

CODEx OF THE DEEP SPIRE

A SOURCEBOOK FOR THE SPIRE ROLEPLAYING GAME

BY JORDAN SHIVELEY

SPIRE
THE CITY MUST FALL



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DISCLAIMER

Your Spire will be different from ours, and we wrote the game with this in mind. As with the core book, you are encouraged to examine the Codex of the Deep Spire and use what you feel is most beneficial for your campaign. The “canon” truths of Spire are whatever you and your group decide they are.

We mention this because in this book, Jordan Shiveley - the man behind DREAD SINGLES - has given lavish details of any number of weird cults, occluded conspiracies and devastating secrets. To include all of them in a game could lead to confusion and over-saturation. Of course, that may well be what you want in your story, in which case: go for it.

We hope you enjoy these nightmare treats.

— Grant Howitt and Chris Taylor



INTRODUCTION

Reader, here is an account of how we found Escatoph Tembrark within the Heart. Perhaps you will scoff less at his words than those who attempted to decipher them. Perhaps you will heed them and spare yourself the same fate.

5TH OF DOWNPOUR, YEAR OF MANY HANDS: THE DAY WE FOUND TEMBRARK.

Tembrark had been one of our school's finest Delvers. No-one before or after has crafted or possessed a finer husk. He was a leading theorist on the nature of Spire. To sit in the lecture hall when he was orating was to be inspired.

When he disappeared, most assumed he had died on one of his many expeditions. It would have been a kinder fate. Years later, we found him raving in the depths of the Heart. He was in an ancient crypt, full of cubes and still-functioning magelights, surrounded by paper, tattered rags, and finely bound books.

He had chronicled his descent into madness on every available surface, including every square inch of the walls and floor. In places, he used his own blood, tearing his own fingertips to do so.

Even now, under our vigilant care, he is but a shell of the brilliant mind and gifted Delves he once was. He rants of vast conspiracies and things awakening beneath the city. All we can do now is tend to him as best we can, and try to salvage what is left.



EXTRA ADVANCE - KATAKOS DELVER

“Open your mind to the language of metal. Open your mind to the lost alphabet of Spire. Words of iron. Words of void. Tongues of forgotten power.”

— Escatoph Tembrark, A Primer To Interfacing and Understanding Basic Tenets of Spire and Its Ontological Interactions



The Katakos Delvers are a cabal dedicated to the mysteries of Spire and its Heart, neither secular nor wholly occult. They are dogmatically open-minded, straddling the line between archeo-scientists and seekers of mystic knowledge. They refuse to commit to any solid theory concerning Spire; instead, they preach that all should open themselves to the magic of the city, letting it flow through them.

The one core tenet they all subscribe to is that the structure of Spire is the antidote to the Heart. They believe that the constant adaptations of the city are like arcane antibodies, evolving to match the never ending encroachment of roiling unreality. Whether this phenomenon is the remnants of self-aware Katakos technology or actual occult manifestation is a matter of spirited but civil debate.

Delvers see themselves as archeologists or academic adventurers, and have a friendly but keen rivalry with the scholars of the Vermissian Vault. Still, their interests are largely aligned, and it is not unheard of for the two organisations to ally with one another for the right rewards.

REQUIREMENT: Prove yourself worthy of the Delvers' cabal by unearthing unique lore and making a valuable contribution to their research.

REFRESH: Uncover a hidden truth concerning Spire, or use a novel piece of Katakos technology for the first time.

ADVANCES

LOW

BECOME THE CITY. [Divine] *You physically blend into the structures of Spire, disappearing inside the walls, buildings and streets. Mark D3 stress to cast this spell. You can stay hidden until the next sunrise, unless there is a determined effort to destroy your hiding place. You cannot sense anything outside of your haven, and you are groggy and weird upon re-emerging.*

SPIRE COMMUNION. [Divine] *You learn the hidden language of the city. Once per session, spend ten minutes seated in a place of importance to Spire and ask a question. The GM will provide a series of visions directly from the city that may shed light on the answer. Roll with mastery the first time you connect these visions to the events of your story and act on them.*

MEDIUM

SPIRE WEAVING. [Divine] *You summon a shield of Spirestone. Mark D3 stress to cast this spell. On a success, masonry, bricks and even pavements will surround you, protecting you from harm; gain Armour 4 until the situation ends. While you “wear” this armour, you roll with mastery on Pursue checks as the ground itself carries you forward. However, for obvious reasons, you may not hide or attempt to blend in with a crowd.*

POSSESS HUSK. [Divine] *Husks are weird and unpredictable things. You bond with one. You have access to a strange robotic entity known as a husk, and can mentally inhabit it with the correct rites. See the HUSKS boxout for more details.*

HIGH

AWAKEN SURROUNDINGS. [Divine] *You have been wracked with visions of the “true” Spire for years; now, you can make them a reality. The Delver channels their will into the city around them, temporarily awakening it to its “true” form. Mark D6 stress to cast this spell as part of a ten minute ritual, or D8 stress to cast it immediately.*



The caster cannot control what Spire reforms itself into, as this is largely up to the gamesmaster. The changes may or may not be beneficial, but they will certainly be impressive. On a success, you can expect walls to dissolve into shambling homunculi made of rubble, weird sculptures to appear, or new pathways opening to places that weren't there before.

