Emergence.

⌘ **Primary Domain:** Occultism

⌘ **Secondary Domain:** Stealth

⌘ Ghost hunter

Unlike most occultists who tend to devote most of their energy to studies exclusively, ghost hunters are used to taking things to the field to hunt down evil entities or cleanse cursed places of their grim residents. Accustomed to things getting physical and trained in combat, they are equally capable of fighting a ghost or Feond.

⌘ **Primary Domain:** Occultism

⌘ **Secondary Domain:** Feats or Close Combat

Flux seeker

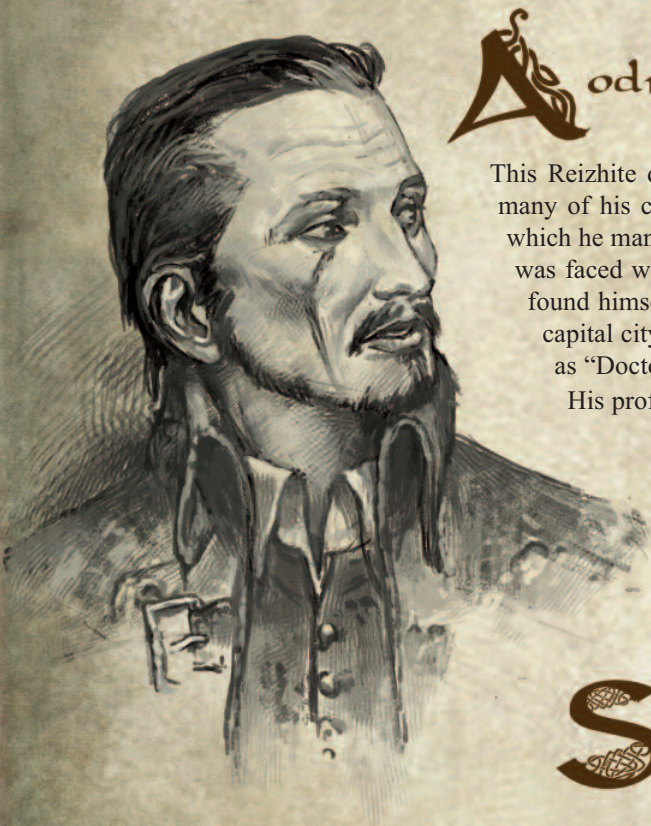
Flux seekers are occultists fascinated with this substance that still holds many secrets. They could be former Magientists who changed paths after an epiphany. The shock may have come from a horrifying experience with the victims of a blood extraction performed to obtain organic Flux. A dreadful thought then washed over them: what if the souls of the animals or humans were still in the Flux used to power artifacts? They may also have been unsettled by the effects of fossil Flux, which affects both the body and mind of poisoned people. What to think of these monsters, hideous shadows of their former selves? Now, they make use of their knowledge in Magience to devise a theory establishing a connection between this science and occultism.

Primary Domain: Occultism

Secondary Domain: Magience

Famous occultists

Two signature NPCs illustrate the path of occultists who dedicate their existence to endeavoring to understand the world. Both can be contacted, willing to aid whoever asks for their help and to teach motivated PCs. They can also be mentors, corresponding to the 40 points version of the Ally Advantage presented in Book 1 – Universe, p.212.



Aodren Floyd

This Reizhite dealt with mysteries rationally and methodically, and discovered that many of his cases essentially stemmed from more or less severe mental disorders, which he managed to treat, mainly through the skillful use of hypnosis. However, he was faced with a case that went beyond anything he could have imagined, and he found himself wrongly accused of murder. He had to run away from the Reizhite capital city to settle in the Talkéride capital. He has since been eking out a living as “Doctor Twain” while tirelessly carrying on with his investigations.

His profile can be found on p.146 of Book 2 – Travels.

Steren Slaine

As Aodren Floyd was running away from Baldh-Ruoch, Steren settled there after the death of her husband, who had apparently been possessed by an evil spirit. The silver lining of this tragedy was that she inherited the treasure her spouse had lost his soul for, which gave her the means to acquire a decent home. A conscientious, methodical woman, her activities are shared between case studies (which sometimes includes exorcisms), maintaining contact with a vast network of correspondents throughout Tri-Kazel, and writing treatises gathering everything she has learned. The most famous of them, mostly known in specialized circles and spread by supportive Varigals, is called “The Black Moon Handbook.”



Gauging a Character's knowledge

There are three ways to determine whether a Character knows about something or not. Depending on the situation and the pace they wish to set for the game, Leaders may use any of these options:

Investigating

If the PCs do not have the required piece of knowledge, the Leader can suggest that the Characters look for it. It will then be up to the Players to explain how they will look for the information they are after. Obviously, this can get lengthy (the time to visit a friend, to use a library, to break into a laboratory, etc.), but this can create the thrill of a mini-investigation and will be an opportunity for the Players to role-play their Characters and use their skills. The Leader is advised to use this method if the information concerned is related to the current story and its discovery would result in significant progress in the scenario. It would be boring to instead sum things up with one single skill roll! Conversely, if the information is basic and it would make sense for the PC to know it, the Leader can follow the instructions detailed in the paragraph, "Automatic success," below.

Using a Domain

A piece of information can be accessible via one directly related Domain—in this case, Occultism—as well as via other Domains, though the Difficulty Threshold will be higher. In other words, intellectual Domains can overlap. Therefore, even if the group of PCs includes no occultist, the Players may still know the desired piece of information thanks to Domains such as Demorthèn Mysteries, Erudition, or Prayer.

The board below shows the Difficulty Threshold associated with the complexity of a piece of information, first with Occultism, then with other possible Domains.

Occultism check	Complexity of the piece of information or knowledge	Equivalent for another intellectual Domain (Demorthèn Mysteries, Erudition, Prayer, etc.)
<i>Easy (8)</i>	<i>Basic, superficial information that a novice would know.</i>	<i>Complicated (14)</i>
<i>Standard (11)</i>	<i>Common information, known by most of those who have general knowledge of the Domain.</i>	<i>Difficult (17)</i>
<i>Complicated (14)</i>	<i>Information that only a professional of the Domain would be expected to know.</i>	<i>Very difficult (20)</i>
<i>Difficult (17)</i>	<i>Information only available to a seasoned professional.</i>	<i>Exceptional (25)</i>
<i>Very difficult (20)</i>	<i>Information only available to an expert.</i>	<i>Heroic (30)</i>

Automatic success

The Leader may want to avoid breaking the immersion of a game with a series of die rolls. A Character may have a Way + Domain (+ Advantage) score high enough for the addition of the two to reach the Difficulty Threshold set by the Leader even without the addition of 1D10. In that case, success is automatic, and there is no need to make a skill check.



Mediums: the threshold

Sensitivity and vulnerability

Most occultists try to understand things by dint of logic, whether through a rational method or a more intuitive one. Others, conversely, follow a more affective, empathic process. They get personally involved in the misfortunes of the grieving families whom they seek to help. They are affected by the tragedies that seem to hold ghosts back, barring them from rest. Those who care about them generally warn them of the risks they take by exposing the innermost recesses of their mind to phenomena that are still currently poorly understood. However, this does not deter them, determined to help as they are. Of course, such people can also be driven by a deep and irrepressible curiosity, a desire to see beyond the threshold of the mundane to explore the intangible, invisible world they half-sense.

The Eisdeach

In Kel Loar, I met a captain who had been several times to Tir na Loch, one of the isles of the Three Sisters Archipelago, and even as far as the Cairns' Island. He told me about a tradition of these islands concerning some kind of insane seers, the Eisdeach (pronounced "ey-ees-dey-ahk"). They are said to have a sort of peculiar sensitivity that allows them to feel negative events and passions. I heard they are actively disliked by the Demorthèn, who have formally forbidden them from coming close to the Cinthareid. However, the locals protect the Eisdeach since they are said to be the only ones able to say whether sailors who are long to come back are dead or simply late. They are called upon so that, through their visions and dreams, one may know whether one can wait and hope, or must let go and mourn.

Later, I also heard that there are Eisdeach along the coast of the Sea of Shrouds as well. Their social status is not as high on the peninsula as on the islands, though. They are seen as cursed, because they are bound to sink into madness. When I learned of the existence of mediums and spiritualism sessions, I could not help but draw a parallel between them and the poor wretches who suffer from recurring nightmares and are made to live in houses away from the rest of the village.

From the journal of
Hadrian, Magientist.



From Eisdeach to medium

On the coast, young people who show signs of having the gift—or curse—of the Eisdeach are entrusted to the care of their elders. This is how spiritual dynasties come to form, every generation succeeding the previous one. The adolescents who learn to understand their visions also face the inexorable fall of their mentor, who gradually loses reason. Many develop, sooner or later, a Mystical Delusion (see Book 1 – Universe, p.276).

In a desperate attempt to run away from eventual madness, or driven out during one of their mentor's crises, young Eisdeach sometimes flee from their native villages, turning into rootless, wandering vagrants. Upon reaching a town, they may learn about the existence of occultists, and mediums in particular. The knowledge and methods of these researchers may then appear as the only chance to escape insanity.

Mediums: professions


Generally, a medium will have Occultism as a Primary Domain and a Secondary Domain of the Player's choice, in accordance with the Character's background. This insert introduces a few variants on the theme of mediums. A Player who wishes to create a medium PC can choose one of these specialties or draw inspiration from them to create an original one.

Mystic

Raised in the faith of the Temple, mystics have been having visions from a very young age. They may have received terrifying glimpses of the misty Limbo, or beheld the glory of the One's icy heavens. Among their community, they had acquired a reputation as a future Elect. Sigires came to question them, to ascertain whether they weren't future sorcerers instead. They managed to fool the interrogators, but they couldn't lie to themselves any longer. The truth is more complex than they had learned, and they needed to know more. Now, they still pray to the One, but they try to understand both the world and themselves through occultism.

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 Primary Domain: Occultism

 Secondary Domain: Prayer

Ashen prophet

They used to be aspiring Ionnthén, but they ran away from their mentor and community following a mystic experience that horrified them. Their visions have shown them Saoghal-Glas, the world after the end of Esteren as the Demorthén depict it: a vast plain of cold ashes, swept by howling winds. At other times, they got to see the C'maoghs and half-heard their lament. It felt so real that they could not just attribute it to a trick of the mind. They believe that these experiences have something to do with the ghosts that haunt certain houses, and even possess some unfortunate souls. Could the C'maoghs be the spirits of the departed? They travel across Tri-Kazel like the Demorthén of old, though their mission is now to understand what occult forces are at work, and investigate the origin of the C'maoghs. Ashen prophets are branded as Morcails by the Demorthén and are therefore hunted down.

 Primary Domain: Occultism

 Secondary Domain: Demorthén Mysteries

Eisdeach

Eisdeach are traditionally natives of the Three Sisters Archipelago, but they may also have been born in a coastal region, in close contact with an untamed nature they are familiar with and which has made a strong impression on them. Tempests, chasms, cliffs, and the raging sea are wonders that rouse within them feelings of awe; a respectful fear mingled with rapt fascination before the magnificent, merciless immensity. This beauty helps them live with a strange gift that lets them see certain signs. According to tradition, the Eisdeach have the ability to sense whether a person lost at sea is dead or alive. Such a faculty is only a legend, but it stems from their particular connection with the intangible world. However, these visions are a constant threat to their sanity, driving them ever closer to madness.

 Primary Domain: Occultism

 Secondary Domain: Natural Environment

On the in-game use of visions

Mediums (and other occultists, to a lesser extent) are Characters who study visions and assorted phenomena. The chapter "Visions and Occult Arts" provides the Leader with tools and advice to include these aspects without the risk of jeopardizing the scenario.

Sorcerers: the wound

As opposed to researchers, who experiment systematically, sorcerers believe they have managed to make contact with an entity from an intangible world without knowing exactly how. Something happened, and since then, they have been like a gate, or more like a crack for this tormented being, made of violent, hostile, and excessive desires in every regard. Of course, they may also simply be deluded, insane occultists. Sorcerers believe they are connected to a power they generally cannot name that has given them rather crude and destructive powers.



The primary use of sorcerers is as adversaries in ambiguous or downright hostile encounters. This is the easiest way for Leaders to insert supernatural elements in the game while avoiding the important social complications related to the presence of a sorcerer among the PCs. The Circle of Emergence, for example, often recruits sorcerers in order to understand their powers, study them, and use their uncanny abilities to increase the organization's influence.



The Black Magic Discipline, introduced in Book 2 – Travels, p.179, grants access to spells. Overall, the game mechanics are comparable to those used for Elect of the Temple (see Book 1 – Universe, p.257), with Exaltation as the associated “energy pool.” Sorcerous powers are very diverse and can be associated with fire, shadow, wind, etc. Their effects can be subtle, such as influencing minds and emotions (see Book 1 – Universe, p.171), in a way similar to Miracles like Canticle, Might of Faith, or Vision of Limbo (see Book 1 – Universe, p.259).

Recovering Exaltation is done through the Ritual Discipline, which is the equivalent of the Contemplation Discipline for the Elect.

*The sorcerer lord,
Mac Snòr*

Sorcerers: professions


Here are various professions that someone wanting to play a sorcerer can choose from. Since such Characters are generally antagonists, the Leader may want to restrict these profiles to NPCs. The background of each profile listed can provide inspiration when preparing an encounter with a formidable sorcerer.




Trauma: A sorcerer's life is particularly traumatic. To reflect this, during Character Creation, sorcerers must take the maximum version of the Trauma Disadvantage (see Book 1 – Universe, p.214), resulting in 3 Permanent Trauma points. As per the rules, the Character also gets 30 additional XPs.

Fallen adept

Placed in a religious environment such as a monastery at a very young age, the fallen adept has never been a sincere believer. They felt confined and nurtured resentment toward the authority figures who decided everything for them. Fortune smiled upon the adept when they entered the service of a copyist scholar. The work was tiresome, but more interesting than the grueling tasks the adept had been accustomed to. Mainly, the work gave access to forbidden writings, books that held knowledge clashing with the dogma fed by the Temple. In the end, the fallen adept was caught reading blasphemous lore or experimenting in black magic, which forced the heretic to escape and live under a new identity. Now, the fallen adept uses this dark knowledge and familiarity with the Temple's dogma to insidiously corrupt unwary minds.


 **Primary Domain:** Occultism  **Secondary Domain:** Prayer

 **Additional prerequisite:** the fallen adept must take the Well-read Advantage (see Book 1 – Universe, p.214).

Enlightened Fool



A survivor of a shipwreck or a dauntless explorer, the enlightened Fool spent several months alone on the Cairns' Island, surviving in very harsh conditions. Unlike many others, the Fool did not lose reason after drinking from the Fools' Spring—at least not entirely. However, they did change. Fascinated with water, they have developed a unique knowledge of the sea and boats and worship an entity whose exact nature is left to the Player or Leader, such as the Kraken (see Book 2 – Travels, p.67).

 **Primary Domain:** Occultism  **Secondary Domain:** Natural Environment or Travel

 **Additional prerequisite:** the Fool must take the Sturdy Advantage (see Book 1 – Universe, p.213).

Messenger

The order of the Messengers is a secret society of sorcerers from Tuaille, with offshoots in many large towns of Tri-Kazel. Though the group was established for political purposes (with the intention of unifying the three kingdoms), it is most noteworthy for being one of the best organized and most powerful factions of sorcerers in the peninsula. Its members believe in the existence of superior entities they can obtain powers from. One of the order's missions is to look for new adepts; people with occult powers, sometimes unbeknownst to themselves or unwillingly granted (like Ciany Lorn, mentioned on page 156 of Book 2 – Travels). The Character is among these chosen ones, unless the aspirant deliberately studied forbidden arts to attempt to join the order.

 **Primary Domain:** Occultism  **Secondary Domain:** Any



Sorcery and the prevalence of the supernatural

Sorcerers can obviously give the game a very supernatural feel, but not necessarily. To begin with, Leaders must think about how much influence they want supernatural elements to have in the game. For a low fantasy atmosphere, three principles should be kept in mind:

The overall scarcity of the supernatural.

Most Demorthèn own very few Oghamic stones, if any, and they only make use of them sparingly, out of respect for the spirits of nature. Likewise, the Elect of the Temple are exceptional people, and some believers even spend many years without having ever heard anything but rumors about them. As for Magientists, extracting and refining Flux is such a costly process that they carefully restrict access to the

artifacts they design. Finally, sorcerers and Morcails know that their life is under constant threat and make sure to keep a low profile. With such a low fantasy setting, most sorcerers can be portrayed as lunatics devoid of any actual powers.

⌘ Subtle powers with unseen effects.

A supernatural effect manipulating the victim's subjective perceptions can be more horrific than one with objective, obvious effects. For example: altering perceptions, inflicting dreams or visions, influencing moods, etc. More overt powers can be used in a low fantasy story, on the condition that they are used in the absence of the PCs, who will only have testimonies to rely on. What will they think of an elated child claiming that a mysterious man resurrected his mother? Could she have only been seriously wounded? What about the fire that started following a vagrant's curse? It may very well have been a coincidence: weren't there lit candles inside, and couldn't they have fallen on straw, cloth, or wood?

⌘ Preparing the rise of the supernatural.

For something supernatural not to appear predictable, trite, or obvious, it should not be part of the story without proper preparation. Something extraordinary should be foretold by rumors and omens. There should be confusion, contradictions, muddled testimonies. Uncertainty and ignorance will feed both fear and awe. An encounter with a sorcerer, or anything supernatural, will be all the more intense if the Players are already on the edge of their seats, and to do that, they must want to know and understand. There should be throughout the story a rising feeling of tension leading to the final confrontation that will be the scenario's apotheosis.

⌘ Learning

There are two ways one can acquire sorcerous powers.

The first and most common one results from a violent shock, a traumatizing revelation taking place through extraordinary circumstances. This is the case for Ciany Lorn (see Book 2 – Travels, p.156) and Brother Arathos (see The Black Moon Handbook, p.32). These extraordinary events are comparatively as intense as what Elect of the Temple feel when they receive their first Miracle (see the sections “The path of the Ordinances” and “Optional scene: Summoning a Miracle” in the “Mac Thogail” Focus of Book 3 – Dearg). There are more revelations for sorcerers than for Elect—five times as many, approximately. However, the life expectancy of sorcerers is obviously much shorter: they are isolated, hunted, harassed, feared, ostracized... They cannot afford the slightest mistake, whereas the Elect are respected by the believers and protected by a whole institution that elevates them as role models.

The second possibility lies in studying books holding rare, unhealthy, and sometimes demented knowledge. Such writings are the results of speculations and experiments from occultists, sorcerers, or sorcerer hunters. Many are one of a kind, sometimes encrypted to make them impossible to read for enemies or the uninitiated. Eberict, “the Shadow” (see Book 2 – Travels, p.172) was thus able to learn spells following countless hours of studying in Expiation, at a time when he was still a Sigire.

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⌘ Sorcerer hunting


Sorcerers are feared and hunted wherever they are identified as such, though for different reasons:

⌘ **Gwidre.** From the point of view of a follower of the Temple, sorcerers, in one way or another, are the servants of demons. They have become a portal to Limbo, an agent of destructive, malevolent powers. Striking down sorcerers is necessary to protect the world from evil influences. Burning to a cinder sorcerers' bodies and all of their possessions (unhallowed books and instruments used for rituals) is a sure-fire way to permanently get rid of any trace of their blasphemous presence on the world. Note that although sorcerers are generally incinerated, they are not systematically burned alive. This execution is a form of aggravated sentence in the case of particularly awful crimes, or the result of an abnormally cruel judge. Usually, the person is strangled on the pyre after they have been given one last opportunity to beg the One for His mercy. Then the fire is lit.

⌘ **Taol-Kaer.** Those who follow the traditional beliefs upheld by the Demorthèn often mistake sorcerers for Morcails. And since fallen Demorthèn are treated like criminals of the worst kind, ruthlessly hunted and killed, sorcerers are subjected to the same fate. As for the execution, there are no particular rules. Most often, it takes place during a nocturnal assault or an ambush to leave no chance for a target considered to be highly dangerous. The body is generally left to the scavengers, sometimes after it has been dismembered.

⌘ **Reizh.** The situation of sorcerers depends on the region they are in. In the lands where Demorthèn faith is still prevalent, they are taken for Morcails and treated as such, therefore being executed as soon as they are identified. North-east of the Donir, however, the law follows rationalist, materialist principles, so that sorcerers can only be blamed and punished for crimes duly recognized by an official court.

⌘ A tribunal in Farl or Baldh-Ruoch has to examine a murder that has been apparently been committed with the use of sorcery. What will happen? This will have major consequences for occultists, either very positive or very negative. For a team of practitioners of this esoteric science, cracking the case could be the way to prove that their research is useful to society, and not just half-baked ramblings or hocus-pocus. This would open the way for occult studies to be approved by academies and universities, and give occultists a place where they could work openly.



Conversely, the trial could give rise to a lot of bad press and a radical aversion for anything even remotely related to sorcery and occultism. In that regard, the team's behavior will be crucial: if they show that they are committed to fighting sorcerers, dangerous supernatural phenomena, and criminal actions in general, then they will prove and publicly display their integrity and valor. The future of occultists is in their hands.

Sorcerous powers

I do not like Sigires, and Sigires do not like me. Is the enemy of my enemy my friend? Regarding sorcerers, I will be tempted to say no. Actually, I am not sure I want to meet one to verify what I have heard about them. This vexes me, as I am not the type to be impressed by tall tales. And yet...

It was not far from the Gwidrite border. I was taking care of my tour and my business when I reached a mountain inn. It was an austere place, I might even say grim, with the addition of the heavy rain falling outside. My coat was drenched, so I quickly took it off to hang it by the fire and get it dry. Usually, I am more careful and first get a feel for the locals. This time, I had not noticed the group in black cloaks in the corner. Of course, I was carrying my usual paraphernalia with me, which, in addition to my red garments, made my occupation painfully obvious. I suddenly became aware that they were all staring somberly at me, and that I was dealing with a party of Sigires who looked like they had just had a rough day. Panic washed over me as I wondered whether they would cause me problems, but then I decided to go for broke and audaciously sat at their table to say hello, talk to them... I behaved freely, without a sign of worry.

Their leader, a short-haired, blond woman called Geillis, surprised me when she agreed to converse for a while. Obviously, I was delighted to get the opportunity to learn more. They had just managed to eliminate a sorcerer that had given them much trouble. I must say, their tale curdled my blood. And to think that it was not the first sorcerer they hunted! The Sigire also told me of a strange theory that earned her groans from her colleagues. She suspected that the sorcerers' powers were essentially connected to one element, such as fire or wind, for example. It reminded her of what she had heard about the pagan, spirit-based cults of Demorthèn. According to her, these ancient rites were nothing but variants of cults dedicated to demons and to the powers of Limbo, such as Feondas, which were forces of destruction themselves. If she was to be believed, the stake of her battle was the salvation of the whole peninsula.

Honestly, I am not certain of this woman's mental condition, but this parallel between the spirits sorcerers worship and the spirits of the Demorthèn... Could these stones, these Ogham that they use, act as filters to keep them from sinking into madness while wielding primal powers?

From the journal of Hadrian, Magientist.



The Tarish wound

Even they do not know or try to forget about the painful source of what makes them different from other peoples. They focus on their connection with their ancestors and their clan, willfully cloistered from the rest of the world. They hand down certain pieces of ancient knowledge, notably the Bewitchment Discipline from the Occultism Domain, with which they cast terrible curses (see Book 2 – Travels, p.180). This is only taught to trustworthy members of the clan.

The world is changing, however. They can see it in the Magientist breakthroughs from Reizh or the more disciplined organization of Gwidre. Some pure-blooded and half-blooded Tarish alike find it more convenient to become part of Tri-Kazelian society. It is obvious that sooner or later, the invisible walls that guard the Tarish and their secrets will start crumbling.

Among the most passionate occultists are Tarish half-bloods who make it their mission to rediscover their roots, generally with even more enthusiasm and success than pure-bloods. In the context of a campaign, this can be associated with the narrative arc of Origins (see the chapter “Advanced Character Creation” in Book 3 – Dearg), which will thus combine cultural and esoteric research.

The implications of divination

The desire for knowledge, to see the past, the future, or from afar, is at the center of every form of divination. What galls me about this principle is its implications. Let us say we find a way to predict the future; what shall we think of it? Let us assume that one or several gods exist, and that they know the future; why would they consent to impart it to a creature as insignificant as an ant from their perspective? This would seem to imply that they have an interest in doing so, but why? Pity perhaps? If we take into account sickness, old age, death, and Feondas, I believe we can reasonably question the benevolence of any possible superior entity. Another explanation why we might divine the future is because it is inescapable, meaning that foreseen events are bound to happen. In that case, human choice would be reduced to the equivalent of notes upon a music sheet that has already been written. How sad that would be... Moreover, I believe that, were the future so set in stone, we would already know about it, with how much time the Tarish have spent drawing cards, the Demorthèn begging their spirits, and the occultists trying anything and everything to understand the unseen.

In the end, it seems obvious to me that the future is unknowable. I have never seen anything to convince me of the contrary or even lead me to doubt this assumption. Regarding knowledge of the past or present, however, I am less assured.

From the journal of Hadrian, Magientist.

Necromancy and spiritualism

Following a troubling story about Candlewood, I endeavored to learn more about occultists. I talked with a few of them who did not appear demented or dangerous. It is hard to earn their trust. In the end, I was allowed to be present at a soiree between several occultists in Osta-Baille. The atmosphere was quite relaxed; it felt every bit like a dinner between friends. I heard some of them talk about the Tarish and their traditional brand of occultism, divination in particular, so I questioned them: had they ever experienced things that made them reasonably certain of the existence of an ability to know the past, the present, or the future? As I suspected, the various methods aiming at seeing the future were uncertain, more akin to autosuggestion or heuristic methods to choose what one already knows to be the correct decision intuitively. In the end, the only technique that caught my interest and actually made me think twice was necromancy. Many prefer to use the term “spiritualism,” as they probably think it more elegant to tactfully talk about “spirits,” even though it is unmistakably about asking the dead for information. Well, I admit I am being facetious, as spiritualism actually involves an additional nuance. It is practically a religion, or at least a developed set of ethics whose purpose is harmony between the material and the immaterial, between the living and the dead.

From what I understood, necromancy is tricky business. Only an “ill-dead” can be interrogated, which means someone who has committed suicide, been murdered, or died at a young age in a tragic accident. It seems that somehow, the dead person's desire to live, how it refuses or dreads death, is a determining factor. The more time has elapsed after death, the more the deceased seems to literally fade away, as if dissolving, a related inconvenience being that its memory dissipates too. Apparently, it only retains emotions without remembering their causes. Conversely, a dead person who remains attached, anchored to a loved one or to an object of particular significance seems to retain more of its personality, motivations, and knowledge. There is, however, a flaw to this apparently ideal situation. Occultists who have seen such manifestations first-hand agree that the emotions of the summoned being are exacerbated, excessive, sometimes bordering on perversion and delirium. Can one actually trust such a twisted being?






From the journal of Hadrian, Magientist.

Occult Disciplines

The Disciplines related to Occultism are many and have plenty of utility, whether in wild or urban territory, during a crisis, or for scholarly research. Some are widespread and legal, so that it is relatively easy to learn about them, through book-assisted self-teaching or by frequenting scholarly circles in towns. They can all prove useful in “A Tidy Room,” and most will regularly prove useful to an investigator.

Esotericism

This Discipline gathers the theoretical knowledge and methodology to efficiently develop one's own theoretical construct. A Character who is learned in this field knows the gist of most beliefs. This Discipline and its aspects are more thoroughly detailed in *The Black Moon Handbook*. An Occultism (Esotericism) roll can be used to:

-  Know a legend.
-  Know theories on hauntings.
-  Lead a spiritualism session or séance.
-  Be able to experience lucid dreaming.
-  Exorcise a possessed person.

Hypnosis

Hypnosis is a technique designed to put an individual in a state of altered consciousness for various purposes. An investigator may use it to help witnesses remember everything they saw with photographic accuracy, whereas a healer will be interested in the possibility of easing the pain of someone sick or wounded. Finally, this Discipline can also be used to treat traumas and mental disorders.

Conditions for a successful hypnosis

Hypnosis requires trust between the hypnotist and the hypnotized, in addition to a quiet environment. It must be associated with a state of well-being for the patient, whose trance-like condition will stop if a disturbance occurs. Disrupting the process may only take a simple sentence or action that will hurt the subject physically or morally. Hypnosis does not make it possible to have people perform actions that they would ordinarily deem unacceptable. The minimum duration of a hypnosis session is 10 Rounds, which is equivalent to a minute.



Exploring memories

By making it possible to reach a state of altered consciousness characterized by feelings of well-being and safety, hypnosis lifts mental blocks obstructing the way to certain memories or some details of those memories. Sometimes they are buried deep due to traumas, the use of drugs, or dangerous Disciplines such as Suggestion developed by the Circle of Emergence (see p.54).

Medical applications

Anesthesia. Without anesthetics, a surgeon has to perform with dexterity and speed, as patients who are being operated on can die of pain, blood loss, or infection. A patient anesthetized with hypnosis can be operated for any type of pathology. More cautiously, hypnosis can supplement a medicine-based anesthesia that will therefore require fewer active ingredients and will be less likely to cause complications. To use this ability, the practitioner must have at least 8 in Hypnosis and pass a Difficult (17) check.

Stimulate immune defenses. Having a patient go through regular hypnosis sessions will result in quicker recovery. Someone under such psychic care will heal twice as fast. Therefore, for each 24 hours, any Damage points suffered will disappear as follows: 2 points for a good night's rest; 4 points if the patient is also tended to; 6 points if the patient stays in bed or has likewise remained quiet for the whole day. To use this ability, a minimum level of 8 in Hypnosis is required, and the user can only tend to a limited number of patients at the same time. As a rule of thumb, this number should be equivalent to the healer's Empathy.

Treating for trauma

Hypnosis yields good results in the care of trauma, particularly during periods of grief or as treatment of phobias. The rules about such care are detailed in Book 1 – Universe, p.279-280.

Dream Interpretation

Dream Interpretation is a Discipline focused on the comprehension of dreams' symbolic meanings and of related mysteries, like those of Deathcheaters (see Book 1 – Universe, p.170) or collective dreams (see Book 0 – Prologue, “Loch Varn”). Occultism (Dream Interpretation) covers the following applications:

- ✦ Knowing about dream-related traditions, Deathcheaters, and the book “The Territories,” by Goran Franz; a rare, precious tome whose mere acquisition could be a quest in itself for an occultist.
- ✦ Deciphering the symbols of people's dreams, which will help the patients understand their own wishes and desires, and therefore make the wisest decisions (in matters of trade, marriage, alliance, etc.)
- ✦ Being aware that one is dreaming.

Mental Phenomena

The Mental phenomena Discipline is the Occultism equivalent of Knowledge of Mental Troubles, a Discipline of the Science Domain. It makes it possible to analyze someone's mental condition, mainly on the basis of Ernst Zigger's work. Combined with Hypnosis, Mind Treatment, or Spirituality, it can be used to heal someone's mind (see Book 1 – Universe, p.279-280). In addition, this Discipline, just like Knowledge of Mental Troubles, provides skills in empirical criminology. This field consists of studying crimes and criminals in order to figure out probabilistic laws that will make it possible to deduce a criminal's profile from the examination of the victim and crime scene. However, an empirical criminologist must remain humble: this discipline, like any empirical science, proceeds from experience, which means it is in constant evolution, looking for patterns and tendencies.

The murder committed in “A Tidy Room” gives an opportunity to put this investigation method to the test with an actual crime. Act 1, Scene 6 of the scenario shows how the Mental Phenomena Discipline can be applied to empirical criminology.

A new perspective in the study of disorders

The work of Maaryan, aka The Dàmàthair

For a long time, the writings of Ernst Zigger dominated the field of the study mental troubles. It offered an elegant and apparently complete model, according to which personality trends were related to increasingly serious derangements manifesting under the pressure of harsh experiences. In Reizh, a new standard has been met with enthusiasm among occultists because it leaves room for the discovery and definition of new, more or less atypical and rare troubles.

Maaryan, called “The Dàmàthair” because of her former activity, is the initiator of this school of thought. Now a woman in her fifties with salt and pepper hair, she gives the image of an energetic matron filled with deep compassion toward mankind behind her piercing stare. No one could ever have guessed that she would become a respected author in the study of the mind when she was born in the Reizhite village of Geldone. She was married at a very young age to a farmer and became a Dàmàthair. Her first child, Esbeth, grew up to become a lovely, much courted girl. She married a honey-tongued city man whom everybody was fond of. However, Maaryan felt something was awry, and when she paid a surprise visit to her daughter—who had not been writing for some time—a few months later, she was horrified to discover how awful her life was. The young woman had to prostitute herself to make ends meet, and her husband frequently beat her. The Dàmàthair went through painful, strenuous efforts to free her daughter, but as she did so, she met a jurist, Arthus Dubel, an occultist interested in mental phenomena. This opened her eyes to how complex and treacherous the human mind could be. As she noticed that the canonically recognized disorders did not provide satisfactory explanations to a certain number of criminal profiles, she took it upon herself to study and observe them. She focused on infamous cases, on shameful, shocking acts, seeking to understand how to identify criminals during their development. What could lead a child to become a monster once an adult? How could some people do horrible things without feeling guilt?

Her life changed radically. She left her village, to which she only returned a few weeks every year, spending most of her time in the city to study, question Varigals, examine cases by herself, and correspond to share what she had learned or deduced. Assisted by her daughter, she now has an office in Kalvernach, and has written many articles in addition to a few treatises. “The Tormentor's Mask,” in which she describes her first experience in great detail, is her magnum opus. Her purpose is to cover obscure but very dangerous cases that she was able to identify. The “Cold Mask” disorder was her first discovery.



New disorder: the Cold Mask

The Cold Mask disorder is generally associated with a low score in Empathy, which shows inability to relate to others. It is sometimes complemented by a high score in Reason, analyzing the world in a cold, calculated manner. Other people become only tools, chess pieces, and only the subjects' own needs matter.

Symptom of aloofness

The subjects have little regard for emotions, failing to understand how someone's death can cause grief, or how a sorrowful romance can make readers shed tears. They feel different but are aware that they need society to live comfortably or achieve objectives, so most of the time they play along. They can feel respect and esteem, which will stem from the interest of a relation and the trustworthiness of a person in certain domains. Their typical sign of trust is to say things as they are for them, for example to explain that they cannot abide with sentimentality.

Their main weakness is their inner emptiness. They look for something that will fulfill them, that will give meaning to their existence, but deprived of emotions, of attachment, as they are, they remain superficial. They lack inspiration, drive, and the satisfaction borne of success. They can never stop, and even though they strive to be the best, they are haunted by a prickling feeling of jealousy that can become destructive toward “normal,” “happy” people. They may go as far as to humiliate and kill with a capricious cruelty whose logic and meaning will elude other people.

Syndrome of manipulation

Other people are just tools, cattle, guinea pigs, but it remains to be determined how useful they are. The answer to this question depends mostly on the Characters' objectives. If they are Magientists searching for lodes of fossil Flux, they will appreciate knowledgeable informers and colleagues who can help them. An occultist studying the human mind may attempt to orchestrate terrifying crises to observe what happens, for example whether mental and physical phenomena are connected. Any interaction is calculated, and human relationships are rationalized like the reactions of organic machines. Subjects are keenly aware of the notion of the social game and hone their skills to be the best social engineers. This results in a +2 bonus to manipulation-based rolls, which gives them an edge to fool people, even experts in mental phenomena, through Relation rolls. Moreover, the patients also get a +2 bonus to resist any emotional disturbance.

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Unfeeling puppeteer

Remote from their emotions, the subjects feel like a stage director, the center of a universe they must order and control to get what they want. They lie and conceal most of the time. During a Crisis, they release their anger on those who are psychologically weak, taking pleasure in humiliating them, crushing them under the weight of their weaknesses to vent. Breaking, crushing, dominating, fooling, deceiving... the damage they cause will vary depending upon the magnitude of their ambitions. Only their own interests matter, and other people are safe only as long as these puppets are more useful alive and well. If needed, they will betray without remorse. In that regard, guilt only exists in their mind as a distorted concept, since the only thing they abide by is their own ambition, and the only regrets they might have are from not following their ambitions. Unfeeling puppeteers get another +2 bonus to manipulate and remain shielded from emotions—willingly or not. Reason is Strengthened while Empathy is Weakened.

Portraying the Cold Mask



The Cold Mask is a disorder intended for NPCs. It is fundamentally asocial, manipulative, and traitorous, which does not fit the purpose of having the PCs functionally coexist.

Book 1 – Universe includes a coherent list of mental disorders coordinated with the Ways system that the Leader can use (see p.269). They make up the bulk, but not the entirety of the ways the frailties and faults of the Characters' minds can manifest. The Cold Mask is a mental and social disorder particularly appropriate to introduce antagonists that do not immediately come off as hostile or deranged. The excellent control they have over their reactions, at the cost of any spontaneity, is perfect to take aback and surprise a team of overconfident PCs. This disorder is particularly fitting for bards, courtesans, occultists, or Magientists.

The Leader can draw inspiration from many iconic characters. Professor Moriarty, criminal genius and sworn enemy of Sherlock Holmes (“The Final Problem,” by Arthur Conan Doyle, 1893) is the head of a criminal organization. The serial killer/psychiatrist Hannibal Lecter is the dark mentor of FBI agent Clarice Starling (“The Silence of the Lambs,” the novel by Thomas Harris, 1988). Verbal Kint, aka Keyser Söze, the manipulative expert criminal, poses as a weak, pathetic man (“Usual Suspects,” directed by Brian Singer, 1995), offering an example of character whose dangerousness comes as a surprise. These three characters can serve as models for Aïndrid in the scenario “A Tidy Room.” The serial killer Dexter (from the eponymous series of novels by Jeff Lindsay) can also be an inspiration for the Leader regarding how to depict the Symptom of aloofness.

Other occult-related Disciplines

Occultists sometimes make use of knowledge not directly related to occultism for their research. These side Disciplines may even be the initial profession or the cover of an isolated occultist who wishes to lay low. Every one of these skills can also provide opportunities for plot hooks and encounters, whether the Character tries to improve in this Discipline or is called upon to practice it.

Erudition: Languages

Learning a new language requires spending time—generally at least a few months—and having a teacher. All Tri-Kazeliens know the common tongue and their local dialect. Each point a Character has in this Discipline equals to being proficient in one additional language.

A Character with a level of 7 in Languages means that said Character knows 2 languages in addition to the native ones.

Here are a few languages that occultists may be interested in:

Ancient tongue.

Spoken by the Osag as well as the inhabitants of the Three Sisters, it is considered a sacred tongue by many Demorthèn. Since none of these people write down their tales and legends, the only way to learn about their culture is to earn the trust of some of them.

Continental.

The chronicles and ancient books narrating the arrival of the Continentals, whether Magientists or adepts of the Temple, are rare and precious. Could they contain hidden pearls of knowledge? Unfortunately, many of these priceless copies were lost to time due to neglect and various incidents. The best linguists are currently among the monks and clerics of the Temple, but many books were pillaged during the War of the Temple (857-863), and now adorn the private libraries of noble families across Taol-Kaer and Reizh. Most probably, the revelations they yield are essentially about the history of the Temple, the missionaries' arrival, and the establishment of the religion of the One on the peninsula.

Thieves' cant.

The traffickers of Koskan and seasoned brigands learn it as a Discipline from the Stealth Domain, since it allows them to get messages across without fear of being overheard by honest citizens or guards. This lingo is a mixture of terms whose meaning has been altered, snatches of Tarish, pieces of various local dialects, and neologisms. For occultists who frequently deal with underground networks to finance their research, knowing this language is a boon.

Tarish.

Few among those who are not of Tarish blood know it, and even many half-bloods have never learned it. This language is an essential element of this people's identity. It is used for ceremonies, rites of passage, prayers, but also for more unsavory dealings. The Tarish are nomads, knowing the peninsula's roads and pathways nearly as well as the Varigals. Moreover, they generally do not feel particularly constrained by the laws of the settled folk. It happens that Tarish clans are involved, at various degrees, in contraband or smuggling.

Magience or Science: Medicine

In the field, first aid can be administered through various Domains and Disciplines (Demorthèn Mysteries (Traditional Medicine), Magience (Medicine), Natural Environment (First Aid), and Science (Medicine)). Naturally, people by and large are more skilled in the Natural Environment Domain. What distinguishes Medicine is its method, its rigor, and the tools it uses. Most healers and physicians make their remedies themselves, from ingredients found at apothecaries and herbalists. Some Varigals and rural inhabitants also collect medicinal plants to make additional money.

The most complex preparations, including synthesizing certain drugs, require an equipped laboratory to be made. The boldest occultists use toxic compounds to reach states of altered consciousness, experience lucid dreams, and go into trances. Medical know-how limits the risk of accidents, poisoning, or overdose. A minimum level of 8 in the Medicine Discipline is required to make such compounds. A Complicated (14) Medicine roll is necessary to administer the right dose. Note that such experiments are highly dangerous; a failure with a natural 1 on the die roll will most certainly result in the recipient's death.

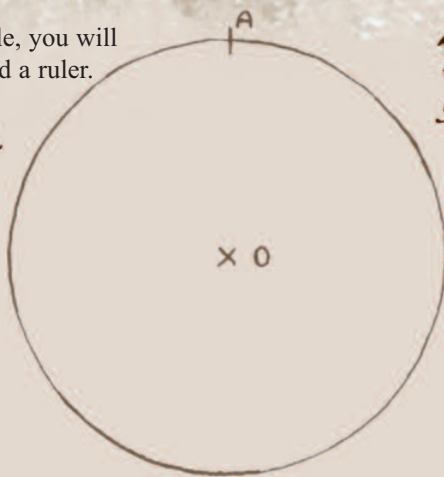
Science: Cryptography

Many occultists are influenced by the idea that, since mathematics make it possible to translate phenomena into numbers, there may be a secret link between algebra and the comprehension of the world as a whole. Everything is a symbol and an object of speculation in Esotericism, but translating it into rituals requires technical know-how. The Cryptography Discipline covers many useful applications for occultists. Geometry, for example, makes it possible to draw accurate shapes. It is not easy to draw a pentagram or a heptagram on the fly!

Drawing a Hexcelsis

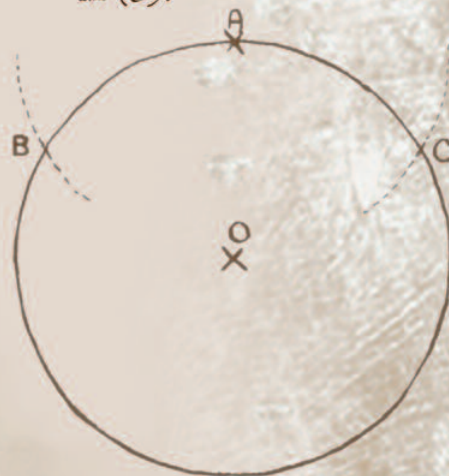
To draw a Hexcelsis in a circle, you will need a pair of compasses and a ruler.

1. *A* Draw a circle (*S*).
Mark the center (*O*).
Keep the pair of compasses
at the same radius,

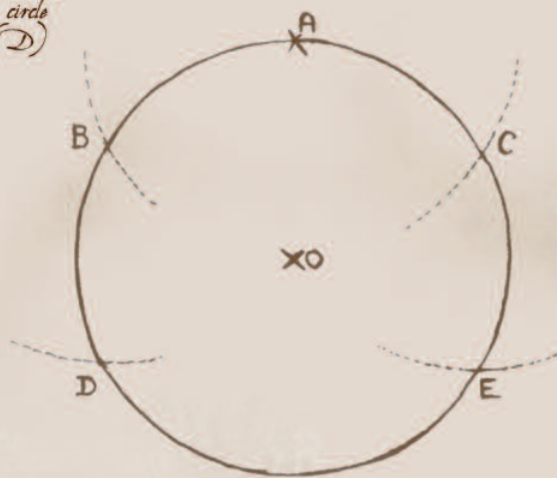


2. *A* Mark the top of the circle (*A*),
which will also be the top
of the Hexcelsis.

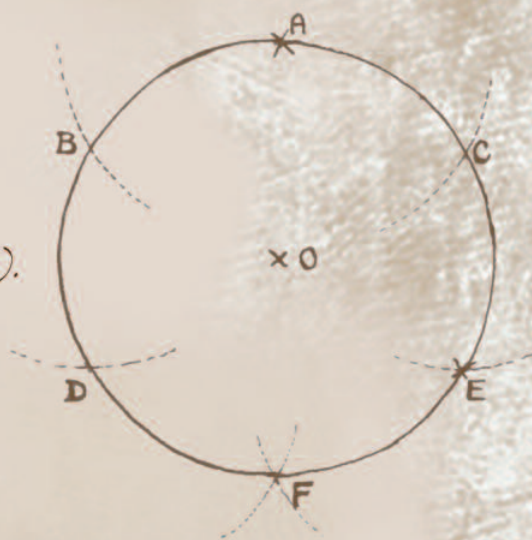
3. *A* Draw two arcs of a circle
starting from (*A*). This results in two
new points on the circle (*S*): (*B*)
and (*C*).