SUMMON HUSK. [Divine] As POSSESS HUSK, but in exchange for marking D6 stress and enacting an hour-long ritual, you construct the ideal husk for your purposes from the structure of Spire.

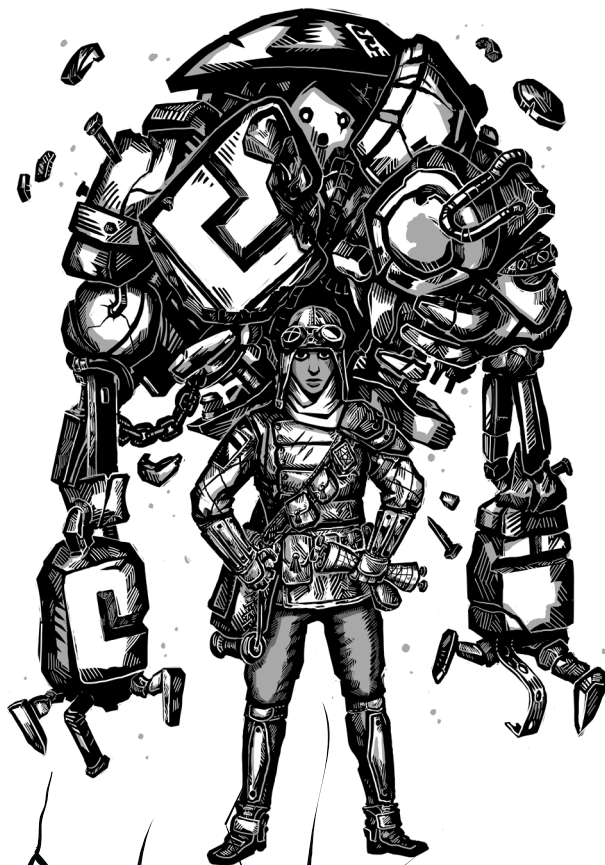
HUSKS

Husks vary tremendously in their construction. Most are small exploratory units, covered in barely-understood sensory equipment and defensive measures. These defences can include “ink” jets that hang in the air as camouflage, spring-loaded legs to leap out of danger, or galvanically-charged exoskeletons that burn inquisitive hands.

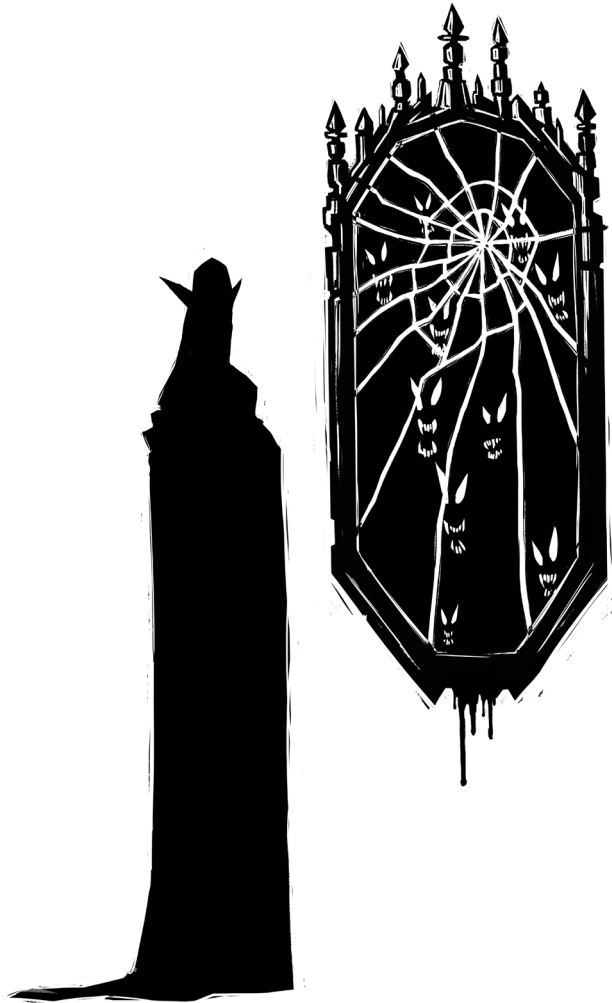
Husks can also be cat or snake-sized (intended for spying and other subtle work) or lumbering behemoths designed to clear fallen masonry or fight with implanted weaponry.