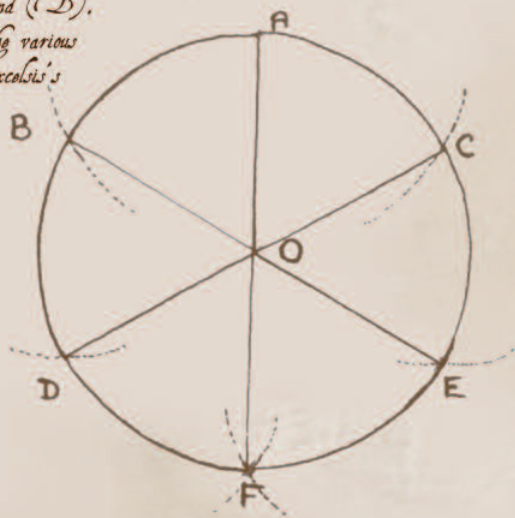
4. *A* From (*B*) and (*C*),
draw two other arcs of a circle
on (*S*), which will be (*D*)
and (*E*).



5. From (*D*) or (*E*),
draw another arc of a circle (*F*).



6. (*A*) and (*F*) are on the same
level on (*S*); same for (*B*) and (*E*)
as well as (*C*) and (*D*).
These points are the various
points of the Hexcelsis's
snowflake.



7. *A* Connect (*A*) to (*F*), (*B*)
to (*E*), (*C*) to (*D*).
All the lines go through (*O*),
the center of the circle
and of the snowflake.



Now, you can adorn the snowflake with symmetrical, regular patterns to make it unique,
because no two snowflakes are alike...

Steron Shaine

Regarding decrypting and deciphering, here is a brief glance at the terminology:

⌘ **Code**: means the simple translation of a system of symbols into another

⌘ **Cipher**: can imply using more complex methods, such as a double key, a secret language, or a ruler.

Cryptography also makes it possible to design codes to encrypt messages or even whole books, in order to keep one's secrets from rivals or enemies. Without a key or any clue to decrease the difficulty, understanding the message will be far from easy. Any literate Character with at least 1 in the Science Domain can try to decrypt a message.

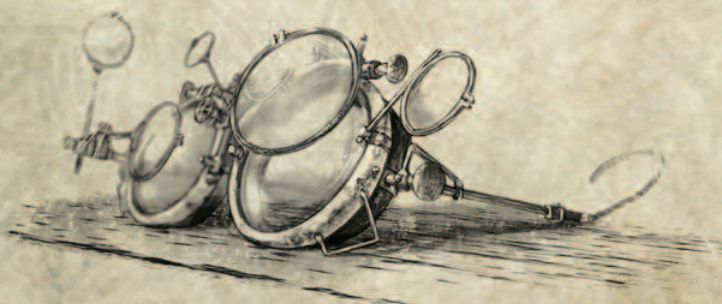
There are two options to decrypt a message: the Leader can either let the Players work with the clues they are given, or allow them to solve things with a roll. Codes that are simple enough that the Players (as opposed to the Characters) can crack them without clues are Complicated (14) at most.

Difficulty to design or crack a code	Description of the code	Minimal duration to decrypt it without the key
<i>Complicated (14)</i>	<i>Common code, relatively simple to use.</i>	<i>1 day</i>
<i>Difficult (17)</i>	<i>Rare, complex cipher. This is the usual level for diplomatic messages or communication among a well-organized cabal.</i>	<i>3 days</i>
<i>Very difficult (20)</i>	<i>A work of art, likely undecipherable without the key.</i>	<i>10 days</i>

Finding clues about the code lowers the Difficulty by -1 or -2. Knowing the key (and understanding how it works!) makes it possible to directly decipher the message, without needing to make a roll or spend time..

Finn has 5 in Reason, 2 in Science, and the Smart Advantage. He attempts to understand the coded message that he and his companions have intercepted. His starting score to decrypt it is $5 + 2 + 1$, for a total of $8 + 1D10$. The code is Complicated (14). Understanding the mechanism will take at least 1 day. Finn's Player rolls a 7, for a total of 15. After a tedious morning of mental probing, he discovers in mid-afternoon the mathematical key that yields the solution to the code. Proudly, he shows the result of his work to his companions, who have spent the day following other leads on the case they are investigating.

Yldiane has been given a rather strange package marked with a red circle. Following very disquieting events, she has decided to leave Varigal ethics aside and to examine its contents. She is very disappointed to find only papers covered in meaningless words! She has 2 in Reason and 0 in Science, which bars her from even attempting to understand it. Tediously, she writes a copy she intends to show to Liam. With his 5 in Reason and 4 in Science, his odds are much better. Although this will probably take several attempts, decrypting this Difficult (17) message is within his ability... but won't time be against them?



Optional Rule: Increasing Mental Resistance

This optional rule allows Characters (whether they are occultists or not) to increase their Mental Resistance. This characteristic represents one's resilience to psychological shock as well as one's ability to bounce back from them by drawing from inner resources. Occultists, since they dedicate their lives to the study of strange, eerie, and unsettling subjects, are regularly confronted with fear, anguish, and horror as a natural consequence of their work. Many make do with their innate potential (i.e. their basic Mental Resistance, in addition to any associated Advantages or Disadvantages), at the risk of gradually crumbling and inevitably sinking into madness... However, it is possible to train oneself to better withstand these ordeals and overcome them. Like any improvement of the Characters' statistics, increasing Mental Resistance has a cost, but it also requires meeting one or several criteria (see further into this chapter).

Bonus Points	XP cost
1	10
2	15
3	20
4	25
5	30



Increasing one's Mental Resistance costs XPs and requires meeting at least one criterion

John wishes to increase his PC's Mental Resistance by one bonus point, which costs 10 XPs. Acquiring a second bonus point will require him to spend an additional 15 XPs. Buying the maximum of 5 bonus points will therefore have a total cost of 100 XPs.

Having the sufficient amount of Experience points at one's disposal is not enough. Increasing one's Mental Resistance also requires fulfilling conditions related to the Character's attitude and life experience. To be able to increase one's Mental Resistance, a PC must have met at least one of the following criteria during a past gaming session. Whether or not a criterion has been met is up to the Leader.

Peer support

Peer support means having loved ones that are attentive, kind, and of sound advice. Characters who are isolated or suffer a loss are able to become part of a new network, a new community, or even to find love again after a heartbreaking period of mourning. In return, the Character always proves ready to help, support, comfort, and advise. This peer support protects them against tragedies and keeps them going during hard times. The Characters' aptitude in social integration can be evaluated by examining the groups they are part of: Do they care about others? Are they able to relate to their peers, contributing to the overall harmony and cohesion?

Ean, the archer / spy who had to run away from Tulg-Naomh to find shelter in Melwan, is a stranger with the Flaw "Unreliable" and the latent disorder "Paranoia." Managing to overcome his tendency for being untrusting and selfishly individualistic, showing sincere concern for the people who house him and getting interested in his new home could justify earning a +1 in Mental Resistance. In effect, Ean's commitment can be put to the test through taking risks for his new community, or through accomplishing important efforts to help the inhabitants of Melwan. Of course, he must do so selflessly and of his own free will, not in the hope of some sort of reward.



Self-confidence

Positivity, the feeling of personal efficacy, mainly stems from a keen awareness of one's abilities and the quiet pride acquired by those who have overcome great difficulties. For a Character, self-confidence can be attained by the accomplishment of an important personal objective, such as those usually associated with a major realization related to a narrative arc (you can learn more about narrative arcs in Book 3 – Dearg).

Finn, in the course of his Focus (see Book 3 – Dearg, “Modhannan: A Better World”), was able to fulfill his dream of becoming a Magientist. It took traveling very far away from Dearg, being regarded as a stranger, and overcoming many hardships related to his studies. This gave Finn self-confidence, which justifies acquiring a bonus point in Mental Resistance.

Personal philosophy

Being able to give meaning to one's life and to the events one faces is a safeguard to better resist and confront one's ordeals. According to the game system, Mental Resistance is influenced by the Character's Conviction, which shows how one's ethics and values can be a source of inner strength. For Characters to be able to earn Mental Resistance due to their personal philosophy, they must be able to draw some wisdom from difficult events they have experienced, while being neither pessimistic nor cynical. This lesson must influence the Character's way of life. To validate this criterion, the Leader may ask the Player to sum up this new lesson of wisdom for the PC.

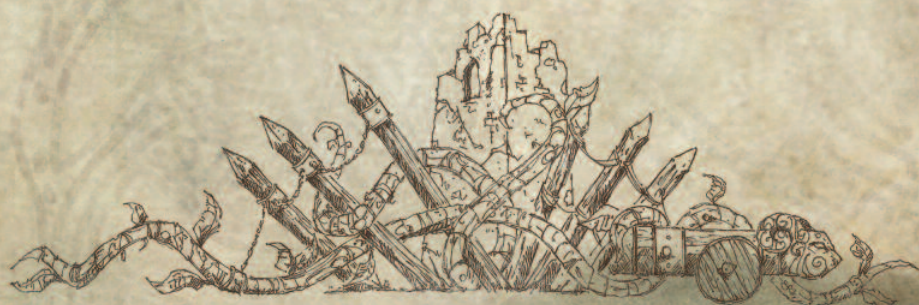
In her Focus (see Book 3 – Dearg, “Coir: The River Child”), Adeliene has to face the death of a friend, a loss for which her native community considers her to be responsible. A tragic accident may seem absurd, out of control, and often leaves feelings of powerlessness and meaninglessness. For years, she has been bearing the consequences of this traumatic event of her childhood. Being able to stand proud, to give meaning to her existence and actions despite this cruel ordeal may grant her a +1 in Mental Resistance.

The eye of the storm

Even though the Character has to face a serious crisis, they are able to come up with a dynamic, constructive strategy to solve the problem. It manifests through the ability to act and be aware of the consequences of their decision despite the stress they are under. The Character's action is characterized by their flexibility, their sense of commitment, and their creativity. They are set on solving the problem and will stop at nothing to do so, without regard for the difficulties.

All Leaders witness, one day or another, an epiphany when a PC gets a brilliant idea that completely turns the tables when everything seemed lost. Once the session is over, the Leader may tell the Player that their Character's aptitude for coming through even under significant pressure can be a reason for the PC to earn a +1 in Mental Resistance.

In the scenario “A Tidy Room,” Act 1, Scene 7 – The judgment of the mob (p.105), a homeless man is about to be lynched by an angry mob accusing him of being the young girl's murderer. It is very likely that things are going to take a turn for the worse. In this context of crisis and emergency, if one or several Characters manage to find a clever solution to pacify everyone, this inspiring display of wits might earn them a +1 in Mental Resistance.



Visions and Occult Arts

Optional rule: Occult Arts

With this optional rule, in addition to learning new Disciplines, an occultist can become proficient in Occult Arts. Occult Arts work similarly to Fighting Arts (see Book 1 – Universe, p.230 and 238). A Character with a level of 5 in the Occultism Domain can master specific techniques. An Occult Art is unlike a Discipline in that it cannot be increased. Learning an Occult Art costs 20 XPs and requires one month of intensive training. One usually learns an Art from a teacher who has mastered it, but it is possible to master it by oneself by spending double the XPs (40) and devoting twice as much time to it (two months).



Visions have an important function in Shadows of Esteren. They are an efficient tool to set a horrific atmosphere, but using them incorrectly can lead to disastrous results. This chapter proposes optional rules that the Leader is free to consider. The second part of this chapter provides extensive advice on how to use visions during the game (see “On the in-game use of visionary Occult Arts”).

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Visionary Arts

Some visions are very painful and result in Mental Resistance checks with the Difficulty Threshold left to the Leader's discretion. Being born with the gift of the Eisdeach or learning the Art of Vision means experiencing such episodes for the remainder of one's days. The Dream Art, however, allows one to better manage this trauma.



Art of the Eisdeach

A traditional seer associated with the worlds of the sea and the dead, the Eisdeach is both feared and respected. Legend has it that the Eisdeach are able to perceive whether the owner of an item is alive or dead. However, in truth, the visions are not that reliable.



Visions

If an item or place can trigger a vision, the Eisdeach will be the first to experience it and will be able to describe it in detail.



Sea sense

The Eisdeach has a +2 intuition bonus on Natural Environment and Travel rolls related to the sea.

One cannot become an Eisdeach; it is an innate gift. This Art can only be taken at the Character's creation. However, those who nevertheless want to become learned in visions can acquire the Art of Vision, described below.



Art of Vision

Mediums are occultists who have trained to open their senses to the world around them and become more permeable to other-worldly influences. Therefore, if a location is bathed in energy that may provide a vision, they will be certain to receive it and will keep a precise recollection of it.

Visions

If an item or place can trigger a vision, the Medium will be the first to experience it and will be able to describe it in detail.

Dream Art

This applies to occultists who have developed the habit of writing down their dreams and going through regular meditation exercises. Little by little, they have trained to stay detached from what they experience, allowing them to better resist the mental trauma induced by shocking visions or nightmares.

Mental resilience

An occultist who has mastered the techniques of the Dream Art gets a +4 bonus to Mental Resistance rolls related to visions.

It is very difficult and dangerous to explore dreams and visions without learning the Dream Art; many Eiseach and Mediums have sunk into madness without it.



On the in-game use of visionary Occult Arts

Visions and nightmares are recurring events in Shadows of Esteren scenarios. Not being able to tell truth from falsehood, reality from illusion, the conscious world from a dream, etc. This is fertile ground for a horrific atmosphere.

Who controls the Characters' visions?

PCs who have spent Experience points to develop their occultist talents will doubtless be more watchful than the others for such signs and will want to put their skills to use. Though a Player being more involved is always a welcome thing, the effectiveness of such abilities must be carefully measured, lest they completely ruin the suspense of a narrative.

Book 1 – Universe details different ways the system can be used, and how the Resolution of an action can take place (see Book 1 – Universe, p.176). When it comes to managing visions and nightmares, these differences become all the more decisive. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

A PC cannot trigger visions.

Even when PCs spend XPs to improve their Occultism Disciplines or to acquire particular Arts, this does not grant them the power to summon a vision. Otherwise, the Leader authorizing such an ability risks the concerned Players asking to roll for every item, corpse, and other elements that may yield a clue. Such a reflex can weigh down the pacing and atmosphere of the game. Occult Arts make Characters sensitive to potential visions they may grasp, but they do not involve die rolls. This is an important principle, similar to the matter of the Characters' emotions, detailed in Book 3 – Dearg (see the section “Who controls the Characters' emotions?” of the chapter “Conscience Rules But Does Not Govern” included in Book 3 – Dearg, Episode 3).

The Leader is the sole decider of when a vision occurs.

This follows the previous point: deciding when a scene or an event can trigger a vision for a Character is up to the Leader. Visions are to be set on the same footing as the other elements of a scenario: they can be used to move the plot forward, provide an illuminating clue, or create an ordeal (which may be represented by a Mental Resistance roll). If a Player asks the Leader, “Do I feel something in this room?” the Leader can improvise a vision, but only if it serves the quality of the plot or the pacing of the game.

By default, visions will be attributed to specialist Characters.

A Player who has spent a lot of XPs in skills related to Occultism will understandably expect such an expenditure to have an impact on the game. If a strange dream or a vision must occur during a scenario, and provided it does not conflict with an important narrative element, a Character who has developed an Occult Art should get priority in experiencing it.

Taking into account PCs with Occult Arts when constructing a scenario

For the Leader, the difficulty lies in maintaining the mystery of an investigation while giving it a particular flavor through the inclusion of supernatural elements. Many shows and movies work by contrasting a police investigation against the insights provided by a medium. Here are a few examples of shows where this is a central feature, which can be a good source of inspiration for the creation of scenarios centered around visions and Characters who have developed Occult Arts:

- ⊗ **Profiler** (1996-2000, by Cynthia Saunders) stars an FBI investigator with such great talent that she can see the pieces of a crime scene literally coming together, which allows her to understand what happened and solve her cases. There is nothing explicitly supernatural here, but her aptitude is extraordinary enough to be comparable to visionary powers.
- ⊗ **Missing** (2003-2006, by Glenn Davis and William Laurin) portrays a medium who assists investigators and becomes an agent of the FBI. The heroine's dreams and visions are portrayed as puzzles that she must put together to reach the truth. Technological tools (computers) are combined with supernatural clues to solve each case.
- ⊗ **In Medium** (2005-2011, by Glenn Gordon Caron), the main character experiences dreams sent by the dead, many of whom were victims of violent crimes. The clues they contain can be fragments showing the death of the victim, or have a more symbolic meaning. The cases are solved thanks to the light that her supernatural abilities cast on the clues obtained through a rational criminal investigation.

How to portray clues brought by visions

Here are several possibilities for managing visions in a scenario:

- ⊗ **Clue cards.** The Leader lists the elements that seem essential to reach the truth, then attaches them to various NPCs. If the encounter goes awry or becomes impossible in the course of the game, the Leader can switch the clue to another NPC, or provide it through a vision. Events that shocked a person or occurred prior to death can become clues of a mystical nature. Visions then work as a means to access information that would have normally been lost.

In "A Tidy Room," the Leader wants the PCs to suspect the Gwilmine trafficking very early. To that effect, the Leader decides that someone will tell them that several members of the Canal Gang have gone to Aïndrid Hedrod in the wee hours, the very night Edhene disappeared. Considering Aïndrid the prostitute usually receives only one client at a time, it is rather strange that she would let several people in! By default, the Leader attributes this clue to Glazi, a Tarish beggar. If his encounter with the Characters cannot take place because he died before they got to talk to him, the Leader can switch the clue to another witness, such as another prostitute of the district... or it can be the basis of a vision. It will come either from Edhene (as the last memories of her death), or from Glazi (from lingering feelings of terror after the gang noticed his presence and roughed him up).

- ⊗ **Accelerator.** Visions can replace lost information, but also give access to clues more quickly. This gives the Leader a means to manage gaming time—which can sometimes be limited due to material constraints—or to unlock a situation when the Players are at their wits' end. This trick must be used with moderation, lest the Players rely on it too much and feel that they have nothing to do themselves... or, conversely, are annoyed because it takes away the thrill of the investigation.
- ⊗ **Enigma.** The Leader can include visions that are essential clues in themselves, but which will require some decrypting. In this case, the simplest way to go is to introduce visions as recurring dreams starting at the beginning of the scenario. The Characters will seek the truth by using classic means (evidence, witnesses) and will interpret them through the prism of the enigmatic dreams. Designing an Enigma can take time, and it is hard to come up with a good one on the fly. This method, as opposed to that of the Accelerator or the Clue card, will most likely make the scenario more difficult. Therefore, it is intended for Players who enjoy intellectual challenges.

Through these three types of investigation-based visions, the Leader has the means to give more substance to the game. It will boost the pacing and give the scenario a spiritual or even mystical dimension, even if the facts are entirely natural and there is nothing supernatural in the crime or mystery that the Characters are dealing with.

Describing visions

Visions, like symbolic dreams, are fundamentally subjective and convey a metaphoric message through analogy and allegory. To stress how a vision is in no way a video recording under control, the Leader should focus on several things:

The relevance to the story.

A vision, as obscure as it may appear, must always be important. It provides a glimpse of an unknown and otherwise inaccessible dimension. In the case of an investigation scenario, the Leader is entirely free to arbitrarily determine which clues will be transmitted. The interest lies in casting a more emotionally-charged light on what would otherwise be a series of dry facts. Visions have the power to intensify the atmosphere and humanize protagonists that the PCs may never even meet (for example, a victim who is already dead at the beginning of the story).

Point of view.

Subjectivity means the recipient of the vision experiences the emotional perception of an individual, thereby adopting the person's point of view exclusively. Obviously, this can be affected by one's mental condition (see Book 1 – Universe, p.273). If the vision is from someone suffering from a Mystical Delusion, this may mean that the recipient will hear voices and catch glimpses of imaginary spirits. In the case of a paranoid's Organized Delusion, the one having the vision might see enemies and spies all around, or be given a distorted version of the crime in which the victim attacked the murderer! The vision is always true, but this is a subjective truth, which must be handled as carefully as a testimony that may reveal more about the witness than about the facts.

An intense moment.

Recurring dreams or connected visions can form a pattern, an underlying theme that will leave an impression on the Players. Using a dedicated soundtrack, either for the visions of a specific scenario, or for dreams and visions in general, can heighten this effect. As soon as they hear the first notes of the song, the Players will know that something important is about to happen.

Attention to detail.

In the same way that visions are subjective and can convey a picture different from objective reality, the elements perceived can vary from the ordinary, focusing on senses other than sight or hearing. Carefully describing one's sense of balance (standing, accelerating, falling) or inner sensations (shortness of breath, palpitations of fear or desire) can alter the perspective. The clues will have to be interpreted and will feel much different from ordinary factual information. The choice of the senses described and of the “camera angle” used is up to the Leader, who is free to change them every time to show that the world of emotions and energies does not follow the same rules as mundane life.

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A Character is getting a vision from Edhene's shawl. The Leader decides to focus on the senses of touch, balance, and inner body. The Character sees how Edhene wore this article of clothing on a daily basis, how she used it to cover her head and figure to avoid notice, how she held it tightly against her when she was terrified, how it was ripped away from her... The duration of the various steps can give a more accurate idea of Edhene's activity right before her death, of what her disposition was. Thanks to this information, the PCs can speculate regarding what she may have seen. Someone she knew? Someone she was running away from? Or did she swiftly meet her end from a surprise attack?





Chapter 2 Circle of Emergence

A rising force

The peninsula of Tri-Kazel hides numerous mysteries, and many people seek to elucidate them. Among those hoping to unravel Tri-Kazel's enigmas are determined occultists, ready to do anything to succeed, coldly, methodically, and without haste. Some of these have gathered to be more efficient, assembling as the Circle of Emergence.

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The early years: a fringe group

In the beginning, the Circle of Emergence was a daring group of occultists from Baldh-Ruoch. They had in their ranks a few students of Magience, some of whom had studied in the Ashen Yard (see Book 2 – Travels, p.30 and following). They shared a radical experimental process and did not flinch at regularly consuming mind-enhancing drugs or investigating mysterious ruins, fascinated with places such as Broken Stones or the Cinthareid.

Two members of the group had a decisive influence on its organization: Zeriak and Aïndrid. Together, they made it what it is today: a cabal of ambitious occultists with the means to further their research and an extended network to rely on (this point is detailed later in this chapter).



The Tarish Zeriak

Convinced that the best way to understand the origins of his people was to seek answers in occultism, Zeriak studied the field in Baldh-Ruoch. A charismatic man, he managed to seal a partnership of sorts between a few Tarish clans and the Circle of Emergence. It is thanks to him that the drug network devised by Aïndrid expanded so quickly. Now, the association



between these clans and the Circle is long-lasting, so Zeriak has had the time to resume his work in the field. After the Candlewood Experiment (see the insert below), he decided to study Calhtair's Wood. No one has seen him since, but those who know him are certain he will return.

The major role of Aindrid

One of the most eminent members of the Circle of Emergence is a woman who has escaped Expiation. She is commonly called Aindrid (see p.58 of this book, and Book 2 – Travels, p.46), although she often changes both her identity and appearance. A particularly sly person, she imprinted her insensitive mark and her sometimes chilling methods on the secret society as a whole. She is the true conductor, the power behind the throne, the puppeteer. In pursuing the acquisition of knowledge, crime and money are just means. Her network is still growing, dangerously so. This genius in manipulation and organization takes delight in carefully designing plans that will be carried out by underlings who know nothing about her. She only gets personally involved when she deems it absolutely necessary or when her curiosity is piqued.

The red circle symbol

The Circle of Emergence has adopted a simple, red circle as its symbol, since it easily goes unnoticed and can be shown quickly. From the members' point of view, discretion is the best way to reach their ends without being hindered by authorities or moralistic meddlers.



The Candlewood Experiment

A few years ago, the Tarish occultist Zeriak went to the Cinthareid of Candlewood with a few followers. He wanted to study the reactions of the C'maoghs to certain substances and objects he had brought. This was combined with rituals and spiritualist sessions. The first tests produced results—something was happening... yet, it was difficult to determine precisely what that something was. With the use of drugs, the occultists went into a near-comatose state of lucid dreaming. They finally discovered a connection between what made the C'maoghs react and some of the items they had brought. However, before they could examine this discovery more closely, they encountered terrifying powers. How could they wake up and escape this dreadful experience when the drugs were still in effect, keeping their bodies close to death?

After an unknown length of time, Zeriak came back to his senses, surrounded by the lifeless bodies of his companions. Some were not dead yet, but ultimately they all passed away, perishing from hunger and exhaustion in the following days and weeks.

For some, there seems to be a connection between these events and the fact that the C'maoghs are less numerous, with the Feondas being conversely an ever-growing threat (see Book – 2 Travels, p.14).

Occult History

Here is a chronology of various events related to occultism and possibly, directly or not, to the Circle of Emergence. The Leader should not feel restricted by this timeline, which can be modified to suit the needs of the Leader's own universe.

895: First meeting of the Circle of Emergence within the university of Baldh-Ruoch. The group is mainly composed of poets, students of Magience, and people of Tarish blood.

899: A pure-blooded Tarish by the name of Zeriak becomes the main orchestrator of the research and experiments of the Circle of Emergence. Interested in discovering the secrets of his people's past through occultism, this scholar paves the way for an ongoing relationship between several Tarish clans and the Circle of Emergence.

Fall 900: The Candlewood Experiment.

Summer 903: Aodren Floyd (see Book 2 – Travels, p.146) runs away from Baldh-Ruoch and starts a new life in Osta-Baille.

Spring 904: Eberict, “the Shadow,” (see Book 2 – Travels, p.172) a Sigire of Expiation, betrays the Temple and flees to Baldh-Ruoch.

Fall 904: Aïndrid escapes from the prisons of Expiation.

Summer 905: Steren Slaine settles in Baldh-Ruoch following the tragic death of her spouse, Cethern Mac Emmanon (see the short story “Call to Action” in the book Hauntings).

Fall 905: The Scientör Adler dies, killed in Baldh-Ruoch by Ciany Lorn (see Book 2 – Travels, p.156). The young woman flees to Gwidre and travels along the Holy Way, then the Pilgrims' Way.

Spring 906: Brother Arathos, a Sigire, “dies” near the Ordachai Peak (see The Black Moon Handbook).

Summer 906: The Sigire Becuma, who followed Aïndrid's trail, is assassinated.

Fall 906: The Sigire Yekeb is in turn tasked with finding Aïndrid.

Spring 907: Aïndrid settles in the Weavers' District (see “A Tidy Room”); the location of the town is at the Leader's discretion. The Black Moon Handbook, written by Steren Slaine, is published.

Summer 907: Ciany Lorn meets Aodren Floyd, aka Dr. Twain, in Osta-Baille (see Book 2 – Travels, p.139).

Fall 907: The Tarish Zeriak goes missing in Calhtair's Wood.

The Circle of Emergence 101

Here is a rundown of the characteristics of the Circle of Emergence. This model can also be used by the Leader to condense all the relevant information about any type of organization with a major role in the game.

- ❖ **Objective:** discovering the secrets of the peninsula and of the human soul.
- ❖ **Means:** drug trafficking (improved Gwilmine), Suggestion techniques, blackmailing, corruption, and assassination.
- ❖ **Network:** the members correspond through encrypted mail. Usually, they settle and develop a small, local network entirely ignorant of the Circle of Emergence. They are allied with Tarish clans, who transport the drug and some packages, and with Magientists, who make the drug. The members extend their personal network to circles that can be useful to them and which they can easily interact with (local authorities, tradesmen, nobles, etc.)
- ❖ **Established in:** predominantly Reizh, but they are spreading through Taol-Kaer.
- ❖ **Power:** limited, but growing.
- ❖ **Numbers:** currently, only a dozen members actually know the organization's true means and goals. However, each of those is in contact with several pawns, pupils, or followers who may join the ranks of the Circle, not to mention their extensive connections with criminal networks and Tarish clans.

Relationship with other occultists

Athelsan Oxcendre read through his notes and recent letters while giving his report to Aindrid:
“To sum it all up, the most talented and interesting occultists for us are, therefore: Aodren Floyd... A skilled hypnotist, very active lately. He seems very preoccupied with personal business.”

“Yes. We will see how he fares and keep watching him.”

“Eberict, known as ‘the Shadow.’ A dangerously prideful man, in my opinion. He appears certain that he can forever elude the Sigires thanks to his powers.”

“We must do what it takes to convince him. The sooner, the better.”

“Stereon Slaine...”

“The author of The Black Moon Handbook?”

“The very same. It seems to me she has good instincts. Moreover, she was able to set up a network of informers...”

“She is a fool. Spreading a book through the whole peninsula for the use of peasants and merchants who believe their barn is haunted? She is unable to keep a secret. Moreover, I’d wager she would be inclined to help the authorities shed light upon certain activities of ours in the hope of obtaining official acknowledgment in the northeast of Reizh. For the time being, we will let her have her fun. If she becomes a hurdle, we will eliminate her.”

“Then there is this group...”

“What of it?”

“They seem to call themselves ‘the Order of the Messengers.’ They seem to have a large presence in Tuaille and Tulg Naomh. Some reports lead me to believe that they are also active in the south of Gwidre. I wonder if there is a connection with this Mac Snòr you were curious about. From what I have been able to learn, this order is very interested in the Vale of Dearg, though I do not know why.”


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Portraying the Circle of Emergence


Depending on the Leader's plans, the Circle of Emergence can be a one-time encounter or a recurring, multi-faced enemy. To make the most of this organization, two major moments deserve particular attention: the first encounter and the last.

Discovering the existence of the Circle


The PCs investigate an ambitious robbery, a murder shrouded in mystery, or various high-profile dealings. However, behind the seemingly ordinary crime, elements of apparently secondary importance raise their attention. This is how “A Tidy Room” was designed.

 **Another day, another case?** First, the PCs go through the investigation as per usual. They meet a few important personalities of the Circle of Emergence, who are undercover, of course.

In “A Tidy Room,” the members of the Circle of Emergence are Aindrid, posing as a prostitute, and Athelsan Oxcendre, whose cover is a bookseller.

 **An occult force.** Once the PCs have wrapped up the case, they notice that some events still have no explanation. More worrying still, witnesses may disappear or criminals may be freed. A yet undiscovered force is at work from the shadows. The underlings themselves do not know whom they actually worked for.

In “A Tidy Room,” Aindrid will attempt to murder Athelsan to keep him from spilling the beans to the PCs. As for the Canal Gang, they handled the drug's sale, but had no idea of its origin or the scale of the network that took it to them.

 **An opening.** The lead to the Circle of Emergence disappears mysteriously, and all traces are lost. The only way to follow the trail will be to gather information about the network and progressively discover its ramifications. The PCs are in for new ordeals...

In “A Tidy Room,” Aindrid vanishes before the PCs can confront her. They may suspect that one or several of them was the victim of the implantation of a Suggestion. This could lead into a canvas or scenario of the Leader's choice.

Aindrid's shadow

Aindrid becomes an unseen character, mentioned, but absent. At most, the PCs may get to arrest her agents, for example by bringing down the Osta-Baille network or by stopping an operation "Pale Horse" (see the paragraph "A terrible poison," p.52). When the Leader deems the timing right, it will be time to play a scenario that should be similar to Sherlock Holmes' ultimate case, "The Final Problem" (Arthur Conan Doyle, 1893). During this story, the protagonist faces Professor James Moriarty. The villain brings on the full force of his organization with the purpose of destroying his meddlesome archenemy. The detective and the criminal genius end up locked in a final, mortal fight in a wild, majestic landscape, tumbling into the Reichenbach Falls.

In the case of Aindrid and the Circle of Emergence, the apotheosis can take place in a haunted, cursed, hardly accessible location, such as the Howling Chasms or the Slope of the Fallen. The last encounter will thus also involve hostile spirits, which will test the Characters' body and mind.

The agents of Expiation


The year 904 was a particularly humiliating one for the Sigires of Expiation. In the spring, Eberict, one of their most promising agents, a great specialist in unhallowed books, deserted. During the aftermath, his case was the object of much debate. He had always been troublesome and unrepentant as a child, he should never have been accepted into the order! From then on, rebellious adolescents would be sent to the order of the monks, such that, should they break their vows, the consequences would not be so disastrous. The whole training and selection model had to be redesigned.


However, in the fall, there came another harsh blow: Aindrid, a child who had grown up in the prison, had managed to escape with the complicity of Brother Talfryn, a high-ranking member (see Book 2 – Travels, p.46). It was as though a hornets' nest had been stirred. Keeper of faith Vengu (see Book 1 – Universe, p.154) demanded that things be put in good order, which resulted in significant modernization for better efficiency.


Far away from Expiation's organizational changes, field agents were entrusted with the heavy task of finding the two infamous fugitives. Sister Becuma was the first to pursue Aindrid. She was assassinated during the summer of 906. Her last report sent to Expiation mentioned she had found a seemingly promising lead. The order appointed another investigator, Brother Yekeb.

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Brother Yekeb, sigire Male, Gwidrite, 26 years old


 **Ways:** Combativeness: 3. Creativity: 1. Empathy: 2. Reason: 5. Conviction: 4.


 **Skills:** Close Combat: 5 (Bludgeoning Weapons: 7). Craft: 3. Erudition: 2. Feats: 5 (+1 bonus to extended actions). Natural Environment: 5 (First Aid: 6, Survival: 6, Tracking: 7). Occultism: 1. Perception: 5 (Alertness: 8, Observation: 7). Prayer: 5 (Knowledge of the Temple: 6). Relation: 3. Shooting & Throwing: 3. Stealth: 4. Travel: 5.

 **Advantages:** Strong Mind. Sturdy.

 **Character Traits:** Unswaying / Austere.

 **Sanity:** : Balance (Melancholy). Mental Resistance: 10.

 **Combat:** Attack: 8 (Bludgeoning Weapons: 10). Defense: 14. Speed: 5. Potential: 1. Damage: 2 (Carath).

 **Health:** 19. Stamina: 11.



Yekeb grew up in a village of the Mòr Roimh frequently threatened by raids from the Osag pagans. Motivated by an unshakable faith and showing a composure bordering on cold-bloodedness, his taking of vows made his community proud. He considered for a long time which order he should be part of. He had to admit he liked to travel, which excluded becoming a monk, cleric, or priest, since those orders generally led a sedentary life. He enjoyed solitude, which did not match what he saw of the Blade knights. That left Vector and Sigire. Since he did not feel interested in preaching to unbelievers sometimes fiercely attached to their traditions, he chose the order of the Sigires. He quickly proved his abilities in the field, and his superiors entrusted him with investigation and information-gathering missions. Simply put, he was a scout tasked with determining whether a problem required the order's attention or not, and what forces were required to solve it. Today, he is on the trail of the criminal Aindrid. From what he has been told, Becuma, his predecessor, died because of something related to a telltale red circle. Yekeb suspects an organization, but doesn't know its scale. His superiors have urged him to find the fugitive quickly, but he is starting to wonder if that would be the most advantageous course of action. Unquestionably, she must be stopped, but it seems she is associated with many other dangerous individuals, which means it could be possible to catch a more important haul. There must be a network behind all this, but who is involved? And to what extent?



Yekeb can become an ally of the PCs, since he will need help to strike a hard blow at the Circle of Emergence. He may also warn them about how dangerous this group is. Although he keeps bad memories of the Osag, he remains a pragmatic man who is aware of his vulnerability. He can ask Expiation for reinforcements or demand the support of other Sigires, but he is of the opinion that his colleagues are sometimes too rash, whereas he wants to get the big picture before acting. He would rather use such options only after a group of suspects has been identified with reasonable certainty.



Core activities of the Circle

The ways the Circle of Emergence gets its money can be entwined with other scenarios, creating opportunities to have the PCs get in its way and discovering thereafter that members of this organization are involved. The Leader can also easily use this group, design how it progresses, and employ it as a recurring adversary, a menacing shadow that remains mostly in the background.

Gwylmith and gwilmine

⌘ Why Gwilmine?

Gwilmine (see Book 1 – Universe, p.244) is a relatively common drug used by menial workers. The bulk of its consumers is therefore made of farmers, factory workers, soldiers, sailors, etc. Since Gwylmith is plentiful, Gwilmine is one of the cheapest drugs to make. Most dealers associate with dyers, making use of the Gwylmith residues to synthesize second rate Gwilmine. Sometimes, they even divert part of their flower orders to provide underground laboratories with high quality raw material.

⌘ Gwylmith in Tri-Kazel

Gwylmith is a common plant whose flowers bloom in pretty, vivid yellows used in the dying industry. Its medical merits are well-known: it gives energy, staves off fatigue, and makes it easier to bear the thinness of air at high altitudes. It is widely consumed as a tea or syrup, which does not inflict the negative effects of Gwilmine. This synthesized drug concentrates the natural active substances of Gwylmith up to a toxic level, in addition to including various additives. Chewing Gwylmith petals dyes one's mouth in yellow hues, coloring the teeth, sometimes even the lips, and giving one's breath a smell that, although not unpleasant, is very distinctive.



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"Improved" Gwilmine

⌘ **Addiction:** Fast ⌘ **Harmfulness:** Moderate ⌘ **Dependency:** Strong

As opposed to common Gwilmine (see Book 1 – Universe, p.244), this variant gives a +2 bonus to all rolls requiring physical effort (whether to resist pain, hunger, exhaustion, or for Feats or Attack rolls) for a duration of 3 hours. Afterward, the bonus goes down to +1 for 3 additional hours.

Given these "virtues," it is no surprise that it is so successful and that it is considered more like a doping substance, a "boost" rather than what it really is: a degenerating poison inevitably causing the destruction of whoever gives in to it. Indeed, the product has the same harmful effects as standard Gwilmine, and has on some addicts a dreadful side effect: it excites Passion, more precisely aggressiveness, even sadism. It gives rise to a thirst for violence and blood, which can climax in acts of unbearable ferocity (see the insert "What if there is no Diwelank?" p.91).

⌘ Mechanics-wise, an intake of improved Gwilmine results in a +2 increase to Passion for 1D10 hours. To reflect how this explosive side effect may manifest, the Leader can use either one or a combination of the two following rules:

⌘ When an improved Gwilmine user must make a Passion Test (see Book 1 – Universe, p.235), the roll is made using the artificially increased Passion.

⌘ Optional rules are suggested in the chapter "The Shadows We Cast" (from Book 3 – Dearg). Only a Character with badly controlled aggressiveness may succumb to such impulses of extreme violence.

Of course, any connection between such behavior and the excessive consumption of improved Gwilmine are denied by most.

Improved Gwilmine addicts may switch to ordinary Gwilmine to stave off withdrawal effects, but they will get no benefits from it since the common substance isn't concentrated enough compared to the product they are used to taking.

The Availability is Rare (RA), and a dose costs from 3 to 15 Ed. Dealers often start with the low price to encourage consumption, while the high price corresponds to a shortage. Some dealers also cut doses, so that the buyer does not know the concentration of the product in advance. This results in increased risks of overdose or poisoning for the consumer.

Drug trade and geographical influence

The Temple's hold on society, law, and customs, in addition to its mistrust toward the Tarish—who are regarded as pagans bordering on sorcerous—complicates the dealings of the Circle of Emergence in Gwidre, but does not prevent them entirely. The expansion of the network is summed up without going into details so that the Leader can work with it as desired. The Leader should feel free to increase its reach or, conversely, reduce it, in accordance with the needs of the story.



⌘ Ashen Yard

The Circle of Emergence hopes to control the Gwilmine trade, and even expand it, thanks to a product of better quality, more powerful and durable. The recipe was discovered by a member who had undertaken studies in Magience and obtained a position in a laboratory of the Ashen Yard. Aïndrid was quick to make full use of this innovation by setting up the first production site in this town and creating a vast network of distribution. Since the main hurdle is how long deliveries take, she has been working on creating another major laboratory in Osta-Baille.

⌘ Attempts to establish in Farl

A large, wealthy city relatively close to the Ashen Yard, Farl (see Book 2 – Travels, p.41) is obviously a tempting target for the Circle of Emergence. However, for the time being, the Circle of Emergence hasn't managed to firmly establish a foothold in the city due to its disciplined administration and very low corruption.

⌘ Corvus Abbey

Gwilmine is regularly sold in and near the Corvus Abbey. It is appreciated, despite the risks, since it makes consumers inured to physical ordeals. The buyers only constitute a fraction of the Circle's clientele, but they are disciplined, well-organized, and united by a shared hatred for the Temple, which they almost see as a totalitarian power. Among these rebellious-minded people are hardened criminals, as well as politically-oriented idealists, waiting for the right occasion.

⌘ Spear Wall

Sometimes also called "Little Dèas," this mountainous range of the Mòr Roimh forming the natural border between Gwidre and Reizh is often traveled by Tarish smugglers. It is inhabited by Osag, who seek to control the area to eventually establish a free, central kingdom for their people. To them, the illegal activity of these caravans is another way to flout the royal authority, so they give smugglers information and logistic support from time to time.

⌘ Pilgrims' Way

From the pathways of the Spear Wall, Gwidrite smugglers take over and make for the highly frequented Pilgrims' Way (see Book 2 – Travels, p.34), with the capital Ard-Amrach as their final destination. Agreements have been made with the gang of the Each' Fist (see Book 1 – Universe, p.76), who buy the merchandise somewhere near the Ordachaï Peak, then manage the reselling as they see fit.

⌘ Kermordhran and the Oëss route

Since the King has appointed in Kermordhran a governor tasked with overseeing the region, it has not only modernized and developed, but has also become harsher toward smugglers and brigands. The roads connecting the Ashen Yard to Kermordhran and Farl are now regularly patrolled and watched by well-maintained Inguards. For a long time, the Circle of Emergence has been using this route, but it is becoming increasingly unreliable; some members' mail has even been intercepted by the authorities. They haven't been able to decipher the messages, but the fact is that the region is becoming inhospitable, and it would be preferable to switch to less scrutinized roads.

⌘ The Donir and Baldh-Ruoch route

It is still relatively easy to sail or ride down the Donir. The river towns—Kember (at the confluence of the Oëss), Baldh-Ruoch, or Ear Caladh—still have rather lax customs policies. It generally only takes masking the cargo as something harmless (pottery, grain, wool, etc.) and paying the required taxes for everything to go without a hitch for the traffickers. Should the authorities become aware of how dangerous the massive drug trade is, things might change, but it doesn't seem that this is going to happen any time soon.

⌘ Leacach and the Tealderoth

Like any navigable waterway, the Tealderoth can save precious time and require little effort. It is also possible to take riverside roads, but in several places, it is necessary to pay the services of ferrymen to cross one of the river's tributaries.

⌘ A new production center in Osta-Baille

The main focus of development in Taol-Kaer is the new laboratory in Osta-Baille, led by the Magientist Ethoran and by his deadly second-in-command, Zeke. A foothold in the capital would give access to new markets in Ard-Monach, Tuaille, Terkhên, Tulg Naomh, etc.

⌘ Attempts in Koskan

Koskan the corrupted is a place where every possible and imaginable drug is produced. However, the quality is chancy, going from perfectly decent stuff to unpleasant poisons. Rival criminal gangs are plenty, and they see Osta-Baille as a natural outlet for their trade. Trying to settle in Koskan would risk triggering a new underground, winner-takes-all war. And of course, geopolitical considerations can make things even more complicated!



The Fluxed Gears of Osta-Baille

A guard is dead. So far, nothing baffling. Nothing surprising either in how his remains—partly eaten by scavengers—were found in the sewers several days after he went missing. However, things get complicated with the autopsy results.

For the forensic expert, there is no doubt that the victim was murdered facing his killer, in a single, extremely powerful blow, without even getting an opportunity to strike back, even though he was regarded as a competent fighter. Obviously, there was a huge difference in skill between the two opponents. A Gwylmith bloom was found in the victim's pocket. This plant is largely used by dyers, who import it from plains (see Book 1 – Universe, p.20), riverside areas, and more temperate coasts, mainly in the region of Abundance and the Emerald Crescent.

The circumstances of the crime are puzzling as well. How could a guard be killed alone? According to the usual procedure, they must work in groups of at least two. In the days preceding his death, the man had mentioned to his family that he believed some of his colleagues were receiving bribes; this was the only way he could explain how lax they were regarding certain suspicions of his. Of course, he said no more about it, lest he put his loved ones in peril.

Considering how distrustful the victim's relatives may have become toward the official authorities, the family might seek help elsewhere to discover the truth. This could lead to digging up a nascent but already powerful network whose members have no qualms about getting rid of meddlers permanently.



The duo managing the budding network in Osta-Baille were designed to come off as tacky and outrageous, so that the PCs underestimate them as crass thugs they can easily overcome. Ethoran and Zeke actually make an efficient pair, since they know and trust each other well. Both, despite their extravagances, are capable of coming up with cunning plans. The Leader can play with this dual aspect by first showing their zany side before brutally surprising the Players with their intellectual aptitudes. Conversely, their background includes psychological faults and frailties that crafty Players will be able to take advantage of, provided they take some time to learn about their enemies before confronting them.

Ethoran

Male, Reizhite, 28 years old, Magientist

- ⊕ **Ways:** Combativeness: 4. Creativity: 5. Empathy: 2. Reason: 3. Conviction: 1.
- ⊕ **Skills:** Close Combat: 1. Feats: 1 (+2 bonus from the Syndrome of Elation). Magience: 5 (Artifact Creation: 7, Artifact Use: 8, Flux Knowledge: 6, Medicine: 8, +3 bonus). Perception: 3. Performance: 5 (Acting: 6). Relation: 5 (Persuasion: 6). Stealth: 2.
- ⊕ **Advantages:** Brilliant, Well-read (+1 in Magience).
- ⊕ **Disadvantages:** Aftermath (-1 in Health and Stamina).
- ⊕ **Character Traits:** Pugnacious / Eccentric.
- ⊕ **Sanity:** Mental Resistance: 6. Orientation: Instinctive. Syndrome of Elation (Elation).
- ⊕ **Combat:** Attack: 5 (Energetic gauntlet: 12). Defense: 10. Speed: 6. Potential: 3. Damage: 3, Ignores Protection (Improved energetic gauntlet).
- ⊕ **Health:** 18. Stamina: 9.



A petulant young man from a wealthy family of Baldh-Ruoch, Ethoran tended to think big, convinced as he was of his matchless talent. He had a certain taste for theatrics, seeing life as an immense stage. He went as far as to run away from his home to join a troupe of performers and learn their trade, afterward coming back without any guilt for how worried he had made everyone. Being naturally silver-tongued, he was able to convince his parents to cover the costs of his studies in Magience.

Thanks to his quick wits, it was smooth sailing, until the day when a mixture of carelessness and bad luck resulted in a serious accident that disfigured him. He owed his survival to the excellent medical care he was given. He was severely wounded, the metal plate now affixed to his skull a permanent reminder of his failure. He went through a phase of depression, and even considered ending his life. It was at that point that he met Aïndrid, who was quick to notice his potential and make full use of it.

Filled with a new purpose, Ethoran left for Osta-Baille to begin his new life, now proudly sporting his scars. He had been offered a fully equipped laboratory, his only obligation being to ensure the steady production of the Circle's special brand of Gwilmine. It was suggested to him that he should take a bodyguard, someone more level-headed than him. With that in mind, he noticed that he and Zeke complemented each other perfectly, creating a formidable tandem. Together, nothing would resist them!



Ethoran tends to speak flippantly, using jargon inspired from Magience. His favorite neologism is "Fluxed," meaning "infused with Flux." For example, the axe he enhanced for Zeke is "Fluxed," and the birthing network he is the spearhead of is called "The Fluxed Gears."

Zeke "The Lurker" Marintok

Male, Reizhite, 29 years old, fighter

⌘ **Ways:** Combateness: 5. Creativity: 3. Empathy: 2. Reason: 4. Conviction: 1.

⌘ **Skills:** Close Combat: 5 (Unarmed Fighting: 7, Axes: 9 (Battleaxes: 10), +1 bonus). Stealth: 4. Magience: 2. Natural Environment: 3. Perception: 5 (Alertness: 7). Feats: 5 (+1 bonus to strength). Relation: 2 (-1 penalty). Shooting & Throwing: 3. Travel: 2.

⌘ **Advantages:** Strong. Fast.

⌘ **Disadvantages:** : Aftermath (-1 in Health and -1 Relation).

⌘ **Character Traits:** Focused / Cold.

⌘ **Sanity:** Mental Resistance: 6. Orientation: Instinctive. Obsessive Idea Symptom (Obsession).

⌘ **Combat:** Attack: 11 (Unarmed Fighting: 13, Axes: 15, Battleaxes: 16). Defense: 13. Speed: 12. Potential: 2. Damage: 3 ("Fluxed" battleaxe* +2).

⌘ **Health:** 18. Stamina: 10.

(*) Zeke activates his "Fluxed" battleaxe before any fight. It inflicts 2 additional energetic Damage for a total of 5. It runs on organic Flux and consumes 1 charge for each strike. It has a Resistance of 6 and is Vulnerable to water. The axe's handle possesses a built-in Tank that can be filled with up to 2 single-use cartridges. Alternatively, it can be plugged to a Flux carboy for 30 charges.

A native of the countryside surrounding Kalvernach, Zeke grew up into an infamous scoundrel. The tense climate around the town between the advocates of Magience and the Lords of the Emerald Crescent meant an endless source of taunts and brawls. One day, chance had it that Zeke had chosen to defend the honor of Magientists against some nobles. However, he failed to hold back and killed one of his opponents, while he ended up seriously injured. His father urged him to leave the region as soon as possible, as the victim's family was intent on taking revenge.

This experience taught him a lesson. He left, but swore that from then on, he would be wary of the consequences of his actions. He learned to think, to not let himself be carried away by his fiery temper. He would now control his strength, use it like a well-tuned tool. Everything would be perfect: his martial style, his equipment... everything.

Today, Zeke works for the Circle of Emergence. Well, he has noticed the telltale red circle and is aware of the Gwilmine trade, but he doesn't care about the specifics. Why should he give a damn about some weak-willed junkies? However, he is very invested in his work as Ethoran's bodyguard. The mutual benefit of such an association has made friends of the two men.

Zeke is nearly seven feet tall, towering above most Tri-Kazelians. Many of his opponents made the mistake of believing that his huge frame would slow him down. Much the opposite! He is naturally very fast, and he has trained to develop this aptitude, making it the core of his fighting style: always attack first, without warning, to fell your opponent in one swift strike.

In combat, Zeke only uses the Quick attitude (see Book 1 – Universe, p.216) if he suspects that his opponents might outclass him. Otherwise, he attacks with an Offensive attitude, using his vicious battleaxe made even more lethal by Ethoran's improvements.

With his expert combat skills, Zeke is able to kill unwary opponents with one single monstrous blow. Witnessing such butchering results in a Complicated (14) Mental Resistance check. If this results in an incapacitating Scarring like Stupor or Crying (see Book 1 – Universe, p.271), this can leave the PCs even more vulnerable in the face of this formidable foe.

The location of the scenario “A Tidy Room” is a lower-class district, in a town that can be in either Reizh or Taol-Kaer. The Leader can have it take place where the PCs are, or determine its location in accordance with the state of the Circle of Emergence's network (previously detailed in this chapter), and by following the indications of atmosphere and plot hooks provided for many locations in Book 2 – Travels.

If the scenario takes place in Koskan, a corrupted city where the Circle of Emergence seeks to establish a foothold and clashes with other criminal groups, the case will most likely be made all the more difficult with gang-on-gang scuffles and vendettas. The victim tally will quickly grow since law enforcement is poorly organized, or even completely corrupt, secretly lending assistance to one or another organization. In this context, the PCs will be in great danger.

Conversely, in Farl, order is properly maintained, and there is minimal corruption. Therefore, the PCs can rely on the guard and on local authorities in general to stop the activities of the Circle of Emergence in the region. If they prove astute and competent, the PCs may even be encouraged to pursue the investigation beyond the limits of the Prince of Farl's jurisdiction.

Murder in the guise of a curse

It sometimes happens that one has a troublesome relative, wealthy but slow to die and hand it down. Or one may have a dangerous competitor, a rival in matters of love. Or maybe one has to share one's life with moody, inflexible people. In these cases, one has the choice between bowing to mocking fate or getting rid of the undesirable person. However, there is always a risk. Should the murder be noticed and the ensuing investigation lead to the author of the deed, it would all be for naught. The purpose is therefore to rid clients of their problems without attracting any suspicion. The process can be of varying complexity. Two elements are vital for the trick to work: fake witches and a lethal poison.

A lethal poison



A poison, hidden in a common item delivered by a servant, a hawker, etc. is applied to the victim.

The Bâneach, or pale horse, is a fearsome poison. It is said it owes its name to an unfortunate event that elucidated the highly toxic nature of this flexible metal. The story is known among Magientists, particularly among Mineralists. According to this tale, the first one to identify the substance also discovered its deleterious effects following the poisoning (accidental or deliberate, depending on the version) of a horse.

Gray, malleable, and soft enough to be cut with a knife, it is a byproduct of the extraction of lead. It is a heavy metal, and its salts act as a cumulative poison, just like arsenic for example, affecting the central nervous system. The victim first feels great fatigue that can be confused with a form of Catarrh (see Book 1 – Universe, p.242). This often results in an erroneous diagnosis due to how poorly known this affliction is and how the symptoms can vary from patient to patient. However, this inevitably results in loss of hair, which is the main symptom that betrays the poison's action.

Tri-Kazel's largest lead mines are located near Kell. Therefore, the substance is mostly known in Reizh and largely unseen in the other kingdoms. Once the poison has been identified, the patient can be treated with an ingestion of Farl Blue, a rather common substance that takes between a few hours and a few days to take effect. Without the appropriate antidote, death is slow and painful. Provided the poisoning is progressive, with the daily ingestion of a small dose of poison, the victim will waste away ineluctably.



The Pale Horse, by Agatha Christie (1961)

This book can be an excellent source of inspiration for a Leader who wishes to make a poisoning case even more complex and take the Players through a long investigation. Such a plot will mostly fit a rational ambiance, so the major cities of Reizh and, to a lesser extent, Taol-Kaer, would be the most fitting.

In this novel, the main character progressively discovers a criminal business that has cynically made murder a trade like any other.

A must-read!



Fake witches

It all starts with a rumor reaching the ears of a potential client. Other people who experienced similar difficulties were able to solve their problems without having to get involved and without the authorities even having a reason to get interested in the case.

The Drowned Beauty inn seems to be the source of the solution. This establishment is located not far from town, in a pleasant setting suitable for rest and inspiration. The client is welcomed by a trio of eccentric widows who claim to be genuine practitioners of occultism: the frigid Gloadig, the bubbly Dezign, and Zerline the Tarish half-blood. As they speak with the client, they guess their customer's troubles and offer to help. Zerline is learned in the ancient Tarish tradition of bewitchment. She is capable of casting terrible curses afflicting the target with disease and death. To do so, she needs at least one personal item of the future victim.

The client is free to leave the inn and think about what must be done as long as is wished. If the answer is yes, the client comes back with the required object and spends a night or two in the inn, during which a very impressive nocturnal ceremony will take place, including the sacrifice of an animal and the possession of Zerline by a powerful spirit from the world beyond.



The three “witches” actually have no supernatural power... however, they are very talented actresses! If need be, they can slip an attenuated form of Opallion (see Book 1 – Universe, p.244) or Morphenose (see the end of the present chapter) into the client's food to make the dupe more susceptible. Witnessing the ceremony results in an Easy (8) Mental Resistance check, but the Threshold can be higher under the influence of the drug.

The day after the ceremony, Gloadig tells the client that death is now on its way. The client must now leave for some time, get away from the target lest the shadow spread to him or her as well. More pragmatically, the client must make sure not to have any reason to be associated with the passing of a person whose death is advantageous. The payment of the witches' services takes place after the target's death, once the client has secured the inheritance. The sum will be proportional to the earnings, while remaining “very reasonable.” The client will be contacted by a third party. Of course, welching on the payment would be very ill-advised...

The Spider

This allegedly occult gang of assassins specializes in entirely undetectable murders. This is essential, since otherwise, many suspicious deaths would result in investigations, and sooner or later, the jig would be up. The “witches” know nothing of the method used. Likewise, the accomplice who comes to take the money may sincerely believe that the victim died through occult means. Each link of the chain only knows what is strictly necessary. The only one to have the full picture is a secretive person, an agent serving the Circle under the codename “Spider.” Indeed, he or she is at the center of the web, supervising, distributing the earnings, listening to rumors, and monitoring the activity of possible investigators.



Genuine occult powers

The Leader may prefer a version with actual supernatural powers. In this case, the story will be slightly different. In addition, it will probably be much easier to solve for the PCs. Enter Ierna, who has the Tarish occult gift. However, just like her cousin Zeriak, she is very flexible with her ethics, and it does not bother her to sell her talents. That is how she became a partner of the Circle of Emergence.

❖ Ierna is able to perform a ritual bestowing a curse that attacks the victim's life force, resulting in death within one year at most. To do so, she needs a hair and a personal item of the target, with which she shapes a figurine. Every month, the victim loses 1 Stamina point. The degradation of the person's health condition resembles a degenerating disease. To end the deadly process, the figurine must be found and purified by a Demorthèn or an adept of the Temple.

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❖ She also knows another ritual that is equally deadly but works much differently. For this one, there is no need of hairs or personal belongings. She crafts a sort of cursed fetish that attracts the attention of a nightmarish entity often called by the name of “Black Hunter.” It is said to be able to frighten its victims to death in their sleep (see the “Deadly Beauties” Bestiary book). The fetish must be hidden in the target's mattress or pillow.

neutralize the poison. Surviving a poisoning that reached the Critical Health condition results in an Aftermath (-1 in Stamina and Health), similarly to the Disadvantage of the same name (see Book 1 – Universe, p.214).

Ean the spy goes back to Tulg Naomh to visit former friends... or at least, he believes them to be so! During dinner, he absorbs enough Poison for 5 cumulative points. Once he is back home, he feels unwell, since he has reached the Okay condition (-1 penalty on all rolls); however, it may just be the fish not agreeing with his stomach. The following day, he doesn't feel better, but the physician he has called for simply diagnoses an intestinal flu and prescribes some medicine and rest. Ean's “friends,” who have been made aware of his state, come see him two days later, full of compassion, and take this opportunity to administer another dose of 5 cumulative Poison points. A few hours after their departure, he feels even worse, reaching the Bad Health condition (-2 penalty).

Optional rule: Suggestion

To achieve her ambitions, Aïndrid has developed an Occultism Discipline based on a combination of hypnotism, Morphenose, and rituals. The purpose of a Suggestion is to implant ideas and urges at the risk of leaving deep psychological scars. Suggestions heightening a natural behavior are easier. Therefore, it will be easier to have a brute attack a particular person of apparently his own volition than to get him to register for music classes and do everything to excel.

This section covers instructions and advice regarding the in-game use of Suggestion. Suggestion is a Discipline of the Occultism Domain, and is inspired by Hypnosis. However, it is much more dangerous. Only unscrupulous individuals—supposedly, the PCs' antagonists—are likely to make use of it.

Kell's mines

Kell's mines are mostly known for their iron, which is extracted as pyrite. However, the region has a more important industrial potential from its iron lodes and the many products that can be obtained from its refining, such as sulfuric acid or white lead. Blue lead, mixed with melted glass, results in crystal, a highly sought luxury material. The development of the roads between Kell and Farl or Baldh-Ruoch is an issue both economic and political, which feeds the tensions between Magientists and Demorthèn regarding Taelwald's Forest.



A cumulative poisoning functions like a direct poisoning (see Book 1 – Universe, p.243), with the difference that the effect spreads over a longer period of time.

A cumulative poison is always Deadly, thus inflicting a total of 20 Poison points. However, the points will accrue progressively, as the doses accumulate (from 1 to 5 Poison points every day, depending on the amount ingested). The symptoms are also progressive, ignorable at first, then more and more severe, until death comes or the appropriate antidote is given to neutralize the poison.

☞ Implanting the Suggestion

Implanting the Suggestion is a process that takes a whole hour and must absolutely not be interrupted. Having the victim consume Morphenose is necessary to make the target sufficiently docile. Thus, the only issue is to prevent any outside intervention that would prevent the occultist from completing the implantation.

Implanting an order, an instruction, or a belief equals one Suggestion each time. An occultist who wants to implant several Suggestions must repeat the process. It is possible to implant an instruction on top of an idea or belief.

The Varigal Yldiane was recently the victim of a Suggestion. The occultist who implanted the Suggestion knows that she is on her way to making a delivery to a lord, so he instructs her to slip the contents of a vial into the drink of the lord's child. Pouring the contents of the vial in the drink constitutes an order. However, the occultist is worried that the Varigal may be disturbed by the idea of manipulating a liquid she doesn't know the nature of. Sudden second thoughts could compromise the child's assassination. The occultist therefore decides to implant another Suggestion during another session, for example the belief that the vial contains medicine.

☞ Psychological shock

A Suggestion is a coercive process that sometimes leaves indelible psychological marks. The victim can resist the Suggestion by opposing his or her Mental Resistance to the occultist's Occultism (Suggestion). As with Occultism, the Way used for Suggestion is Reason. A 1 on the occultist's D10 results in automatic failure, the victim suddenly snapping out of the hypnotic trance. However, if the occultist wins, the Suggestion is successful.

A successful Suggestion results in 1 permanent Trauma point for the victim. Should the same person go through several sessions, every session inflicts 1 permanent Trauma point.

Aïndrid's Suggestion roll is $18 + 1D10$. With the average score in Conviction being 3, Tri-Kazelians have on average a Mental Resistance roll of $8 + 1D10$. Therefore, it is virtually impossible to resist her!

Example: We previously saw that to have Yldiane believe she is slipping medicine into a lord's child's drink while it is, in fact, poison, two Suggestion sessions are necessary. This will result in 2 permanent Trauma points. Those who know her will certainly be puzzled by her apparently causeless oddities of behavior.



Usually, the victim only keeps disjointed, blurry memories of the Suggestion sessions. However, the more sessions the victim goes through, the greater the risk is of the target remembering pieces of them in dreams.



Risk of rebellion

During the session, the victim makes a Subversion Test (see Book 1 – Universe, p.234). The Strong Mind (+1) or Mental Rock (+2) Advantages also increase the Difficulty. If the victim fails the Test, in spite of the hypnotic trance and the Suggestion, a jolt of consciousness and individualism leads the target to suddenly attack and try to kill the occultist or run away madly. When this spark of rebellion takes place, the victim is not aware of what has been attempted, only that there is great danger. Later, once he or she has had some time to recover, the person will understand that something was attempted. The victim will be dimly aware of some coercion attempt, but without piecing the whole situation back together.



During a Suggestion session, Yldiane makes a Subversion Test. She has a Creativity of 3 and rolls a 2 on the D10. Since she has a high Combativeness (4), the Leader adjudicates that like a cornered beast, she jumps at the occultist and strangles him! After some time, she gets a grip on herself, her thoughts still fuzzy from the consumption of Morphe-nose. She doesn't remember where she is, and from what she can see, she just killed a man amid a pentacle... What happened? Yldiane must urgently shed light upon this all!

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During the dormancy phase, the victim of a Suggestion can develop a sort of dull feeling of anguish whose source seems unidentifiable, particularly if the Suggestion includes a particularly negative, morally abhorrent component. The person's sleep is frequently plagued by nightmares related to the mission, with close to no residual memory of them upon waking. An occultist may be able to look into this problem through hypnosis. This will elucidate the dream's contents, but will it be enough to understand what is afoot and prevent a crime from taking place?

The extent of the effect

At least a small part of the victim's psyche must agree with the Suggestion. Thus, it is not possible to force someone to act in a way radically opposed to the person's deep convictions. A clever user of Suggestion therefore begins with gathering information about the vehicle the occultist intends to use to reach their objectives.

A son filled with anger against his father may be led to kill him. Such an act goes largely beyond what he would normally do, but the resentment cultivated from long-standing condescension and scorn is sufficient to provide soil for the Suggestion.

Conversely, there is the case of a devoted mother who loves her children more than everything, works tirelessly to feed them, and looks after them out of genuine concern. For her, a Suggestion to murder them all is unacceptable. On the contrary, the order clashes so violently against her convictions that she may wake up in the middle of the hypnotic trance, certainly confused... but far less docile.

Difficulty of the Suggestion check	Exaltation cost	Maximum duration of dormancy	Maximum duration of the mission	Extent of the effect
Complicated (14)	5	1 month	3 hours	Pushes a person to commit an act that the victim would normally deem acceptable. Only works for rather simple orders.
Difficult (17)	10	6 months	1/2 day	Pushes a person to act in an unusual way.
Very Difficult (20)	15	3 years	3 days	Can force extreme behavior. The order can imply that the victim has to act with intelligence and initiative to perform the mission

Dormancy

Dormancy is a term originally used in botany. It describes how an organism can stop all or part of its activity for some time before reactivating. In the case of Suggestion, dormancy refers to the period during which a person has received an instruction without being aware of it, leading an apparently normal life. The effects of Suggestion are a veritable time bomb. They can remain dormant for a very long time before suddenly springing up with a brutality that will surprise everyone.

⊕ **Fading:** Once the dormancy period has passed without the Suggestion coming into effect, the influence progressively subsides, and the victim strangely feels like a weight has been lifted off his or her shoulders.

⊕ **Trigger:** When a Suggestion is implanted, the occultist associates a trigger with it. It can be a particular event (a wedding, a meeting, a festival, etc.), or key word or a key sentence, a person, an item, etc.

⊕ **Trance:** Once the order is triggered and comes into effect, the victim acts almost as normal, though with dimmed mental and creative faculties. It is as if the person's attention were elsewhere as long as the mission has not been performed. This can last several hours, as shown in the chart below, which details the maximum duration of a trance. An astute observer may be able to notice that the person is acting like a potentially dangerous sleepwalker. This will require passing a Difficult (17) Perception (Observation) or Relation (Reading Emotions) check.



A user of Suggestion draws from his or her own Exaltation to use it. The starting Exaltation score is Conviction x 3. However, just like Black Magic (see Book 2 – Travels, p.179), and similarly to Miracles (see Book 1 – Universe, p.218 and 230), Exaltation increases as the Suggestion Discipline progresses.

Aïndrid has 2 in Conviction. Since Exaltation = Conviction x 3, Aïndrid has 6 in Exaltation. Additionally, she has reached a level of 10 in Suggestion. This Discipline works just like the Miracles one for an adept of the Temple. This means that, for each level between 6 and 9 in Suggestion, the occultist earns +5 in Exaltation, which results in a total of 20 extra points once a level of 9 has been reached. Also, 10 extra points are attributed for each level between 10 and 13, giving Aïndrid an extra +10. Her Exaltation total is thus: Base (6) + Discipline from 6 to 9 (20) + Discipline from 10 to 13 (10) = 36.

Exaltation and occultists

Recovering Exaltation points

Similarly to Eberict (see Book 2 – Travels, p.172), those who practice Suggestion regain Exaltation through studying, by devoting their entire attention to it in an almost monastic way. The game mechanics to recover points are the same as for Demorthèn and Elect (see Book 1 – Universe, p.251 and 258). The equivalent of the Demorthèn's Meditation and of the Elect's Contemplation is the Ritual Discipline. An occultist with no points in this Discipline can use the Occultism Domain instead.

- ✦ The studying and thinking must preferably take place in a quiet, scholarly place such as a library or an office (Complicated (14) check), or by poring over occultism books (Standard (11) check).
- ✦ Being in possession of an Object of Power triples the hourly recovery, as does studying a haunted location (Standard (11) check). It is not possible to earn more than 15 points per day through this method. To benefit from this accelerated recovery, one must possess the Ritual Discipline.
- ✦ Performing minor occult rituals (reading a new occult book, exploring a haunted place, etc.) results in the recovery of 5 Exaltation points.
- ✦ Performing significant occult acts (successful spiritualism session, lucid dreaming, etc.) results in the recovery of 10 Exaltation points.
- ✦ Performing major occult acts (successful exorcism of a spirit, contact with a higher entity, etc.) results in the recovery of 30 Exaltation points.

Exaltation increase from several Disciplines

An occultist may be proficient in several Disciplines increasing the user's Exaltation. In such a case, only the highest one is taken into account for the calculation. The Exaltation increase can only occur once for each level of Discipline.

A Character with 5 in Occultism acquires the Suggestion Discipline at a level of 6, which results in 5 extra Exaltation points. Then, she increases Suggestion, which reaches a level of 7 for 5 additional Exaltation points. Later, she decides to focus on another Discipline, Black Magic. Usually, reaching 6 in Black Magic would have meant a +5 in Exaltation, but since the Character has already reached this level with Suggestion, she will only get a new Exaltation bonus by reaching a level of 8 in Black Magic or Suggestion, and so on.

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Drug - Morphenose

⊕ **Addiction:** Slow

⊕ **Harmfulness:** Moderate

⊕ **Dependency:** Mild

An annual creeping plant, Morphene is fairly common, blooming beautifully in forests, fallows, and gardens. It looks like a sort of creeper with spectacular purple, white, and blue inflorescence. It grows slightly sour, edible fruits. It is traditionally used in soothing and sedative herbal teas. However, Morphenose, a chemical derived from Morphene, is a drug that induces a state of dreamy sleepiness in which the imbiber is more receptive to suggestions, with a +1 or +2 bonus depending on the concoction's quality. The recipient also gets a +1 bonus in Empathy. The duration depends on the dosage, with 1D10 hours for a standard dose. A patient undergoing withdrawal feels anxiety, and sleeps restlessly, troubled by bad dreams. Hence why this substance is frequently used by occultists, whether for spiritualism experiments or hypnosis sessions.

The substance can be made with a Complicated (14) roll in Demorthèn Mysteries (Traditional Medicine), Erudition (Herbalism), Natural Environment (Herbalism), or Science (Medicine). It looks and tastes like sugary syrup, and is usually mixed with honey, or burned as a resin.



Aindrid

Female, Gwidrite, age unknown, occultist/prostitute

- ⊗ **Ways:** Combaticiveness: 4. Creativity: 4. Empathy: 0. Reason: 5. Conviction: 2.
- ⊗ **Skills:** Close Combat: 3. Craft: 2. Erudition: 4. Feats: 1. Occultism: 5 (Hypnosis: 6, Suggestion: 10, +3 bonus). Perception: 5. Prayer: 3. Relation: 5 (Manipulation: 10, +4 to rolls based on manipulation*, +1 bonus). Science: 5 (Medicine: 6, +2 bonus). Stealth: 5 (Mimicry: 8). Travel: 4.
- ⊗ **Advantages:** Charismatic, Brilliant, Well-read (Occultism).
- ⊗ **Disadvantage:** Enemy (Sigires of Expiation).
- ⊗ **Sanity:** Mental Resistance: 7 (11 against emotions*). Orientation: Instinctive. Trauma: 16.
- ⊗ **Combat:** Attack: 7. Defense: 10. Speed: 4. Potential: 2.
- ⊗ **Health:** 19. Stamina: 10.
- ⊗ **Exaltation:** 36 (see the Suggestion Discipline covered on, p.54).

* From the "Cold Mask" disorder introduced in this book (see the chapter "Deciphering Signs").

Taken as a child into the Sigire prison in the heart of Expiation, she came back a changed person. She may have been educated to become a saint, but this actually made her the subject of an experiment in reeducating the children of occultists. She survived, but at what cost? Following what was asked of her, she distanced herself from any emotion while developing a remarkable aptitude for understanding the game of pretense in which she had been raised. Now able to play with hidden desires, the way others sacrifice their bishop to checkmate their opponent two moves later, she devised a long-term strategy to escape.

She went through a complex scheme stretching over more than two years. Despite Eberict's desertion during that time (see Book 2 – Travels, p.172), which put everyone on edge, she managed to leave Expiation. She left behind the fallen Sigires who had broken their vows of chastity and fellow inmates doomed to a life of imprisonment, some of whom would sometimes commit suicide rather than go on with their nightmarish existence (see Book 2 – Travels, p.46). She also took with her precious forbidden books from the citadel's library.

Her purpose is not revenge, as such a purpose would stem from emotions she does not feel anymore. Likewise, she sees herself as enemy to no one, since she feels no hatred, just interest or scorn. Her objectives are purely intellectual; what motivates her now is exclusively a thirst for knowledge.

During her travels, Aindrid made contacts, perfected her knowledge, and actively contributed to the development of a cabal of occultists, the Circle of Emergence, whose purpose is to discover the secrets of space, time, and mind by using knowledge from the entire peninsula. She is very interested in subjects as varied as the rumors about the Vale of Dearg, Tarish legends, and any occurrences of haunting. She is always on the lookout for sorcerers she might learn from and for promising individuals she might teach occultism to, with the long-term purpose of deriving new insight from their works. She knows perfectly well how gargantuan the task she has set for herself is, and therefore needs as many potential pawns as possible. Apart from the most observant of her minions, very few of her disciples have the faintest idea that she belongs to the Circle of Emergence. They generally take her for a solitary, roving occultist like so many others.

She knows that the Sigires of Expiation must be after her, so she regularly changes her identity and appearance. So far, she has been a governess, a grieving widow, a pilgrim looking for redemption... but her prostitute alias is her favorite, as it provides her with the best income in addition to easy opportunities for influencing the minds of useful clients. In order to brighten the poor reputation that this profession gives her, she has gotten used to posing as a prostitute with a heart of gold, which results in convenient sympathy toward her.



Personality

Character Traits:

Courageous / Individualist.

Disorder: Unfeeling Puppeteer (Cold Mask)
(see. p.32)

Convinced as she is that only the strongest survive and are able to obtain results matching their ambitions, Aindrid is determined to give herself the means to reach her ends. However, she is equally aware that discretion and subtlety will get her much further than force. Thus, she always wears the mask she deems most appropriate and plays her part with the secret glee of having been able to deceive individuals who believe themselves particularly sly.



Secret

Even though she would deny it, there is a great emptiness within Aindrid that she desperately needs to fill with an intense activity, new projects, and great ambitions. Her thirst in that regard is akin to a bottomless well: it has no end and cannot be quenched because she has never understood its source.

Her emotions have been ripped from her, but is that phenomenon truly natural? It could be the result of a conditioning that, while horrible, was entirely mundane. A more frightening variant might make her the result of an experiment involving snatches of rituals taken from books written by demented sorcerers burned at the stake. What of the other children taken to Expiation at the same time as Aindrid? Did they die in the course of these tests that threatened the life and soul of those who were subjected to them?

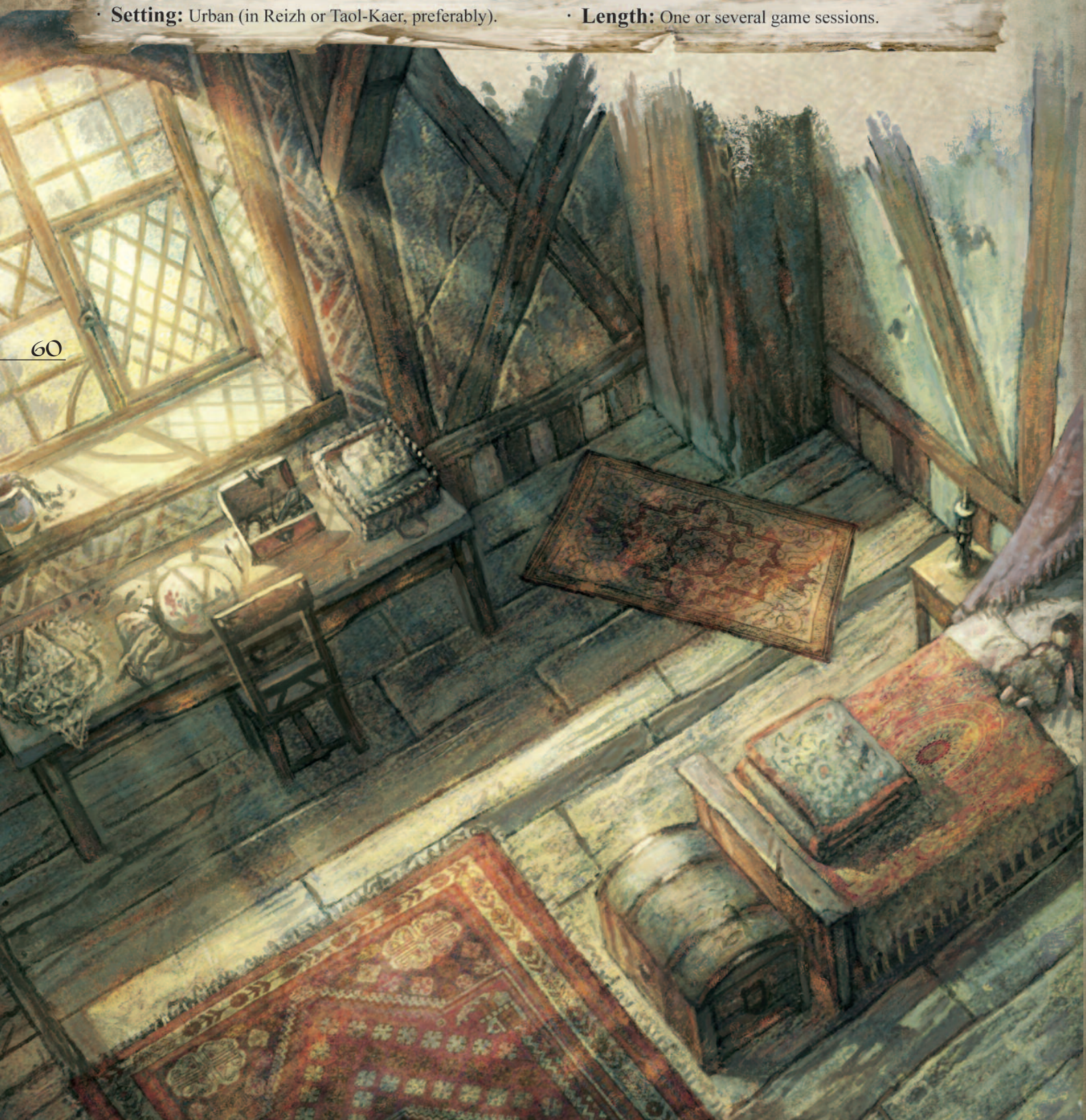


Chapter 3

A Tidy Room

by Iris

- **Style:** Investigation (rational, psychological, and occult).
- **Season:** Any (but with usable roads and no snow).
- **Setting:** Urban (in Reizh or Taol-Kaer, preferably).
- **Length:** One or several game sessions.



- **Summary of the scenario:** When a young girl from a low-class district, enchanting and beloved by all, disappears, the locals are in a commotion. Searches are quickly organized: people comb through vacant lots, backstreets, and dumping grounds. Even the sewers and canals are explored over the course of several days... to no avail. Finally, the body is found, and it is clear that she has been brutally murdered. A mob soon produces the perfect culprit: an alcoholic beggar, a stranger to the district suffering from mental instability. His fate is sealed when some of the young girl's personal belongings are discovered among his effects. People demand justice and get it in the form of a public lynching. Yet, the death of the alleged criminal brings no solace. The pain lingers, and the girl's family keeps her room as it is, as if expecting her to return... and if some whispers in the district are to be believed, she just might...

⌘ **Act 1: Stupor.**

The Characters discover the district and its denizens. They are mobilized to find Edhene, but she is already dead. Very quickly, while the Characters look for clues about the murderer by examining the corpse, an angry mob lashes out at the beggar.

⌘ **Act 2: Denial.**

During Edhene's funeral, the Characters are arrested without knowing why and have to remain in prison for several days. They learn that serious accusations have been made against them. When they are finally freed, they see that the whole district is going through a veritable nightmare, between epidemics of Chimerical Fever and frightening supernatural manifestations. The place is quarantined, and once more, the Characters are entrapped.

⌘ **Act 3: Acceptance.**

The web unravels and the mysteries are solved one by one as the Characters, by dint of wits, bravery, or persuasion, manage to overcome most of their adversaries and resolve their main problems.

- **Stakes and aims:** The central theme is mourning, as revealed through the sudden tragedy during Act 1. This scenario also involves the machinations of the Circle of Emergence, mainly drug smuggling and research into a monstrous creature, the Diwelank. The plot is tightly woven into a game of deceit and powerful, sometimes violent emotions. Falsehood wears several faces. Aindrid's is the most obvious one, but the attitude of the district's population also bears mentioning: they tolerate the actions of a gang of criminals because its members are locals, but will lynch a stranger on mere suspicion. In spite of these shocking aspects, which form the scenario's starting point and feed its complications, “A Tidy Room” is also a story of redemption, acceptance, and closure. Beyond the decorum and the elements laid to make the scenario richer, the basic pattern is the following:

✦ A tragedy results in an unbearable loss.

✦ The suffering from this impossible loss creates a monster made of memories and phantasms.

✦ Finding closure and letting oneself live again frees the monster.

The “monster,” which takes the shape of the Bogeyman in the scenario, is a metaphor for psychological suffering. “A Tidy Room” tells of the mourning of parents who have lost a child and remain impenetrably surrounded by the ghosts of their memories, kept fresh by the shrine they've made of their child's bedroom.

⌘ **Main objectives:** Bringing peace and quiet back to the district and to the Maers.

✦ Dismantling or destroying the Tidy Room, with the consent of all the Mears, without exception.

✦ Putting an end to the rule of the Canal Gang and driving off Aindrid.

⌘ **Additional objectives:** Getting to the bottom of the story.

✦ Identifying Edhene's true murderer.

✦ Resolving the problem of the Diwelank (see Chapter 4 – Bestiary).

✦ Understanding the phenomenon of the Bogeyman (see Chapter 4 – Bestiary).

✦ Saving Athelsan Oxcendre.

✦ Discovering who is at the source of the Characters' arrest on the basis of slanderous accusations.



-A Tidy Room-

Warning to the Leader

The scenarios of the Shadows of Esteren series explore the theme of horror. In “A Life Choice,” the Characters discover a community that turns out to be a coercive sect practicing human sacrifices. Another example is “Vengeful Words,” whose background features unfortunate souls being sent as fodder for the cannibalistic rites of a sorcerous lord. Yet, when violence inflicted in a game is far from our daily lives, it appears vague, unreal.

The themes of “A Tidy Room,” however, are much closer to our lives, which makes some of its aspects all the more unsettling as we have a more intimate understanding of them: urban violence, drug smuggling, rape... However, this scenario is in no way about reveling in depravity or seeking twisted pleasure in talking about sordid crimes.

Dramatically speaking, it will be difficult to cut corners on the revolting nature that is at the heart of the tragedy and will create the feeling of unbearable loss. The Leader has the responsibility of evaluating the Players' sensitivity. Although giving the Players a shock during Act I is an efficient means of crafting a compelling story, this feeling must not go as far as discomfort. In particular, some members of the group may be particularly sensitive about rape, and mentioning it during the game may trigger unpleasant emotions.

If the Leader has any doubt regarding the sensitivity of the other participants involved, it is probably better to focus on one of the other options suggested, such as the murders committed by the Diwelank. Since this creature is no more than an imaginary monster, it creates a distance from the facts.

Prologue

“A Tidy Room” can be played out in various ways that may considerably change the atmosphere and the course of the scenario, even though the basic plot will be the same. The guidelines presented hereafter are simple indications, and it is entirely possible for the Leader to combine contrasting moods through a personal mix of modular scenes.

62 Horror and dramatic tension

Depending on their tastes and intentions, the Leader can opt for a scenario with no, a little, or a lot of supernatural influence. By default, the scenario offers a confrontation with extraordinary events, but options have also been included to play out the story without it being necessary to rely on ghosts or monsters. According to the style of suspense and horror that they prefer, the Leaders can select mundane or supernatural options through the system of modular scenes, picking the murderers most appropriate to the atmosphere they wish to create. The following paragraphs provide several possible ways of shaping and telling the story through other means than supernatural ones.

Modular scenario

The scenarios of Shadows of Esteren follow a specific system of “modular scenes.” At several key moments of the scenario, indicated with the icons below, inserts will suggest various optional scenes that will allow the Leaders to give the scenario the atmosphere they wish, with an accent more pronounced on certain aspects (gore, suspense, supernatural, etc.) Of course, these are only suggestions, and Leaders are invited to adapt and personalize their narrative choices by designing new scenes.



Gore



Suspense



Psychology



Supernatural

The atmosphere during gaming sessions will mainly depend on the involvement of the Players and on the work of the Game Leader, who acts as the director. Several icons indicate technical aids providing advice.



This icon indicates inserts giving the Leaders tips and hints in order to optimize the atmosphere of a scene.



This icon highlights important pieces of information so that the Leaders may notice them easily.



This icon indicates a hook that the Leader can develop into a scene or even an entire scenario.



This icon introduces an optional rule.



This icon indicates an important element to crack the case.



This icon gives musical suggestions to illustrate a scene. *Shadows of Esteren* gives a great importance to music, as evidenced by the album *Of Men and Obscurities*, by Delphine Bois, specifically composed for use as ambient music for the game.

Harsh reality

In this version, every oddity, every crime, has a purely rational explanation, removing any supernatural influence. By going with this approach, the Leader will put the stress on investigation and suspense.

Edhene's death.

The killer can either be Gliwi, the Canal Gang, or Alan Fildh.

There is no Diwelank.

The bloody murders that have sown terror through the district are the work of Alan Fildh. His addiction to Gwilmine has become so severe that he goes into a murderous rage every time he consumes some. The Canal Gang, which sells the drug, is therefore indirectly responsible for his crimes.

There is no Bogeyman.

The visions the locals suffer from are directly attributable to Chimerical Fever and/or mass hysteria (see the insert).

Athelsan Oxcendre's crisis of conscience.

The occultist cannot bear to be part of an organization that spreads a drug whose side effects can include psychotic breakdowns. At the beginning, he will be certain that the events in the Weavers' District have a supernatural origin and he will try to associate with the Characters for several reasons: they are outsiders to the Circle of Emergence; they are involved in the investigation; they seem capable and worry Aïndrid.

A case of mass hysteria

The supplement “The Black Moon Handbook” focuses on real or imagined haunting phenomena. In that regard, it goes through the main ingredients of collective hysteria, which can be an entirely rational explanation for this scenario's events. In a nutshell, mass hysteria is a phenomenon of collective fear, which coincides with sometimes very impressive somatic symptoms (visions, hallucinations, headaches, stomachaches, rashes, difficulty breathing, fainting, etc.) It appears within tightly knit communities experiencing a psychological crisis. The source of the phenomenon is usually a charismatic person who often suffers from mental problems. Once members of the group become emotionally compromised, hysteria supersedes reason, and they quickly assign supernatural or other equally fantastic attributes to the cause of the trauma. Separating and isolating the persons affected by collective hysteria can put an end to it. In the case of the Weavers' District, the source of the collective hysteria would be Edhene's mother. The spreading symptoms would then be attributed to the evil spirit of the Tarish Glazi, clashing with the benevolent spirit of Edhene, who has become the patron protector of the district. Ending the crisis would require either taking the victims of the phenomenon away from its source, or managing to persuade Edhene's mother to “let her daughter go” to a better world. The last option would certainly be easier to pull off for a sincere adherent of the Temple who believes in the concept of the fundamental struggle between Good and Evil. Such a Character may be able to convince the mother to lead her daughter on the right path by letting her join the One by becoming a saint.

Bloody hands

This combination emphasizes feelings of disgust by stressing the appalling nature of the events, with a tendency toward gory scenes. This style of play is best left to reasonably experienced and mature Leaders who will be able to make use of shocking descriptions in subtle doses.

- ⌘ **Edhene's death.** The Leader will detail the description of the discovery of the young girl's corpse, stressing the contrast between how lovely and lively she used to be and the repulsive piece of carrion the Characters have before them.
- ⌘ **Glazi's death.** Disgust can easily be engendered by detailing the abject behavior of the crowd lynching the Tarish.
- ⌘ **The Diwelank's shadow.** The monster that escaped from the laboratory of the occultist Athelsan Oxcendre has made the Weavers' District its hunting ground. It will kill several times, leaving the corpses in such a state that the victims' relatives will barely recognize them, mainly identifying them from their personal belongings.
- ⌘ **The slaughter of the Maers.** If the Characters take too long to solve the case, Gliwi, whose psyche was already brittle, will snap under the influence of the Chimerical Fever or the Bogeyman, and he will murder his entire family... which may make the house a haunted location!

Nightmare

The emphasis is put on psychology and the hidden recesses of the human mind. The scenario will follow a slope leading to an increasingly dreamlike atmosphere.

- ⌘ **The anguish over the disappearance.** The search for Edhene, who is already dead, must be detailed and described with care to show first the anxiety, then the anguish and horror of losing someone dear. This is a crushing blow for the Maers, who will suffer the news like a lead weight. The slightest rumor feeds unreasonable hopes, such as when a merchant claims to have caught a glimpse of a girl who looked like Edhene outside of town, with a man...
- ⌘ **Killing fury.** At least one Character was swept up in the frenzy of the bloodthirsty crowd bent on lynching Glazi. The aftermath is a shock. What are these emotions so violent that they can lead to an irrepressible desire to collectively butcher a man? Guilt and doubt will dominate the Character.
- ⌘ **Dreams.** The Characters are haunted by confused, nightmarish, feverish dreams. One or more Characters have contracted Chimerical Fever, but must nevertheless go on with the investigation in a district invaded by fog and darkness. Even those who remain hale have restless nights, the result of the intense stress they are under.
- ⌘ **Night terrors.** The Bogeyman, the Diwelank, and the Canal Gang all run rampant during the epidemic of Chimerical Fever. The visions and prophecies of the beggar Alan Fildh seem to take shape in the web of terrifying, dreadful dreams. Everyone comes face to face with themselves as they seek to free themselves from this oppression, this harassment that claws at their minds.
- ⌘ **Dawn.** The emergence of truth is felt like the end of a spiraling dream, an appeasement for the PCs and the whole Weavers' District.

Mourning

One's reaction in the face of an impending death or an unbearable loss generally follows four steps: Denial, Anger, Depression and Acceptance. The first, Denial, is a phase during which the subject rejects reality: this must be an error, a mistake, because something so horrible simply cannot be. It is followed by Anger, a phase of revolt against the injustice of one's fate. Indignation can lead to a jolt, a burst of activity, as the subject tries to find a solution with a more or less disorganized expense of energy. The person may seek vengeance or pursue senseless goals. Depression comes when it becomes evident that the person is powerless, that one's misfortune cannot be avoided, that injustice will never be punished, that nothing will ever return what has been lost and that whatever is done, the conclusion will be the same. Then, finally, they reach the stage of Acceptance.

The story's plot is organized according to this succession of mindsets. Act I is dedicated to Denial and Anger, while Depression can be found in the terrible melancholy striking the parents of the victims and those close to them. As for Acceptance, it is one of the scenario's objectives. The Leader can take these broad phases as guidelines to prepare the descriptions and the NPCs' attitudes.



Getting the PCs involved

The possibilities for initiating the scenario can be adapted following the adventures the PCs have been through so far. Here are a few possible ways of getting them involved in the Weavers' District's problems. Of course, several can be combined. Each of the options listed below will be detailed thereafter:

⌘ **Mercenary investigators.** This option is suited to Leaders who wish for the game to start with as short an introduction as possible. It methodically guides the PCs toward the different components of the scenario's mysteries while not being too emotionally heavy.