When you gain the POSSESS HUSK power, you can access one of these odd, unique devices. Treat ownership of it as an NPC bond, albeit one that requires you to cast your consciousness out of your mortal body and into a robot.

This bond accrues stress in the normal way, but a husk can't rat you out to the authorities: all stress is represented by wear and tear on the machine. You can remove stress (or fallout) by repairing the husk, improving it with new materials, or communing with its labyrinthine mind.



THE MIRROR WORLD AND FIENDS THEREIN



“Not all is as it seems behind the glass. Why does your reflection have so many teeth? Why are your hands stained oh-so-red?”

— Author Unknown, The Refracted Fiend Folio

EXCERPT FROM TEMBRARK'S JOURNALS VOLUME IV, LEAF 138.

I should have known better than to pick up that shard of glass.

The first lesson we teach initiates is to simply Observe and Record, and I disregarded it. But it was as though something was whispering to me; I swear the glass trembled when I touched it. I wrapped it in a piece of cloth and packed it away without cutting myself.

I was not so lucky with the second piece.

As I write this, hiding inside a collapsed crypt with no idea how I will escape, I wonder: how could I not have seen what was happening? As soon as I nicked myself with the second shard, it began to quiver like the first. My blood slithered towards it as if with a mind of its own, and was hungrily absorbed.

Even at the start of what I now see to be a fugue state, I knew this was bad - very bad. I tried to fling the shard away, only to find instead that I had tucked it carefully into my pack. After that, my memory is hazy at best for a while. I do remember combing the Heart for more shards, exploring unstable hallways and forgotten paths that I never would have chanced in a clear state of mind.

Eventually I came to my senses in a dusty chapel. A mirror had been pieced together and lay before me in a pool of what I hope was my own blood. The whispering that I had first heard now filled the room, swirling around me with physical force; the mirror pulsed with red light as it slowly absorbed the blood.

I could see figures milling inside the mirror, and could not stop myself from approaching it. Something in the way they moved made me certain that they were coming to meet me - that they knew me! I recall wanting to meet them more than I have wanted anything before or since.

I will not write down much of what I saw when I entered the glass; I do not dare to risk somehow drawing the attention of the nightmare things that live there. But I will say that they mean us nothing but ruin.

There was a sea of teeth and reaching claws and hard bright eyes meeting mine as the creatures advanced. I don't know how I had the will to flee, but I did. Their hungry whisperings followed me as I fell back through the mirror and into Spire, where I instinctively reached out to plead with the walls around me. I desperately threw them down

into the mirror, hoping to grind it into dust. I didn't stop weaving with my surroundings until the chapel became a solid slab of rock, entombing whatever was inside.

I'm sure that somewhere else, someone is just about to find a trembling shard of glass, or perhaps a whole mirror waiting in a forgotten room. This thought is one of the many that robs me of any sleep.

ARE YOU EVER CURIOUS ABOUT THE SPIDERS THAT CRAWL INTO YOUR MOUTH AT NIGHT? WANT TO KNOW WHAT THEY'RE REALLY THINKING AS THEY SPIN THEIR HIDDEN WEBS? THEN YOU SHOULD THROW AWAY THAT SPIDER MELD OIL YOU BOUGHT YESTERDAY. WE ARE WATCHING YOU.

Chronicler Note 24-b11: *The amount of detritus that Tembrark amassed in his crypt is astounding. Here is a small sampling of the many things we have spent hours cataloguing.*

Exhibit 24-a A small shard of crystal, apparently taken from a magelight, but which emits darkness instead of brightness.



Exhibit 12-n A collection of faded daguerreotypes that show the same drow slowly approaching the camera. However, the moment you put them down, you cannot remember the drow's face. Instead, you are filled with an overwhelming sense of hunger.

Exhibit 346-x A small, sealed lead box that held a writhing insect made of golden circuitry and crystals. It seemed to pass in and out of reality as it

moved. Unfortunately, when the box was opened, it immediately sprang into the mouth of the unfortunate adept Negil. We have him under observation.