⌘ **Famed sleuths.** In this case, the Characters will be a bit less supervised and guided than in the previous one. They can act according to what they believe is right or wrong while defending their honor and their reputation.

⌘ **The Maers.** The Characters have ties to Edhene's family and take care of the investigation because they cannot leave her murder unpunished. This option

requires the Leader to prepare an introduction to “A Tidy Room” through a prologue possibly lasting several sessions to introduce the setting and the protagonists.

⌘ **The Circle of Emergence.** This last option gives “A Tidy Room” the role of a major scenario opening into a campaign during which the PCs will fight this criminal organization. Adapting the narrative arcs can set even greater stakes for this struggle. This will require the Leader to design many customized adventures, but it is a very promising option to depict an occult, epic, and unique quest.

⌘ **Mercenary investigators**


The Leader can use one of the optional NPCs, Trenmor Mac Daere, and give him the role of an agent of the city. Mac Dare is a politician, a member of the town council, and a dignitary in charge of the safety of the Weavers' District. He suspects that part of the local guard is in the pocket of the Canal Gang, and he does not know whom to trust. From his point of view, the PCs are strangers unknown to the Gang and will therefore be able to operate without attracting notice. According to him, it should not be hard for them to find a reason to settle in this popular district: many workers come here from the countryside,

whether temporarily or permanently, and sometimes retired merchants make it their home. The PCs will simply have to adopt a cover story matching their skills. As a reminder, here are several thresholds of Skill mastery:

- ③ 3 to 5: decent, though unspecialized, knowledge; a beginner in the field.
- ⑥ 6 to 9: Professional. Could set up shop and make a living.
- ⑩ 10 to 12: Expert. Has quite a reputation in the field and an expertise that people would pay good money for.
- ⑬ 13 to 15: Master preceded by their reputation.

The possible professions are: Craftsman (cobbler, smith, woodworker, tailor, etc.), Physician (either through Demorthèn Mysteries, Magience, Natural Environment, or Science), Performer (Performance), Penman (Erudition), Preacher (Prayer or Demorthèn Mysteries), Trader (Relation), etc. Mac Daere will explicitly insist on the PCs respecting a few conditions. Should they fail to do so, they will not be paid. First, the Characters are to investigate without telling anyone about their mission, no matter what pretext they will have to use (concern, curiosity, chance, etc.) Any communications with their employer must remain discreet and take place through an intermediary. Alan Fildh or Mandica could be agents of Mac Daere who will be responsible for transmitting any additional information. The PCs' mission will be to settle for some time in the dis-

trict, take the pulse of its daily life, and be part of its community. As a result, if they want to keep up appearances, they will have to look for Edhene as well when she disappears. After the suspect has been lynched, Mac Daere will share his suspicions. Driven by his obsession, he fears that the culprits are the Canal Gang. The PCs will be in charge of disentangling truth from falsehood, identifying the murderer, apprehending him, and gathering evidence against the members of the Canal Gang. Possibly, Mac Daere will also ask the PCs to shed light on the mysterious events that plague the district and determine the source of the apparitions. In any case, he makes it clear that the purpose is the district's well-being and that he will reward any actions furthering that goal.

 Each PC will be paid 50 Ed (the equivalent of an average five days of pay for a mercenary, see Book 1, p.219) to bring down the Canal Gang. This sum can vary depending on the PCs' fame and their ability to negotiate. To neutralize the thugs, the Leader can steer the team toward legal means (evidence, legal arrest, etc.), or toward more strong-arm tactics, with the ensuing medical care at the expense of Mac Daere. The Characters can also each earn an additional bonus of 10 to 20 Ed for each decisive action or piece of intelligence, such as establishing the connection with Aïndrid, confronting Edhene's murderer and bringing damning evidence, or shedding light on the apparitions, whether they are triggered by Aïndrid or by a Bogeyman phenomenon.

Famed sleuths

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This is a simple, handy variant for a team with altruistic, intellectual inclinations. The Leader must be well aware of the Players' mindset before deciding to use such a hook. Indeed, some Players may be reluctant to be involved in a scenario without some incentive.

In the case of this method, the Characters' reputation for being honorable and subtle preceded them in some way or another, possibly from the mouth of the Varigal Haldrid. The Maers will seek their help to find Edhene... a mission that will unfortunately be doomed to fail. If they want to maintain their reputation, they will have no choice but to bounce back from this disaster by understanding and exposing the truth. This will take them on the path of a complex, dangerous investigation.


The Maers

Having a strong, personal connection with the Maers will have the PCs experience the events from the inside, which will greatly increase the scenario's emotional intensity. It is a very efficient way to get the PCs involved in the story and to make for very moving scenes. Here are a few possibilities:

- ❖ A freshly created group can be from the Weavers' District and personally know the young girl through various festivals or everyday encounters. Playing out one or two short scenarios involving Edhene before getting to "A Tidy Room" will strengthen this effect.
- ❖ Travelers on their way to some business of their own might discover Edhene's hospitality and kindness and make friends with her, which would give them personal reasons to uncover the truth. This option will be all the more efficient if the Leader seamlessly introduces the Maers in previous scenarios. Knowing the family, even superficially, may lead a team driven by intellectual curiosity (criminology, observation of rare phenomena, etc.) to get involved in the case.

- ❖ One of the Characters has direct ties with Edhene. She can be a relative, a close friend, or even a significant other. Since the scenario "A Tidy Room" involves the brutal death of Edhene, using this option will give a more horrific tone to the story. The more time the Leader has taken to develop the relationship between Edhene and the Character in previous sessions, the greater the shock and emotional turmoil will be. The Leader must be careful with this option, not going too far, and making sure that the Players agree to a style of gaming where horror and despair are prevalent. The Leader can draw inspiration from the game aid "Conscience rules but does not govern" (see Book 3 – Dearg) to depict the rising of emotions and passion.



 During fall or spring, heavy rainfalls occur. The river flowing through the town bursts its banks, flooding large areas and blocking the roads. The struggle against the raging river can result in a terribly intense scene: drowning, last-second rescue, separated groups... Then long hours of desolation, looking for remains or corpses through the mud. Many travelers, possibly including the Characters, have lost their possessions. Edhene is one of the volunteers who help the unfortunate souls. The Maers, encouraged by the young girl, house some of the victims, who may once again include the PCs. It will take several days for the river to drop, ample time to talk and create bonds. Afterward, the PCs can leave the Maers to play out another scenario, then pay them a visit on their way back, which will start “A Tidy Room.”

Making the scenario part of a campaign

The Characters travel through Tri-Kazel, go through varied adventures, seize opportunities... Here is a path the party can follow, which combines several of the series' official scenarios:

- ⌘ **Book 0 – Prologue.** The scenarios “Loch Varn,” “Poison,” and “Red Fall” can be played one after the other. They will depict the atmosphere of typical communities of villagers.
- ⌘ **Book 2 – Travels.** As they escort merchants going to Tulg-Naomh to sell Dearth's production of copper-based products and assorted local items, the Characters see Anaïs Cruyssec's job offer. She has sailed from the Ashen Yard and needs a guide and an escort. This is a possible introduction to “A Life Choice.” Moreover, on their way to Mùdan, and possibly after a short detour through Dearth, the Characters can be confronted with various incidents presented in the Canvases “Night of Fright” and “Blood Feathers.”
- ⌘ **The Monastery of Tuath.** Anaïs Cruyssec is looking for people who might help her cure her son, and she has heard that there is one such person in the Monastery of Tuath. This rumor, used as an epilogue for “A Life Choice,” becomes a starting point for “Vengeful Words.”
- ⌘ **Occultism.** On their way to bring Anaïs and her son to Tulg-Naomh to sail for the Ashen Yard, the PCs meet the Varigal Haldrid, who is having trouble with a client who has just come back from the Gray Bogs and has obviously become very ill. As thanks for their help and for providing life-saving care to his client, Haldrid will introduce them to the Maers who, as hospitable people, will invite them to take a few days of rest from their travels. This is an introduction to “A Tidy Room.” In the course of their investigation in the Weavers' District, the PCs may have learned about the existence of the Circle of Emergence and decide to bring down the Fluxed Gears or another one of their activities.
- ⌘ **The Black Moon Handbook.** Whether its owner survived or died, Athelsan Oxendree's collection of books will allow the Characters to acquire books about occultism, including the Black Moon Handbook. Since they are in Tulg-Naomh, they might also get interested in the problem of the knight Keir Mac Farquar. In the future, they might also be invited to solve the problem detailed in the Canvas “Rounding Up Stray Souls,” which takes place in Gorm Caladh, or happen to cross the path of Brother Arathos in the surrounding mountains...

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The Circle of Emergence

Should the Leader want to put the secret organization at the forefront, the scenario may start with the PCs finding out about a letter sent to Athelsan Oxendree, occultist and member of the Circle of Emergence. In this case, the PCs have intercepted a Varigal or a group of Tarish and discovered that they carried a letter signed with a red circle and initials. The messenger(s) may have died during an attack of brigands or from an accident. The letter can come from several possible locations around the peninsula. In any case, the letter is for “A. OXC. Weavers' District, town of XXX,” with XXX being the town the Leader has chosen as the setting for the scenario.

Depending on the Leader's needs, the contents of the message can be encrypted or not. The code may, for example, be a call-back to the Characters' investigations in their previous adventures, in particular “Red Fall” from Book 0 – Prologue and “Vengeful Words” from the Monastery of Tuath. It will become apparent to the Characters that only by stealthily and subtly infiltrating the district will they be able to learn more, watching out for any events out of the ordinary.

A new use of the arc of Vengeance

Shadows of Esteren's system of narrative arcs (see Book 3 – Dearg) includes the arc of Vengeance. It is a secondary arc that is not intended to be resolved through the official Dearg campaign. Its story is about personal justice, the search for the murderers of a loved one. Fighting the Circle of Emergence can be an opportunity for a variant of this arc, based on the game aid “Creating New Narrative Arcs” (see Book 3 – Dearg).

⊕ **Profile:** Sid (see Book 1 – Universe, p.182). This is a possible adaptation of the Character for a campaign where the Circle of Emergence is in the foreground.

⊕ **Faction:** Any.

⊕ **Themes:** This narrative arc is about how hard it is to obtain justice when the royal power, official and theoretically legitimate, is unable to put an end to a cross-border threat. The Circle of Emergence is an insidious enemy, sneaky and easy to underestimate. Thriving on corruption, blackmail, and the use of arcane arts, they are able to outmaneuver the lords, dukes, and even kings who are used to enforcing justice and law only within the precincts of their own domain. Any who seek to fight this organization will surely be on their own...

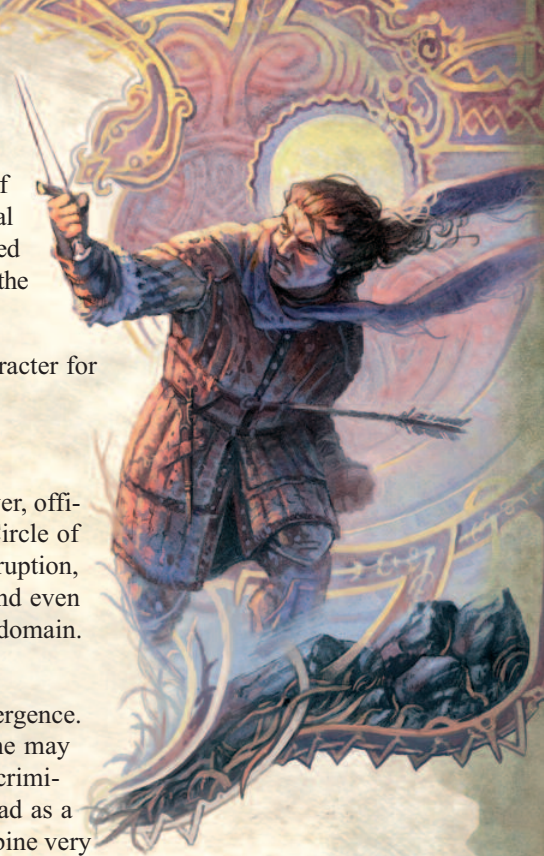
⊕ **Prerequisites:** The Character has lost someone dear by the hand of the Circle of Emergence. The initial event could be a murder, though it is not the only possibility. The loved one may have succumbed to an overdose of improved Gwilmine or have become a bloodthirsty criminal under its influence. The Leader can also include the dagger shaped like a bird's head as a clue. Playing this adaptation of the narrative arc of Vengeance is an option that can combine very well with another Character who has chosen the narrative arc of the Occult (see p.17). The Leader may also draw from the chapter “Mysterious Powers” (see Book 2 – Travels, p.180, “Tarish Curse”) to establish a stronger connection between the Tarish identity and the occultists as a means to involve a Character who has chosen the narrative arc of Origins (see Book 3 – Dearg). By using this to create a relationship between some Tarish clans and the Circle of Emergence, the Leader will connect the main dramatic axes even more tightly. This way, these three PCs will each have a powerful motivation to explore the world of the occultists, meeting the eminent figures of this universe and learning about their knowledge and secrets. Here are a few possibilities to set the Circle of Emergence as the antagonist in the narrative arc of Vengeance:

⊕ **Focus:** A Focus is a scenario with a particular structure, centered on a narrative arc and dedicated to having the Players explore it (see Book 3 – Dearg). In this one, the PC has returned from a journey or a mission, or someone close to the PC has. It turns out that this someone is severely addicted to improved Gwilmine, and the drug alters the person's behavior as much as it affects their health. But the worst part is, they are the victim of side effects driving them to commit brutal murders. At the end of the Focus, the PC will discover the truth, finding out about the ravages caused by a new and devastating drug.

⊕ **The red circle:** The PC tracks down the drug dealer, who is already dead. A short investigation leads the PC to an envelope stamped with a red circle containing a coded letter. The letter is for “A. OXC. Weavers' District, town of XXX,” with XXX being the town the Leader has chosen as the setting for the scenario.

⊕ **A Tidy Room:** The PC reaches the town with a personal motivation that will get them involved in the scenario “A Tidy Room.”

⊕ **A powerful network:** Once the epilogue of the scenario has been reached, the PCs will have an idea of the strength and resources of their opponent. The Leader can draw from the paragraph “Portraying the Circle of Emergence” (see p.45) the elements to prepare several additional adventures.



Game aids: appendices, clue cards, portraits, and maps

As with “Vengeful Words” (see The Monastery of Tuath), this scenario comes with several game aids whose purpose is to help the Players solve the various mysteries of the scenario and assist the Leader in optimizing the atmosphere. Leaders, in accordance with their gaming style and the tastes of their Players, can decide to use all or part of the game aids provided.

⊕ The appendices:

The appendices are intended for the Leader, to be used as cheat sheets during the game. They sum up the scenario's core information: chronology, clues, protagonists, and global summary. They were made so that Leaders can dedicate their full attention to the ongoing game.

The clue cards

The scenes associated with a clue card are indicated with an icon. In the course of such a scene, the Leader will give the PCs the associated clue. Having a visual reminder at hand can help them remain focused on the story. It is also a way to avoid losing track or letting the pace slacken. Make sure to let the Players know that, though the clue cards will help them by pointing at the key elements of the story, they do not cover all the mysteries that the PCs may find out about through the scenario.

Portraits

“A Tidy Room” is a scenario with many protagonists. For the Leader, the portraits are descriptive aids; for the Players, they are reminders. Combined with the clue cards and maps, they can even be used by the Players during brainstorming phases: just like in a detective story, they can mull over their notes, personal observations, clues, suspects, etc.

Maps

This book comes with several maps: the Weavers' District, the sewers, an abandoned house, and the washhouse. Each one of them is likely to be visited and explored several times. These maps can be used by the Leader to prepare ambushes and chases. They also ensure that the Players have a clear idea of the environment their Characters are in, and they can help in progressively developing a feeling of familiarity with the Weavers' District.

General chronology

The plot mixes the priorities and actions of three groups: the Weavers' District, the Circle of Emergence, and the supernatural entities (see Chapter 4 – Bestiary). So that the succession of events can be clear, the following table sums up the default chronology:

When ?	The Weavers' District	The Circle of Emergence	Supernatural Creatures	The PCs
Evening and night 1	<i>Party. Many get drunk. Edhene dies.</i>	<i>Traffic of Gwilmine by the Canal Gang. Meeting between Kalber and Aindrid</i>	<i>The Diwelank escapes, roams through the district, then hides in the sewers.</i>	<i>Are invited to the party.</i>
Days 2 and 3	<i>Edhene's disappearance is noticed. A search begins.</i>			<i>Are asked to be part of the search parties. They discover the district, familiarizing themselves with the place and the locals.</i>
Day 4	<i>Edhene's corpse is found. Some of Edhene's personal belongings are found to be in Glazi's possession. He is lynched.</i>			<i>The investigation starts with an undercover autopsy. They are powerless witnesses to Glazi's lynching, or barely manage to save him.</i>
Day 5	<i>Burial and mourning feast. The Tidy Room takes shape.</i>	<i>Aindrid is getting worried about the meddlesome PCs and forges evidence against them so that they can be arrested.</i>	<i>The Diwelank finds shelter in an abandoned house. It is seen by witnesses. First night of nightmares.</i>	<i>Are invited to the burial. Are arrested on the basis of false accusations.</i>
Days 6 to 14	<i>The situation gets out of hand. First cases of Chimerical Fever.</i>	<i>Traffic in the canals, under the cover of mist. Important delivery stored in the sewers.</i>		<i>Stay in prison.</i>
Day 15	<i>The epidemic worsens.</i>			<i>Discover the state of the district. Prepare to leave or to resume the investigation.</i>
From Day 16 to the conclusion of the crisis	<i>The district is quarantined. The epidemic and psychosis go on.</i>			<i>The PCs are trapped and have to act.</i>

The Weavers' District



he Weavers' District is more than the setting for "A Tidy Room"; it is actually one of the scenario's characters: its rhythms and locations provide opportunities for all kinds of encounters and incidents. The Leader should make sure to be familiar with the District's various areas, which will have varying degrees of importance according to how the Leader intends to play out the scenario.

Since the Weavers' is not among the wealthiest districts, only its main streets are paved, with a central channel carrying the litter, feces, and waste water into the sewers, then into the canal that pours into the river. The other, smaller streets made of dirt are narrow and constantly darkened. They frequently turn into morasses during downpours, with rainwater and gravity creating ad hoc waste disposal systems. In addition to the humans who live in the district, there are plenty of animals. Some are raised in the suburbs or even belong to the locals, while others are taken to the slaughterhouse or to the market, or to be used as beasts of burden.

The popular architecture is quite different from the great ideals enthusiastically depicted by the student Kelvorch Lochaed (see Book 1 – Universe, p.116). In the suburbs and working districts, three main types of buildings can be seen.

The first are narrow, tall houses with half-timbered facades, which often have few windows and whose ground floor sometimes serves as a shop.

Then there is grander construction featuring amenities like a backyard and private well. These habitations either belong to well-off families who live there along with their staff, or are divided into several homes like an apartment building. In the latter case, the common yard is used as a playground for children, to leave the clothes to dry, or to raise a few rabbits, chickens, or pigs.

Finally, close to the canal and beyond, the buildings are essentially made of wood, sometimes of poor quality, as they are meant to only be used for a short period of time. Huts of wood or cob with small vegetable patches, or even hovels, can also be seen.

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- 1- Marketplace
- 2- Great washhouse
- 3- Warehouses & workshops
- 4- Western gate
- 5- Eastern gate
- 6- Huts & dumping grounds
- 7- Banks
- 8- Canal

- A- Abandoned house
- B- House of the Maers & Nollck de Nectan
- C- Quilynien the undertaker
- D- Aindrid
- E- Glazi
- F- Canal Gang
- G- Old Loryame
- H- Golden Spool (tavern)
- I- Athelsan Oxendre
- J- Alan Fildh
- K- Scorcha
- L- Raseron

Sewers

At first, there was a map of the underground network, but with time, so many pipes and tunnels have been added that it is now inconceivable to find an up-to-date map. The sewers carry the drinking water as well as the waste water, following a complex circuit. Maintenance operations are mainly performed in important locations around the city, such as the marketplace or the washhouse, in the case of the Weavers' District. Elsewhere, inhabitants who have personal access to the sewers are requested to keep their pipes in good condition themselves. Some sections are enlarged, connected to more recent ones, or walled-up, sometimes even destroyed, accidentally or otherwise.

Inside the sewers, there are large collectors, rooms of sometimes prodigious dimensions, and galleries of all sizes. The water level depends on the rain and can reach from ankle height up to the roof. The unused galleries, however, are relatively dry. The water is murky, the ground is slippery, and there are plenty of rats (see Book 2 – Travels, p.183). In addition, the constant lapping noises can become disquieting. A light mist, along with bits of unidentifiable debris, often hang in the air. The smell of carrion is particularly hard to bear, and can go as far as to make those who come close to a carcass nauseated or even ill.



Being faced with the odor of decaying flesh, not to mention the smell of feces, in an enclosed space requires Stamina checks to not feel ill. The Character makes the Stamina roll, and the Leader describes resulting condition. Taking precautions or being used to such an atmosphere can provide bonuses: +1 for covering one's face with a cloth, +1 for adding perfume, +2 for having professional experiences that have acclimated one to such stenches, etc.

⊕ 13 or less: the Character cannot help but vomit. The Character is unable to act, speak, or even stay alert for one round, then suffers a -2 penalty to all actions for a short period in the aftermath.

⊕ 14 to 16: the Character feels nauseated (-1 penalty to all actions).

⊕ 17 or higher: the Character is able to carry on with no penalty.

- 1- Hideout of the Canal Gang
- 2- Canal access
- 3- Default location for the ambush
- 4- Washhouse access
- 5- Canal access
- 6- Warehouse access
- 7- Marketplace access

To the abandoned house

Canal

Upstream from the river, the canal is used to transport wares, mostly heavy, bulky items. The level of activity is intense all through the day, with plenty of moving, trading, selling, loading, and unloading. At night, however, the atmosphere becomes dreary, with fog rising in patches above and around the murky, often foul-smelling water. Under the cover of darkness, commerce of a more sordid kind takes place: smuggling, fencing of stolen goods, drug trafficking, occasional or regular prostitution, etc. All the locals of the Weavers' District know that a gang is active there (see the Canal Gang, p.84). These thugs have been proving bolder the past few months due to the impunity they enjoy: the inhabitants prefer to turn a blind eye to their activities, lest they suffer the consequences. Better to ignore another's screams than to become a victim oneself!

Well-informed people know the rumors swirling about a more potent strain of Gwilmine (see Book 1 – Universe, p.244 and Chapter 2 – The Circle of Emergence) and where to find it. The surroundings of the canal are home to all kinds of traffic. It is possible to get regular supplies of Flux cartridges (see Book 1 – Universe, p.226), though in small quantities, and occasionally, other Magientist paraphernalia and Tonics (see Book 1 – Universe, p.225).

The gang of hoodlums ruling over this turf can be called upon as middle men to acquire items of dubious origin, or to rough someone up. In exchange for their services, they will ask for a minimum of 5 Ad. Refunds are uncommon; returns are discouraged.



Depending on the composition of the group of Characters, some may have connections with criminal organizations, which the Leader can use to introduce each member of the Canal Gang one by one.

It can be a nice way to show all the diversity of the Weavers' District in shades of gray.



Marketplace

The marketplace is the liveliest place during the day, plentiful in shops, taverns, and hostelrys. People here buy and sell everything in a constant bustle of colors, laughter, and shouts, while street performers strive to make a living from their shows. Compared to other urban districts, there are relatively few pickpockets in the Weavers' District, but one should still be careful. At the center of the marketplace stands the district's well, the main source of drinking water for those who do not own a private well. It is kept closed with a metal cover to keep people from tampering with it. The guard locks it in the evening and opens it in the morning. There is a ladder to climb down and take care of the maintenance. A few public fountains have also been erected, but these recent additions, close to the homes, are still few and far between.



The Golden Spool tavern is the favorite gathering place of the weavers of the Maer family and their friends. It doesn't look like much, but it is a decent place. Two pints of beer or cider can be bought for only 3 Ed. Two pints of strong alcohol, possibly distilled in questionable conditions, cost thrice as much, but are of course served in tiny glasses. The owners of the establishment are an elderly couple called the Ferdwens. They look quite alike, as if they had rubbed off on each other. They are of average height, with graying brown hair, clearly overweight, and always wear a smile on their faces, even when reminding a client that there is a sizable tab to pay. Occasionally, they lend money in small sums, but closely keep track of the interest. They have a daughter, Sybille, who is their spitting image and studies accounting with a clerk in another district. The couple can tell the PCs about every personality of the district, but they don't like to be involved in the canal's shady business and will therefore prove evasive or inventive about what happens there.



Scorcha (see p.89), a street urchin, favors strangers as her victims. She keeps her eyes open for people distracted by a performer's show or busy haggling. She uses her score in the Stealth Domain (total: 9, and 10 in Pickpocket), her roll being opposed to the Perception (Alertness) of her victim and any surrounding witnesses. If she is spotted, she immediately runs away. She is remarkably spry, with a Speed of 8 and a 5 in Feats (total: 10, and 11 in Acrobatics). She can easily climb, leap, or run through all kinds of obstacles to give her pursuers the slip.

If chased, she has her options. She may choose to scamper under a fruit stall, run to a vegetable seller's cart, climb atop it (knocking over few things on her path due to her small build and agility), and finally dash through the narrow, congested streets, taking several turns to lose any pursuer. In the end, she will make for her lair in the Canal, to have a look at her loot.

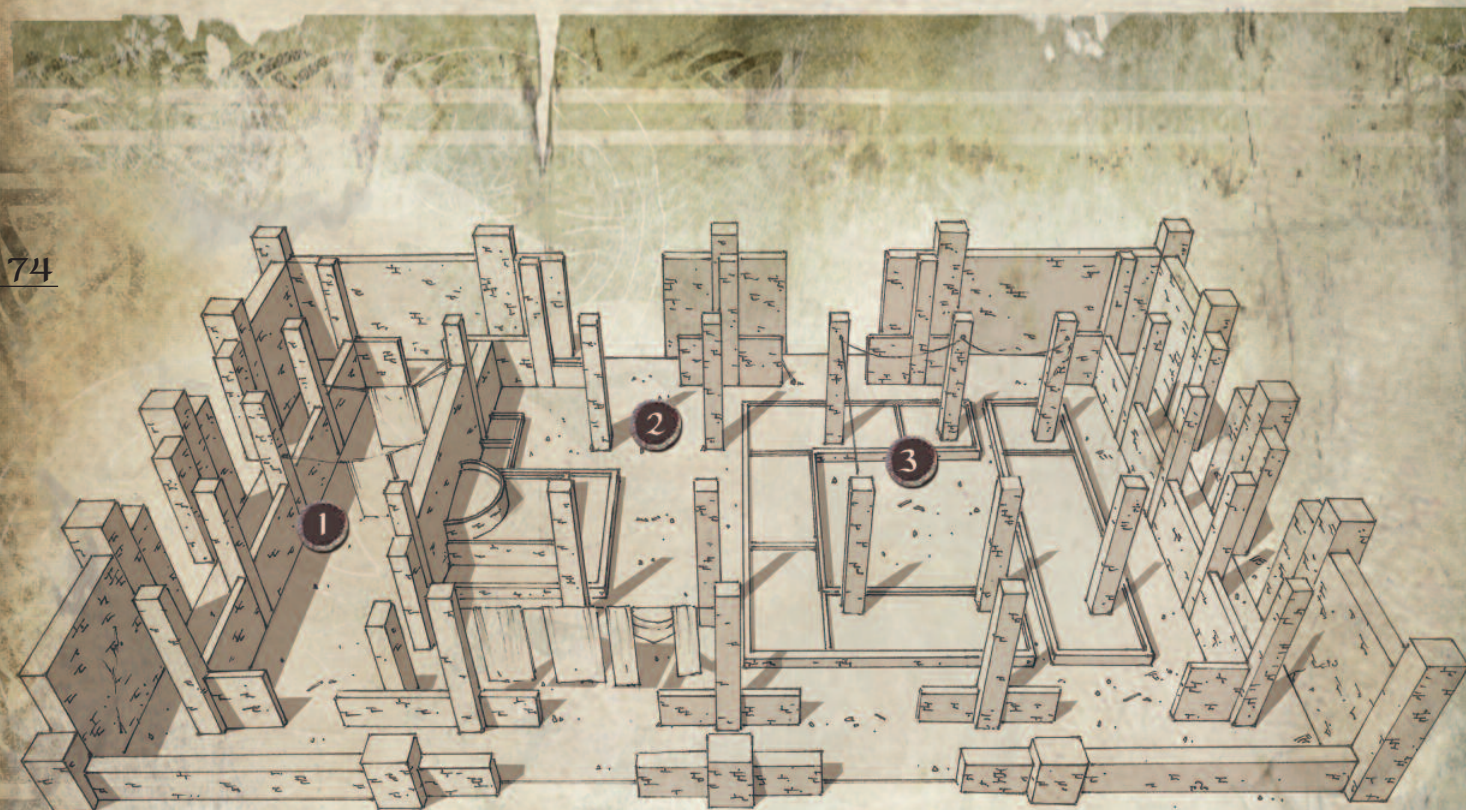
The Characters should be able to catch Scorcha after either a heated chase or a quick investigation followed by some exploring of the canal's surroundings, in the nearby dumping grounds. The PCs can make an ally of her, one who can show them the districts and its dangers, or warn them about impending events.

Washhouse

A particularly impressive building, the district's washhouse is a testimony to the importance of the weavers guild, who use it to wash the cloth they make. The building is halfway between the marketplace and the great workshops close to the canal. Surrounded by large, paved pathways, it is a well-sunlit place. The building is divided into several dedicated rooms to boil the laundry, dry it, store the wood or damaged tools, etc. The washerwomen, housewives, or servants meet there to work around the tubs, under the arcades borne by large pillars. There is chatting aplenty, and news about the whole district is exchanged while the work is done, sometimes amidst merry singing.

If the PCs manage to earn the locals' goodwill, they can come here to easily gather information about the private life of this or that resident. A Relation (Charm) roll will show how good the PC is at socializing: less than 8 means that the Character is ignored, considered a nosy passerby who had better move along; reaching 8 results in polite smiles and curt replies; with 11, the PC will get to talk with a regular for a spell; 14 will catch the interest of several people, chatting and forgetting about their work for a pleasant moment; with 17, the Character may be invited to lunch or dinner, making fast friends or at least coming off as someone pleasant and interesting that one would want to introduce to family and colleagues.

At night, however, all is quiet: the water trickles slowly, and a few beggars come here for shelter. Come morning, they are shoed away by the employees charged with cleaning the place and lighting the fires.



1- Drying area

2- Hot water vats

3- Cold water vats



-A Tidy Room-

Abandoned house

A family of well-off clothiers, the Ceogh, used to live comfortably here. Unfortunately, the entire household met its end due to an unknown illness. The house was locked down, sealed off haphazardly with boards over the windows and doors. Rumors about the place are plenty: some speak of poisoning, others of a Tarish curse, and no one has dared to set foot inside for years.

Within, everything has remained untouched, with dust seemingly ingrained into everything and scant rays from the outside lighting the ghastly still scene. Rats have made the house their home, as evidenced by the droppings and gnawed furniture.

When the Diwelank that escaped from the laboratory of the occultist Athelsan Oxcendre settled here, the rats were the first victims. For the creature, this is the perfect lair with, in addition to the living quarters themselves, an attic that the merchant used to store his wares and a cellar. This underground area, paved and filled with spiders, has access to the sewers through a trapdoor kept closed against the foul smell. The inhabitants used to throw their trash down there, and the current monstrous resident is smart enough to use it as a potential escape route.



Great workshops

Located by the canal, the great workshops are the district's main source of employment. Traditionally in Tri-Kazel, clothmaking is a family affair for any standard garment, a professional craftsman being called upon only for more complex or grander projects (see Book 1 – Universe, from p.107 onward). The Weavers' District, however, has moved away from the standard pattern of apprentice, journeyman, master craftsman. The factories were built by Laegere and Vulgane, two rich merchants from Leacach, a small town known for the quality of its wool. (see Book 2 – Travels, p.22).



Laegere made a quick fortune through unclear means. Being close to the Magientists, he was forced to leave Leacach. Along with his daughter Vulgane, he has settled in the city's suburbs where “A Tidy Room” takes place and erected a factory. Through the years, it developed healthily, thriving in particular on the know-how of journeymen who could not manage to reach the title of master craftsman due to scheming within the guilds (see “The Guilds of Tri-Kazel: a Rising Power,” Book 1 – Universe, p.105). Since then, Laegere has died, and his daughter Vulgane has earned the title of Mercanthalas, which makes her the head of the weavers' guild. She is a businesswoman who protects her interests.



Vulgane does not live in the Weavers' District, but she might be worried about the unrest caused by the Canal Gang or by the events following Edhene's death. This can make her the one who will hire the group of PCs to investigate. Vulgane is rich and frequently in contact with clients who are part of the upper class. She has an extensive social network that the Characters could benefit from.

The great workshops include several buildings, each one with its own specialized function:

☯ Warehouses.

Flat-bottomed boats carry materials of various qualities, from the slightly rough winter Caernide fur and the softer Calyre wool to hemp, linen, and various other wools. Since the shipments must be protected from rodents, the workers of the warehouses frequently leave food to keep the local alley cats around. In addition to raw materials, the warehouses are also used to store cloth to be cleaned in the washhouse and rolls of fabric to be sold.

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☯ Thread factories and warehouses.

The factories use the most modern techniques to make thread. For example, a thread mill makes it possible to process up to 50 times as much cloth as a traditional threading vat.

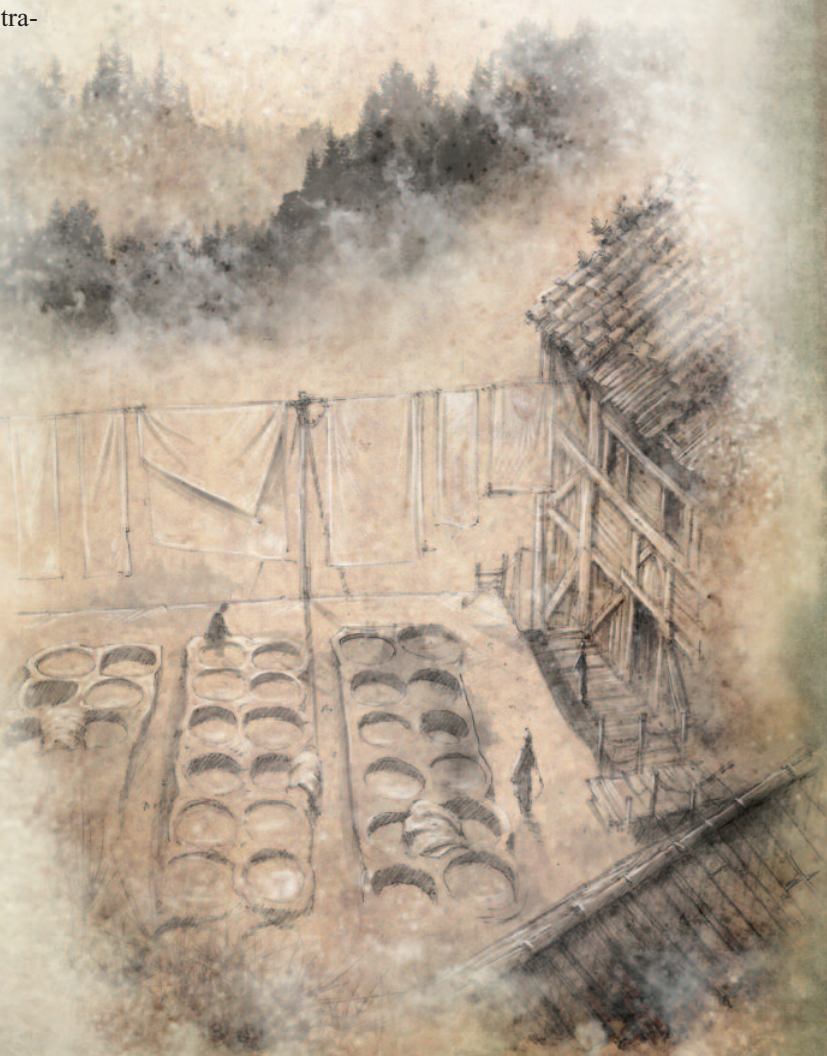
☯ Great mechanized looms.

This technological leap is as obvious as it is noisy. The basic horizontal counterweighted loom produces five times as much cloth as the vertical loom, and with Magientist improvements on top of it, the manufacturing speed is increased even further.

☯ Dyeing vats.

An acrid stench seizes the throat long before one reaches these colored, bubbling vats filled with more or less toxic products that durably dye fabric in beautiful hues. The water has to be changed regularly, sometimes coloring whole portions of the canal in purple, yellow, or green. For obvious reasons, the dyeing workshops have been built some distance away from the rest of the facility. In the clothing business, only leatherworkers are more of a nuisance to their neighbors.

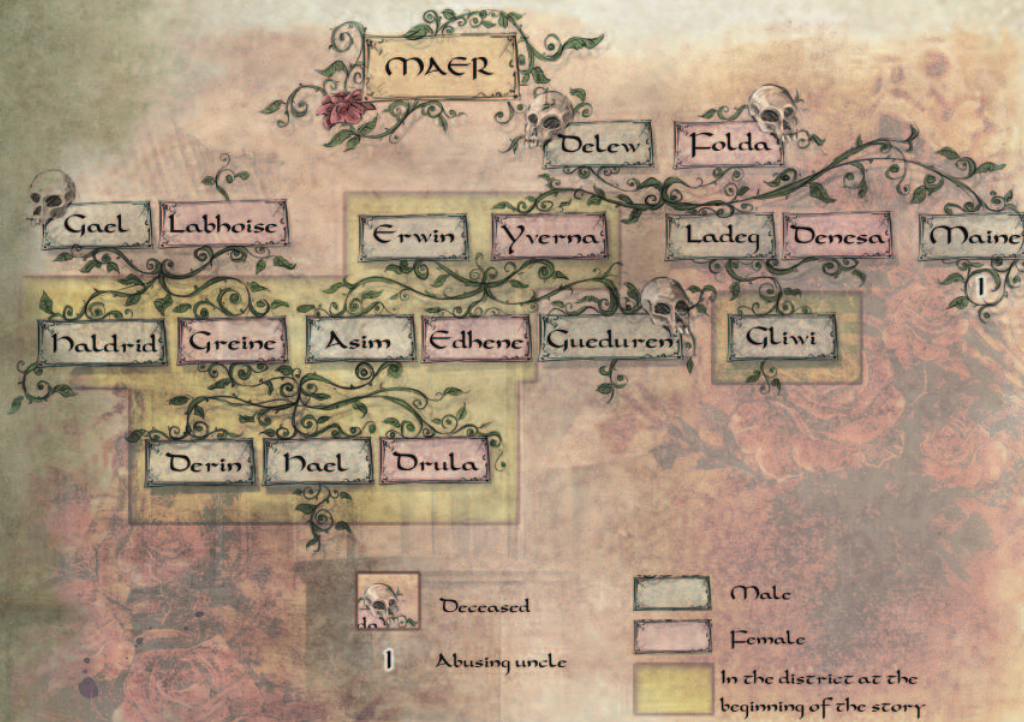
Very lively during the day, the great workshops are much calmer during the night, with only the hissing and fighting of cats to break the silence. Due to how precious the machines and stockpiles are, there are guards to keep watch.



Personalities

Since A Tidy Room takes place in the densely populated Weavers' District, it will involve many Characters. The NPCs are classified into the following categories in order to remember them more easily: the Maers, the dangerous Canal Gang, and the Neighbors.

1. The Maers



The PCs will be closely involved in the life of the Maers, an honest and charitable family respected throughout the district. Only part of their many relatives live in the Weavers' District; the others inhabit various villages around the countryside. The following pages detail the family of Edhene, the girl whose death serves as the story's starting point: her parents, Erwin and Iverna; her brother Asim, her sister-in-law Greine, her younger nephews and nieces Derin, Hael, and Drula; the Varigal Haldrid, Greine's brother; her late brother Gueduren; and last but not least, her cousin Gliwi.

The whole family lives in the same large, two story house with an attic.

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Bonding with the Maers

There are as many possibilities for introducing the Maers as there are campaigns and Leaders. Some suggestions were provided in the introduction, and here are a few others aimed at directly connecting the PCs to one member of the family or another.

- ✦ The Maers have distant cousins in the Vale of Dearn. They are relatives of old Zaig (see Book 0 – Prologue, p.71 and “The Vale and its Surroundings” in Book 3 – Dearn), to whom they occasionally send packages. Anyone from Dearn, Fearil or Melwan will be welcome and given lodging in exchange for news. This is a common custom in Tri-Kazel, which the Leader may explain or demonstrate through the PCs meeting the Varigal NPC Haldrid, brother to Greine, who is Asim's wife.
- ✦ Asim, the elder son (see his description), will be interested in news about the Vale of Thoir (see The Monastery of Tuath). He went there in the past to get medical care for his son and had made friends with Jalan.
- ✦ Gliwi and the late Gueduren (see their descriptions) may have been soldiers in the dukedom of Salann Tir. This way, the PC following the narrative arc of Love may have met them there during his service (see the Focus “Gaol” in Book 3 – Dearn).
- ✦ The Varigal Haldrid can be met on the road. Two such possibilities are detailed in an insert in his profile.

Edhene, the daughter



Guillaume & Cyrille Aufaure
RISE - 13 - A New Lead

The Leader can use this song to highlight the meeting with Edhene and any strong scene related to her. This will prove particularly effective if the PCs have had the time to get acquainted with her long enough to have ties with her before her death.



Born late, Edhene was always too coddled, too sheltered, too loved. Her mother Iverna in particular strove to keep her away from all the horror of the world, fostering her sweetness, her naiveté, and her sincerity. 14 years old, innocent out of ignorance, she dedicates most of her attention to young children and dependent elders, always with a smile. Her daily activities include delicate needlework and bringing care to others. This means that she often goes out alone, sometimes without warning anyone. She is downright defenseless and oblivious to the compliments that she sometimes receives from men, including her ever-considerate cousin Gliwi, or the seductive Juzeg from the Canal Gang, whom she is sure is a good person.

Edhene's fate

Depending on which option the Leader chooses, Edhene will be killed in the course of Act 1 by one of the following:

⊕ **Her cousin Gliwi.** Drunk, psychologically fragile, and madly in love with her, he will kill her without being aware of his actions.

⊕ **The Canal Gang.** Edhene has a soft spot for Juzeg, the bunch's immoral bad boy who will lead her into a trap to be left to the vile appetites of his companions. They may have been made all the more violent by Aïndrid's experiments in Suggestion, or by the consumption of a brain-smashing cocktail of alcohol and improved Gwilmine.

⊕ **The Diwelank.** This monster that escaped from Athelsan Oxcendre's basement on the night of Edhene's death may have killed her out of predatory instinct or to feed.

⊕ **Alan Fildh.** Should the Leader prefer to do without the Diwelank, the old man becomes a bloodthirsty murderer under the influence of the improved Gwilmine sold by the Canal Gang.

Each one of these options is developed in the description of the associated Character.

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Erwin, the father

The 60-year-old patriarch of the Maers is a composed, thrifty man concerned about honor and loyalty. However, he is also tired, worn down by his work as a manager in the district's weaving factory and by the many ordeals of his life. The death of his second son, killed in the line of duty two years ago, was a great shock to him. He is still a well-behaved, welcoming man who will, for example, offer for the PCs to stay for some time in his son's former room, which has been emptied of anything reminiscent of him. Iverna never approved of how expeditious this mourning was, but she submitted.

⊕ **Devastated by the death of his daughter,** Erwin will waste away into a shadow of his former self. He can be a central victim of the nightmare that plagues the district. The Leader can portray him in the following ways depending on the options chosen to stress the atmosphere of the scenario:

⊕ **Chimerical Fever epidemic.** The father contracts the disease. Being morally and physically weakened, he suffers greatly from it, going through crises of delirium, bouts of sleep-walking, and moments of wandering through the city, calling for Edhene and Gueduren...

⊕ **Bogeyman.** The father encounters the thing, and the confrontation is such a shock that it leaves him in ruin, alternating between catatonia and delirium. He rants incoherently, speaking almost prophetically of Saoghal Glas, convinced of having been a prisoner in the post-apocalyptic world as it is described in the Demorthèn myths.

⊕ **The Canal Gang.** By tragic chance, Erwin sees a drug deal in progress. Despairing as he is, the father has lost all sense of self-preservation and calls them out. After a short fight, the thugs kill him. Someone witnessed the scene and runs to tell the PCs about it. The murderers of Edhene's father know that they are in for the death penalty and that they must get out of town, but to do that, they will need money. Thus, they go into their hideout in the sewers to take some of the stashed money, so that they will not be on the run penniless.

Iverna, the mother

The family of this woman in her fifties has been living in the region for several generations. A sensitive person, she is very attached to memories and to symbols, and she is a trove of information on the subject. As she ages, she lives more and more in the past. After the death of her son, she was forced to let go of his personal effects, after which she entirely reinvested her affection in her relationship with her daughter Edhene.