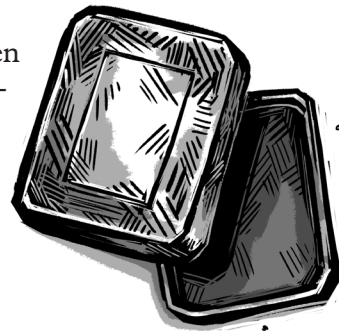


Exhibit 67-v A small, jet black cube carved from an unidentified substance, with a simple button on the top. None of us have been particularly keen to press it, since the box whispers and begs for us to do so.

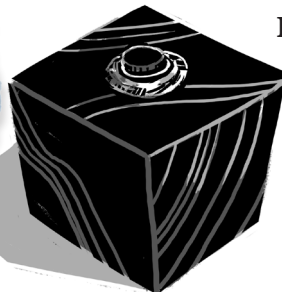


Exhibit 87-g A dirty piece of parchment with an impossibly detailed drawing of Spire. Parts of it seem to change when no one is looking.

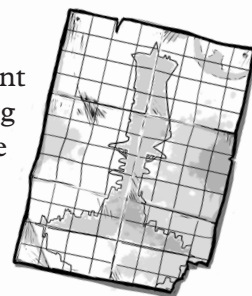


Exhibit 40-b A single shard of glass that steams in the air but is ice-cold to the touch.



Exhibit 29-h A set of ten finger rings, connected by delicate shimmering wires and etched with tiny arcane symbols. When worn, the wearer testifies that they have the sensation of moving or controlling something of great mass, but they have no idea what or where it is. We fear this is only part of a greater whole.

Exhibit 73-k Ten vials of blood. All are dated from the time that Tembrark has been missing and are labeled as his. Some of the blood moves with a life of its own, reacting to light and noise as though it were a simple beast, such as a grimeworm or petty-mole.

GHOST WRITER FOR HIRE!
EXTENSIVE CREDENTIALS
TRANSCRIBING THE SPECTRAL
EDICTS OF SHADES. PAYMENT
REQUIRED IN LIQUID ASSETS.

Chronicler Note 34-n6: *I am rather distressed by the following entry. "The thing that waits beyond the coldest flames" (his nomenclature, not mine) sends Tembrark into the worst of his ravings. When questioned, he becomes obsessed with the idea that this malicious thing is continuously drawing closer to him. I will do my best to compile his journal entries and my own recordings into a more complete account.*

EXCERPT FROM TEMBRARK'S JOURNALS VOLUME III, LEAF 24.

I do not know how long I knelt before that accursed doorway. My arms hung limp at my sides and my mouth gaped as I stared beyond the threshold. It was only after the khaat Renfrik pulled me away that I began to remember approaching the portal and developing a deadly obsession.

I had seen the door set in its own small vestibule on earlier forays and made note of it. Something about it drew my attention, like a beacon on my psychic map of the Heart - or, more accurately, like a darker section of water signifying the end of safe shallows. What lay there was cold and unknown.

However, every time I tried to focus on it, my thoughts would skitter away as though the door was not ready for me. I now suspect that it was I who was not ready. Or should I say: I was not ripe? I would forget about it, no

matter how hard I tried to remember. But I still often found myself staring at the door, with no recollection of how I had arrived.

The alcove was strewn with decaying packs, equipment and quite a few rotting corpses. Normally this would have been warning enough to go on my way, but somehow they did not register as a concern. I knew they were there, of course, but they provoked no sense of fear or caution.

When I stood before the door, I heard an insistent susurration. It was as though many dry tongues were practicing saying my name in a thousand thousand ways, never quite succeeding. As time went on, I could detect these scratching voices on the breeze even when I and the door were far apart. This happened more and more frequently until one day I finally found myself on the threshold.

The whispering thundered in my ears. Even now, from the comparative safety of my chapel sanctum and with the power of the khaat's wards still on me, I dare not write down what the thing beyond the door was saying. Words have power, especially ones as hungry as those.

I was staring down a seemingly innocuous hallway. At first I didn't see anything, but then the thing was there, and I knew it had always been there - possibly before this hall had been built, perhaps even before Spire itself existed.

I could not discern any distinct features. It was like looking through smoked glass or a sheet of water. One moment it was at the far end; the next moment it was at the invisible barrier of the doorframe, straining to pass through. Sometimes it was in both places at once.

I sunk to my knees amidst the bones and decay and wanted nothing more than to listen to its whispers, to be there for it, to help it however I could. I don't remember much else until the khaat woke me. I'm sure I would have sat there, rapt, as my life drained down that hallway and brought the thing one step closer to freedom.

But I did wake up. I remember the heavy smell of spice and sweet breath before my eyes opened. Then I heard a voice say, with acerbic exasperation: "No time for dozing, Tembrark. We've got quite a bit of work for you to do. Up you come."

I looked down and stared into the seven dark, gleaming eyes of what had to be one of the fabled khaats. Even we Delvers have only heard the barest rumours about them, besides the mere fact of their existence.

The khaat looked away from where it had placed two feline paws against my chest, turning to the doorway and the thing that waited. I heard its voice echo through my mind once more: "Excuse me, Tembrark. I need to put something in its place."

The air sparked around the khaat as it walked towards the door. The bones around me began to rattle and then levitate, the air alive with unimaginable roiling sorcery. I fell into unconsciousness once more, and I must confess that I am thankful for it: I fear my brain could not endure

witnessing the majesty of the Arts wrought upon the thing beyond the doorway.

When I came to, the hallway beyond the door seemed duller. An opaque shimmer filled it, and I could no longer hear the whispering creature within. The khaat looked up from where it had been grooming itself with a pink forked tongue.

"Come now. It is time we left this place. We have much to discuss, you and I."

DO YOU HAVE A HUNGER? DOES THE
TASTE OF IRON WAKE YOU UP AT NIGHT?
HAVE YOU FOUND THAT YOUR SKIN IS
AN UNNECESSARY BURDEN? WELL, DO
WE HAVE AN OFFER FOR YOU! MEET
LIKE-MINDED INDIVIDUALS BENEATH THE
CARRION OAK WHEN THE HARBINGER
MOTHS ARE IN FLIGHT.



THE THING THAT WAITS BEYOND THE COLDEST FLAMES

The Thing That Waits has many names and appears in different forms to each race, but one fact remains the same: it wants to come to Spire. The few who have escaped its whispering thrall speak of something unspeakably old and hungry, tirelessly traveling down that uncanny hallway.

The Thing That Waits calls beings to its doorway, ensorcelling them with its whispers and draining them of life. This is how it grows stronger and pulls itself closer to our reality. The door has been shut, locked, destroyed, banished from reality, and demon-wracked into absolution, but it always returns - and The Thing That Waits comes with it.

THE CONCLAVE OF KHAATS

"To know the mind of a khaat is to attempt to hold the flow of the spheres in the palm of your hand. It is better to let the khaat know you, and in that knowing, let a reflection be found."

—Cartiphas Blail, third Epistarch of the Vermis-sian Circle

The seven-eyed khaats come from Elsewhere. They are secretive and strange, and only emerge in the deep, dark places of Spire.

They have their own sorceries and schemes, and their own culture too. Each one bears insignia around their neck, though they never reveal the meaning of this to outsiders. They appear in patches of shadow that have lain undisturbed for centuries,

looking to acquire desperate mortal agents to act on their behalf.

In exchange for performing strange favours - as a race that lives outside linear time and space, all khaat requests are at the very least peculiar - these agents are granted psychic gifts from their feline masters, whether they want them or not.

EXCERPT FROM TEMBRARK'S JOURNALS VOLUME V, LEAF 245.

I had heard scant tales of the Dust Wardens, and only occasionally seen their dour figures in the streets of Spire. The irony of their relationship with Death and my meeting one of them as I stared at my own end does not escape me. It happened after I came out of one of my fugue states, which were becoming more and more common since my encounter with The Thing That Waits Behind the Coldest Flames.

(Chronicler Note: See Volume III, Leaf 24 of Tembrark's Journals.)

I remember staring dumbly at my hands, which were caked with dried blood. My fingertips were raw and the nails broken, as if I had been dragging them along some rough surface: but why? I don't know how long I had been sitting there like some sun-addled corvid, but the sound of sliding rocks and a low, keening dirge jolted me from my reverie.

An impossibility seethed out of a gap in the nearby masonry. At first I only saw a mass of flesh slithering through the door frame, dislodging more of the crumbling brickwork.



As it moved into the flickering sparklight of the hallway, I could make out more of its hideous form. I involuntarily sprang backwards, drawing its attention; and as it turned in my direction, I saw that it was the writhing, slithering flayed skin of a male drow.

It moved as though it had some fell intelligence, but through its sagging mouth I could see that it was hollow. Its limbs elongated grotesquely as they grasped at whatever they could to drag itself forwards, the skin flapping as it moved down the hallway.

As I struggled to draw my jackdaw pistol with trembling hands, the sight of a second skin creature coming through the doorway froze me in my tracks. The newcomer sniffed the air, its mouth sagging horribly. It whistled a low note to its kin and surged into the hallway, their voices melding into a hungry wail as they charged at me. That was when the Dust Warden made their presence known.

The warden passed next to me, a mere handbreadth away. They looked like a small girl, pallid and grey, an aura of age and dust spread over her skin and old-fashioned garb. Despite this, she walked with the unstudied grace of a child.