When Iverna's daughter dies, all the resentment she had kept inside since Gueduren's death will resurface, and she will demand that the room is left as is. She will brook no objections and will prove so bent on it that her husband will accept, being too shocked and wracked by grief to refuse anyway. This manner of mourning, deeply rooted in denial, is the trigger for the appearance of the Bogeyman phenomenon that will terrorize the district. To counteract the supernatural evil, there is no other real cure but for the mother to accept her daughter's passing, finding solace and, if possible, consolation. The destruction of the much too Tidy Room will be the symbol, the concrete expression of her willingness to let go.



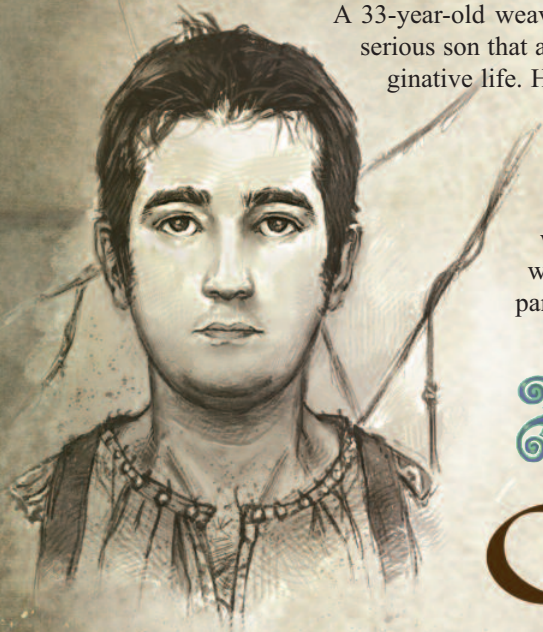
Asim, the elder son

A 33-year-old weaver closely involved in the district's life, he is the very image of the reasonable, serious son that any parent would like to have. Hard-working and thrifty, he leads a routine, unimaginative life. He has a soft spot for alcohol, however, and sometimes comes home very late after a few rounds at the Golden Spool with some colleagues.

The most memorable event of his existence was a visit to the Monastery of Tuath with his Varigal brother-in-law to ask Saint Beren to heal his son. Despite his fears, his son was indeed cured, but it seemed to them that some strange things were happening there. He had made friends with a copyist named Jalan and still writes to him every now and then, keeping a fond memory of the young man's company. However, Jalan hasn't responded for some time, which worries him.



Asim is a possible starting point to play the scenario "Vengeful Words" (see the book *The Monastery of Tuath*). He may also be its finishing point, with the PCs giving him news of Jalan's fate.



Greine, Asim's wife

An energetic woman in her thirties, Greine wanted to marry up as a way to rise above her condition as a countryside maid. Along with Iverna, she is one of the housekeepers, and she is known for speaking her mind. She would like for Asim to be more ambitious, to at least become a manager like his father, but she is starting to come to terms with the idea that it is probably not going to happen. She views Edhene with a sort of contained animosity. The young girl is a gem, of course, but Greine cannot help but be annoyed at how pampered and protected she is, spoiled by everyone, which the housewife finds unfair.

Greine is the only one of the household to have a problem with Edhene, even if she usually swallows her resentment since her sister-in-law is beloved by all. After the death of the young girl, Greine turns out to be the only one to keep a cool head. She suffers a less severe blow than the others since she was less attached to the deceased and is also more self-willed. Very quickly, the house's maintenance will rest entirely on her shoulders. She will be in charge of the money, of the food, and of making sure that her traumatized relatives do not completely wither away. More than once, she will have words with her sister-in-law Iverna about Edhene's room. She considers it downright morbid to keep a mortuary shrine in a house inhabited by living people, including three young children. If the PCs can't see why Edhene's room poses such a problem, Greine may nudge them in the right direction by explaining how incomprehensible and exasperating she finds the whole charade to be, while feeling deeply disturbed by the room.



Asim and Greine's children

Derin, 10 years old

The elder of the trio is a bit of a daredevil who seems to take after his uncle, the Varigal Haldrid. He is often found playing with a group of other children of his age. He knows a little about Scorcha, whom he has a bit of a crush on. He can introduce her to the PCs if they haven't gotten acquainted with her otherwise.

Hael, 5 years old

A boy with a fragile physical condition who even came close to dying once, but was miraculously healed when his father and his uncle took him to the Monastery of Tuath. He generally stays home with his little sister, calmly playing close to his mother or his grandmother.

Drula, 2 years old

A very cheerful little girl, she laughs and claps her hands in joy at everything. She walks and crawls around as soon as she is out of her mother's or her grandmother's eyesight.

Haldrid, the varigal

Greine's 28-year-old brother. He was always fond of the wilderness, traveling around, hiding, observing, being on his own, etc. Becoming a Varigal was the best thing that could have happened to him, and it probably kept him from becoming an alcoholic good-for-nothing glued to the counter of some tavern. When he stops by the town, he never fails to pay his sister a visit and to stay at the Maers', which is a fine opportunity to avoid expenses and get hearty meals.



Bookending the story with Haldrid

On a dramatic level, it may be interesting to propose narrative structures that echo each other. This insert goes over a possible start to “A Tidy Room” with the PCs meeting the Varigal Haldrid. It then details a potential epilogue to the scenario in which the PCs follow after him.



Meeting Haldrid

Merieren is a town located on the junction of the road leading from Tuaille to Osta-Baille and the one connecting Ostreach to the capital of Taol-Kaer. Overlooking the River Klaedhin, this merchant locality is a gateway into the dukedom of Tuaille.

There, the Varigal Haldrid has found a client, Neithon, wanting to go to a town near the one where “A Tidy Room” takes place. During the journey, Neithon's health worsens. He was unwittingly infected with worms in the Ahman Glas, the Gray Bogs. The eggs, which he ingested when he ate some kind of marsh fruits, have hatched in his stomach, and the larvae have migrated into his lungs to grow. When Haldrid and Neithon cross paths with the PCs, the poor man is constantly coughing out little white worms. He spits out some, but swallows others, which takes them into his belly where they will reach adulthood and reproduce.


Faced with this disease, Haldrid is powerless and horrified, even wondering whether his client is not being devoured from the inside by Feondas. If the PCs have a physician among them, they will be able to give Neithon proper medical care. Even if they don't, they will be able to help by helping take him to one.

A Complicated (14) Demorthèn Mysteries (Traditional Medicine), Magience (Medicine), Natural Environment (Fauna and Flora), or Science (Medicine or Zoology) roll will be enough to identify the “white worm” parasitosis. It gets its name from the adult worm, which can be up to 12 inches long. The treatment consists in administering a herbal poison to purge the worms. The substance is unpleasant to humans, but will only result in vomiting and diarrhea. Within two days, the patient will be rid of all the parasites in his body. Afterward, he will need some rest to fully recover.

In either case, Haldrid will owe one to the PCs, who have helped him save a client, and will introduce them to the Maers as friends.

A mysterious mission at Aindrid's request

The Varigal leaves the district as soon as Act 1, on his way to deliver a package. If he chances upon the PCs, he will courteously bid them adieu, but he will not go through any particular effort to find them if they are not at the Maers' house. He won't say much about the cause of his departure, and he seems in a hurry. Haldrid has told more to his sister Greine in the PCs' absence. She knows that the package was from Aindrid, that the Varigal is leaving for Osta-Baille, and that there was a small, red circle on the wrapping.

 At the end of the scenario, after Aindrid's mysterious departure, Greine will reflect that this whole package thing is rather suspicious. Therefore, she will tell the PCs what she knows. They will probably wonder how someone who appears so genuinely nice might be involved in a criminal network.

If they follow the Varigal to Osta-Baille, the PCs will face other figures of the Circle of Emergence: the "Fluxed Gears," described in Chapter 2 of this book.

Gueduren, the late son

This lively boy had left seeking adventure with his cousin from the countryside, Gliwi. He may have served under Wylard Mac Readan or the Duke of Salann Tir (see the Gaol Focus in Book 3 – Dearg). He died when he was 21, either during the slaughter of Wylard Mac Readan's family by a Feond, or during the attack of the Iron Reeds, led by Jeryll of the Swamps (see Book 2 – Travels, p.154) on the Duke's castle, at the Leader's discretion.



A meeting in Saltwaters

The Focus "Gaol: Of Love and Fury" (see Book 3 – Dearg) explores the past of the PC following the narrative arc of Love, which is by default attributed to the premade Character Eoghan. Whoever chooses this arc must include the following elements in the Character's backstory:

- ❖ He is in love with Céliane, one of Fearil's Dàmàthair.
- ❖ His valor was put to the test by Dearg's Ansailéir, Maorn.
- ❖ He performed his military service in the domain of Wylard Mac Readan (see Book 1 – Univers, p.10).

The Focuses can be played at any time, as flashbacks. Therefore, it should not be a problem for the Leader to insert additional NPCs into the campaign.

Gliwi and Gueduren can be featured in the memories of the PC related to the narrative arc of Love, whether at Wylard Mac Readan's or at the Duke's castle. Here are a few possibilities:

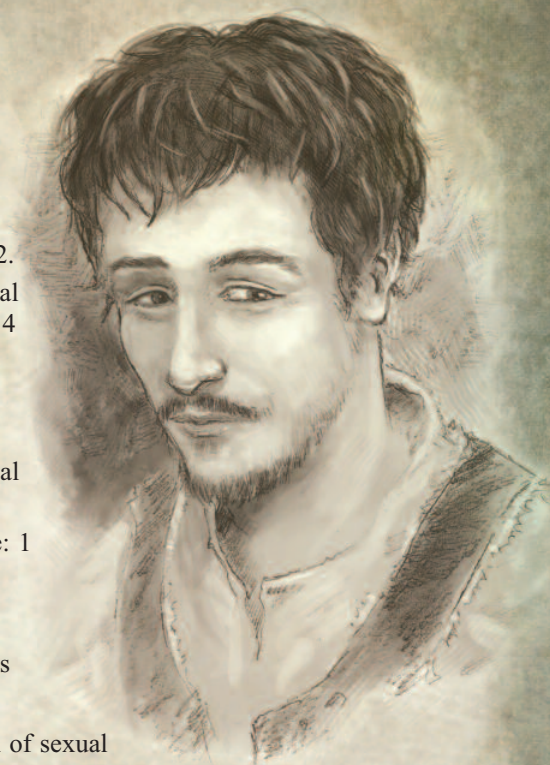
- ❖ Gliwi proved uncannily capable at surviving, staying away from the heat of battles and defending himself very aptly when he had no choice but to fight. The PC may, for example, have gone through serious risks to aid Gliwi, frozen and apparently helpless in the face of danger.
- ❖ Gueduren, a fierier fighter, fell in battle. He may even have given his life to save the PC, which would make him indebted to the Maers, and might even justify visiting them.

Gliwi, with his unhealthy obsession for Edhene, can also echo the theme of the narrative arc of Love. When the PC associated with the arc finds out about the shocking elements in Gliwi's story (for example, that he raped and killed Edhene), the Player must immediately make a Drive Test (see Book 3 – Dearg). Drive equals the sum of the Character's Determination (this is also covered in Book 3) and his Passion. On a failure, the PC will enter a state of extreme emotion, which even he may not be able to explain. Gliwi's passion echoes the violence of his own sentiments, and this triggers a landslide of feelings that may overflow and lead to disproportionate reactions: he partly loses control, overwhelmed by emotions.

Upon discovering that Gliwi killed Edhene, whom he claimed to love, and moreover, by raping her, Eoghan must make a Drive Test. If he fails, his rage will be immediate and he might hit Gliwi then and there, or even try to kill him.

Gliwi Maer, the cousin

Male, Talkéride, 22 years old,
Weaver and former soldier



- ☞ **Ways:** Combateness: 2. Creativity: 3. Empathy: 5. Reason: 3. Conviction: 2.
- ☞ **Skills:** Close Combat: 5 (Swords: 7). Craft: 4. Erudition: 3. Feats: 2. Natural Environment: 1. Perception: 1. Performance: 3 (+1 bonus). Relation: 4 (+1 bonus*). Shooting & Throwing: 3. Stealth: 4. Travel: 1.
- ☞ **Advantage:** Handsome.
- ☞ **Character Traits:** Peaceful / Cowardly.
- ☞ **Sanity:** Mental Resistance: 7. Orientation: Instinctive. Disorder: Hysterical Syndrome (Hysteria)*.
- ☞ **Combat:** Attack: 7 (Sword: 9). Defense: 15. Speed: 7. Potential: 2. Damage: 1 (dagger) or 2 (short sword).
- ☞ **Health:** 19. Stamina: 10.

* Gliwi's Hysterical Syndrome improves the results of successful Relation checks (see Book 1 – Universe, p.277).

Behind his angelic face, Gliwi hides painful secrets. As a child, he was a victim of sexual abuse from one of his uncles, without anyone ever standing up for him. Everybody ignored the boy's awful ordeal, and he developed a twisted vision of human relationships. Thirsting for purity and innocence, he grew close to a very young girl, Aïdne. However, the child's family noticed it, and as rumors started to spread, Gliwi enlisted as a soldier at the age of 17 to get away from the situation. Being cowardly and unassuming, he found it hard to fit in, but found support in Gueduren, a cousin from the city who looked after him, ignorant of his dark past. In spite of strict training, Gliwi sometimes burst into tears in the heat of action, and it really took having his back to the wall for him to draw his weapon and show what he was capable of. After Gueduren's death, he left his company and went to the Maers, who housed him and supported him, giving him his late cousin's bedroom as lodging. Since then, he has started working as a craftsman with Asim, and he is appreciated for his calmness and discretion. His good looks have made him a favorite of the district's young ladies, but he hasn't shown any interest in any of them, except for Edhene. With her, he becomes a picture perfect knight in shining armor, but even with a temper as toned down as his, remaining close to the object of his desire for a prolonged period of time is difficult. He lives under an unbearable, permanent nervous pressure.

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After Edhene's death, Gliwi will spend most of his time holed up in his room, crying, wanting to stay away from everything and everyone.

What if Gliwi is the murderer?

Gliwi is one of Edhene's possible murderers. If the Leader goes with this option, here is how the events unfolded:

- ☞ **Murder.** Gliwi, in a drunken fit of hysteria, has lost all restraint. He has killed Edhene while raping her, smothering her to keep her from shouting.
- ☞ **The aftermath.** To begin with, Gliwi has no clear memory of what happened, only nightmarish visions that deny him any restful sleep. He contributes to the search parties with zeal. His mind oscillates between a hopeless idealization of his relationship with his cousin and the denial of what he remembers.
- ☞ **Tears.** Once Edhene's death has been ascertained, he will suffer a nervous breakdown. He will spend the following days in his room, barely eating and crying continuously.
- ☞ **Interrogation (1).** If he is asked about his relationship with Edhene, he will affirm that she was his secret betrothed and that they had planned to get married as soon as she was old enough.
- ☞ **Interrogation (2).** If the PCs corner him and point out inconsistencies, he will lie more and more blithely, the contradictions piling up as he will come up with increasingly unbelievable explanations.
- ☞ **Crisis.** If he feels that the PCs are closing in on him, this additional strain, on top of the loss of Edhene and his own torment, might lead him to commit suicide. He will probably resort to hanging, but a more dramatic and poetic variant might have him die while chasing after the Edhene-like Bogeyman (see Act 3).
- ☞ **Appeasement.** A tactful, compassionate investigator could manage to earn Gliwi's trust and help him make peace with himself. The young man will then tell the PC his whole story. Having no reason to live anymore, and crumbling under the weight of his own guilt, he will be ready to face the death penalty awaiting him with dignity. For the first time in his life, he will not be afraid. Such a scene would echo the appeasement of Iverna Maer resulting in the Bogeyman's defeat (Act 1, Scene 2), and can be rewarded as the completion of one of the scenario's secondary objectives.

-A Tidy Room-

2. The Circle of Emergence and the Canal Gang

The Circle of Emergence is seeking to establish a foothold in the town where the scenario takes place. To do so, they will rely on the Canal Gang, a local criminal group, to manage the sale of a new type of drug.



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The members of the Canal Gang and the means at their disposal are covered in the following pages. This section also includes Athelsan Oxcendre, an occultist at the service of Aindrid but tormented by his conscience, and Aindrid herself. This Character is also mentioned in Chapter 2 “The Circle of Emergence,” but here, what is described is her cover in the Weavers' District and her attitude toward the PCs.

In addition to the information below, supplementary details are included in certain scenes of the scenario itself:

- ⊕ **Act 1, Scene 4 “Aindrid Hedrod's involvement”** covers the PCs' first contact with this figure.
- ⊕ **Act 2, Scene 4 “Can the PCs sneak out of the Weavers' District?”** details how the PCs might be led to require the Canal Gang's help to escape, at the risk of actually falling into a trap set by Kalber, determined to get rid of them for good.
- ⊕ **Act 2, Scene 5 “Collaborating with Athelsan Oxcendre”** is about how the occultist, who wants less and less to do with the Circle of Emergence, will help the PCs.
- ⊕ **Act 3, Scene 3 “The death of Athelsan Oxcendre”** is an action scene during which the PCs will have a shot at saving the occultist. It will also yield revelations concerning the Circle of Emergence.
- ⊕ **Act 3, Scene 4 “Aindrid is gone”** Aindrid quietly slips out of the Weavers' District, leaving behind her Canal Gang associates.

The Canal Gang

A motley gathering of sons and daughters of laborers and craftsmen, of rural people freshly arrived in town who cannot find or keep a job, and of demobilized soldiers. The gang's common values are a belief in the survival of the strongest and a non-conformity steeped in bitterness. Society is the cause of their families' poverty; it bars them from the path to comfort and wealth, while burghers keep all the important, well-paid jobs and the nobles only have to go through the trouble of being born. But the gang's members are intent on taking their due.

To that effect, the means of this local gang are the traffic of allegedly improved Gwilmine (see p.47), pimping, robbery, etc. Currently, the sale of the drug and smuggling in general are its main activities. In the most recent months, the gang has been reorganized under the influence of Aïndrid, who has trained the members in intimidation tactics and more efficient group strategies. Under the pretense of buying her services as a prostitute, they come to her for their "classes" or for advice. This has made her a very influential power behind the throne.

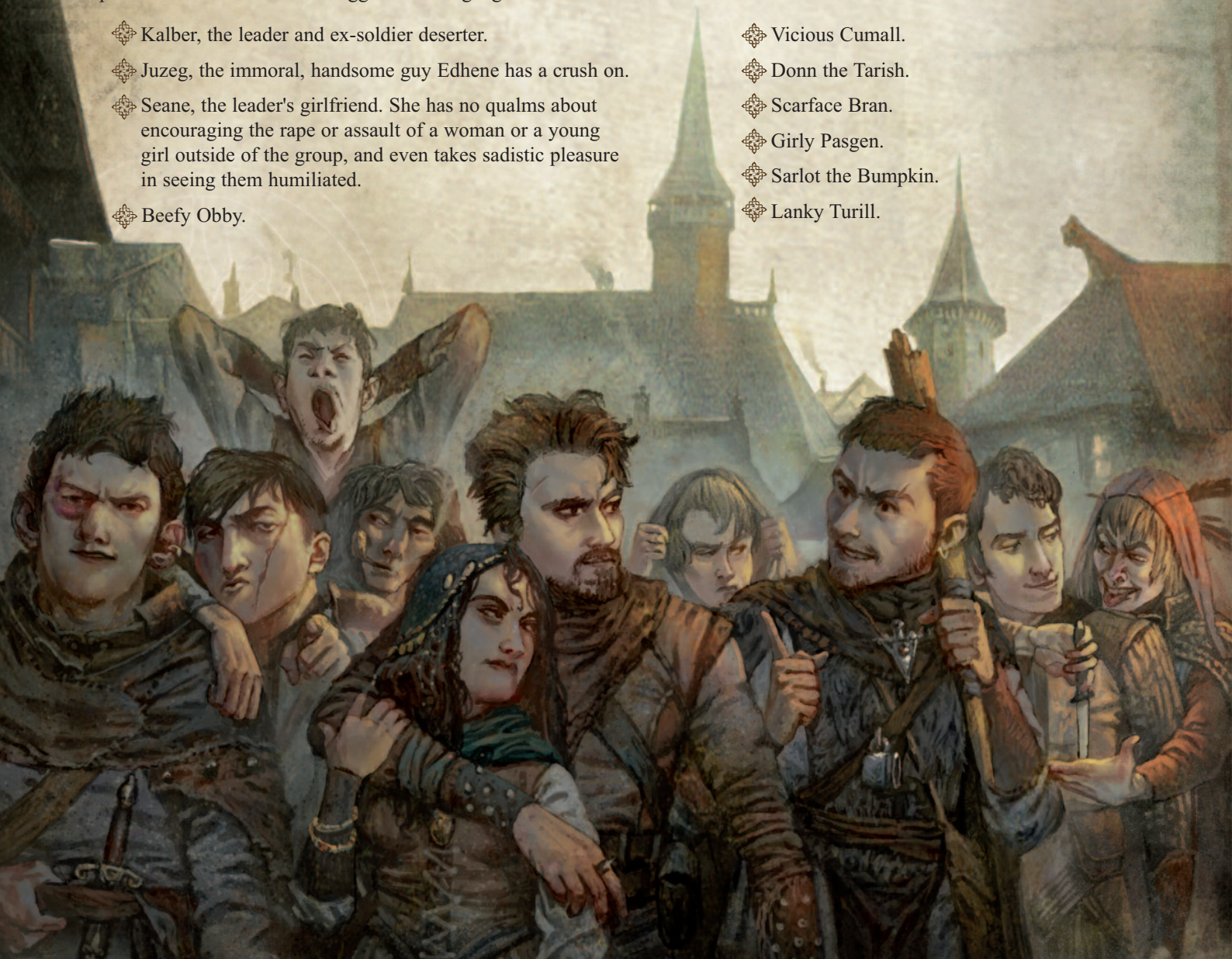


Are the gang's aggressiveness and violence exclusively due to jealousy and to their desire to get their revenge on society? Maybe they are victims of Aïndrid's experiments in Suggestion, as she seeks to improve this domination technique. Girly Pasgen, Sarlot the Bumpkin, and Lanky Turill may be having second thoughts and be worried by their newfound tendencies for violence. The PCs may have contact with them if they make use of the gang's fence and earn the trust of one of them. In this case, their contact in the gang could become an efficient informer, motivated by the sincere desire to straighten his act.

If the Canal Gang were the perpetrators of Edhene's murder, the three thugs will have every reason to feel all the more guilty. They know that they have done horrible things and cannot sleep at night. They are torn between shame and the fear of meeting a similarly unpleasant fate at the hands of their "friends." However, without their testimony, the PCs will never know the whole truth about the hell that poor Edhene has been through.

How many members there are in the gang is left to the Leader's discretion: 5 active members is a minimum, and will make it a group relatively neglected by the guard; 10 means a serious threat that no one can ignore, even though the public can underestimate or turn a blind eye toward its activities; with 20, the district is under constant threat, and the guard is corrupt or compromised. Below are a few suggestions for gang members:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| ❖ Kalber, the leader and ex-soldier deserter. | ❖ Vicious Cumall. |
| ❖ Juzeg, the immoral, handsome guy Edhene has a crush on. | ❖ Donn the Tarish. |
| ❖ Seane, the leader's girlfriend. She has no qualms about encouraging the rape or assault of a woman or a young girl outside of the group, and even takes sadistic pleasure in seeing them humiliated. | ❖ Scarface Bran. |
| | ❖ Girly Pasgen. |
| | ❖ Sarlot the Bumpkin. |
| ❖ Beefy Obby. | ❖ Lanky Turill. |



Kalber, the Leader of the Canal Gang

Male, Talkéride, 25 years old, deserted soldier

- ⊕ **Ways:** Combativeness: 5. Creativity: 4. Empathy: 2. Reason: 3. Conviction: 1.
- ⊕ **Skills:** Close Combat: 5 (Swords: 6, +1 bonus). Craft: 1. Feats: 5 (+1 bonus to strength). Natural Environment: 2. Perception: 5 (+2 bonus to Alertness*). Relation: 5 (Intimidation: 6, +1 bonus, -1 penalty). Shooting & Throwing: 3. Stealth: 4. Travel: 2.
- ⊕ **Advantages:** Strong, Charismatic.
- ⊕ **Disadvantages:** Infamous (deserter [the effects are equivalent to a reversed version of Charismatic]).
- ⊕ **Character Traits:** Pugnacious / Ruthless
- ⊕ **Sanity:** Mental Resistance: 6. Orientation: Instinctive. Disorder: Syndrome of Abusive Interpretation (Paranoia)*.
- ⊕ **Combat:** Attack: 11 (Swords: 12). Defense: 12. Speed: 7. Potential: 2. Damage: 2 (short sword). Protection: 2 (quilted leather).
- ⊕ **Health:** 19. Stamina: 10.

* Kalber's Syndrome of Abusive Interpretation grants him a +2 bonus to every roll related to Alertness.

A man of modest origins but ambitious, Kalber thought that by enlisting in the army of the dukedom of Dûlan, he could elevate his social standing, but in the end, he only met what he considers to have been scorn from incompetent highborn people. According to him, the system is corrupt and civilians are cowards. The passiveness of the inhabitants of the Weavers' District has lent weight to his pessimistic vision of mankind. One must stand strong and take what one wants, without ever dropping one's guard!

His life after he deserted was chaotic. He associated with a gang of marauders who made a living from brutal, cruel extortion, but in the end, the group met its end at the hand of the Hilderin knights. His companions were put to death, but he managed to escape. Today, Kalber has settled in the Weavers' District and has managed to establish himself as the natural leader of the Canal Gang. He was seduced by Aïndrid, physically as much as by her promises of riches and power.



Being naturally wary and quick to expect the worst, Kalber might take drastic measures to get rid of the PCs if they meddle in his business. Aïndrid will seek to temper his rashness to avoid unpleasant repercussions, preferring to act indirectly. However, an isolated PC might still be the victim of a kidnapping attempt, should an opportunity present itself. The Character will be knocked out and taken away into the sewers for a violent interrogation, the tormentors potentially going as far as torture.

Every hour of such treatment results in a Mental Resistance and Stamina check, both ranging from Complicated (14) to Very Difficult (20) depending on the cruelty of the means used. The purpose of the injuries is to inflict pain, not to kill, but the ordeal may prove too taxing from the victim's body. On a failed Stamina check, the Character suffers an amount of Damage points equivalent to the difference between the Stamina roll and the Difficulty Threshold.

Since these themes are based on sensitive subjects, the Leader should only depict them with mature Players, and keep a certain distance.



A way to have the PCs explore the sewers consists in confronting them with the kidnapping of one of their number or an ally. They may notice a trail leading to the sewers, hear shouting, or be warned by young Scorcha, who has just witnessed the assault. They will have to trudge through the darkness, in unknown territory, braving the stench, the rats, and possibly even the Gnawers (see Book 2 – Travels, p.185) before they can reach their friend and save them from an atrocious fate.





What if the Canal Gang are the murderers?



Choosing the Canal Gang as the perpetrators means choosing the most sordid option, the one most likely to disturb the Players and make them deeply uncomfortable. It should be depicted responsibly and only used with mature Players.

If the Canal Gang is guilty of Edhene's murder, they will pretend that it was not rape since she was a willing participant. Even if the group rape is mentioned, they will stick to their version, trying to smear the deceased by calling her a "bitch in heat" or a "slutty little saint." Regarding her death, they will blame some sewer monster, probably a Feond. The Diwelank wreaking havoc will provide them with the ideal scapegoat.

Before Edhene, other women—travelers or prostitutes—were assaulted but left alive, the gang believing that they were in no risk of being identified or accused. The word of locals like them is worth more than that of unknown women, especially worthless girls like prostitutes, widely called "public girls." Proof is, the people of the district turn a blind eye when they hear a woman crying in the night, and the victims who tried to make a complaint were turned away. However, even though they got a kick out of humiliating Edhene, it was obvious that the testimony of a well-known, honorable girl would have gotten them into deep trouble, hence the decision to dispose of her.



It will be easy to heighten the uneasiness by drawing upon the theme of innocence and guilt, like during the lynching scene. The locals, under the shock of a tragedy, slaughter an outcast, who makes for the perfect target. Conversely, for months, they have been ignoring the true evil spreading insidiously from the canal. Had the locals not stuck to their own interests, had they dared take the risk to unite to put an end to the violence, had they lent an ear to the strangers violated by the members of their community, then they would have been spared the cruel tragedy that was Edhene's murder. It is only through the courage of facing one's responsibilities that catastrophes can be avoided. In the end, they are all guilty; guilty of having left things go unopposed, guilty of having chosen the easy way, guilty of having remained stuck in the certitude that their community was better than others.



Aptitudes of the gang members

The Leader can use these generic characteristics for any member of the Canal Gang:

Both sexes, Talkéride, between 15 and 25 years old, rogues

⌘ **Ways:** Combaticiveness: 4. Creativity: 4. Empathy: 1. Reason: 3. Conviction: 3.

⌘ **Skills:** Close Combat: 4. Craft: 3. Feats: 4. Perception: 5. Relation: 4. Shooting & Throwing: 2. Stealth: 5.

⌘ **Character Traits:** Resourceful / Testy.

⌘ **Sanity:** Mental Resistance: 8. Orientation: Instinctive. Disorder: Aggressive Symptom (Frenzy).

⌘ **Combat:** Attack: 8 (Shooting & Throwing: 6). Defense: 9. Speed: 5. Potential: 2. Damage: 1 (dagger) or 2 (short sword or crossbow). Protection: 0.

⌘ **Health:** 19. Stamina: 10



Thelsan Oxcendre, the bookseller

Male, Talkéride, 35 years old, occultist

⌘ **Ways:** Combaticiveness: 1. Creativity: 4. Empathy: 2. Reason: 5. Conviction: 3.

⌘ **Skills:** Close Combat: 1. Erudition: 5. Occultism: 5
(Esotericism: 9, +2 bonus), Perception: 3. Relation: 5.
Science: 5 (+1 bonus). Stealth: 3.

⌘ **Advantages:** Smart, Well-read (Occultism).

⌘ **Disadvantages:** Aftermath (Health, Stamina),
Phobia (Pyrophobia).

⌘ **Character Traits:** Ingenious / Nonconformist.

⌘ **Sanity:** Mental Resistance: 8. Orientation: Rational.
Disorder: Balance (Obsession).

⌘ **Combat:** Attack: 2. Defense: 12. Speed: 7. Potential: 2. Damage: 1
(dagger). Protection: 0.

⌘ **Health:** 18. Stamina: 9.



As a child, Athelsan was an unwitting witness to the manifestation of sorcerous fire-related powers. The flames in the hearth started growing and spread through the whole house. He was trapped inside and almost died. Despite the physical and mental trauma that lingered from this experience, he decided to become an occultist to understand how this had come to be. Since then, he has made a great deal of progress on a theoretical level and has gathered a few precious books, including a few making mention of the Bogeyman. A curious, talented man, he attracted the attention of the occultist Aïndrid Herod. She helped him by financing his research, mainly by having a secret laboratory built in the Weavers' District and securing the acquisition of the Diwelank. His cover is as a seller of books and stationery. He also offers his services as a penman, writing letters or official documents for the service of the illiterate. He admires Aïndrid's intelligence and beauty, fascinated by the mystery she represents. He has been endeavoring to know more about her and her activities, compiling his speculations and findings in his journal. Feeling guilty after the Diwelank's escape, he will try to get closer to the PCs, offering his services as a collaborator. He knows that he must not speak of Aïndrid, as she is chased by relentless enemies whom he suspects must be Sigires. When he offers his help to the PCs, Aïndrid will see him as dangerously friendly toward outsiders. This will lead the ruthless occultist leader to organize his elimination before skipping town.



The occultist is a source of problems, namely the Diwelank's escape and his passive collaboration in the Gwilmine trade. Struggling with his conscience, split between his moral sense and his quest for knowledge, he will also be part of a solution with his shrewd analysis of the Bogeyman phenomenon and the resulting apparitions and visions. The purpose of this ambivalence is to demonstrate that occultism is first and foremost what its practitioners make of it, and that matters of ethics are as prevalent as with Magience, for example.

Aïndrid Hedrod, the prostitute

She settled in the district a few months ago now, and in the beginning, she had to deal with a very poor public image due to her occupation. She dresses relatively modestly considering her profession, but still overtly displays her femininity.

The generous Edhene sought to help her fit in, and the newcomer took full advantage of this opportunity. It is widely known that Aïndrid is a friend of Edhene despite their age difference. They occasionally meet to chat, with Edhene doing needlework and asking questions while Aïndrid tells her of what she has seen or heard. For the PCs, Aïndrid will appear to be a good source of information since she has intimate knowledge of many men of the district. Her clients are ready to swear—as long as they are not within earshot of their wives—that this refined brunette can prove as dirty as can be, ready to fulfill all their desires and fetishes without restriction while remaining a very welcoming and well-behaved hostess.

Those who try to learn more about her can hear the story she has invented before settling in the Weavers' District, and which she uses as a cover. The details of this figure's ambiguous attitude are described in the following insert, "Portraying Aïndrid."

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Portraying Aïndrid

Aïndrid is the leader of the Circle of Emergence, something that the PCs will only discover once she has taken her leave. Until that time, it will all be deception, half-truths, and lies. For the conclusion of the scenario to be strong and this revelation to have its impact, the Leader should make sure that not only will the PCs never suspect her, they will also develop a friendly relationship with her. The Leader can find additional information and advice in the following scenes:

Act 1, Scene 4 "Aïndrid's involvement" covers the PCs' first contact with this figure.

In Act 3, Scene 4 "Aïndrid is gone," Aïndrid slips out of the Weavers' District unnoticed, leaving behind her associates from the Canal Gang.

The truth about Aïndrid

The name "Hedrod" is part of Aïndrid's temporary identity to settle in the district. To unmask Aïndrid, the PCs will have to surpass her Relation (Manipulation) rolls. Since Aïndrid plays a part and is herself practically incapable of emotion, she has methodically built herself a persona. She is good at quick thinking and fast talking, but still, she does need a moment to construct her reactions. Thus, there is always the tiniest gap between a stimulus and an emotional reaction or answer. Anyone perspicacious enough to notice it will feel a vague sense of unease that they will find hard to pinpoint the source of. Deciphering someone else's body language can be done with a Relation (Reading Emotions) or Perception (Observation) roll, opposed to Aïndrid's Relation (Manipulation) roll. The PCs can get the following bonuses according to the circum-



tances: if they explicitly prove observant and wary (+1), if they have known her for some time (+1 to +2), if Aïndrid is unsettled or caught unprepared (+1 to +2). The Leader, even on a PC's critical success, should not straight out tell the Player "She's lying." A more interesting way to proceed is to describe how neutral and unemotional she might seem: "You see that she seems to be thinking about something before answering." "She reacts just a tad late, as if she had suddenly been reminded of what is happening." If the Players start to understand that Aïndrid does not feel emotions the same way most people do, the Leader may surreptitiously remind them that Aïndrid has faced her share of traumas throughout her existence, which may very well have altered her behavior. And in a way, it is actually the truth.

A Leader who wants to know more about reading body language may read the following book by the psychologist Paul Ekman: *Telling Lies: Clues to Deceit in the Marketplace, Politics, and Marriage*. The book covers interrogation techniques and cases where lying is easy or difficult.

Aïndrid's manipulations

Aïndrid uses her Suggestion technique, sometimes to get a more generous payment, but most often to obtain information or favors. Sexuality is only a tool she uses to get a man relaxed and isolated from his community. She also uses "simple" bribes when she believes it more effective, in accordance with the personality of whoever she is dealing with.

Aïndrid's interest in the PCs



Aïndrid is very interested in the PCs' investigations, but she is also worried that they might learn about the Gwilmine trade and attempt to stop it. Therefore, she acts as a double agent:

- ✦ She superficially helps the PCs, giving them true information to avoid any risk of the PCs discovering a deception, which would result in losing their trust. She might even pose as a victim of the Canal Gang forced to give them part of her earnings.
- ✦ At the same time, she thinks about the most efficient ways to stop the PCs in their tracks and make them leave, such as reporting them for alleged crimes and having them arrested. Or she may use the most susceptible members of the group to further her goals, for example to aid in her escape.



Depending on the composition of the group of PCs, she may also attempt to convince a talented and ambitious scholar, scientist, Magientist, occultist, etc. to join her organization. This final objective does not mean that she will not stick to her short-term goals, such as having the whole group arrested to act more freely for a few days. However, as she maneuvers to neutralize her opponents, she will make sure that her protégé does not suffer long-term harm from it.

Yet, in the long run, this boon of Aïndrid might arouse the PCs' suspicions, as they will notice that one of them is always spared or only marginally harmed by the agents of the Circle of Emergence. Will they go as far as to suspect their companion of being a traitor? Or will they take advantage of this insidious recruitment attempt to know more about the secret organization?

Aïndrid Hedrod's story

Aïndrid has made up a whole story for her role as a prostitute. It is as follows: Aïndrid Hedrod is from the countryside, in the region of Ard-Amrach. Being from a poor family, she found employment as a maid for a burgher at a young age. Unfortunately for her, the head of the house believed he had the right to do as he pleased with his servants. Afraid of losing her job, she submitted to his orders. When she became pregnant, she was terrified. Her master offered her some money to buy her silence and to get an abortion. At first, she refused energetically and decided to go home with her child. However, her family considered the ordeal a humiliation and drove her away from what used to be her home. Penniless, resourceless, she went to the capital, where she borrowed money to get an abortion, which she then paid back by prostituting herself. Disgusted with what she had suffered in Gwidre, she left the country with a merchant caravan. Since she had no other choice but to make a living from the world's oldest profession, then at least she would practice it where she pleased. Her sympathy for Edhene partly comes from how the young girl reminds her of her lost innocence and enthusiasm.

Aïndrid's true story is detailed in Chapter 2, p.58.

Prostitution fees

Should the PCs want to know how much prostitutes ask for, this varies according to the quality of the service. A major difference is whether it takes place outside (2Ed) or in a decent house (6Ed). A full night is worth at least 1Ad. Particular demands may increase the price from 2Ed to 1Ad. Courtesans who only provide their services to members of the high society will never accept less than 1Fd, which is a way to preselect their clientele.

3. The neighborhood

The district is populated and lively. The population is composed of natives and of people from the countryside who have come looking for employment, for a certain safety (compared to the precariousness of villages threatened by brigands and Feondas), and for the freedom to be different.

Scorcha, the street urchin

Female, Reizhite, 10 years old, rogue



- ⊕ **Ways:** Combativeness: 4. Creativity: 5. Empathy: 3. Reason: 1. Conviction: 2.
- ⊕ **Skills:** Close Combat: 1. Feats: 5 (Acrobatics: 6, +1 bonus to agility). Perception: 5. Relation: 1 (-1 penalty). Shooting & Throwing: 1. Stealth: 5 (Pickpocket: 6, +1 bonus). Travel: 1.
- ⊕ **Advantages:** Born Under a Lucky Star, Nimble, Quick.
- ⊕ **Disadvantages:** Infamous (thief [the effects are equivalent to a reversed version of Charismatic]), Poor.
- ⊕ **Character traits:** Resourceful / Capricious.
- ⊕ **Sanity:** Mental Resistance: 7. Orientation: Instinctive. Disorder: Symptom of Absent-mindedness (Mental Confusion).
- ⊕ **Combat:** Attack: 5. Defense: 10. Speed: 8. Potential: 3. Damage: 1 (dagger). Protection: 0.
- ⊕ **Health:** 19. Stamina: 10.

A willful girl who ran away from a childhood of domestic violence, Scorcha ekes out a living in a hut in the vacant lots. She uses what resources she can to find food, from pickpocketing to scrounging. As opposed to many others, she has always had a bad feeling about Aïndrid and instinctively stays away from her. A pity, as the puppeteer would have liked to train and shape the young Scorcha into a tool in the service of the Circle of Emergence...



Scorcha, the little thief, is a potential helper, here to support the PCs and push things forward when needed. Her life as a street urchin has made her stealthy and quick-witted, and there are plenty of things she may “happen to” witness. Even if she does not understand everything, she can occasionally be a precious source of information. She can warn the PCs of the threat the Tarish beggar Glazi is under, or how Aïndrid went out of Athelsan Oxcendre's house with a strange expression, after which the smell of smoke started spreading. Should the PCs start relying too much on Scorcha for the Leader's taste, the girl can simply spend some time playing in the vacant lots instead of gathering information, or she can be “elsewhere,” without the PCs knowing exactly what she is doing, since the child will remain silent about her business.

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The PCs may befriend Aïndrid the prostitute and come to trust her. If this occurs, she might ask them to help her convince Scorcha to come live with her, as it so happens she has a spare bedroom the girl could sleep in for free. Of course, she will present this as a charitable offer, “to help the poor child.” In this case, Aïndrid will take Scorcha with her at the end of A Tidy Room. What will happen to the street urchin? What are Aïndrid's plans? This could be an incentive for a group of PCs to go after the head of the Circle of Emergence, and for the Leader to make use of the suggestions included in Chapter 2 – The Circle of Emergence.



Glazi, the Tarish beggar

A man between 35 and 50 years old, weathered by life, bad weather, and alcohol of which he is an immoderate consumer. A beggar and occasionally a handyman, he is known for his foul temper and for speaking crudely and rudely to women. Always lurking in the streets, he knows about many little things that happen throughout the district.

He will claim to have seen a monster come out of Athelsan Oxcendre's house, or to know things about the dealings of the Canal Gang. Found with Edhene's purse and jewels, he will be lynched by the mob... unless the PCs are able to pull off a last-second rescue.



Ld Loryame

A widow whose children are now far away—if they are even alive anymore—the old woman is the very image of indigence, frailness, and instability. Suffering from several illnesses, including incontinence and senility, she has so far only found support from Edhene, and is the last person to have seen her alive.

Since she has a very disorderly sleep schedule, she may happen to witness strange events in the middle of the night, especially as her room is on the second floor of a house located between the marketplace and the wash-house; the perfect place to observe the district's activity. However, the hardest part will be pulling coherent clues from her muddled mind.

Throughout the investigation, if the PCs have gotten into her good graces, she might, at the Leader's discretion, wave at them from the window to invite them to come in so that she may tell them about something she saw.


Other possible encounters

An investigation scenario always includes blank spots. How will the Players try to solve the mystery? What leads will they follow? In the course of the adventure, the Leader may need other figures of the district or town depending on the party's composition and initiatives. The following figures are aids for the Leader, consisting of four profiles that can easily be adapted to the context chosen. Alternatively, these figures may also be victims of the Diwelank.

Example 1: If the scenario takes place in Farl, the guard will necessarily be involved and will closely follow any development. The Leader may therefore use Trenmor as a mortician, Mandica as the official investigator, and Erwen as her sergeant and occasional bodyguard. Alan may be a sort of old, demented doomsayer who keeps shouting imprecations and apocalyptic prophecies in the streets, which will strengthen the eerie, if not downright nightmarish, atmosphere... particularly if some of his predictions turn out to be correct!

Example 2: Conversely, in Koskan, Trenmor can be a Magientist with medical know-how who will be able to help the PCs, but not without due payment. Mandica can be a gang leader from a neighboring district who will be eager to know more about the dealings in the Weavers' District. Erwen would be one of her agents, tasked with discreetly ensuring the PCs' safety. Finally, Alan could be a spy of the Lord of Koskan seeking to get a better picture of his city in spite of the difficulties, and for this purpose, Alan might have a use for the PCs.

trenmor Mac Daere

 **Roles:** lawyer, physician, scholar, tradesman, client, etc.

A man between 30 and 40 years old, dressed in plain, urban clothes. He can be involved in the scenario to autopsy the body (in case the group of PCs does not include a physician), or as the head of the investigation into Edhene's death, or as a representative of the law worried about the Gwilmine trade.



andica Octar

Roles: A woman between 25 and 30 years old, dressed rather elegantly and femininely.

She can be a well-established local, a successful but unassuming courtesan, an inquisitive intellectual, an expert craftswoman worried about the current situation, or simply an official investigator. She can even be a madam who coordinates some of the district's prostitutes, or a competitor of Aïndrid's who was here before her. She knows the district, the local figures, and has many contacts throughout the town. If needed, she can put in a good word for the PCs.



rwen Oan

Roles: warrior, watch sergeant, mercenary, former soldier, etc.

A martial-looking man in his thirties. He can be a helpful ex-mercenary, a diligent member of the guard, or even a journeyman used to brawls and intimidation.

He may have met Edhene when he protected her from the advances of the thugs of the Canal Gang, when he took her home one evening as she was coming back late from visiting the needy or running errands, etc.

He may also have been tasked with watching the district during the Chimerical Fever epidemic, or he may be a bullheaded sergeant who believes that the case should be wrapped up and forgotten about.



ld Alan Fildh

Roles: demented mystic, pauper, spy, etc.

An old man with a faraway look who lives on the edge of poverty. He can be a slightly kooky grandfather from a large family who does odd jobs, a former party animal who drank away all his money, or a doomsayer shouting in the streets that Saoghal-Dheir is about to strike the world. Edhene may have visited him to inquire about his health and give him alms.



What if there is no Diwelank?

A Tidy Room can be played without anything supernatural. In this case, the savage murders performed by the Diwelank will be Alan Fildh's doing. He looks like an insignificant old man, but he is actually a consumer of the improved Gwilmine sold by the Canal Gang, an addiction he spends most of his money on. Having a naturally high Combativeness and a repressed tendency for sadism, he has lately been suffering monstrous side effects after each intake. He has killed the rats of the dilapidated house in which he has taken shelter and laid crude traps.

Feats: 10 **Perception:** 4 **Stealth:** 8 **Attack:** 13 **Defense:** 9 **Speed:** 10
Potential: 2 **Damage:** 1 (dagger) **Protection:** 0 **Health:** 20/15/10/5 **Stamina:** 10

The statistics above do not represent Alan Fildh's normal abilities. When he is under the effects of the drug, the old man becomes a sort of predator, a fierce, cruel beast. He is then in a state of rage that grants him extraordinary might, as reflected by his combat characteristics.



Act 1: Stupor



Summary: Act 1 focuses on the degradation of the Weavers' District. The story opens with a party, introducing the NPCs in their best light. The inhabitants appear as simple, innocent people who are happy to be alive. Edhene's disappearance puts the community's solidarity to the test, first showing how nobly united they prove through the ordeal, then the widespread indignation and horror in the face of her murder. However, as the anguish festers, it soon devolves into uncontrollable violence, climaxing with the lynching of a disliked, though ultimately innocent, homeless man. Throughout these ordeals, the PCs, at first united with the locals, should progressively distance themselves by seeking the truth beneath the surface, refusing to be part of the mob, and endeavoring to keep their wits about them by keeping a healthy emotional distance from both the events and the protagonists.



At the beginning of the scenario, the default option is that the Characters are housed by the Maers (see p.77), with whom they have a friendly relationship. Should they have a dwelling of their own in the district, it will be located very close to the Maers', with the two households sharing a backyard, for example. This will be required for several scenes of the scenario.

Scene 1: Making merry in the Weavers' District



The objective of this initial scene is to introduce the scenario's major locations (the Maers' house, the marketplace, the Golden Spool), and allow the PCs to interact with the protagonists of the story.



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The Weavers' District has been particularly merry and lively lately. An important order has just been completed, and everyone has been given a bonus. The weavers plan to assemble for a celebration, and they invite the Characters to join them at the Golden Spool, owned by the Ferdwens (see p.73). Alcohol is cheap and plentiful. The locals' behavior toward the PCs is varied, but overall friendly:

- ✦ Musicians and bards are greatly appreciated and will find work late into the night, receiving easy praise. The innkeepers will give them a small bonus to share between one another, the amount depending on the quality of their Performance: 3Ed for a Standard (11) one, 6Ed for a Complicated (14) one, 9Ed for a Difficult (17) one, and 12 Ed for an exceptional (20) one.
- ✦ Sociable, charismatic, or attractive PCs will be asked plenty of questions about where they come from and what adventures they have been through. With the drinks flowing, it will not be very hard to find a one-night stand... Preferably not one already wedded or betrothed, which would lead to a few complications.
- ✦ The strongest PCs might be invited to a few contests of arm-wrestling (with Feats rolls) or drinking (with Stamina rolls). The winner will be able to earn 10Ed from bets.
In case the Leader needs a few additional names to introduce NPCs for these episodes, here is a selection: Kathelig, Kened, Padarn, Uaine, Uunic, Cadfan, Binig, Blaez, and Quidy. Their professions can be: factory worker, warehouseman, dyer, weaver, etc. Men and women work together, no profession being specifically reserved for one sex, except for that of warehouseman, which is essentially masculine, heavy-duty work.



This first scene will be an opportunity for the Leader to introduce two important aspects of the story: the Diwelank, and the Tarish Glazi.

In the early evening, the weather is clear and starry, but as night falls, mist rises from the canal, which makes the late-night atmosphere more disquieting. Darkness, the light fog, and alcohol make it necessary to pass a Standard (11) Perception (Orientation) to make it home with no mishaps.

- ⊗ **Diwelank.** On their way back, the PCs are startled by a frightening noise, a combination of something sturdy breaking and a loathsome growl. It is the Diwelank bursting free of the basement of Athelsan Oxendore. It is impossible to clearly identify the source of the sound, and luckily for the Characters, they have not attracted the attention of the creature that would probably have attacked them otherwise. In the morning, the rumor that the merchant has been burgled may allow them to establish a connection.

⊕ **Glazi.** PCs who lose their way will come face to face with Glazi. Being in a foul mood, the Tarish will heap abuse in his native tongue on the Characters, or even throw garbage at them to drive them from “his turf.” The purpose of this encounter is to introduce this figure and have the PCs witness his behavior. Since the Tarish is so insistent about being left alone in his alley, why would he go and kill Edhene? In the morning, Glazi, taking a stroll through the district, will find the young woman's comb and purse. He will recognize them, but will nevertheless pocket them with the idea of selling them later. He tells no one about his findings, which will be discovered in the beginning of Act 1, Scene 7, and may cost him his life.

The dark hours

The scenario can be played at any time of the year, as long as the cold is not too intense and there is no snow to cover the streets, which would make tracking too easy. The day/night cycle, however, is important, since it schedules day-to-day activities. Quality artificial lighting is often costly, and working with insufficient light greatly complicates things. As a result, most activities take place during daylight, and the town's visage changes radically between day and night.

If the events take place in summer, close to the solstice, the longer days will mean that the criminals will be more easily seen and identified. Conversely, if the story takes place during fall, the long nights, added to the rain and mist rising from the river, mean perfect conditions for the Diwelank to move stealthily.

In a world where timekeeping instruments are few and far between, only available to fortunate scholars and powerful figures, the PCs will have to make do throughout their investigation with more or less subjective temporal indications: “sunset,” “some time after sunrise,” “in the middle of the night,” “during the first round of the watch” (considering there is approximately three hours between each round), etc. Consequently, it will be complicated to investigate an alibi. How do you establish an individual's innocence or guilt when all you have are chronologically vague elements?



The events of the night

☯ Sunset.

Edhene goes to old Loryanne's to bring her food and help her get into bed. During the day, and sometimes at night when she cannot sleep, the old woman sits on an armchair close to a window from which she can see the marketplace's activity. Edhene is late, but this is not unusual, as she sometimes stays to talk with Loryanne. This is the case tonight, and she is further delayed by having to clean the old woman, who has soiled herself.

☯ Early evening.

Edhene leaves and goes to the village square for a bit of stargazing. She drops by the Golden Spool and leaves after a quick glass of cider. On her way back home, something draws her attention. Things quickly take a turn for the worse: Edhene encounters one of her possible murderers, and her fate is sealed (see Act 1, Scene 6).

☯ Early night.

Due to the festivities, testimonies are confused. Gliwi went out at some point to get some water, but since the marketplace's well was closed, he went to a nearby public fountain. Some say they saw him afterward, but they are not sure.

☯ Middle of the night.

The merry-makers go home, and the Golden Spool finally closes.

☯ Late night.

An intense downpour flows through the district and washes away any footprints and blood stains that may have remained.

☯ Early morning.

Cousin Gliwi, who had fallen asleep in one of the washhouse's sheltered rooms, goes home. He claims to have no memory of the night, having fallen ill and feeling too weak to make it home.

~ Scene 2: The disappearance ~

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Guillaume & Cyrille Aufaure - RISE - 2 - Save me.

This melancholic tune accompanies Edhene's disappearance and, later on, the investigation of the tidy room.

The Weavers' District wakes up with a hangover. Daily life and work must resume. People work six days every week, with different schedules so that the factories are constantly active. Note that, as opposed to Reizhite and Talkéride towns, a Gwidrite population may follow specific moral rules or prayer schedules.

For the Maers, it is a day like any other: the fireplace is lit, water is heated, the breakfast is cooked... Cousin Gliwi comes back a mess, having drunk so much that he has forgotten how he ended up falling asleep in the washhouse. He has also lost his purse, which earns him a few jeers, but it was already near-empty thanks to his generous patronage of the Golden Spool. Edhene's absence starts to be noticed. With all the activity of the day before, each of the Maers thought she was with another, whether at the Golden Spool or at home. Memories are blurry, but one thing is for sure: she is not here, and must have disappeared during the evening or the night.

Very quickly, the mother, Iverna, grows worried and goes out to ask the neighbors whether they have seen Edhene and when. Erwin, the father, and Asim, the eldest son, quickly follow suit, questioning the weavers who were at the Golden Spool. Cousin Gliwi is beside himself, deeply shocked, and follows Asim in his investigations. Varigal Haldrid decides to go to the guard. Soon, only Greine and the children remain at home. In this heated atmosphere, she is one of the few to keep her cool. Believing that there are enough people running around outside, she makes sure that the daily chores are being taken care of.

If the PCs take some time to gather information, they can learn about the following trails to follow:

☯ **Old Loryanne.** Edhene must have paid her a visit to care for her, which she usually does every day. Greine will describe her with relative objectivity, stressing that the old woman is not all there and often stays awake at night, which also means she sees a lot of things.

☯ **Young Scorcha.** This child is always lurking around, sticking her nose and hands where they have no business being. It may be that she knows something.

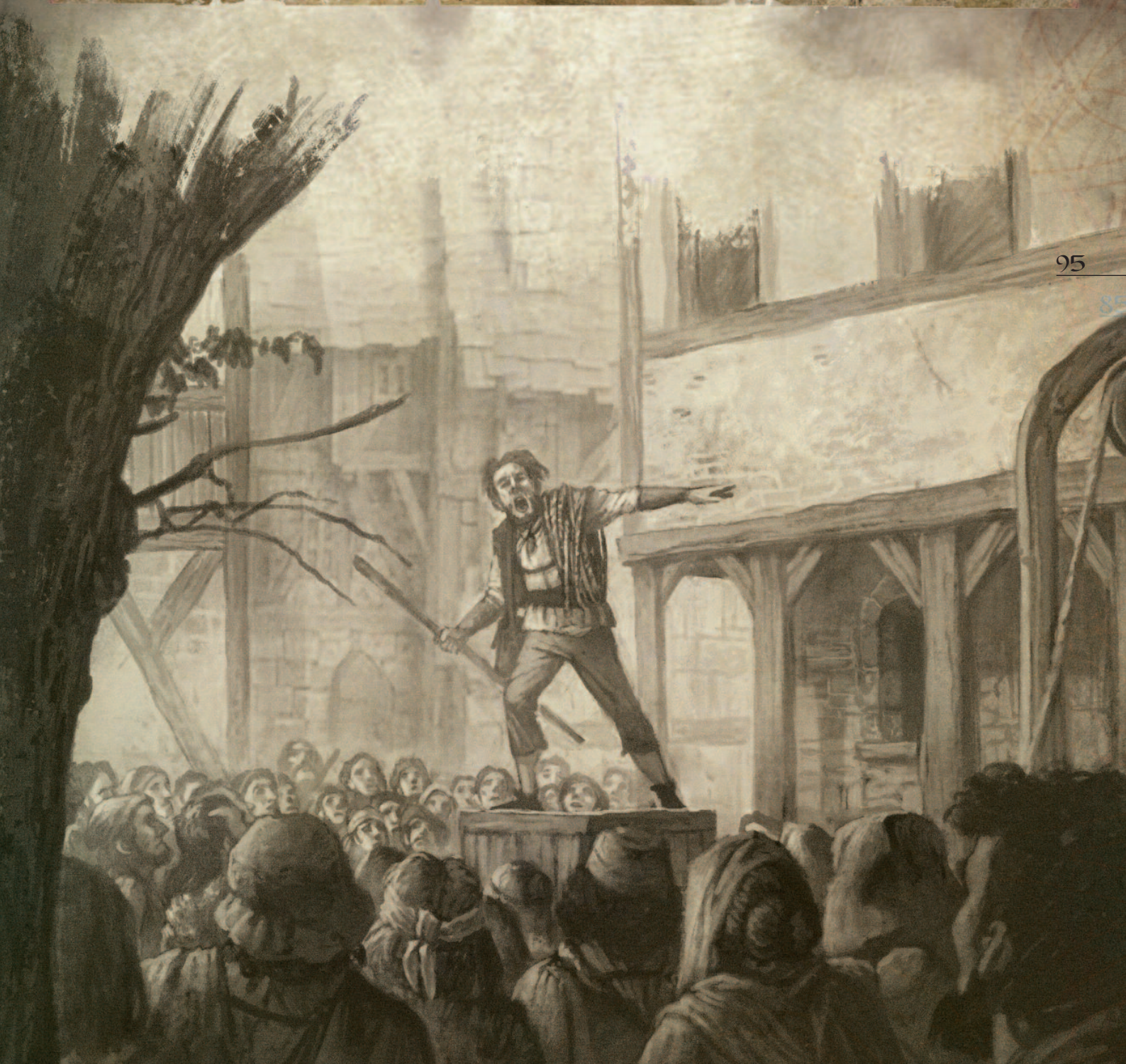


These two witnesses will not necessarily hold information directly leading to the murderer, but they will act as informants throughout the scenario. They will be more useful resources for the investigators than, for example, the managers of the Golden Spool.

Examining Edhene's belongings

Searching Edhene's room will turn up nothing out of the ordinary; no secret diary here! Her behavior wasn't strange either; she seemed neither worried nor agitated. The room is on the second floor, and the window is securely locked, which seems to eliminate the possibility of her running away from home or having been kidnapped.

In the marketplace, it is collectively decided to organize search parties. The inhabitants form teams to comb through the district, including the canal, dumping grounds, factories, vacant houses, etc. Almost all of the locals are involved. The PCs are also asked to be part of the search. This is an opportunity for them to familiarize themselves with the area so that they can more easily progress through the ensuing phases..



The secrets of Athelsan Oxcendre

Among the people gathered in the marketplace, there is Athelsan Oxcendre, officially owner of a bookshop and professional writer. Someone calls to him, "I've heard that someone broke into your house last night!" to which he replies, "Yes, someone tried, but nothing was stolen." He is certain that there is no connection between Edhene's disappearance and this incident. However, someone who watches him closely and passes a Complicated (14) Perception (Observation) or Relation (Reading Emotions) roll might harbor suspicions. He is troubled and does his best to hide it. Why try to conceal his worry when so many people through the district express it freely? In addition, he seems genuinely concerned about Edhene's fate and gets wholeheartedly involved in the search. At this point, the occultist fears that the creature that broke free from its cage attacked and killed the young girl. However, he is not certain of it, and he fears the reaction of the locals should he speak of what he knows.



A strange burglary. If the PCs investigate the location of the alleged robbery (Complicated (14) Perception (Observation) roll), they will gather from the debris and marks that something came out of the cellar window; something rather small, but agile and powerful (see Chapter 4 – Bestiary, "Diwelank"). This is as good as their guess will get, but one thing is for sure: this doesn't look like the work of a burglar.

With guilt weighing heavily on his mind, Athelsan is disposed to tell the truth to the PCs and request their help. However, he will endeavor to swear them to secrecy beforehand, fearing that the community will rush to blame him and retaliate.



The matter of the Diwelank can be solved as soon as Act 1, even before Edhene's corpse is found: the creature can be tracked (Difficult (14) Natural Environment (Tracking) check) or spotted during night patrols (Difficult (14) Perception (Alertness) check). The monster has settled in the abandoned house and has an escape route through the sewers. For this phase, the Leader can make use of the description of the abandoned house provided in this scenario's Prologue, and of the Diwelank's profile included in Chapter 4 – Bestiary. Killing or capturing the beast will earn the PCs the support of the occultist, who will do all he can to actively help them during Act 2.

Scene 3: The search

By default, Aindrid Hedrod will be part of the PCs' team. A Standard (11) Relation (Reading Emotions) roll will show how scornful she is toward the district's honest women and their husbands' lascivious glances. The prostitute introduces herself as a friend of Edhene and mentions that she owes a lot to the young woman, who is the only one not to have judged her based on her profession.

Here are a few things that the PCs might encounter during the search:

- ❖ Edhene's shawl is found in an alley, where she was kidnapped, between the marketplace and the washhouse. This clue can be used by an investigator with visionary powers (see Act 1, Scene 6).
- ❖ The Canal Gang are gathered in their headquarters, Kalber's house, right by the waterfront. There is light inside, but they will let no one in, claiming that they know nothing and that "the girl's probably just gettin' shagged sum'where, don't be such worrywarts..."
- ❖ Should they manage to question him, the beggar Glazi may mention that he saw something move in the abandoned house. It was the Diwelank getting familiar with its new lair, from which it will be able to hunt. As long as it has not gotten used to its new environment, it will hide in the sewers if someone comes and will prowl the streets only at night.

Strange dealings



The meeting between Kalber and Aïndrid

Scorcha, Glazi, or old Alan Fildh can tell the PCs about the relationship between Aïndrid Hedrod and Kalber, the leader of the Canal Gang. He, along with a few of his men, went to the prostitute. Usually, she entertains only one man at a time, which shows something is amiss.

- ❖ If questioned about her activities, Aïndrid will first argue about professional discretion: “If I start talking about my clients, soon, I’ll have none left.”
- ❖ If the PCs prove insistent and bring up the testimony regarding her meeting with accomplices, she will pretend to be scared to brush off the questions: “I can’t tell you about this. It’s not related to Edhene, I swear! I’m fond of the girl, I’d never let anyone hurt her!”
- ❖ If this still doesn’t work, she will confess with a credible lie: “Kalber is a brute. If I don’t pay a tax, he’ll... no, I don’t want to talk about it.”
- ❖ If the PCs mention the presence of several members of the Canal Gang: “When I have no money, they collect the tax through my body. They’re animals!”



Improved Gwilmine.

Inquisitive PCs who watch the denizens of the canal come and go, loosen a few tongues, or ask Scorcha may learn of the existence of a drug trade. They can even acquire a sample to analyze it or simply identify it with a taste test. The Leader can find the characteristics of the drug on page 47.

- ❖ Clever, careful investigation of the district’s drug users will let them know that it is a much stronger variant of Gwilmine than the one usually sold. It is imported.
- ❖ A Complicated (14) Science or Magience (Medicine) roll will confirm that it is Gwilmine; a Difficult (17) roll will show that there is something different about it. It is an improved version that requires a well-equipped laboratory and very qualified workers to synthesize. Substantial means are also necessary to make and import it.



PCs who snoop around the canal feel watched by the members of the Gang. They are a constant, diffuse threat: shadows in the alleys, the feeling of an imminent attack that slips away before crashing down on vulnerable teammates...

Scene 4: Aïndrid Hedrod's involvement



This scene sums up Aïndrid’s activities before she disappears so that the Leader can go through these events in a natural way.

Motivations

Being nothing if not pragmatic and curious, she will try all through the investigation to get closer to the PCs. As a friend of Edhene’s, being at the same time familiar with the district and a stranger that has seemingly nothing to hide out of shame or peer pressure, she can appear supportive and even helpful. The Leader can use her as an ally, witness, or informant. Her actual motivations are more ambivalent:

- ❖ Learning more about the PCs’ experiences during their previous adventures. She is genuinely fascinated with events such as those depicted in “Loch Varn” (a scenario included in Book 0 – Prologue), for example.
- ❖ Her cooperation is also out of prudence and survival instinct. She suspects that the PCs might discover her trafficking, and therefore watches their progress to know when to take measures. It will eventually result in her having the PCs arrested with false accusations, with the intent of driving them out of the town (see Act 1, Scene 2).
- ❖ During Act 2, when new phenomena start to appear, she will be interested in knowing the truth about the Bogeyman (see Chapter 4 – Bestiary, “Bogeyman”).

Why doesn’t she take more radical measures to stop the PCs for good? She could, for example, have them murdered in such a devious way that they would have no conceivable way to escape it.

Despite the danger they represent to her drug trade, her need to know and understand remains foremost. She feels no sympathy for the members of the Canal Gang, and its demise would only be a momentary setback. If she has a choice, she would much rather learn information about a mystery than preserve one of her sources of income. If some PCs prove particularly crafty and astute, she will wish to see them hone their talents in the hope that they will contribute to the achievement of her supreme objective, unveiling the secrets of the peninsula. To this end, she may watch them or have them watched from afar to confirm her first impression. She only quashes intelligence and knowledge reluctantly and as a last resort.

Seduction

Aindrid will seek to get closer to some PCs, using her prostitute cover as an alibi, but not going as far as explicit advances, which would be too suspicious for experienced investigators.

She plays the part of the woman down on her luck, but doing her best despite her misfortune: "I would like to thank you, but I only have..." "I did not choose this profession..." "No one's ever talked to me like that..." "I... I don't want to be alone tonight..." Her role as a woman in distress, a victim of fate, might seduce protective male Characters.

A seasoned judge of character, Aindrid will have no trouble identifying the best course of action. The Leader is thus free to base her actions on what they know about the Characters. It will probably be preferable to take the Players aside so that the others don't notice that Aindrid speaks and behaves differently with them. Likewise, in order not to arouse suspicion, the Leader is advised to keep any die rolls hidden.

Those who spend the night with her will keep a very pleasant memory of it. However, what they don't know is that they may have been drugged with Morphenose and become the victim of Suggestion (see Chapter 2 – The Circle of Emergence).



Falling for Aindrid?

If the Leader acts craftily, one of the PCs may grow fond of Aindrid or side with her. These feelings may be genuine, or they may stem from a suggestion implanted in the Character's mind by Aindrid. The Leader may even decide to depict in detail how lovestruck the Character feels toward Aindrid. To do so, inspiration can be drawn from how the passion of the Lead develops in the Focus "Mac Thogail" (see Book 3 – Dearg). The game aid "Conscience rules but does not govern" (also included in Book 3) can also help, in particular the part "Irrepressible love."

This passion may give a more dramatic turn to the ensuing events, involving the Players on a whole new level. The situation could even become all the thornier if the Character were already in a relationship. Of course, Aindrid will make sure to use these feelings to her advantage at the most profitable time.

Scene 5: A grim discovery



Guillaume & Cyrille Aufaure – RISE - I – Lost and found

Sooner or later, the sewers will be explored as well. A short expedition starting from the washhouse will turn up Edhene's corpse, surrounded by a few rats that will flee into the darkness at the humans' approach.



All that remains of the young girl are patches of clothes covering a mixture of pale flesh that the vermin have gnawed and clawed. It gives off an unbearable stench of rotten meat. Down in the dark, dank sewers, the sight of the squirming mass of fur focused on devouring what was once a lovable, lively person is deeply disturbing and inflicts a Complicated (14) Mental Resistance check.

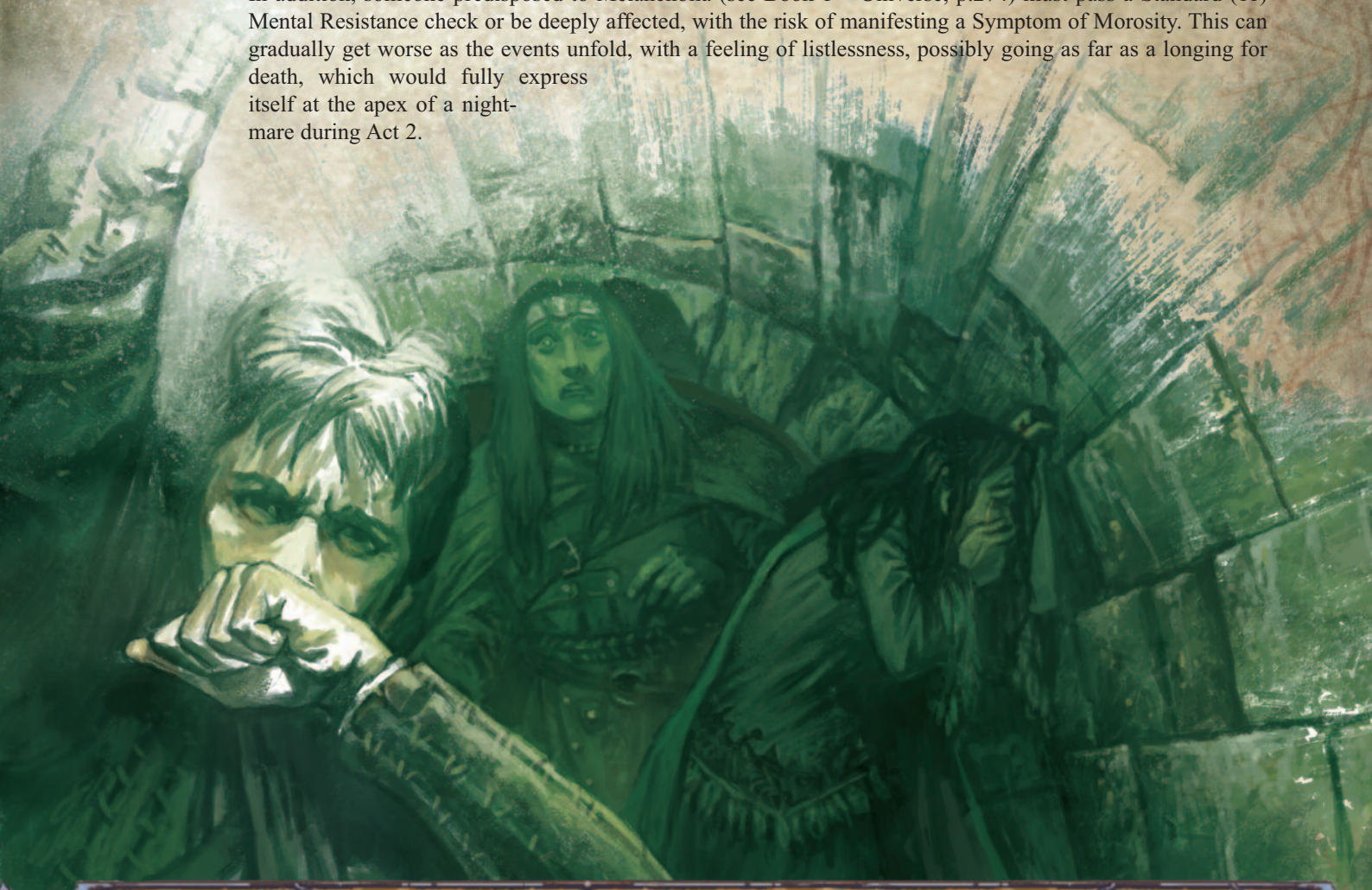
It is then time for the PCs to organize a trip back to the surface with the earthly remains of Edhene without shocking the locals as much as they have been themselves. Then, they will have to break the news to the family, who will obviously be devastated. Family members will react differently depending upon their temperament, but it will be a great ordeal for all. Who could have harmed their precious little girl? Everyone loved her!



The horror of an unbearable, unfair loss may make a great impression on the PCs. Mournful hours will be spent with blank stares, incomprehension, sobs, or a heavy silence in front of the impossibility to communicate an emotion too strong to be translated into words. The experience will be particularly taxing if they are housed by the Maers or have made friends with them.

The PCs' Empathy will be Tested, and they may be victims of emotional contagion. Sadness and moral distress will result in difficulty sleeping, an ongoing state of weariness, a dulling of the senses, and an overall loss of enthusiasm. This inflicts a -1 penalty on all actions until the next fast-paced scene, namely the explosion of violence leading up to Glazi's lynching.

In addition, someone predisposed to Melancholia (see Book 1 – Universe, p.274) must pass a Standard (11) Mental Resistance check or be deeply affected, with the risk of manifesting a Symptom of Morosity. This can gradually get worse as the events unfold, with a feeling of listlessness, possibly going as far as a longing for death, which would fully express itself at the apex of a nightmare during Act 2.



Scene 6: Questions without answers



Jure Peternel – Dearg – 5 – Devil



The murderer's identity is only a secondary matter in the global plot. Choosing the killer is primarily a matter of atmosphere. Autopsying the body and getting a vision from the shawl give access to roughly the same information, narrowing down the possible suspects. However, as the events move forward with increasing speed, it is not possible for the PCs to verify their theories before they are arrested, which will start Act 2. It is even possible for the scenario to reach its end without the PCs being certain of the criminal's identity.

Examining the body



Autopsying Edhene's corpse. One of the Players' most reliable clues is Edhene's body. Examining it requires a Difficult (17) Magience or Science (Medicine) roll to learn all the available information. Should no PC have the required abilities, the Leader can give medical skills to one NPC or another. In that regard, Trenmor Mac Daere or Mandica Octar would be the most logical choices.



The clues the Players find will depend on which murderer the Leader chose among the possible candidates: Gliwi, the Canal Gang, the Diwelank, or Alan Fildh under the influence of improved Gwilmine. The related information and narrative options are detailed in the following paragraph, “Who is the murderer?”

Traditionally, in Tri-Kazel, people seek to lay a soul to rest, so that it can—depending on one's belief—either turn back into the Life-Tree's sap, or join the One. In-depth knowledge of human anatomy is mostly the prerogative of rationalists, with Magientists among them. It is only in the northeastern portion of Reizh that using autopsy for an investigation is relatively commonplace. Elsewhere, opening a corpse to seek information will be met with disgust and horror, possibly to the point where the physician doing so will be branded as a necromancer!

In this case, the extreme tension in the Weavers' District makes the situation even more delicate. With how beloved the victim was, the mere mention of an autopsy would be met with great indignation—why add insult to injury? Even the guard has given up on performing a close examination due to the locals' emotion. This decision, which may surprise the PCs, results from the law enforcers' twofold mission: ensuring social peace and uncovering the truth. Frequently, when the authorities are weak or simply lazy, the first imperative tends to outweigh the second, and the quest for truth gets lost in the majority's opinion.

Should, by some misfortune, the locals learn of the PCs' initiative, they would be viewed dimly for some time, which would make the investigation all the harder (–2 penalty to all Performance and Relation rolls until the Bogeyman has disappeared in Act 3, Scene 2).

For their investigation to not get them in trouble, the PCs will have to be both discreet and prompt, as they will only have one opportunity to act, when the body is being cleaned and prepared for the funeral. Of course, lest their activities be noticed, it will not be possible for them to go through a by-the-book autopsy. They will have to make do with a superficial examination.



Examining the body will require haste. At best, they will have a three-hour window, so they will have to time their actions well.



Persuade Quilynien. The body is kept by an undertaker called Quilynien, a 40-something-year-old man, thin and grim-looking. He is, however, a sensitive, very devout man who believes he has a responsibility toward the deceased's soul. Therefore, it will not be hard to make him accept a respectful approach that will help the dead girl find peace. In the end, the Leader should calibrate Quilynien's helpfulness in accordance with how challenging this part of the scenario is meant to be.



A race against time. Quilynien accepts, but he still has to prepare the body for the funeral, and there is much work to be done to give it a peaceful appearance, even with fresh clothes and a mask on her face. It is thus the start of a race to secure medical know-how if no Character has the Medicine Discipline. During this time, they must: ask the guard (or another source of information) about the town's physicians; get to one of them, who may not live in the district; persuade the physician to come even though the guard did not ask for one; bring the physician unnoticed through alleyways, staying clear of main streets; make the physician enter through a service door; and finally proceed with the examination of the body.

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Who is the murderer?



It's up to the Leader to pick Edhene's murderer. It can be picked beforehand or be decided in the course of the scenario, depending on how it goes and how the PCs lead their investigation.



The PCs should not encounter any red herrings unless they are led astray by partial information. Regarding the examination of the body, the Leader can, in accordance with their style, use one of these two methods to manage the Players' access to clues:



Methodical. At least one of the PCs has the Medicine Discipline, or they were able to secure the help of a suitably skilled NPC. The ensuing examination removes any uncertainty. The Leader may decide that the scene's challenge was to perform the autopsy, and that the Players have earned all the available clues.



Uncertain. The PCs have no choice; they will have to examine Edhene's body themselves. Each clue, signaled with a separate icon, can only be found by succeeding on a Difficult (17) Perception (Observation) check, or a Complicated (14) Magience or Science check. It is likely that the Players will fail some of the rolls and will therefore never have all the available clues to be certain of the murderer's identity. In that case, there will be no choice but to work with this partial data, which will mean getting to the bottom of every lead. This can result in a more sandbox-like phase, which will considerably lengthen the duration of the scenario, especially because every one of the possible culprits can dish out its share of hardships for the PCs.

Depending on the chosen murderer, Edhene's death will have occurred in a particular way, which can be deduced from the clues found on the body or experienced through visions.



Visions



he use of visions is optional, but will make the investigation of Edhene's death considerably easier.

- ❖ The end of Act 1, focused on investigation, shows only a minor aspect of the scenario, the central element of which is the Bogeyman phenomenon that spreads during Act 2. Therefore, depicting spectacular visions will by no means ruin the scenario or make it overly simplistic.
- ❖ Conversely, going for the “Uncertain” way of finding the clues (through appropriate skill checks instead of visions) can seriously complicate the Players' task. It may even, if the PCs are unlucky, go as far as to make it impossible to find the murderer.

The description of the available clues and possible deductions for each potential murderer is followed by mention of the visions the PCs can get from the shawl. Should it not be possible for the PCs to have access to the clues from the forensic examination, the visions from the shawl provide a back-up means to get a good idea of the killer's identity.



Edhene's shawl. This clue will provide an idea of where the young girl was attacked, and it suggests that she struggled or tried to run away. Only a medium will be able to learn more (see Chapter 1, Visions and Occult Arts), provided the Leader has decided to make supernatural options available to solve the mystery.

- ❖ The piece of cloth is filled with normal emotions, which will make it clear to the medium that it is not an Anchor (see “Anchored Ghost” in the Bestiary of The Black Moon Handbook), and thus that Edhene has not become a ghost. This clue should let the Players deduce that the Bogeyman of Act 2 is not a ghost.
- ❖ The vision will depict touch-based sensations from the point of view of the shawl as well as its owner. The information matches what a medical examination can yield and will provide clues on how the events unfolded (see the section “Who is the murderer?”)

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Empirical criminology applied to Edhene's murder



he Discipline “Mental Phenomena” can be used like empirical criminology. The central event of “A Tidy Room” is the murder of a young woman in a working-class district. How would an empirical criminologist approach such a matter?

First, such an expert will know that when the victim is a woman, nine times out of ten, the murderer is a man who was close to her, and whose motivation lies in a mixture of desire and hatred. The culprit can be a spurned suitor, a jealous husband, a former betrothed who did not take the break-up well, etc. The investigator will therefore start with the victim's relatives to sort out the suspects. In “A Tidy Room,” the suspect matching this profile is the cousin Gliwi.

The second cause of death for a woman is related to theft and assorted criminal acts. It can be a case of pickpocketing gone wrong, or she may have been at the wrong place at the wrong time. Gangs are likely to be the perpetrators of such crimes. Opportunistic rapes following thefts are not rare, and in the case of a group, this may lead to gang rape. In “A Tidy Room,” the suspects matching this profile are the members of the Canal Gang.

Finally, there are exceptional cases where the murder is committed by a complete stranger, such as a vagrant or a serial killer. In “A Tidy Room,” the suspects matching these profiles are, respectively, the homeless Tarish, Glazi, and the Diwelank. Paradoxically, in practice, the shocked locals primarily seek the murderer among those most remote from their community, ergo the vagrant or the monster. When this turns out to not be possible, the following suspect is the criminal gang. It is only as a last resort that they will consider the idea that the killer may be among them.

Therefore, with the emotional reaction of the community stricken by the murder on one side, and the rational, methodical approach of an investigator on the other side, the two parties will work at cross-purposes. This contrast is one of the causes of the potentially very negative reaction from the locals.

Of course, it may conversely happen that the victim's family already knows the culprit and reports him. However, this implies that the murderer previously displayed an antisocial attitude and a foul temper, which had already distanced him from the group.



If one of the PCs has the Mental Phenomena Discipline, the Leader may give the Player this theoretical information in order to support the investigation. Such food for thought can be handed out when the investigation hits a lull. For example, the Leader can explain that as the PC mulls over the case, they remember a study they read several years ago.



Here are the potential murderers the Leader can choose from.

Cousin Gliwi

Drunk out of his mind, in love, and obsessed with Edhene, he flirted with her near the washhouse, but as he proved increasingly insistent, she pushed him away. Panicked and mad with desire, he raped her, stifling her cries for help, and ended up accidentally choking her to death. Amidst his feverish delusions, he vaguely hoped that she only refused herself to him to play hard to get, that “No” meant “Yes, but I don't dare say it,” and that she would end up accepting his embrace. When he became aware he had killed her, he spent some time with the body, ranting about how much he loved her, how it was an accident, how everything would be fine... Then he went as far as to lie with his love's corpse. Afterward, once the alcohol's effects had worn off a bit, he became alarmed and decided to dispose of the body as well as whatever trouble might come from it.. That night's events are still muddy in his head, and the half-forgotten memories sometimes haunt his nightmares.

Examining the body will reveal that:

- ❖ Death occurred during the first half of the night.
- ❖ The victim was raped, both when she was alive and posthumously.
- ❖ The victim died of asphyxiation, presumably while she was raped. Judging from her bruises, her aggressor(s) covered her nose and mouth, probably to keep her from calling for help.



In addition, in case the Leader wants to include visions (see the previous insert, “Visions”), the shawl reveals that:

- ❖ The victim was initially trusting.
- ❖ She felt increasingly uncomfortable as she was forcibly embraced and tried to keep her distance from her overzealous suitor.
- ❖ She struggled against a single aggressor and lost her shawl.

The Canal Gang

The seductive Juzeg convinced Edhene to go for a walk, then progressively lured her to the gang's hideout. As the taunts and dares escalated, the situation grew ugly, resulting in gang rape. Edhene was kept prisoner in the basement and abused by some of the members while others discussed what to do with her. It was decided to kill her to keep her from speaking.

Other women before Edhene have experienced a similar fate, though they were not all killed, being strangers and prostitutes, which left the thugs confident that the victims would not bring action against them, or that such an action would lead nowhere. Scorcha may warn the PCs that no woman is safe with the Canal Gang around, and may lead the Characters to some of their victims: country girls who came to the town alone and are employed as factory workers. The process is always the same: seductive luring, pressure, rape. Securing these

women's testimonies will make the Canal Gang's sentence all the harsher should they be arrested for drug trafficking, even if they are not involved in Edhene's death.

Formally proving the gang's crime will be difficult, but the PCs may find blood spots in their basement, and maybe even a tooth lying in a corner, which the young girl lost under her tormentors' blows. The gang may also be dismantled by establishing its involvement in the drug trade: the PCs will have to find their stash hidden in the sewer, not far from the canal, in a small, disused sector that the thugs have made theirs. Rape, murder, and drug trafficking are all punishable by particularly cruel methods of death (see the insert "What is the murderer in for?").

Examining the body will reveal that:

- ❖ Death occurred during the second half of the night.
- ❖ The victim was repeatedly raped.
- ❖ She was held by the wrists and ankles.
- ❖ For several hours, she was subjected to severe abuse, akin to torture.
- ❖ Finally, she was strangled.



In addition, in case the Leader wants to include visions (see the previous insert, "Visions"), the shawl reveals that:

- ❖ The victim felt trusting, slightly excited, her heart aflutter, as if in the company of a flirt.
- ❖ She walked for some time with someone who was affectionately holding her arm.
- ❖ She grew increasingly scared, her fear reaching her apex when several hands brutally grabbed her, dragged her away, and ripped away her shawl.
- ❖ The shawl remained on the floor for some time, trampled every now and then.
- ❖ Finally, it was picked up with a negligent, muscular, masculine hand and thrown on the still warm body of Edhene. They were carried for some time, until the shawl slipped off to the floor where it was found.

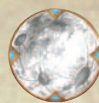


The Diwelank

The occultist Athelsan Oxcendre was keeping prisoner in his secret laboratory a creature that he had called "Diwelank" (see this book's Bestiary) and that he wanted to study cautiously, in addition to his other projects. Unfortunately, the beast managed to escape, busting through a window in the cellar. Athelsan is abnormally worried, even though he will do his best to explain that it is only a fear of burglars, but that he lost nothing important and the whole thing is nothing to worry about. If he finds the PCs trustworthy, he may hire them to catch the creature, as discreetly as possible, since the locals will certainly not appreciate that a monster was kept right where they lived, and that their children are now in grave danger.

Examining the body will reveal that:

- ❖ Death occurred during the first half of the night.
- ❖ The victim was killed swiftly; she probably did not even have time to suffer.
- ❖ It is hard to draw a clear picture of the weapon that was used (see Chapter 4 – Bestiary).
- ❖ The victim was eaten by the rats, but also by something bigger.



In addition, in case the Leader wants to include visions (see the previous insert, "Visions"), the shawl reveals that:

- ❖ The victim felt calm.
- ❖ Something caught her eye.
- ❖ The victim felt a short, intense burst of fear. She suddenly dropped, and the shawl fell.

What if Alan Fildh is the murderer?

The clues will be similar to those related to the Diwelank: a sudden attack that left the victim no chance, and during which she succumbed to a few brutal strikes. The killer then moved the body and kept slashing at it. Judging from the wounds, the weapon could be a knife, but wielded with extraordinary strength.

What is the murderer in for?

Murder as seen by traditional law

In the countryside, arrangements can be found according to which the murderer pays compensation to the victim's family, or must serve them for several years. When no agreement can be found, the default punishment is the death penalty or life-long banishment (see Book 1 – Universe, p.38 and 124). Should the murderer belong to another community, and therefore be out of the sentence's reach, the situation may very quickly devolve into a feud between two families or villages.

The harsher justice of the cities

If the murder takes place in a city, the death penalty is generally requested, without the possibility of individual arrangements. The most common alternative penalties are a pilgrimage and making penance (in Gwidre only), and forced labor in mines (mainly in Reizh).

Asking for mercy

The three kings (in Tri-Kazel as a whole), the ruling princes (in Farl), the Hierophant (in Gwidre), and the dukes (in Taol-Kaer) have the prerogative of arbitrarily granting the culprits mercy or commuting their sentences without having to provide any justification. Technically speaking, asking for grace is not equivalent to appealing. In northern Reizh, in the region of Farl, and in the territories under the influence of Baldh-Ruoch, it is possible to appeal against the decision of inferior jurisdictions. Mercy is a last-resort action, when all the other options have been used.

- ❖ The guilty party must make their plea for mercy known. The guilty party or those who speak for them send the appropriate petition to the higher authorities. The complete file must detail the facts at hand and the mitigating factors they wish to bring forward.
- ❖ The judges send their own report to be examined.
- ❖ The files are reviewed by the administration of the king, prince, or duke. Until the reply arrives, the execution is postponed.
- ❖ If the request for mercy is rejected, the standard legal procedure resumes. Otherwise, the decision of the higher authority applies.
- ❖ If the guilty party asked for the mercy of a duke, for example, they can try to ask for a royal mercy, which results in a new procedure and postpones the execution once more.

Most of Tri-Kazel's inhabitants are illiterate. Therefore, they would need to call upon lawyers to take care of the procedure and remind the authorities that it must be carried out to its end, in case an overzealous local lord would want to carry out the execution without delays. Vassals are under the obligation to wait for their suzerain's decision; doing otherwise would mean spurning the authority of one's liege and, in doing so, committing an act of rebellion. This constitutes a motive for war and is therefore not taken lightly. As a result, an ill-disposed local authority will do everything to cut the request short, in one way or another.

As far as the guilty party is concerned, all these procedures require money and at least one person out of prison that cares enough about them to go through the lengthy, complicated, and costly proceedings. In addition, such a person might be the target of intimidation. An isolated person with no support has no chance to ask for mercy.

Mercy is generally granted according to a combination of motives, even if they are not made explicit:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ⌘ Youth: someone below the age of 20 is more easily forgiven. | ⌘ Self-defense: if the murder resulted from an attempt to protect something worthy (life, honor, religion, property, etc.) |
| ⌘ Poverty: the person acted out of despair and hunger. | ⌘ Social usefulness: even if the individual committed a serious crime, that person's social usefulness is considered to outweigh the damage. The sentence is then suspended. |
| ⌘ Family obligations: the guilty party is a parent whose death might lead the family to sink into poverty, which would therefore punish innocents as well. | |

The execution

Hanging is the most common means of execution. When the crime is severe and repulsive, the local authorities generally choose a more spectacular and cruel setup, such as the wheel, followed by exposing the body (or bodies) at the entrance of the city (see Book 1 – Universe, p.124). In this case, the death is slow, the limbs methodically broken and the torso crushed until death comes.

A bloodless epilogue?

At the end of the story, and depending on the PCs' actions, the locals might have had enough violence. They could feel in favor of a relatively merciful sentence rather than a cruel and exemplary one, and ask for the culprits to be hanged, or for hard labor for the youngest and more excusable of them.

Scene 7: The judgment of the mob



Linkin Park – The Hunting Party (Acapellas + Instrumentals)
- 22 – "A Line in the Sand" (Instrumental)

Contrast is one of the keys to optimize the use of music during a role-playing game session. By playing this song, the Leader will surprise the Players by launching them into the violence of this scene.



The murder of an unpleasant, yet innocent outcast by a crowd of bloodthirsty honest citizens is a shocking, if not downright traumatizing, event. It is an important part of the story's horror, blurring the borders between good and evil, innocence and guilt, victim and tormentor.

At the time of this scene, the PCs probably have a very dark image of Edhene's murderer and are determined to see that justice is done. The population of the Weavers' District is of the same mind and will be the PCs' mirror, their distorted reflection. This event, dramatically speaking, will be a foretaste of the confrontation with the Bogeyman during Act 2, since the creature shows the darkest aspects of one's mind.

As the PCs investigate to find the truth about Edhene's death by examining her body, a rumor starts to spread through the marketplace, then through the whole district. It's about the homeless Tarish, Glazi. Self-proclaimed "avengers," on the basis of an "irrefutable" reasoning (see the insert "The marketplace rumor"), are on their way to "interrogate" the suspect.

Public crises and urban tensions



PCs who have lived in an urban area for some time are aware of the danger of crises and riots, which often erupt out of fear or anger. This insert sums up what they know..