She casually pushed the barrel of my pistol down before placing herself between me and the nightmarish skin-creatures that fluttered wetly down the hallway. I am no warrior - I'm a scholar, a researcher - but over the years, my subject matter has required that I take certain martial precautions. I am ashamed that I let such a seemingly defenseless child walk straight towards those mind-warping terrors.

Her calm demeanor seemed to give them a moment's pause. But then they gathered themselves up, shrieking, and surged towards her. I started to move forward, though I had no plan - only thinking I had to do something before this child was rent limb from limb. Before I could get anywhere, she shifted her posture and the hairs on the back of my neck stood on end. A chill ran through me. She had suddenly become something else: a tensed predator waiting to strike.

She moved before the horrors could swarm her, defying gravity by dancing up the side of the crumbling wall and drawing an ornate balefire pistol like a seasoned warrior. She shot directly into the first horror's gaping maw, the gun crackling with gunpowder and sorcery. Its flapping body was shredded into fleshy gobbets that disintegrated as they fell through the air. Without a second glance, she landed with deadly poise behind the other creature, the barrel of her gun glowing brightly and hissing in the sudden crush of silence.

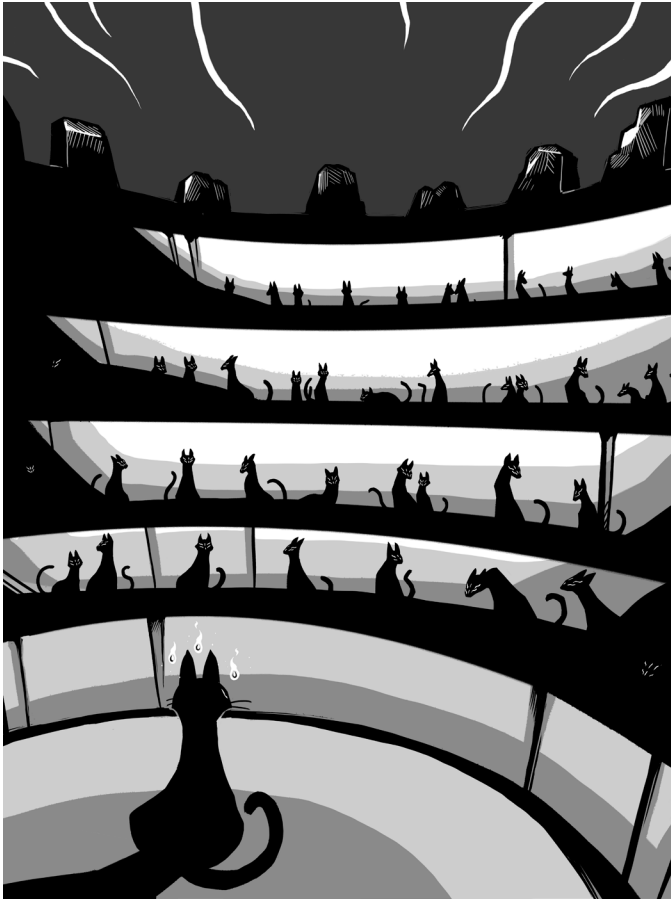
The second creature wheeled to face her, flaring out to its full height and horribly distorting the features of its former occupant. The warden dropped her still glowing revolver with a thud and closed her eyes, lifting one hand before her. Again there was the ineffable shift I had witnessed before, but this time her posture changed from tense violence to emanating tranquil power.

She began to trace complex, crackling arcane patterns in the air, the afterimages of her hands blurring into a ghostly myriad of gestures. Traces of cold light shot from her fingers and the patterns she drew, coalescing into a shimmering cage around the creature. The warden made a final motion and the cage began to revolve, faster and faster, sparking and hissing with arcane energies. It contracted into a single glowing point and disappeared - taking the writhing horror with it.

Once again, the warden closed her eyes, exhaling as if releasing a burden. When she opened them, she was simply a child once more. She gestured to the shadows behind me while I stood, slack-jawed and rooted to the spot. A

familiar feline voice crept through my mind as the khaat emerged from the darkness.

"Come come, Tembrark," it said. "You can't die just yet. We still have so much to discuss."



Note on the text from Varleis Embryn, the current Chronicler of the Katakos Savants: *Infuriatingly, the account trails off here. No amount of cross-referencing can reveal what exactly they discussed. Tembrark himself simply lapses into silence when questioned. If pressed, he will become catatonic for weeks at a time. It's as if he does it to spite us; or perhaps he is attempting to protect himself. Either way, it is maddening.*

This khaat could be the same creature from Tembrark's experience with The Thing That Waits Behind The Coldest Flames, but without further sources this is mere speculation. Besides, who is to say whether there is more than one khaat? Perhaps they are all the same entity, spread throughout space and time, toying with us as a cat would with a mouse.



EXTRA ADVANCE - THE DUST WARDEN

The Dust Wardens are twiceborn; pallid, ghostly drow who have willingly bonded with the spirits of the dead. They accept lost souls inside their bodies, blending their memories and skills into a new understanding shared in one physical form.



THE CREATION OF A DUST WARDEN

A Dust Warden is created with ritual and sorcery at the Well of Rebirth. The body of the deceased is covered with spell-inscribed funerary cloth and dropped into the well, while the current Abbot of the wardens presides over the Cant of Winding Paths and Opening of Doors.

What comes next has never been witnessed by anyone outside of the sect, but has been recorded in the words of Abbot Benjin Vrelik:

“...and out of the Well of Rebirth I saw come a most holy beast. At first it bore no resemblance to the man we had delivered to the depths: it was only shifting, luminous flesh that seemed to be both there and not there. As it crossed the courtyard, stuttering in and out of reality, it began to take on the aspect of the dead - as if being in the air of Spire reminded it who it had been. As it approached the kneeling Supplicant of Exaltation, it stopped; then, drawing the Supplicant to their feet, did kiss them firmly upon the mouth and seem to melt into their body...”

This bonding is what gives the wardens their strange aura. It appears to be a field of energy emanating from them, rather than an actual transmutation within their body or belongings: any item they carry acquires this effect, but goes back to its original state when discarded.

Higher ranking wardens can gain dispensation to bond with multiple souls, flowing through their memories and skills at will.

REQUIREMENT: Accept a lost soul into your body at the Well of Rebirth, located far within the Heart.

REFRESH: Achieve greater understanding with the soul that shares your body.

MEDIUM

BIND SOUL. *You tether a lost soul to your own.* When you take this advance, determine two skills, three domains and a knack that the spirit possesses. Mark D3 stress to Mind to replace your own skills, domains and knacks with those of the spirit for the remainder of the situation.

The soul also has motives, mannerisms and a personality of their own which they will display while you access their skills, overriding your body. However, it should be stressed that you share the same intent. This is not a possessing spirit that will send you on wild adventures: you are allies.

You can take this advance multiple times, adding souls to your body as you wish.



SKINSINGERS

EXTRA ADVANCE - MAIDEN OF THE MOTHER OF SHADOWS

The Mother of Shadows has existed for as long as the shadows themselves; or at least, that is what is whispered in the furtive circles deep within Spire. What exactly she is is the subject of myth and legend in the underspire, but what is known is the nature of her pupils: the Maidens. Hollow-eyed and grim, they emerge from the shadows to effect her will, following unknowable designs. The dark communion that binds the Maidens to their Mother empties them out entirely: blood, guts, bones, brains, all gone. The Maiden's bodily shell is then refilled with a portion of the Mother's shadow form. They are an extension of her, gifted with power for their devotion.



Even the most dangerous denizen of Spire murmurs fearfully about the skinsingers and their machinations. No-one knows for sure if these hex casters are a cult with some horrifying purpose, or lone practitioners of the darkest arts. The skinsinger entices and traps its prey with a song of arcane power, then animates their victim's skin with a life of its own. The skinsinger can then call this slithering husk to do its bidding while the unfortunate body lies ensorcelled and skinless. Most skinsingers only call their thralls at night when their victims are at home, hiding the frozen, raw bodies until the husk returns to lie dormant, its purpose fulfilled.





None set out to become a Maiden: it is a punishment for those who dig too deeply into the multifractal web of allegiances, secrets and lies that keep the city standing. The deeper these spymasters dig, the more convinced they are of a vast and impossible conspiracy: a secret behind all secrets. They are proved right in the most horrible fashion, leading to their induction into the shadowed ranks of the Maidens.

Given the Ministry's obsession with secrecy, there are several Maidens amongst their number (often in high-ranking positions) who have succumbed to the Mother's ultimate truth. They attempt to conceal the true nature of their being for as long as they can, and they are very good at hiding.

REQUIREMENT: Undertake the terrible communion of the Mother of Shadows, and become bound to her arcane plan.

REFRESH: Perform the malign and sickening bidding of your Mother.

MEDIUM

IN THE SHADOW OF HER WINGS. [Divine]

You skip between shadows. Mark D3 stress to Blood to step into one patch of shadow and emerge from any other shadow you can see.