A town is not an island disconnected from what happens around it. For example, bad crops in the surrounding countryside may lead to a rise in the price of grain and food in general. At first, the locals will make do with lowering their expenses and waiting for better days. However, if the problem goes on for too long, the slightest thing can set people ablaze! A bakery will be attacked by furious mothers who want to feed their children, a rich family with a monopoly on the importation of vital goods will have its house burned and its members lynched, etc. Violence brews under the surface, usually erupting in sometimes fiery quarrels or in denouncing offenses and crimes, both real and imaginary.

But when the situation truly gets ugly, there is no limit to horror: the scapegoat can be beaten, hanged, castrated, or even torn apart by the murderous crowd. The most baffling part is that those responsible for such atrocities are perfectly ordinary people who usually lead peaceful lives. Hatred, the feeling of powerlessness, the rage of suffering and losing control of one's life can lead to extreme reactions that are beyond reason.

In addition to these momentary crises that sometimes trigger mind-boggling explosions of horror, there are plenty of long-term motives for tensions and disputes in working-class districts. These are generally the location of industrial activity requiring a large workforce, which is a boon for employment, but which also results in various nuisances such as fumes (toxic or not), noises, and tremors born from Magientist machines; or the pungent smell of tanneries, dyeing workshops, and cheese shops. The slaughterhouse district, for example, may be a seedy and dangerous part of town, since the only inhabitants who have remained are those who don't have the means to live elsewhere.



The marketplace rumor

The Leader can draw inspiration from the conversation below to depict what the PCs will hear. They may actually witness such a discussion directly. It may also be used to answer the PCs' questions and improvise from there.

Glazi is the ideal suspect: he is generally unpleasant, in particular toward the district's women. For the high-strung inhabitants, it's not too much of a stretch to think that he may have actually harmed a woman. Imagination quickly builds the most extravagant bridges, even in the face of common sense or concrete proof.

"For sure, the one who did this had something against Edhene."

"But everyone in the district loved her! I know of no one who would've dared touch a single hair on her head!"

"That's for sure! You and I knew her, and we never could've..."

"That's it! Of course! The bastard must be a stranger!"

"A vagrant?"

"Or one of these Tarish beggars?"

"Like Glazi? That pig! I saw him a few days ago, lurking close to the washhouse. You should've heard the awful things he yelled at the girls, that pervert!"

"I saw him talk to Edhene once. With the face she was making, I'm sure he was being indecent to her!"

"He often hangs around the washhouse and the canal, doesn't he?"

"Yeah! That's right! And he wouldn't be put off by the sewers—the guy has no dignity!"

"What if... Did someone ask him if he'd seen Edhene?"

"I don't think so... It's actually been some time since we've seen him."

"I saw him, on the other side of the canal."

"What was he doing here?"

"Fleeing, for sure!"

"Because he's guilty!"

The riot

Glazi may not be particularly clever, but he is keenly aware of how widely disliked he is. A local Tarish is the ideal culprit, all the more so when he is an unemployed, alcoholic, foul-tempered beggar. He hastily gets rid of the items he picked up, but is caught doing so, and everyone discovers he had some of Edhene's personal belongings among his possessions: an embroidered purse, an ornate hairpin, etc. For the gathered mob, there is no doubt that he did it, and the people's wrath explodes, impossible to contain, almost resulting in a riot. Glazi is dragged to the marketplace, beaten, thoroughly humiliated, and then hanged from one of the trees.



The infection of the crowd

The fury of a mob is a sort of delirious, contagious suggestion, stronger in the heart of the mass than on its fringes. If Characters find themselves amid the crowd, they must make an Influence Test (see Book 1 – Universe, p.234), with a +2 modifier if they are in the middle of the crowd, and with no modifier if they are more distant. A failure means that the Characters passively let themselves be swept into the crowd.

Once they are in this state of fascination, the Characters must make a Passion Test. A failure means that their primitive lust for violence and blood awakens. They want to see and even maybe take an active part in Glazi's execution, shouting and cheering loudly.

At this stage, those who have kept a grip on themselves can try to drag the affected people out of the crowd to bring them back to their senses before they potentially become murderers.



Glazi's agony

By using this optional scene, the Leader will stress the crowd's savagery. With Glazi being accused of having raped Edhene, he must pay through the instrument of his sins. He begs, swears he is innocent, but his pleas fall on deaf ears. His rags are ripped away from him, then he is castrated under the bloodthirsty crowd's manic screams. The rope used to hang him is badly knotted, and the unfortunate beggar chokes and twitches. Some start throwing rocks at him, wanting to end his life themselves. Finally, they take clubs and beat him to death, his limp, naked, bloody form hanging from the tree, an atrocious emblem of its tormentors' madness. The corpse will remain there until late in the night, when the guards will finally dare to remove it and have the area cleaned, without knowing what to make of it all. Being a direct witness to this horrifying scene triggers a Complicated (14) Mental Resistance check.

The Leader should instill a feeling of powerlessness in the Players, who will certainly feel indignant, or even furious. The purpose of this scene is to show that horror is a part of human life, of the PCs' universe. It is then up to them to reestablish the truth, to show the madness and injustice that has been wrought. In contrast to this mindless mobbing, their actions will be all the more noteworthy and will favor progress through raising moral awareness. It is by accepting their powerlessness and by acting intelligently and with determination following this traumatic scene that they will become what is closest to heroes.



Is saving Glazi possible?

Counteracting a raging mob is very difficult and dangerous, as the people cannot be reasoned with, being much too immersed in powerful emotions to even hear arguments. However, if the Leader thinks that the execution scene would be too gruesome, these optional scenes can be used. Here are a few possible rescue scenarios:



In the nick of time. Scorcha doesn't like Glazi because of his foul temper, but she likes the ruthless rioters even less, so she runs to the PCs to warn them that Glazi must be saved. They will have to take the beggar through the alleyways of the Weavers' District in order to sneak past the crowd that will initially stick to the main routes. To make absolutely sure that he is not threatened, the safest course would be to put him into jail by persuading the guards—provided they're not too obtuse—that it will avoid a lynching and that it will leave the suspect in the hands of justice. However, Glazi might be afraid and try to run away at the risk of stumbling upon his tormentors.



Stalling and placating the crowd. The crowd has found Glazi, but the fierce, murderous rage has yet to reach its apex. A Character may stall by passing a Complicated (14) Relation (Diplomacy or Sweet Talk) roll. A persuasive orator may even convince the locals to deliver Glazi to justice with a Very Difficult (20) roll. Usage of the Litany Miracle (see Book 1 – Universe, p.260) will stall the crowd in the first Stanza (Standard (11) Miracles check), and placate it in the third Stanza (Difficult (17) Miracles check).



Armed opposition. It will take having the ear of people that are high-ranking and reactive enough to order the guard to take Glazi away from the crowd before he is killed. The chances of success depend a lot on the PCs' social status and network. At the Leader's discretion, the guard's intervention may turn the rioting into a violent street battle.

Ethical considerations

This slaughter (or aborted lynching), justified only by prejudices and hastily drawn conclusions, is a true matter of conscience and should lead to Guilt Tests for the PCs. This can raise questions about the notion of innocence and guilt. The residents of the Weavers' District were entirely ordinary. They have been faced with a tragedy that overwhelmed them. They felt powerless, and they reacted violently, dominated by their emotions, in an attempt to bring things back under control. What line is there between a criminal and an innocent?

This debate might also lead the group of PCs to question their own motives, and be considered a Confrontation (see Book 1 – Universe, p.228) of a particular kind: an inner fight to give meaning to what seems meaningless. Finding an answer to that question implies developing one's personal philosophy, which may warrant increasing one's Mental Resistance (see the optional rule "Increasing Mental Resistance" in Chapter 1, p.36).



Act 2 - Denial



In order to show the change over the Weavers' District after the tragedy, and the ensuing degradation, the scenario fast-forwards with the PCs being arrested because of underhanded, venomous slander. The purpose is to prevent the PCs from getting too far in their investigation from the start, and to create a stark change of setting while remaining in the same locale. Finally, this setback should give the group an additional motivation to shed light on the events: getting revenge against those who had them arrested!



The separation between Acts 1 and 2 was designed to correspond to a break between two game sessions. The Leader can end Act 1 with Edhene's funeral, and wrap up the session with the PCs' arrest, creating a cliffhanger. It is also possible to play Scene 1 of Act 2 at either the beginning or the end of a session.

The how and why of the arrest

This insert details what happened at the end of Act 1, and gives the reason the PCs were arrested. Leads that the PCs may investigate are provided in Act 2, Scene 2: Reestablishing the truth.

⊕ **Aïndrid was growing worried.**

Aïndrid wanted to make sure that the next drug delivery would take place without any meddlesome interference, so she decided to take the PCs out of the equation for a few days. To that end, she hatched a plan to have them arrested.

⊕ **Anonymous letter.**

Aïndrid disguised her handwriting to make an anonymous letter reporting the PCs as smugglers of improved Gwilmine. The letter goes on to accuse them of having attempted to sell some to Edhene, and implies that the PCs may have killed her. Should the PCs' backstory feature illegal activities, other accusations (truthful ones, this time) may be added.

⊕ **Falsified evidence.**

Raseron, a client of Aïndrid, a man of no particular importance, was manipulated under the influence of the Suggestion. He slipped some of the drug into the PCs' personal belongings.

⊕ **Search.**

The guard, informed by the anonymous letter, discovered the drug and proceeded to arrest the PCs.

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While the PCs are behind bars, several things conspire to make the situation even worse in the Weavers' District: an important delivery of improved Gwilmine takes place; the Diwelank starts to hunt and kill; the epidemic of Chimeric Fever begins; the Bogeyman appears.

~ Scene 1: Arrested out of the blue ~



Guillaume & Cyrille Aufaure - RISE - 9 - Recovery

The Leader can play out this scene in two ways: as narrative fast-forwarding, or as a dreamlike remembrance.



Narrative fast-forwarding

The arrest scene starts narratively, depicting an event from the past that progressively draws a clearer picture of the situation. The idea is to introduce the temporal break by mentioning the pivotal event: the funeral during which the whole community gathered around Edhene's mother, thus generating the last step that allowed the Bogeyman to come into existence.

Here is a possible description:



Edhene's mother in prayer.

"Outside, it has been raining relentlessly for six days. Six days during which you were unable to do anything. Edhene's funeral took place. It was a very intense moment during which the Weavers' District united around Iverna, a tragic, living figure of maternal suffering. She had now lost two of her children in awful circumstances. The grave's earth had been turned into viscous mud. The locals' faces were frozen in pain, their rain-swept tears nourishing the graveyard's ground with the anguish of a community gathered in solidarity."

The Leader can go on with the narration in this fashion: "She kept repeating between sobs: 'It shouldn't have been. Edhene should be alive. She should have been spared this dreadful fate.'

There was nothing to be done. Time was still. Everything was suspended.

You have been imprisoned.

For six days, you have been kept in the city's jails. The walls are dark, thick, and damp. There are only two or three of you in each cell, but after shouting yourself hoarse through the door, you were able to understand that the others were there as well, chained up just like yourself. The ground is covered with a thin layer of rotting straw, and what little light you get filters through a tiny window high above. It is cold, and you're not surprised to hear other prisoners go through worrying coughing fits. Some of them seem to be at death's door.

No one even told you what you're doing here."

Dreamlike remembrance



The Leader may prefer to use a more dynamic narrative device instead, similar to "Loch Varn" (see Book 0 – Prologue, p.34), a scenario in which the PCs experience a confusingly vivid dream. This makes it possible to play out the arrest without the problem of possible unexpected actions from the Players, such as fighting the guard, running away, killing people, using Miracles, or any other actions that would derail the scenario.

Here are a few components to depict the scene:

Funeral.

The burial takes place outside of the district, beyond the vacant lots. It's raining. The whole district seems to have gathered to share the same pain.

The way back.

The procession is silent, and it comes as a shock when the guards rush to surround the PCs, shouting at them to surrender without resistance.

Resistance.

The guards will answer no questions and will not be afraid of fighting (their characteristics are indicated in the nearby insert). They demand that the PCs lay down their weapons (if they carry any) and follow them. If the PCs try to fight their way out, the Leader can bring up the full force of the NPCs to wound, knock out, or kill the PCs. Since this is a dream, do not be afraid to go overboard.


Flight.


If the PCs manage to retreat through the district, a chase begins and the sequence takes on a truly dreamlike, nightmarish appearance. The alleys turn into dead ends, the mud becomes quicksand, etc.

When it finally becomes obvious that all of this can only be a horrible dream, the PCs are startled awake in their cell.


Characteristics of the guards


The members of the watch are well-trained, disciplined men. As reflected by their statistics, they have also improved their Defense and Speed, being familiar as they are with uncooperative rabble.


 **Ways:** Combativeness: 4. Creativity: 1. Empathy: 3. Reason: 4. Conviction: 3.

 **Skills:** Close Combat: 5 (Polearms: 6, Swords: 7). Craft: 3. Feats: 4. Perception: 5 (Alertness: 7). Relation: 4. Shooting & Throwing: 5 (Bows: 6). Stealth: 4.

 **Character Traits:** Disciplined / Gruff.

 **Sanity:** Mental Resistance: 8.

 **zCombat:** Attack: 9 (Spear: 10, Sword: 11, Bow: 10). Defense: 13. Speed: 8. Potential: 1. Damage: 1 (dagger), 2 (bow), 3 (longsword, spear). Protection: 2 (Studded leather coat), +1 (shield).

 **Health:** 19. Stamina: 10



The birth of a collective nightmare



Delphine Bois -Of Men and Obscurities
- 16 - Dreams

The birth of a Bogeyman is one of this scenario's narrative options; using it will make the story more occult-oriented. Any person who has suffered the psychological influence of the Weavers' District through previous Tests—whether they were affected by melancholy or by the murderous fascination of the bloodthirsty mob—is hounded by strange dreams. This also applies by default to any Mediums or Eiseach. Unwittingly, the PCs are contributing, through their emotional investment in the events, to the Bogeyman's emergence. The nightmarish experience results in a Standard (11) Mental Resistance check, with a failure making the victims' nervous state even worse. Most of the inhabitants of the Weavers' District suffer through the same experience, and are likewise deeply affected on a psychological level. All those who fail the Mental Resistance check will add to the Bogeyman's power.

A Tidy Room.



The dreams are muddled, nightmarish, at the same time deeply disturbing and confused. Among the images that come back are: Edhene's funeral, the gathered community, a feeling of crushing moral distress; Glazi's death, the mob chasing him in a frenzied lust for blood and pain; the house of the Mears, viewed from the window of Edhene's room where her mother cries, carefully maintaining the tidy room.

These visions are the PCs' first contact with the tidy room clue. Other events and testimonies will come to strengthen the connection so that the PCs do not neglect the importance of this clue. However, its first appearance should be puzzling.



Waiting in jail

Any escape attempt is doomed to fail. If a Player is really bent on making one extravagant attempt after the other, the Leader may say: "It is now your tenth escape attempt. The first nine were crushing failures, and your ankle now itches painfully where the iron meets the skin. The jailer has understood that you're not the quiet type, and has made sure that your chains are strong and tightly fastened to the wall."

All the Players can do is speculate and examine their situation. Why are they here? Who had the guards arrest them? What is afoot?



Scene 2: Reestablishing the truth



Guillaume & Cyrille Aufaure - RISE
- 3 - Another step to our destiny

On their ninth day of imprisonment, the PCs, considerably weakened by their stay, are taken out of their cells. Without a word of explanation, though under close watch, they are taken to a room where they are ordered to wash with buckets of cold but clean water. Beards have grown and faces are haggard. Once they are in a relatively suitable state, they are taken to a magistrate's office.

The prisoners' physical condition

The prisoners must make a Stamina check each to gauge their condition at the end of their stay in jail. The higher the Threshold they reach, the less painful the consequences will be.



Passing a Very Difficult (20) check means no damage and a good condition.



Passing a Difficult (17) check results in fatigue due to deprivations, but nothing too serious (-1 to every roll).



- ✦ Passing a Difficult (14) check means that the PC is very tired and probably suffers from a nasty cough (-2 to every roll).
- ✦ Below that, the prisoner has fallen ill: the PC has caught a Catarrh (see Book 1 – Universe, p.242) and suffers a -3 penalty to all rolls until medical care has been given.

A conversation with a very interested magistrate

The Leader decides who takes care of the PCs in accordance with the atmosphere and the game options picked (see the introduction to the scenario):

- ✦ Mercenary investigators will be received by their client, Trenmor Mac Daere, or by his aide, Mandica Octar. Both are influential personalities in the town. This is an opportunity for the first debriefing regarding their investigations in the Weavers' District.

- ✦ Otherwise, the PCs will meet a magistrate: Muiredach Yago, 34 years old, sporting a neatly trimmed beard, a proud stance, and brown eyes. Despite the large scholarly robe he wears, he seems to enjoy regular physical activity, perhaps riding or fencing. A married man and a father, he is ambitious and believes that resolving the current crisis and dutifully carrying out his functions may take him a few rungs higher in the local hierarchy, if not more. The PCs' host offers them a seat. To begin, he will ask them how they are doing, and whether they suffered unduly during their imprisonment. Considering the standards of Tri-Kazelian prisons, the PCs were treated well, which is also the opinion of the magistrate (or client), who may point it out.



-A Tidy Room-

The accusations revealed

Once he is done with this introduction, he will get to the heart of the matter: the PCs were accused of various criminal activities through an anonymous letter.

- ✦ The letter accuses the PCs of being drug traffickers. The author claims they have seen the PCs trying to sell some, in particular to young Edhene, who has since been found dead. The letter hints at the idea that the PCs, these armed strangers with an unclear past and suspicious activities, might be the murderers.
- ✦ The watch searched the PCs' personal belongings and discovered Gwilmine among them.
- ✦ If the PCs had a part in suspicious activities that Aïndrid may have learned about in some way or another, these are also mentioned in the letter and the PCs will have to provide an explanation. Have they been outlaws? Did they attack guards? Did they run away from religious justice? As an example, one of the possible conclusions of the scenario “A Life Choice” (see Book 2 – Travels) leaves the PCs at odds with the Demorthèn of Taol-Kaer. Likewise, a tense relationship with the knight Argan (a major NPC of Book 3 – Dearg) might also lead to a poor reputation with the Hilderin order.

The magistrate will mention that drug trafficking without aggravating circumstances is usually dealt with in a simple, expeditious manner: a fine and banishment. Regarding the latter penalty, the convicts are first pilloried, then shamefully paraded through the town's main streets, so that everyone may identify them, and finally expelled at the city's gates. By law, trying to come back to a place one has been banished from is punishable by death.

What if the PCs are outlaws?

The Tri-Kazelian society is harsh, and it is important that the Players understand they are heading straight for premature death if they repeatedly act rashly and flout the law. The purpose of this insert is to give the Leader food for thought to gauge the situation:

- ✦ Most often, the sentences are, from the lowest to the highest: fine, pillory, whipping, banishment, death. Fines and confiscations come in addition to every sentence, their purpose being to finance the judicial system. Imprisonment is a sentence only in Gwidre. Elsewhere, it is solely used to keep a suspect or convict safely behind bars as judgment is pending. Forced labor is used in Reizh and in the dukedom of Dûlan. Slavery is a sentence in traditional law, mainly Osag.
- ✦ The PCs' responsibility will be evaluated individually; the judges will not send a whole group to the gallows because of the faults of one of them. If a single PC has been regularly taking risks, swindling, pillaging, committing arson, stealing, killing, etc. that PC will be the only one to pay the price. However, companions who have done nothing to stop the criminal might have to pay a fine as compensation, or be forced to accept an arrangement through which they would help the law.
- ✦ There is a distinction between an occasional delinquent and a regular offender who makes a living from criminal activities. A regular offender, no matter their domain (murderer, thief, robber, brigand, etc.) is in for banishment or hanging.
- ✦ For an occasional, minor delinquent, there is hope for an arrangement with the magistrate: help to “bust” the Canal Gang and stop the improved Gwilmine trafficking in exchange for a pardon.

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Hypotheses and deductions

In the end, and probably following vehement denials from the PCs regarding the drug trafficking, the magistrate will admit that this whole story does seem curious, considering the succession of extraordinary events in the district. He will lend an attentive ear to whatever the PCs have to say or suggest. There are three main types of motivations that may encourage them to press on:

- ⊕ **Innocence.** They may want to prove their innocence by identifying the true drug traffickers. The magistrate may “amicably” push them in this direction. Indeed, even though the evidence against the PCs is flimsy, it still exists: the drug was well and truly found among their personal belongings. They will therefore be offered a deal: use their status as civilians and strangers to dismantle the Gwilmine traffic. In exchange, their file will be sent to the archives and conveniently forgotten. In that regard, it may also be that the PCs have other skeletons in their closets and thus an interest in keeping the eye of the law away from them.
- ⊕ **Vengeance.** Vengeance against those who framed them can be an effective additional motivation.
- ⊕ **Truth.** Some PCs may primarily be motivated by a desire to get to the bottom of the case of Edhene's murder.

It may be that, at this stage, the PCs already have a rather clear idea of the situation in the district, and that they have deduced or guessed most of the truth. However, considering how rapidly the events transpired, they are probably missing proof to be entirely sure.

What if the PCs definitely don't want to cooperate?

A vehement, aggressive, negative, or hostile reaction from the PCs will earn them a trip back to their cells. After one or two days, they will be brought back to the magistrate. His patience will start to wear thin, and he offers them a simple choice: either the PCs cooperate and help him arrest the Canal Gang and find the true culprits of Edhene's murder, or they will be hanged for homicide and drug trafficking.

What took place the last few days...

The magistrate has some additional news for the PCs: since their arrest, the Weavers' District has experienced other events of a very strange, disquieting nature. Here is what the magistrate can reveal, along with the source of the problem, at the Leader's discretion:

⊕ **Nocturnal murders.** Two beggars and a prostitute disappeared. Their bodies were found in the sewers.

⊕ **Visions.** Several people claim to have seen Edhene walking in the streets. Some of them had serious accidents when they tried to follow her. Cases of Chimerical Fever have been reported. The two events may be connected.

⊕ **Mysticism.** Edhene has become the object of a veritable cult. It is said that sick people who have come to pray in her bedroom have been cured.

What actually happened?

Below, a reminder of the causes of the district's various extraordinary events:

⊕ **Nocturnal murders.**

The savage murders are the work of the Diwelank (or Alan Fildh as a demented killer, if the creature was removed from the scenario).

⊕ **Visions.**

These visions are caused by the Bogeyman (or by a case of mass hysteria combined with the Chimerical Fever epidemic, if the Leader wishes a rational explanation).

⊕ **Mysticism.**

The cures are either due to true miracles related to the Bogeyman, or to a placebo effect.

Glazi's testimony



Improved Gwilmine.

If the PCs have managed to rescue Glazi, his testimony was registered by the guard, who took note of a few interesting things. Being Tarish, he had talked with members of his people's caravans, which sometimes stay in the Weavers' District. According to him, they are the ones to supply the Canal Gang with the drug. There is said to be someone pulling the network's strings from another town. If the PCs have managed to secure this information, the Leader can hand them the corresponding clue card: "Improved Gwilmine."

What now?

Should the PCs manage to work things out with the magistrate, he will warn them that the town's authorities are considering quarantining the Weavers' District to prevent the propagation of Chimerical Fever, in addition to whatever phenomena are taking place there.

If the PCs prove reluctant and unaware of the situation they are in, the Leader can consult the insert "What if the PCs definitely don't want to cooperate?"

Tracking down the libelers

The anonymous letter

It is impossible for the Players to know who created the anonymous letter, which was actually written by Aïndrid. Examining it might still lead to a few educated guesses with a Complicated (14) Erudition (Languages) roll:

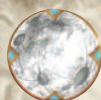
- ❖ The author has purposefully written awkwardly to make the handwriting unrecognizable.
- ❖ Some spelling mistakes and syntax errors seem artificial.
- ❖ The handwriting is neutral: neither feminine nor masculine.
- ❖ The argumentative construction is craftier than it seems at first sight.

The drug in the PCs' personal belongings

A careful interrogation of the Maers—or of whoever houses the PCs—will reveal that a visitor paid a call shortly before the guards. He was the only slightly unusual visitor who came, but he is above all suspicion. He is a weaver, Raseron, a man in his forties. He has come to the town to work and make additional money for his family who have remained in the countryside and badly need support after a bad crop. Here is what the PCs can find out about him:

- ❖ Raseron is suffering from Chimerical Fever (see Book 1 – Universe, p.242). When the PCs find him, he is dying or already dead, his still-warm body lying in his bed, in the middle of a very messy room. Touching the body, as well as searching the room, may cause a contagion.
- ❖ Suffering wavering health, he was often sick, and endured severe lower back pain. As a result, he frequently was in no condition to work, so his wages were very irregular. Therefore, to compensate, he worked a lot of extra hours, and in order to make it through the day, he had gotten into the habit of taking Gwilmine. The Canal Gang supplied him, of course.
- ❖ Still, he had a good reputation, and no one thought him able to defame or even lie.
- ❖ He used to go to Aïndrid, a fact that she may confirm or mention to the PCs if they ask her for information. According to her, he was an ordinary, perfectly respectable man who used her services only because he couldn't see his wife regularly enough.
- ❖ Raseron was actually influenced by Suggestion, which led him to slip the drug into the PCs' personal belongings, something he wasn't even aware of.

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Edhene's murderous appearances

Using these optional scenes will stress the supernatural dimension of Edhene's appearances.

It all started with some rumors saying that, at night, you can see a “girl looking strangely like Edhene.” It was dismissed as a case of mistaken identity. Then, children claimed to have seen her, but since kids say the darnedest things, it didn't raise much attention. Then a few drunkards chimed in, but they couldn't be trusted, and it may as well have been autosuggestion, unless they simply told the tale to make themselves more interesting.

Then the events escalated: Midir, a hot-headed young artisan, and intermittent member of the Canal Gang, ran after her to understand what this was all about. His companions called him, but he had disappeared. First, they thought he was messing with them, but he was truly nowhere to be found... until the following night when his emaciated body was discovered. He seemed to have died of cold and fright, his limbs stiff and his face contorted in an expression of mute horror.



Scene 3: A mystical nightmare



Guillaume & Cyrille Aufaure - RISE - 2 - Save me

This scene takes place right after the PCs have been released, and will start with their taking stock of the changes that took place in the Weavers' District during their absence. By default, their personal belongings have been kept by the Maers, who didn't know what else to do with them. Greine stored them in a chest in the attic, considering that they could decide what to do with them once things had settled down a bit. At least, they would not be stolen or damaged in the meantime.

Even with a warning beforehand, the PCs' first sight of the Weavers' District comes as a shock. The weather is gray and foggy, and the days are so dark that one can only wonder whether the sun actually still shines, and if the time of Saoghal-Dheir has not come.

The whole district seems under the effect of a strange, widely spontaneous religious fervor, as if their spiritual awakening had an intuitive, essentially emotional foundation. The ordinary, well-liked girl has become a saint. People forget about her carelessness, the way she used to go out alone, and her ingenuousness, which bordered on cluelessness in a world as dangerous as Tri-Kazel. Her childhood mistakes are rewritten or revised by her mother who has cleaned and sorted her room. It's a much too tidy room. It is not possible that a real teenage girl could live here, but for the idealized figure she has become, however, it fits like a glove. Flowers and candles have been placed where the shawl was found and near the sewer entrance where her body was dragged. In a short time, they have become makeshift shrines.



Saint Edhene

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This optional scene develops the supernatural influence connected to Edhene's room. The sanctification of the recently deceased can be taken up a notch by giving her former bedroom the properties of an Object of Power, and the status of a sacred relic. The Bogeyman is an entity reacting to the desires of the living, and since Edhene passes for a saint, she must be capable of "miracles."



Edhene's mother in prayer. An elderly neighbor, Nollick of Nectan, a former merchant who had wedded a woman of the district and settled there, has come to pray with

Iverna, Edhene's mother. The Gwidrite is one of the few local adepts of the One. For years, he had been suffering from the aftermath of a bad fracture that made walking a painful effort. After remaining for a while praying for the rest of Edhene's pure, innocent soul, he felt the pain fade. He had healed! News of this event quickly spread through the district.



The miracle of Edhene's room is equivalent to a Miraculous Healing (see Book 1 – Universe, p.260). Every day, the prayers of Edhene's mother and her neighbors who come to pay their respects feed the Bogeyman with Exaltation and allow it to randomly heal one or several people who come to the place. The Bogeyman of the Tidy Room is capable of performing such a Miracle up to the fourth Stanza. The Tidy Room functions like a relic, each hour of prayer gives the Bogeyman 3 Exaltation points.



The miracles of the Tidy Room can result in ironic situations. PCs who have come back from prison sick may be healed even though they are intent on hunting down the Bogeyman wreaking havoc in the streets. They will not know that what healed them is the same thing they may die fighting! Understanding this will be a disturbing revelation, blurring the borders between the notions of Good and Evil. There is horror in ambivalence and ambiguity, in the impossibility of relying on clear-cut categories.

The Leader can play with the constant proximity of innocence and guilt, of good deeds and mischief, in order to sow confusion and doubt. Aindrid and Athelsan will be taken aback and very eager to understand the nature of an entity that is able to both kill and heal.





The Tidy Room. The PCs should quickly learn about the mystery of the Tidy Room. The Leader can then offer a different viewpoint on this major clue. Greine is the only adult of the Maer house to keep a relatively clear head about the situation. She looks very unfavorably upon this atmosphere of nightmare and mysticism. In her opinion, keeping the personal belongings of a departed and practically worshiping her is unhealthy. Even though she is not a staunch believer, Greine knows the gist of the traditional belief: according to the Demorthèn, the dead must leave, and their energy return to the Life-Tree, Corahn-Rin. What is happening here is unnatural! Isolated as she is, she hopes that the PCs will be able to talk some sense into the others.



~ Scene 4: The epidemic ~

For all the nocturnal street scenes in the Bogeyman-haunted district, the Leader can loop through these three tracks:



Delphine Bois – Of Men and Obscurities – 7 – Interlude – Different Paths; 8 – The Revelation; 9 – Interlude – The Dark Hours.



A feeling of tense melancholy has settled. A few people start getting sick, then others, then a whole family, neighbors, and soon, the whole district is quarantined. Meanwhile, the streets have definitely become unsafe, and children are closely watched.

The degraded environment metaphorically reflects the emotional and psychological damage that the Maers have suffered. As for the PCs, plenty of leads and opportunities for action appear, getting increasingly stranger until the whole case turns into a demented waking nightmare:

❖ The Tidy Room performing miracles.

❖ The Bogeyman instilling nightmarish visions.

❖ The Diwelank preying on the locals.

❖ The epidemic of Chimerical Fever.

❖ The Gwilmine addicts going through spells of murderous rage.

❖ Mass hysteria.

It's like Limbo itself has poured into the Weavers' District!

Cases of Chimerical Fever (see Book 1 – Universe, p.242) have become rampant through the district, giving birth to terrifying nightmares and visions when awake. Rumor has it

that the epidemic is a vengeful curse from the Tarish lynched (or almost lynched) by the crowd. Obviously, Glazi has (or had) no such power, such abilities being exclusive to the women of his people (see Book 2 – Travels, p.180). Only a Tarish or a learned occultist (Complicated (14) Occultism (Esotericism) check) can know about that.

The generalized panic and anguish resulting from the epidemic grants all the more strength to the Bogeyman. Tensions are rising throughout the district, and the atmosphere becomes increasingly muddled and dreamlike.

As they poke their noses here and there, the PCs will most likely contract Chimerical Fever as well. This will make the investigation all the harder, as they will have to carry on without ever being sure of their perceptions: slippery shadows, footsteps, the draining feeling of constant watchfulness...

-A Tidy Room-

What is known of epidemics?

In the peninsula of Tri-Kazel, the notion of “germs” is still a budding theory, debated by the most educated Magientists and Reizhite physicians. As a result, the measures taken during epidemics are intuitive and sometimes counterproductive. Even in the case of a relatively benign sickness, daily life can be brought to a near standstill.

Quarantine.

The district is closed off, and it is impossible to legally leave it as long as the illness has not subsided. This situation will force the PCs to solve the problem, one way or another, and by themselves, since no help can be expected from outside.

Isolation.

People know that any contact with the sick must be avoided, and the best way to do so is not to go out. The streets are almost empty, and people venture outside only when it is strictly necessary. They make do with what food they have stored, and keep themselves busy with handiwork, praying, or singing, all in a dull, queasy atmosphere of anxiety. Even then, Characters must make a Luck roll, with a result of 1 or 2 meaning that they have been contaminated.

Nihilism.

On the other side of the spectrum, epidemics also stimulate a very carefree behavior. The libertines, the outcasts, the desperate gather in taverns to get drunk, bet, gamble, frequent prostitutes, fight, and shake some chaos into the unbearable feeling of generalized stillness. If they must die, they may as well live intensely to the end! Such Characters will be contaminated on a result of 5 or less on the Luck roll.

The district is therefore split between two moods: an austere one and a totally excessive one, both equally morbid.



Can the PCs fight the epidemic?



Guillaume & Cyrille Aufaure - RISE - 8 - The hunt

The source of the epidemic of Chimerical Fever can be an infestation of Cnaighs (see Book 2 – Travels, p.185). This spectacular, violent option is a good way to push forward a group that is confused, lost, and starting to lose motivation. The feeling of regaining some measure of control over the situation through action is an emergency solution that generally proves effective. In addition, it will bring the PCs closer to Athelsan Oxendre.

It all begins with a few sewer workers encountering some of the beasts, and mistaking them for big rats. One of the men gets bitten and is contaminated. They all make it back to the surface, and since there is nothing out of the ordinary to the incident, it doesn't attract much attention besides that of Athelsan Oxendre. The contagion starts, and as long as its source is not eradicated, there is no hope for the illness to stop spreading. The occultist reaches the conclusion that the monstrous creatures must be dealt with.

The PCs will have to climb down into the sewers and find the “nest” of these Feondas. It looks like a spider cocoon wrapped into the roots of an old millennial tree—it was cut down many years ago, but since its stump went too deep, it could not be pulled out. Due to the difficult terrain, the PCs are in for a hard fight, but the nest itself can easily be burned with the help of a substance such as oil. 5 Cnaighs for each PC should be enough to create tactical problems: the creatures climb on their opponents' backs, go for the neck, biting and scratching unprotected areas.

In the end, the PCs will see that although they triumphed over a serious peril, they still have not put an end to the major problem: the Bogeyman.



Can the PCs sneak out of the Weavers' District?



**Linkin Park – The Hunting Party (Acapellas + Instrumentals)
– 16 – Wastelands (Instrumental).**

This track may be used to stress the intensity of a fleeing or fighting scene.

Enterprising, rash, or amoral PCs might be tempted to solve all of their problems in one go by sneaking out of the quarantined district. Of course, for all intents and purposes, this equates to abandoning the scenario, which is an entirely valid choice that the Leader can actually use to move things forward.

Sometimes, to survive an apparently desperate situation, fleeing can be an appropriate response. If the Leader feels that the Players are going for this option, it should not be discouraged. On the contrary, the Leader should make the escape attempt all the more justified by depicting the district's condition as positively disastrous and rushing toward an apocalyptic conclusion. The sickness progresses, brutal murders are on the rise, and neither the guards nor the PCs seem capable of halting this propagation of destruction and chaos. By taking things from this angle, the Leader can use the escape as a dramatic stake: will the PCs manage to make it out in time?

Here are several aspects to consider regarding this evolution of the story:

- ❖ The roofs are not a viable option for two reasons. First, they are slippery, and the risk of making a deadly fall is therefore significant, leading to Complicated (14) Feats (Acrobatics) checks. Second, there are inner walls that result from the town's progressive enlargement, and which separate the districts. These walls are closely watched by guards on the lookout for anyone that may try to slip out and contaminate the rest of the city where their families live.
- ❖ Things will prove no less hard on the canal. The bridges and the main outlets are closely watched by unsympathetic guards. They stand by in groups of at least two, most often three or four, sometimes more, and always within earshot of their colleagues. Other inhabitants of the district have already made the attempt, more or less successfully, so the guards are particularly alert. Their orders are clear: escapists must be stopped by any means necessary, and they will not hesitate to shoot down anyone who puts up a fight.

Here are the results of various Thresholds in Stealth (Furtiveness) to escape notice:

- ⊕ **Complicated (14):**
The PC manages to sneak past the first guards, but is spotted halfway through and caught.
- ⊕ **Difficult (17):**
The PC barely made it through the canal, but is spotted right afterward. A good sprint (Difficult (17) Feats (Running) check) can still get the escapist out of here.
- ⊕ **Very Difficult (20):**
The PC has managed to make it through the guards on the district's border, those who watch the bridges, and those who patrol the outskirts; all of this without being spotted. The PC made it!

If even only one member of the group fails the check, this raises the alarm on the whole party. Therefore, unless all of the PCs are highly specialized, it is very unlikely that they will be able to pull this off without a plan and accomplices.

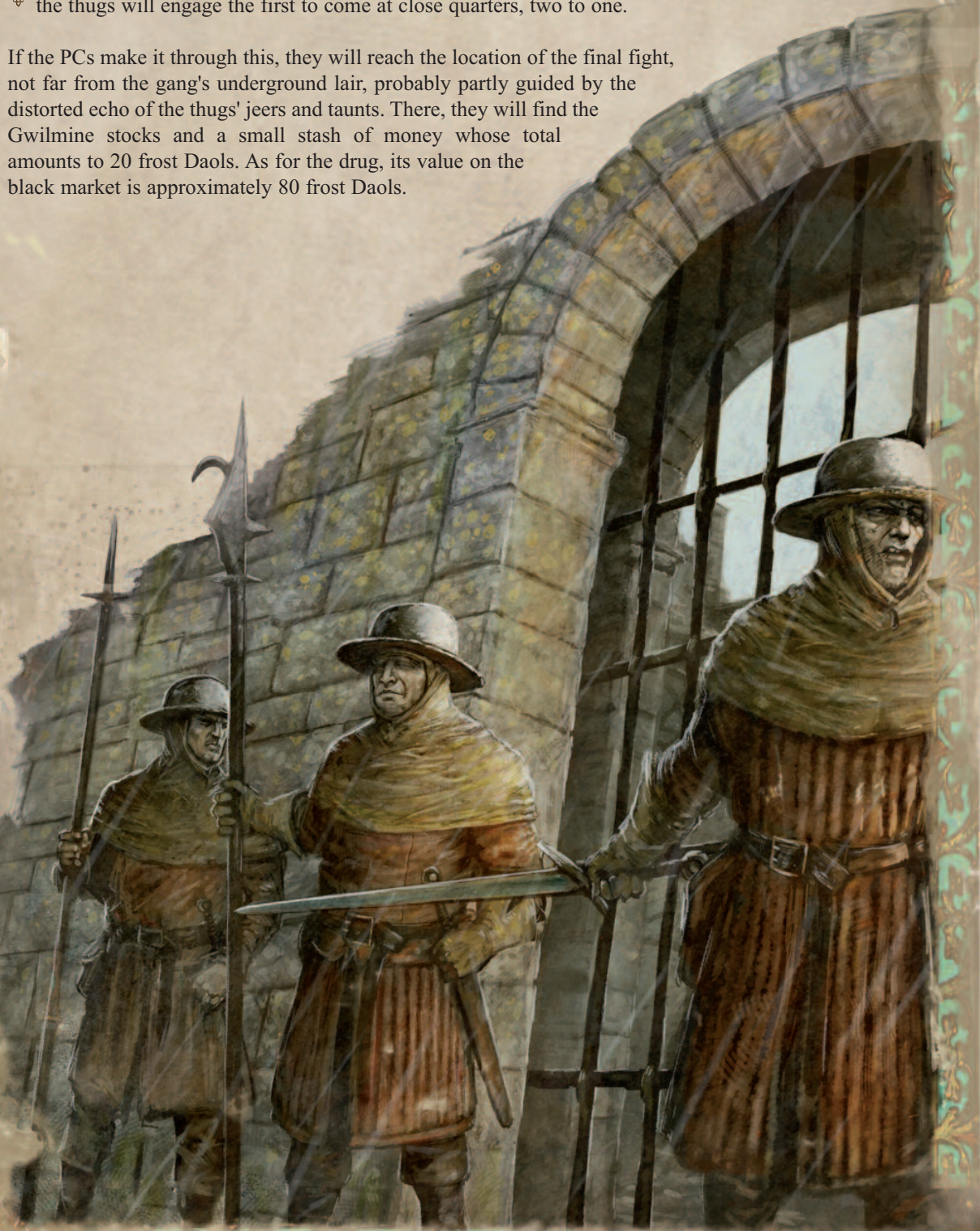
Members of the Canal Gang will easily become aware of the PCs' intentions, their comings and goings, and their attempts. At the Leader's discretion, gang members will come to the PCs before or after an escape attempt to offer to help them leave the district for a "reasonable fee." The offer is credible: the thugs have contacts among the guards through which they can know the schedule of the watch teams, and make sure that some of them will be particularly distracted or easily lured by a diversion.

Accepting such an offer means putting oneself in great peril. Kalber, the gang Leader, has a paranoid streak, and suspects that the PCs' intent is to double cross him. He will therefore try to lead them into a trap in the sewers.

His plan is thus:

- ❖ The group will have to walk in a single file through narrow tunnels his men know well.
- ❖ The members of the gang guiding the PCs will make sure to be ahead and to be the ones holding the torches. At the right moment, they will douse them, so that the scene will only be lit by the PCs' own light sources. A successful Complicated (14) Perception (Alertness) check then means that the PC hears the clicking of a crossbow and reacts soon enough to dive to the ground, leap for cover or in the water, or even charge. In short, any PC who has passed the check has but one action before the projectiles come.
- ❖ The thugs step out of nearby tunnels. Some of them carry crossbows, the purpose being to quickly shoot the PCs in the head and in the back, especially any who carry a light.
- ❖ Their tactic is then to step back to reload the crossbows, luring the PCs to a room where the thugs will engage the first to come at close quarters, two to one.

If the PCs make it through this, they will reach the location of the final fight, not far from the gang's underground lair, probably partly guided by the distorted echo of the thugs' jeers and taunts. There, they will find the Gwilmine stocks and a small stash of money whose total amounts to 20 frost Daols. As for the drug, its value on the black market is approximately 80 frost Daols.



Scene 5: Collaborating with Athelsan Oxcendre

Even if the PCs did not develop any particular relationship with Athelsan Oxcendre, he will make contact with them, considering that they are probably the most able to solve certain problems. For some time, he has been struggling with his conscience about what he should do regarding his thirst for research and the criminal activities of the Circle of Emergence. This is precisely why he doesn't want to ask Aïndrid for help regarding the preoccupations that haunt him. Here is what he may come to the PCs for:

⌘ Hunting the Diwelank.

If the creature hasn't been neutralized yet, now is the time. With information from the one who studied and named it, it will be all the easier.

⌘ Hunting the Cnaighs.

This optional extermination can be proposed by the occultist. (See the insert on p.118, "Can the PCs fight the epidemic?")

⌘ Hunting the Bogeyman.

The phenomena that take place throughout the district remind him of a few things he has read about. He will ask the PCs to come to his house to discuss this and show them his books (see Act 3, Scene 1 and Chapter 4 – Bestiary).



Athelsan Oxcendre's chest. The contents of the occultist's books should be very useful in shedding light on the Bogeyman mystery. However, Athelsan will only reveal those related to the subjects at hand. He will tell them nothing of the Circle of Emergence or Aïndrid, and if the PCs prove too inquisitive, he will reply with "We all have our secrets."

What if the PCs rob Athelsan Oxcendre?

Athelsan Oxcendre's journal, which can be found in his chest along with the books on occultism, includes mentions of the Circle of Emergence and Aïndrid. The Leader might be in a delicate situation should the PCs learn about this before Aïndrid's departure.

Should the PCs search the chest, the Leader can consider that the journal is hidden in another, more secretive location. The information contained in the journal should only be revealed after the fire in Act 3, Scene 3. Page 128 details the revelations contained in Athelsan's journal, as well as the various ways to find it.





Act 3 - Acceptance



By the end of Act 2, the PCs should have dealt with most of the secondary objectives:

- Establishing the existence of the Diwelank and neutralizing it.
- Eliminating the Cnaighs, and thus the root of the epidemic (if this option was used).
- Identifying and dealing with Edhene's murderer(s).
- Pinpointing the source of the drug traffic.

There should now remain one final, crucial knot to untie: the unbearable loss that gave birth to the Bogeyman. During the course of this venture, the PCs will also learn key information about the Circle of Emergence.

Scene 1: Investigating the Bogeyman



The effective destruction of the Bogeyman will probably be accomplished very differently depending on the group. Some will want to tackle the apparitions in the streets, and will quickly see how persistent the phenomenon is. Others will act as clever, methodical investigators, searching for occult clues.

Investigating the Bogeyman will require the PCs to collate several clues that they may have already found, with or without help. Should the Players not connect these clues by themselves, Athelsan will direct their attention to four of the most significant ones (represented as clue cards). The Leader can gather the four cards and lay them in front of the Players while summing up the following information:



Edhene's shawl.

If the PCs have a medium among them, they will be certain that this item is emotionally charged but not tied to a ghost. Athelsan can go through his own spiritualistic experiments and confirm this fact: they are not dealing with a ghost, that is, someone dead clinging desperately to the world of the living.



The Tidy Room.

Considered unnatural from a Demorthèn's point of view, it is the location of miracles associated with Edhene's quasi-beatification.



Edhene's mother in prayer.

Since Edhene's death, her mother has practically become her priestess, guiding the pilgrims who come to her bedroom to pray for cures. She has united the whole community around her pain and the idealization of her daughter. This spontaneous gathering is dominated by primal, powerful emotions.



Athelsan Oxcendre's chest.

It contains several books on strange creatures (see Chapter 4 – Bestiary). They will provide priceless aid to guide the PCs' reasoning and may even make it possible to identify the Bogeyman.

Scene 2: Fighting the Bogeyman



In the streets

The entity feeds on the emotions arising from Edhene's death as well as those that resulted from the lynching. Its nature is to reveal the inner being of people, to expose their desires and torments. It attracts, disturbs, inflicts the sight of one's own crimes, and sometimes carries away whoever follows it, leaving the person dead or mad the day after. This latter aspect will make the entity's interventions much more pressing, disquieting, and spectacular.

Should a PC try to follow a mesmerized person or the Bogeyman itself through the streets, the PC will seem to enter a strange mist before being subjected to horrifying visions the Character will only keep muddled memories of.



Putting an end to the Tidy Room



Guillaume & Cyrille Aufaure - RISE - 2 - Save me

Yoko Kanno - The Vision of Escaflowne OST 3 - 2 - Arcadia

At first, the music will echo the ordeals related to the Tidy Room with the song from RISE. Once the decision has been made to take apart, unravel, and bring down the Room to emancipate everyone, a second song can be used: Arcadia. It starts like a soft complaint and continues with Yoko Kanno's singing, which can accompany the description of the Room's destruction, with the furniture burned in the courtyard and the protagonists gathered in a fervor full of seriousness.

Studying books on occultism will probably lead to the conclusion that the most expeditious solution would be the destruction of everything inside the Tidy

Room. However, the Room is only the symbol of an unbearable loss, of the refusal to accept the death of one's child. Taking it apart, or even burning down the furniture, extracting Flux from it, or donating it to charity is mainly a way to express the decision to move on. Hence, it is fundamental to convince the Maer family as a whole of this decision.

The worst-case scenario is that the PCs have made many blunders and are ill-regarded by several of the locals. It will be no easy task to mend things, explain what is occurring, and show that if nothing is done, terrible things will keep happening. However, convincing the Maers is of crucial importance. Otherwise, the apparitions will keep sowing horror, leading some to exile, while the prayers to Edhene will keep growing, giving more strength to the Bogeyman. The thing will become more and more powerful, and its range of action may expand beyond the Weavers' District.

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Convincing the Maers

To win the Maers over, the PCs will have to find answers to several questions that plague the family and will be asked by Edhene's mother:

- ❖ "How can Edhene's death have any meaning? It's such a monstrous, unfair, insane act!"
- ❖ "The fervor that unites the locals around Edhene's bedroom is so beautiful. If the room disappears, what will remain?"
- ❖ "Doesn't accepting the death of a loved one mean betraying her by forgetting about her?"
- ❖ "How do we go on now?"

There are no ready-made answers that will expressly satisfy Iverna Maer.

What matters most is that the debate takes place and that the PCs find their own truth, their own lessons from the events that shook the Weavers' District, which they will relate to others.



Iverna Maer will be the most important person to convince, since she is what triggered the Bogeyman's apparition.. If the PCs' explanations rub her the wrong way, Greine may come in to help them.

She will take the PCs outside, suggesting that everyone should take time to think about what has just been said. She will arrange a second chance for the PCs, and may brief them beforehand, explaining how she sees the situation and what she knows about Iverna so that the next attempt goes more smoothly. Greine is the only one of the Maers to have remained rational regarding the situation. She is witness to the degradation of Iverna's psychological condition and to the mystical delusion centered on the Tidy Room. Her opinion is that all of this is unhealthy and will result in more problems. She is counting on the PCs to defuse the situation.



The Bogeyman strikes back

If the PCs are bent on doing things the hard way, the Leader can use this optional ending. The PCs will be the targets of violent attacks from the Bogeyman in the streets, the entity rooting itself deeper and deeper into the district, which will progressively become downright unlivable. As a result, the PCs will make the problem worse instead of solving it! For the rest of their lives, they may also be haunted by Edhene's reproaches for the harm they've done.



Solace in the One

The dogma of the Temple can provide the answers that the grief-stricken family will most readily accept. The adepts of the One are trained to face death and ease the transition. What follows is a typical answer a student in theology might provide: "Terrestrial life is but an imperfect, tragic instant when compared against the serene, immaculate eternity that awaits us. Edhene is gone; nothing can change this. However, miracles have taken place in her wake, and they are proof that in spite of all the horror and pain in this world, there is good to be found. The beauty of nature, and generous souls like Edhene are balms against all the moral pains that we must endure. They elevate our souls and encourage us to accept our lot, not to grow bitter and senseless from our pain, but to move on toward a new rising day. We can carry on, all the richer from our experiences, and capable of doing better, both for our own sake and for those with whom we share our existence. There are still joyous and happy days to come. Edhene is a source of inspiration; even now she invites us to hold our hand out to others, without judging, with courage and sincerity. She lacked prudence and good fortune, but this does not make her actions and the message of hope she left us any less meaningful."

If some of the PCs are followers of the Temple, the Leader may brief them about this philosophy of life. Optionally, they may also include a scene involving a follower of the Temple (or a Vector who happens to pass through the town, similarly to the PCs) in the Weavers' District, giving a sermon in the town square with a few locals to listen.

Scene 3: The death of Athelsan Oxcendre



Within Temptation – The Unforgiving (Instrumental Album Version) – 10 – Murder

This track can be used when the PCs reach the location of the fire. Its metal symphony tones will heighten the scene's tension and create a powerful transition after a few Linkin Park songs.



After the intense thinking and psychological debate with the Maers, the scene of Athelsan Oxcendre's death (or last-second rescue) will return action to the forefront.

Aïndrid will consider Athelsan Oxcendre to be a loose-tongued weakling who, worst of all, can't even solve his problems by himself, and will therefore decide to dispose of him. Knowing that her former colleague suffers from a phobia of fire, she cruelly arranges for his house to be set ablaze while ensuring that he will remain trapped inside. He may be in his bedroom or his underground laboratory. In either case, surrounded with flames, smoke, and heat, it will be impossible for him to escape.



Can Athelsan be saved?

Should the Leader wish to give the PCs a chance to save Athelsan, the most straightforward way to do so is through Scorcha. She will come to the PCs in a panic to tell them that she just saw a shady figure sneak out of the librarian's place, where a fire started right afterward. If they are quick, the PCs will arrive in time to see the house lit by the flames dancing inside.

If Scorcha was entrusted to Aïndrid, the Leader can still use Derin, Greine's 10-year-old daughter, as a potential source of information.

Preparing Aïndrid's escape:

The Leader has several options concerning the details of the events that led up to the fire.

- ✦ Aïndrid is at the origin of the fire: either she starts it herself, or she sends some of the district's thugs to do the dirty work: they knock the occultist out and tie him up, then set his house on fire.
- ✦ The witness who warned the PCs, who can be either Scorcha or Derin, may have caught sight of the criminals. Even if he survives, Athelsan will be in no condition to testify for at least three days.
- ✦ These choices depend on how much of a lead the Leader wants to give Aïndrid in order to ensure she successfully escapes (Act 3, Scene 4).




Fast-paced action :

It frequently happens that the Players, in the middle of a fight or a fast-paced scene, forget about the situation and plan things as if their Characters had time to think. This insert proposes an optional rule to instill a feeling of urgency.

The idea is to display 19 counters (tokens, metal Daols, coins, etc.) on the center of the table. Athelsan Oxcendre is dying of asphyxiation. For each Round spent in the burning building, he loses one Health point and the Leader removes one counter. When there are no counters left, he dies.

The PCs must act without delay, lest the occultist perish before they are even done devising a plan. This passing of time can be made explicit—for example by using an hourglass—in order to stress the pressure of the ticking clock. “You have been talking for one Round... two Rounds now...” with the Leader removing counters one by one.

If Athelsan receives appropriate care from one of his rescuers (mouth-to-mouth, Ogham, miracle, etc.), this will buy the PCs additional time. The Leader can let the PC add between one and five counters to the pile depending on the quality of the care given.



Since they should already have had the opportunity to visit the occultist's house, the PCs will know the configuration of the place and should be able to surmise that Athelsan is either in his bedroom upstairs or in his research room downstairs. Since the PCs should know about Athelsan's nocturnal habits by now, it is fair game for the Leader to explicitly remind the Players of this if they do not remember.

❖ **Bedroom.** To access it, the PCs will need to cross the entrance hall, go upstairs, and make it through the corridor. Another possibility is to climb a nearby house and go from there to Athelsan's with a bit of tumbling. The narrow streets and half-timbered, corbeled houses will make this relatively easy. A PC attempting to do so must make a Feats (Acrobatics) roll, with the following results according to the Threshold reached: Complicated (14) means that the Character pulls this off without a hitch; Standard (11) results in the PC suffering 1 Damage point in the process; Easy (8) means more serious injury (3 Damage points); and below that, the Character not only fails but also gets hurt for 5 Damage points.

❖ **Basement.** Accessing it will require the PCs to enter the house, reach a small flight of stairs located in the living room, then go past the pantry and through a small corridor. Another option is to pass through the cellar window located in the back of the house, the one the Diwelank previously escaped through, and which currently releases an acrid smoke. Only someone thin enough will be able to squeeze through... and then, there will still be the difficulty of manhandling an unconscious body through such a narrow opening.

One of the rescuers' main problems is that between the bedroom and the basement, they will have no way of knowing where Athelsan actually is, especially with the smoke and flames obscuring their vision. The Leader may decide where the occultist is beforehand, or may have the Players make a Luck roll.

The PCs will put themselves in no small danger if they choose to brave the fire. They will have to suffer through the heat and smoke, not to mention the flames.

⊕ **Smoke and heat.** Requires passing a Complicated (14) Stamina check every two rounds or suffering a stacking -1 penalty on all actions.

⊕ **Flames and debris.** There are many obstacles (fire, crumbling furniture, damaged stairs, stuck door, etc.), which will require several Standard (11) and Complicated (14) Feats checks. A failure results in minor burns (1 or 2 Damage points).

Putting a damp cloth on one's face or dunking oneself in water before going in decreases the Difficulty of the Stamina checks by 1, though only for the first three Rounds. To get the bonus for the duration of the whole scene, the following precautions can be taken:

wearing full-body protective clothing (leather, for example), wrapping oneself in a thick blanket, or keeping a crouching posture (which will, however, greatly reduce one's speed).

An axe is a very useful tool to slice, smash, and slash through whatever impedes the rescuer's progress. Carrying an unconscious body or helping a wounded person results in a -2 penalty to every action that requires freedom of movement.



Even if he survives, Athelsan will be in no condition to testify for at least three days, which leaves Aïndrid ample time to disappear (Act 3, Scene 4). If Athelsan's recovery period cannot conceivably be that long—if the PCs were able to save him very quickly or have access to extraordinary healing abilities—the Leader can give Aïndrid a better lead, the justification being that instead of taking care of things herself, she hired thugs to knock the occultist out and leave him tied up before lighting the fire.



The district on fire

If the Leader wants to make the scene even more suspenseful, they can explain to the Players that the fire is at risk of spreading through adjacent houses. A night with the whole district on fire could result in dreadful losses and panic, which makes it imperative to bring things under control lest the worst happen.



Athelsan Oxcendre's chest

The PCs have already obtained this clue card during Act 2, Scene 5. Here, it will be supplemented with elements that the occultist had carefully kept hidden thus far. Even if he collaborated with the PCs, he won't have told them about these facts. The PCs will find out about them in the aftermath of the fire, in Athelsan's diary which he carefully kept hidden below his occult books, or in a hidden stash. Or he may simply keep his journal on his person, in an inner pocket.

The occultist's most important documents are stored in a sturdy, fireproof chest. Inside are several books about occultism, including the Black Moon Handbook and others that can be used to gather information about the Bogeyman (see Chapter 4 – Bestiary). And finally, the chest contains Athelsan's journal.

Athelsan Oxcendre's journal

It is up to the Leader whether its contents are coded or not (see Chapter 1 – Deciphering Signs). This option will complicate the PCs' access to the information below and can delay the moment when they reach these revelations.

The journal contains the following information:

- ✦ The Circle of Emergence is the name of a cabal of occultists who have decided to stop at nothing to finance their works.
- ✦ The improved Gwilmine is the invention of a researcher of the Ashen Yard.
- ✦ Another production center is to be established in Osta-Baille.
- ✦ Aïndrid has a major part in the organization.
- ✦ She seems to be on the run from something in Gwidre.
- ✦ She developed a technique called “Suggestion” based on her research into hypnosis, sorcery, and on the use of a drug, Morphenose.
- ✦ Some of her clients are under Suggestions that serve her interests.
- ✦ It seems that Aïndrid was very interested in the PCs, which Athelsan interprets as her probably seeking to use them in one way or another.

Scene 4: Aindrid is gone



Jure Peternel - Dearg - 4 - Bitter friendship

This song will fit very well right after the one used during the fire. It is more composed and relates to one of the themes of Aindrid's disappearance: the bitter taste of betrayed trust.



The story's last confrontation happens in absentia. Aindrid is gone, and even if the PCs were able to gather information from Athelsan Oxcendre's diary, many mysteries remain. To answer them, the PCs will have to go after the Circle of Emergence. This organization is very covert and should only be encountered in brief glances, in the background of schemes that seemed, at first, unrelated. The details of Aindrid's departure are left to the Leader, but she will leave no traces that would make it possible to track her down. The whole thing should feel mysterious, almost supernatural.

If the PCs go to Aindrid's, they will see she is not there. The day after, it will become apparent that she is gone for good. It even seems that she managed to slip out of the town unnoticed! None of her neighbors will be able to tell for how long she has been gone. With the epidemic, people have been staying holed up in their houses, and no one paid much attention to what was happening outside. This mystery is perplexing, but with the recent events, it doesn't raise much attention. Only the PCs—and Athelsan Oxcendre, if he is still alive—suspect the danger this woman represents.

If the PCs have entrusted Scorcha to Aindrid so that she may “take care” of the child, she will be nowhere to be found as well. Her fate is left to the Leader.

Why does Aindrid leave?

The answer to this question has little relevance in regards to the story since it is inaccessible to the PCs. However, if the Leader needs an explanation, it can be that:

- ❖ She anticipated the fall of the Canal Gang and the risk of being associated with them.
- ❖ She considers her research and activities in the Weavers' District to be complete, and is now off to put new projects together.
- ❖ She understood that the Bogeyman was particularly dangerous for those with a heavy conscience. She was simply afraid of falling prey to the creature and preferred to run away.

Scene 5: Peace and quiet




Guillaume & Cyrille Aufaure - RISE - 12 - A Brand New Start

After all the tragedies that the district has been through, all the people who have fallen ill, been wounded, or died; after all the matters of conscience, it is time for everyone to lick their wounds. The locals are in need of something that would reestablish the unity of the community, lay to rest the horrible things they have just been through, and lead them forward.

Provided they have proven themselves honorable throughout the recent events, PCs with both social (5 or more in Performance or Relation, a socially-oriented Advantage, etc.) and religious (Demorthèn or adept of the Temple) aptitudes may be asked to organize a ceremony about remembering and moving on, sending a message of appeasement and hope. The PC's sermon, the lessons drawn from the ordeals they have just experienced, can be the opportunity to use the optional rule “Increasing Mental Resistance” (p.36), based on how the speaker guides others toward greater wisdom.

The reward

 To thank the PCs for their efforts in defusing the district's crisis, the locals have organized a fundraiser. They will hand the PCs their rewards in a large purse containing ember Daols for a total value of approximately one frost Daol. Along with this hefty sum comes an ever more substantial reward: several rolls of cloth, which anyone can recognize as high quality with an Easy (8) Craft (Clothing) roll. A Standard (11) Craft (Clothing) or Perception (Evaluation) roll gives an idea of their market value: about 15 frost Daols. Moreover, garments made from such precious raw material can be sold for thrice as much. Depending on individual decisions, each PC may make a small fortune or have a suit worthy of being worn in noble courts and the fanciest districts.

Paying in kind is common in Tri-Kazel. It is then up to the PCs to make the most of this gift. The Craft Domain will prove very useful if they wish to store, wear, and maintain such precious items with no undue expenses.



Sewing a garment from such precious cloth is a daunting task for most clothiers, who will be afraid of damaging it with the slightest mistake. Making simple clothes from this material requires a Complicated (14) Craft (Clothing) roll. More delicate work calls for a Difficult (17) roll, if not an even higher one. Superior equipment (see Book 1 – Universe, p.226) can be worth up to 10 times the standard price, sometimes more.

Craftsmen capable of performing such work generally have their shops in large cities. They are paid at the very least 1Ad per day, not including fees for the acquisition of additional raw material (thread, lace, etc.) Making a complete suit takes at least a full week. In the end, hiring someone to do the work will cost at least about 15Ad per suit.

Epilogue





Onward to new horizons

It was a bumpy ride, but peace has finally returned to the Weavers' District. Life goes back to its usual course, with its joys and pains, its successes and failures, its friendships, its feuds, etc. Aïndrid is gone for good; no one has seen her for days. No one will forget what happened, nor the pivotal role the PCs played.

That's one step over. What comes next will depend on what the Leader has planned and on the PCs' interest in the Circle of Emergence's activities. Additionally, if Aïndrid took Scorcha with her when she left, the PCs may want to track her down to rescue the girl.

Enter Yekeb

The Sigire Yekeb (see Chapter 2 – The Circle of Emergence) is after Aïndrid, seeking to put an end to her criminal activities. The Leader may have him reach the Weavers' District right after the departure of the one he is chasing. Yekeb can become an ally, or even a PC if a new Player wants to join the group or one of the Characters has died in the course of the scenario.

Experience

Depending on the Leader's choices, the adventure may have been particularly eventful and full of confrontations and dilemmas over several game sessions, which can influence the attribution of experience (see Book 1 – Universe, p.228 and Book 2 – Travels, p.137). Here is a reminder of the main problems that the PCs may have solved:

⊕ Main objectives:

- ◆ Putting an end to the activities of the Canal Gang.
- ◆ Putting an end to the Bogeyman's influence by bringing peace back to the Maers.

⊕ Secondary objectives:

- ◆ Saving Glazi, or clearing his name after his death.
- ◆ Finding the identity of Edhene's murderers.
- ◆ If Gliwi is the murderer, helping him face the death that awaits him more serenely.
- ◆ Shedding light on the slanderous accusation that has led to the PCs' arrest.
- ◆ Finding the source of the Chimerical Fever epidemic.
- ◆ Neutralizing the Diwelank or Alan Fildh, if he is the one responsible for the crimes.

Usually, experience gains are based on a single scenario, with the factors being, as usual, the Progression of the plot, the Interpretation of one's PC, and the Confrontations faced during the game. In the case of A Tidy Room, the Leader may have fleshed out some of the plot points, possibly up to the point of making them individual scenarios. This may apply in particular to the case of the Diwelank and that of the Canal Gang. In this case, the resulting experience gains should be adapted, since the overall adventure will be equivalent to a mini-campaign divided into two, three, or four scenarios.



Chapter 4

Bestiary



The scenario "A Tidy Room" takes place in an urban environment. Leaders can choose a low fantasy game style with little to no supernatural elements, in which the source of the crisis can be a combination of an epidemic of Chimerical Fever and the general feeling of uneasiness and panic spreading throughout the Weavers' District. Conversely, Leaders can go for an approach that will put action and supernatural elements at the forefront, with a prevalence and intensity of their choosing. This Bestiary is a tool that they are free to use as they wish, providing recipes for an atmosphere ranging from familiar to extraordinary.

In the following pages, two creatures are described, including one that is more akin to a dangerous supernatural phenomenon. They were both designed for the scenario included in this story, but can obviously be featured in other circumstances. The Diwelank, for example, can be part of the dread-inspiring fauna of the Howling Chasms (see Book 2 – Travels, p.21), while many places fit the bill for the Bogeyman phenomenon, such as Broken Stones (see Book 2 – Travels, p.10 and 29), the former northern Liagcal torn down by the adepts of the Temple.

In addition, here are a few suggestions for using creatures introduced in other Shadows of Esteren books:

- ⌘ **Guard dog.** The members of the Canal Gang may bring one or two of such beasts with them (see Book 0 – Prologue, p.77, for their statistics).
- ⌘ **Rats.** Teeming in sewers, rats are generally not a threat unless they have nowhere to run. They are scavengers and occasional omnivores who live in groups and must constantly gnaw things to wear out their ever-growing teeth. They make their nests in sewers, abandoned houses, ill-maintained places, etc. The fleas they carry may be vectors of diseases ranging from Weak to Deadly. In the context of "A Tidy Room," they can be partly responsible for the propagation of the epidemic of Chimerical Fever. Being near them puts one at risk of catching the disease. Note that for the purpose of this scenario, this illness replaces the one usually associated with rat bites (see Book 2 – Travels, p.183).
- ⌘ **Cnaighs.** Known under the expressive moniker of "Gnawers," these rat-like Feondas roughly share the same habits as their mundane variant (see Book 2 – Travels, p.185). During the Chimerical Fever epidemic, they can swarm out of the sewers and make the situation even more nightmarish and frightening. Witnesses afflicted by the disease might believe the Cnaighs much more numerous, their living, squirming mass capable of devouring in moments anyone too weak to strike back or flee. Seeing something as atrocious as a human being eaten alive by these Feondas results in a Mental Resistance roll ranging from Complicated (14) to Very Difficult (20) depending on how dear the victim was.

A few thoughts on urban fauna

When I was younger, I once read a Gwidrite book about a majestic, perfect city. I think it was Chaïna, the holy city of the One's adepts. Some of the illuminations made a very strong impression on me. They spoke to me of ideal cities, a masterpiece of architecture designed according to the most rigorous geometric principles. Everything was immaculate and clean-cut, perfectly ordered.

What a contrast when I look out of my window, which faces a bustling street of the Weavers' District! The city is not only far from pure and uplifting, it is teeming, animalistic. Chickens, rabbits, and pigs are raised in the courtyards. The pigs in particular are barely different from boars, and despite their foul temper, people let them roam freely, since they contribute to cleaning up the streets. These beasts eat everything. The chickens do, too, but to a lesser extent, due to their smaller size. At least fowl are not responsible for sometimes lethal accidents here and there. Swine roving around the town have already killed and eaten unwary children... Cities sometimes take measures to keep people from leaving these animals unsupervised. This has been enforced in the Weavers' District, and I breathe all the easier for that.

It is common to see small farming operations, vegetable and herb patches for that little bit of extra food. This way, the families can supplement their diet or make money by selling the surplus at the market. Near the canal and the vacant lots, it is not rare to see opportunistic wild animals such as foxes or crows. As for rats, they have readily acclimated to urban areas, coming out at sunset to look for food during the night.

From the journal of Athelsan Oxcendre

The Diwelank

⌘ Attack: 15 ⌘ Damage: 3 ⌘ Defense: 12 (When camouflaged: 20) ⌘ Protection: 1
 ⌘ Speed: 9 ⌘ Potential: 3 ⌘ Stamina: 11 ⌘ Health: 35/25/15/5 ⌘ Perception: 11
 ⌘ Stealth: 9 (When camouflaged: 20) ⌘ Feats: 13



Camouflage: The entirety of the Diwelank's (dee-ve-lank) body is covered with cells capable of refracting light, which allows it to hide easily. It can still be spotted through senses other than sight, or if something gets in the way of its reflective skin (flour, paint, etc.). When it stands still, it is almost impossible to see, and its Stealth and Defense scores go up to 20 (included in the statistics block). This ability takes focus and energy, so the Diwelank cannot use it if its Health Condition has gone down to Serious. Moreover, each time it suffers Damage, it must pass a Difficult (17) Feats check to maintain the Camouflage. On a failure, it cannot reactivate it for 3 Rounds. If the Diwelank moves quickly (when fleeing or fighting, for example), it is detectable normally.



Adhesive Lamellae: The Diwelank's adhesive lamellae confer it matchless freedom of movement. Any penalty for difficult terrain is canceled for Climbing rolls. In addition, the creature makes full use of this asset and of its Camouflage ability to drop on unsuspecting prey or ambush it in a similar manner, thus getting the benefits of an Ambush (see Book 1 – Universe, p.237). The Diwelank also uses the lamellae to keep prey from running away by sticking one or several of its limbs to its victim. The creature can also hang above its target, grab it with its adhesive limbs, and strangle it with the fingers of its hand-maw. Freeing oneself or someone grabbed requires spending a whole Round on a Complicated (14) Feats check.



Hand-maw: By making use of the long fingers surrounding its maw, the beast is able to manipulate objects with near-human dexterity. It is also capable of strangling its prey (see above) or pinning its limbs to devour it alive at its leisure. Grasping an active target requires a full Round and a successful Attack roll. Then, it can start taking bites out of its victim, inflicting 3 automatic Damage points for each Round during which the target remains pinned. Due to how complex this action is, the Diwelank cannot maintain its Camouflage at the same time. If the victim takes 3 Rounds or more to get free, a successful Stamina (11) check must be made to avoid permanent disfigurement, resulting in the “Unappealing” or even “Ugly” Disadvantage (the opposite of the “Beautiful” or “Magnificent” Advantage, see Book 1 – Universe). The victim or an ally can pry the Diwelank's fingers away by spending a full Round on a Difficult (17) Feats check. As long as the Diwelank is holding down a prey, it cannot attack but can still move, provided its victim is not bigger than a human. Any attack attempted against the Diwelank while held by its hand-maw suffers a -5 penalty. However, if it suffers any damage, it lets go of its prey and runs away, waiting for another opportunity.

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After examinations of as thorough a nature as possible, Athelsan quickly reached the conclusion that the creature he kept prisoner is an extremely rare specimen, as few tales of the peninsula mention its existence. It seems that so far, it had only been seen briefly, and no one ever had an opportunity to study it or even give it a name. The creature appears to be endemic to rocky, temperate mountains, as its presence has never been attested anywhere else. The Diwelank is a lone, diurnal hunter, and it seems that there are very few of its kind throughout the peninsula, though its remarkable ability to hide makes it difficult to give an estimate of its numbers. In its natural environment, its hunting method consists of ambushing isolated prey after a careful approach making use of both the surrounding landscape and its innate camouflage. If faced with a group, it will seek to separate them and will pick off the weakest with lightning-fast attacks, quick but relentless and devastating.

From afar, the Diwelank may pass for human, but a closer look removes any doubts. This creature the size of a human of average build can stand, but prefers to move on all fours. Its four limbs are thin and muscular, and its forelimbs can bend in both directions. All of its limbs end in five long fingers with adhesive lamellae (thin, layered ridges) on their inner surface as well as on the whole palm. This makes the Diwelank capable of walking on walls or even on ceilings, though at a slower speed. Its whole body, of a pale mauve color, is covered in iridescent, honeycombed cells that absorb light and can reflect it at will, making the Diwelank very hard to spot. This unique skin is tightly wrapped around the creature's body, giving it an emaciated look.

Still, its head and maw are its most prominent features. Entirely hairless, its face and skull are a parody of a human cranium, slightly elongated above the brain. It has two human-sized eyes, a noseless breathing apparatus, and a lipless mouth, which leaves visible two short rows of teeth, similar to those of the sharks from the tumultuous seas surrounding the peninsula. Its maw is surrounded on either side by eight long, skeletal fingers, each about 16 inches long and fitted with retractable claws.

At rest, these eerie limbs intertwine and cover the lower side of the Diwelank's face. When it hunts and feeds, it uses these clawed fingers to grab a limb or the head of its prey, preventing it from running away and putting it into a vulnerable position, ready to be eaten alive. Outside of combat, the creature uses its hand-maw to manipulate or carry objects, being intelligent enough to make use of them for short-term objectives.

Athelsan Oxcendre was able to learn so many things about the Diwelank because he has so far been extremely cautious with his experiments, perpetually leaving it in its cage and putting it to sleep when he needed to move it. However, one thing he was not able to understand is the creature's reproductive system, though he has made several hypotheses. Since the Diwelank has no visible reproductive organs, Athelsan figured that it must be self-fertile or capable of parthenogenesis, or even that it breeds through parasitism, perhaps through its mouth. A formal verification would require dissection, but since it would kill this rare creature, he has refused to do so for the time being. The occultist has started pulling strings to secure another specimen. However, his attention has slackened lately, and he has underestimated the intelligence of the Diwelank, which is growing increasingly frustrated with its captivity.



Creating tension and horror with the Diwelank

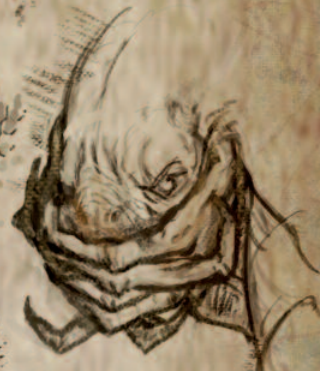
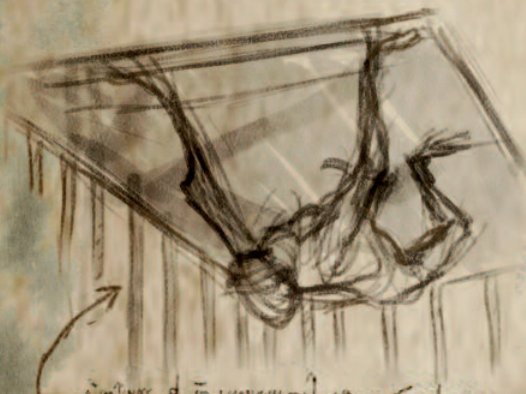
This creature can easily become a nightmare for the PCs. To that effect, the Leader should make full use of its abilities and of the potential advantages of the urban environment. Poorly organized PCs will be more vulnerable to the creature that will fight a veritable guerrilla campaign against them, attempting to isolate and capture the PCs to dispose of lone victims more easily. The Leader can make the tension progressively rise by letting the Players feel how dangerous and vicious the creature is. Its Camouflage and Adhesive lamellae features are sure to give the PCs a run for their money. This means that the Players will not even be sure of what their opponent is until the Leader deems the moment right to dramatically reveal the Diwelank in its full horror.

The Leader should make use of the PCs' full five senses to describe the Diwelank, particularly during intense, confused scenes. To someone who only discovers the creature through touch (for example, in the middle of a struggle), it feels hairless, muscular and bony at the same time, and its head is deeply disturbing. In terms of hearing, the few sounds it makes are disquieting, consisting of hissing, whistling noises. When it is excited, its breathing sounds like rumbling. Being attacked or seeing a companion being carried away or disfigured by this monstrous enemy results in Mental Resistance checks ranging from Complicated (14) to Very Difficult (20).

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The Bogeyman

⌘ **Attack:** 10 / Horror (14) ⌘ **Damage:** 1 / Obsession (see “Horror”) ⌘ **Defense:** 10 ⌘ **Protection:** 2
 ⌘ **Speed:** 5 ⌘ **Potential :** 1 ⌘ **Stamina:** 10 ⌘ **Health:** 40/30/20/10 / Undying
 ⌘ **Perception:** 15 ⌘ **Stealth:** 5 ⌘ **Feats:** 10



Horror: The Bogeyman may have combat abilities depending on the shape its victim's mind gives it, but most often, its contact gives a feeling of horror resulting in a Mental Resistance check. By default, it will be Complicated (14), but to reflect how tormented people are more vulnerable to the Bogeyman, the Leader can apply the following formula: 11 + [Trauma]. This way, Characters with deep mental scars will suffer particularly intense and mind-wracking visions. In addition, anyone who fails the Mental Resistance check gains the Obsession Scarring (see Book 1 – Universe, p.272), which makes the victims want to know more about the creature, or even directly confront it.



Undying: The Bogeyman is not, strictly speaking, alive. It is an entity as durable as the emotions it feeds on or the objects invested with these emotions. Therefore, fighting it with weapons or other material means such as fire can only lead to a semblance of victory. When its Health points reach 0, the Bogeyman disperses. It seems that the only thing that actually disrupts it is its opponents' belief in their success. Filled with pride, certain of their resounding victory, the vanquishers are convinced of having wounded their foe and ultimately triumphed over the entity. Far from it, the Bogeyman will reform after 1D10 hours. To put an end to the apparitions, one must identify their source.



Miracles: The Bogeyman grants the wishes of the living. It is capable of performing miraculous effects, similarly to the Elect of the Temple (see Book 1 – Universe, p.259), in the place where its interventions are sanctified, as is the case with the Tidy Room. Most often, the effects are Miracles such as Miraculous Healing, which, in return, trigger horrific manifestations reflecting the deeply ambiguous nature of the desires. The prayers and beliefs of the living feed the Bogeyman with Exaltation. The Leader can give other Miracles, positive or negative, to the Bogeyman, in accordance with the needs of the story.

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Throughout Tri-Kazel, there are plenty of stories about people disappearing amidst strange patches of mist. Sometimes, the victims are found dead, but since it is hard to discern a precise cause for their deaths, people generally blame Feondas. Everything unexplainable is attributed to them. The Gwidrites, however, fearfully mention the influence of Limbo. Unfortunate sinners are thought to have been dragged to the afterlife, their souls ripped from their bodies. The corpses, when found, are shown to the living to exhort them to lead a virtuous life. Yet, despite the proof of these frightening tales, when adults speak of the “Bogeyman,” it is most often to laugh at the immature fears of children.

While the appearance of a ghost is due to the torment of a dead person (see The Black Moon Handbook), the Bogeyman phenomenon is essentially the doing of the living. According to certain occult theories, some people, among whom there does not seem to be a consistent psychological profile, are natural magnets for strange events. Just like mediums, it seems they act as keys or gateways.

For a Bogeyman to appear, several conditions must be met:

- ⌘ **A human key or gate.** In the case of A Tidy Room, this person is Edhene's mother.
- ⌘ **A breaking point.** The key suffers overwhelming moral distress. Edhene's mother cannot accept her daughter's death and devotes a cult-like attention to her memory in an attempt to hold on to her.
- ⌘ **An intense emotional concentration.** The third essential factor is the manifestation of an intense emotional energy from a large amount of people. Here, the whole Weavers' District is distressed due to the pain of grief and the guilt after Glazi's ruthless lynching.

The Bogeyman is a sort of nightmare turned reality. Its attitude mostly depends on the tormented desire that gave it birth. In the case of the Weavers' District, the location is permeated, on the one hand, with the idealized figure of Edhene, seen as a saint, and on the other hand with the mutilated Tarish, Glazi. The result is a tendency to both attract and destroy.

The Bogeyman's appearance is based on the beliefs and hopes that brought it into existence. Thus, in the Weavers' District, it generally takes on Edhene's shape. It can also appear as her ghost, or as a monstrous creature made of mist.

The phenomenon can, in its early stages, be brought to an end by identifying its source. The appeasement of the key and of those close to him or her are the best way to a clean solution. Ceremonies and rituals often prove useful, not due to their own power, but because of their symbolic meaning. In the case of the Weavers' District, taking apart Edhene's Tidy Room, which her mother has left untouched, is one way to take a step forward, to no longer be in denial but to face reality, as painful as it may be, lest everyone remain prisoner of a never-ending nightmare.

What if the key dies?

Should the phenomenon's key come to die, the source of the problem goes from alive to dead. The location is now haunted in the literal sense of the term, and solving the situation now essentially requires placating the ghost of the key. However, it may be that the key does not struggle against this state, having somehow found peace in death. Consequently, the Bogeyman phenomenon will subside after a few days, as if crumbling apart after having been deprived of its support.

Fighting a Bogeyman

A thelsan Oxcendre owns a few books that would be of great interest to an occultist, and which he keeps in a locked chest. However, most are written in a symbolic or cryptic language. Looking for a piece of information will therefore require an Occultism (Esotericism) roll of varying Difficulty depending on the complexity of what is sought: Standard (11) for something basic; Complicated (14) for more in-depth data; Difficult (17) for something rare; Very Difficult (20) for something exceptional.



Supernatural Generation: This tome describes rare and uncanny creatures, be they Feondas, ghosts, or other strange beasts such as the Loch Snìomh (see Book 2 – Travels, p.184). The author details several syncretistic theories on supernatural energies. Regarding the Bogeyman, (11) human notions of mortality cannot apply to it because it is undying. This phenomenon (14) is not a creature, but something else, something polymorphic often mistaken for ghost-related phenomena. It shares with them a context of intense moral pain and suffering. Its manifestation (17) is subject to several conditions related to the emotions of the living. To appear, (20) it requires a key, a breaking point, and an emotional concentration (see above).



On Necromancy: A book dedicated to the evocation of the dead and to the means of communicating with them to gain information. Diverse techniques are covered, up to calling forth a spirit, with various procedures and pieces of advice to improve the odds of success. In addition (11), the book mentions how some people mistake visions for manifestations of dead spirits. Actually, visions are echoes of the emotional imprint of a living person, which puts things in a different perspective. In any case, (14) there seems to be a connection with death, more particularly with the inability to pass away. Thus, logic dictates that the phenomenon can be ended with the peaceful acceptance of death. However, (17) this is by no means easy, and another solution can be considered, a rather particular form of exorcism consisting in severing all the emotional links of the objects associated with the deceased. This can be performed by destroying them, or simply by changing their function. It can also be conducive to celebrate joy and life, or to favor the growth of new vegetal life, which will progressively change the location's atmosphere.



On Hunting: Behind this innocuous title is a treatise dedicated to how Sigires deal with occultist experiments. Ghosts and vision-like effects (14) can be reduced or durably repelled with the use of the Purification Miracle (see Book 1 – Universe, p.260). It is explained that most Elect (1st and 2nd Stanzas) are able to purify strictly material corruption, but that those connected to what they see as Limbo require more powerful abilities (3rd Stanza and above).

Epilogue

I know she is here, somewhere, close by.

This terrifies me.

She surely holds a grudge against me for having approached the people who discovered the truth about the young girl's death. For the Circle, for myself, for her, I should have left them in the dark and solved the problem of the creature myself.

But I did not feel up to it, I did not feel strong enough. I am not a man of action. I am afraid of confronting danger, and this manifestation is so powerful that I do not dare approach it or attempt anything against it.

I made other mistakes. The Diwelank's escape was certainly the worst. Unwillingly, I am responsible for several deaths.

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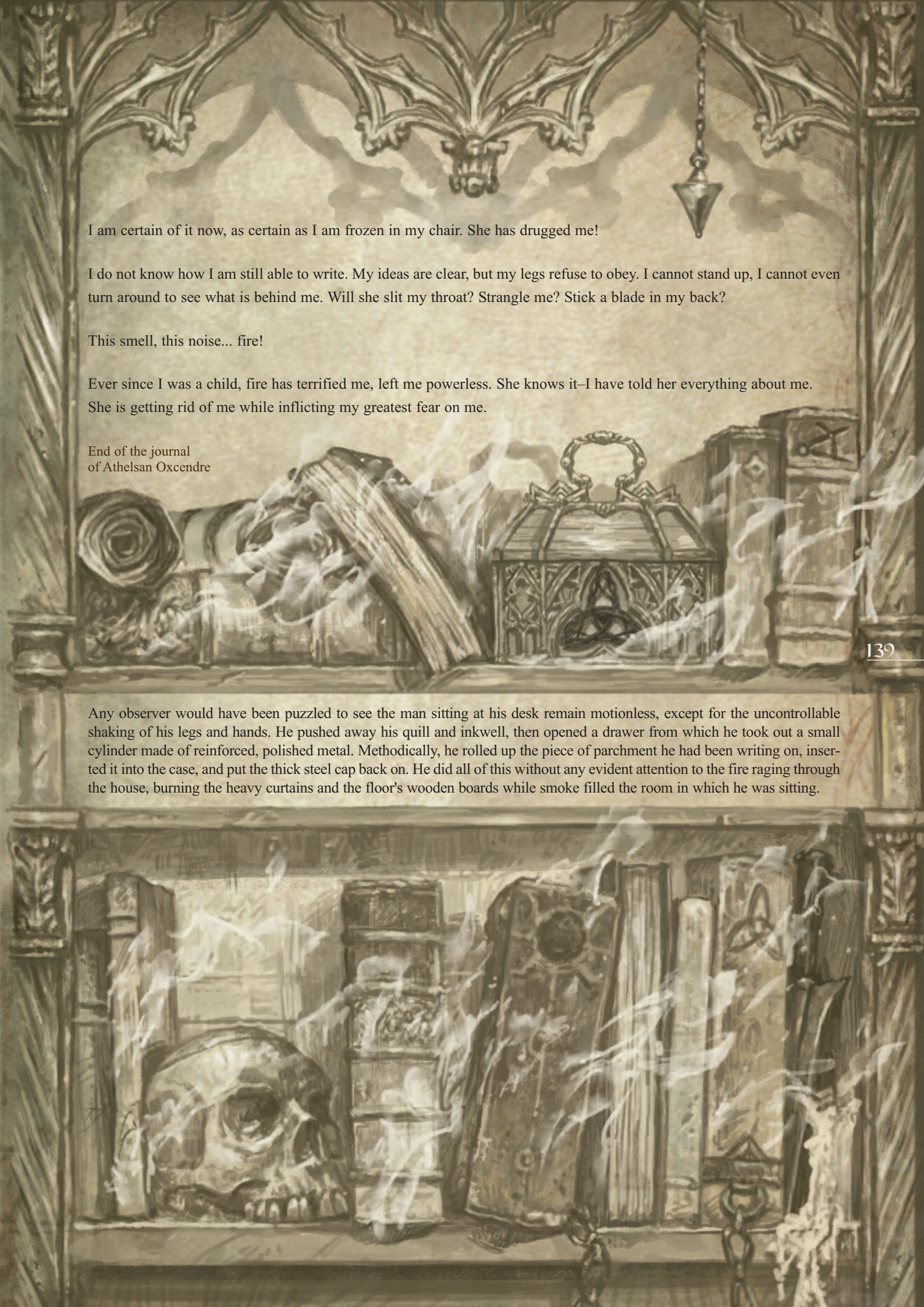
Through all that I've done since she has let me join the Circle, she has been there, watching me, sometimes helping me, and I am now wondering about her true motivations. I was never able to perceive anything behind her eyes. She has always kept perfect control over her mask, as if hiding her thoughts required no effort at all.

In the beginning, she treated me as an equal, and we exchanged information about a few projects. She seemed interested in everything I was doing, and I enjoyed it. My cover as a bookseller makes it easy for me to blend in, while her favored one is that of a prostitute. I finally understood that she was running away from something: powerful, implacable enemies. This seems related to the Sigires, apparently to Expiation. After some time, she told me about the Circle and the Gwilmine trade organized from the Ashen Yard. As a source of funding, it was morally debatable, but it was a providential patronage. Thanks to this formidable organization, I was granted the opportunity to study the Diwelank. She secured it for me in record time. I believe that was the catalyst, for getting me involved in this group. Now that I look back on it, I can see she manipulated me, using my thirst for knowledge as leverage.

Working for her was so easy...

These last months, I grew richer, but more interestingly, I had a very enlightening correspondence with other members of the Circle. I learned a lot and taught a lot. I do not believe myself out of place in this organization, so why such anxiety? I think she is about to disappear. Maybe she wants to silence me permanently... She is not just any member of the organization. She is the puppeteer pulling the strings, reaping the benefits, leading and orchestrating everything from the shadows.

She is here!



I am certain of it now, as certain as I am frozen in my chair. She has drugged me!

I do not know how I am still able to write. My ideas are clear, but my legs refuse to obey. I cannot stand up, I cannot even turn around to see what is behind me. Will she slit my throat? Strangle me? Stick a blade in my back?

This smell, this noise... fire!

Ever since I was a child, fire has terrified me, left me powerless. She knows it—I have told her everything about me. She is getting rid of me while inflicting my greatest fear on me.

End of the journal
of Athelsan Oxcendre

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Any observer would have been puzzled to see the man sitting at his desk remain motionless, except for the uncontrollable shaking of his legs and hands. He pushed away his quill and inkwell, then opened a drawer from which he took out a small cylinder made of reinforced, polished metal. Methodically, he rolled up the piece of parchment he had been writing on, inserted it into the case, and put the thick steel cap back on. He did all of this without any evident attention to the fire raging through the house, burning the heavy curtains and the floor's wooden boards while smoke filled the room in which he was sitting.



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

This Shadows of Esteren add-on, intended for Game Leaders, focuses on occultism. Who are the representatives of this strange science? How are they organized? What do they seek? Beside the mystical powers of the Demorthèn and of the priests of the Temple, is there another source of supernatural power? In exploring these questions, the Characters will face mysteries that may shake their innermost convictions!

Contents include:

• Occultism in Tri-Kazel

This introductory chapter is a complete overview of occultism in Tri-Kazel. Leaders will find many details about the skills of occultists, the forbidden arts of sorcerers, or the mysterious visionary powers of mediums. New Disciplines are introduced, as well as additional rules on sanity.

• The Circle of Emergence

The second chapter describes a characteristic occult organization: its modes of operation, its objectives, and its core members. Whether the Circle of Emergence is intended to become the PCs' patron or their mortal enemy, this game aid is certain to be valuable for Leaders who wish to bring occultism to the forefront of their campaign.

• A Tidy Room

When a young girl from a low-class district, enchanting and beloved by all, disappears, the locals are in a commotion. Searches are quickly organized: people comb through vacant lots, back streets, and dumping grounds. Even the sewers and canals are explored over the course of several days... to no avail. "A Tidy Room" is a large scenario written by Iris that will confront the Player Characters with occult and supernatural dangers. It comes with many game aids, including a comprehensive description of the scenario's locale: the Weavers' District, a perfect setting for any game in an urban environment. Finally, two new creatures are included: the Bogeyman and the Diwelank.