THE DARKNESS WILL HAVE ITS WAY. [Divine]

The Mother protects her children. The first time you suffer minor or moderate Blood fallout in a situation, summon dark tendrils to defend you. Immediately gain 3 armour. All your weapons now possess the Brutal tag until the end of the situation.

AND DARKLY BONDED THEY STOOD. [Divine]

Your blood and bones are shadowstuff. Once per session, mark D3 stress to Mind to remove a Blood fallout result of your choice as you summon shadows to mend your body. Each time you perform this rite, your body permanently changes in a way that reflects your nightmare form: jet-black eyes, quills on your forearms, a long forked tongue, etc. These are cosmetic and have no mechanical benefits or penalties, but may get in the way of normal social interaction.

HIGH

THE MOTHER'S CHILD IS AT HAND. [Divine]

You are what nightmares are made of. Leading a congregation of several other Maidens, you enact a terrible ritual that binds you together in a writhing mess of limbs, flesh, shadow and fear. In this form, you cannot move in the real world, but you can infect the dreams of others. You spread like a virus from sleeper to sleeper until you take hold of the dreaming Spire. There you are the left hand of the Mother, an agent of horror and shadows. The city will only be freed from your terrible grasp by destroying the slumbering beast you have made of yourselves.

THE CARRION OAK OF DUALITY



**HEARD YELLED ON A PILGRIM'S
WALK STREET CORNER BY A
BEAUTIFUL YOUNG DROW, COV-
ERED IN EXPENSIVE JEWELLRY:**

"Hail, the coming of the Carrion Oak! Hail the holy and most high! Splendid and despicable, perfect in thy imperfection! At sunrise, thou dost bloom on the perfumed rooftops of Amaranth; at sunset, thou dost fester in a Derelictus pit. How glorious and wretched thou art!"

We beseech thee, most fecund and foul one, to grant us our desires, in this our hour of deepest need. We will do thine commands, oh great Oak! Thine favours, whether malign or merciful, we will carry out with our most faithful hands, for THE GREAT OAK PROVIDES.

The Carrion Oak! No greater master, no higher god! Thing and unthing, creator and destroyer! Granter of wishes and killer of kings! We are but tools in its divine plan, guttering candles amidst the ROARING CONFLAGRATION of its means and intent!"

VYSKANT ARE THE FUTURE.
VOTE FOR YOUR CLOSEST
VYSKANT HOST IN ANY AND
ALL ELECTIONS. THIS MESSAGE
PROVIDED BY THE VYSKANT
AUTHORITY, PREVIOUSLY
KNOWN AS THE COUNCIL FOR
VYSKANT REFUTATION AND
CONTAINMENT

Chronicler Note 84-x7: *We found hundreds of these strange messages and predictions on scraps of paper, the backs of books and even on Tembrark's own body. They reference every main religion of Spire, but seem to follow no pattern. Who are they written for? Had Tembrark been delivering them to people? Here is a sampling of one set that he had circled on a well worn broadsheet:*

You Who Walk Between the Shadows and Hear the Song That Never Was

YOU LIKE BURROWS? DARK MUSTY PLACES WRITHING WITH... INNER POTENTIAL? WELL, THOSE PLACES LIKE YOU TOO! TAKE A CHANCE ON SOMETHING... HOLLOW.

Beloved of The Huntress Mother

OH THE IRONY! SORRY, NOT LAUGHING. IT'S JUST THAT THE AWAKENED CARRION CHILD IS, WELL, MADE OF UNENDING HUNGERING HORNS, AND IT'S BEHIND YOU.

You Who Have Scorned the Call of The Deep and Seek Not the Void

YES, THE STARS DO INDEED TALK TO YOU. THEY WHISPER WHAT YOU MUST DO, WHAT STAIRS YOU MUST DESCEND, WHAT BLACK WATERS YOU MUST SINK BENEATH.

The Hungering Dark That Grows Within

YOU'VE MADE IT THIS FAR. CONGRATULATIONS! YOUR FUTURE IS FULL OF... FULL OF... OH MY... WELL, IT'S DEFINITELY NOT AN UNENDING SPIRAL OF GNASHING TEETH. CERTAINLY NOT THAT.

You Who Have The Crimson Need

I FEEL LIKE YOU ALREADY KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO SAY. IT'S IN YOUR HAUNTED EYES, THE CATCH IN YOUR BREATH. IT'S OKAY. WHAT IS COMING COULD NEVER HAVE BEEN AVOIDED. JUST CLOSE YOUR EYES.

You Who Grow In the Silence Behind the Veil

OPEN THE DOOR. YOU KNOW THE ONE. YOU'VE ALWAYS KNOWN THE ONE. IT'S THE DOOR, THE DOOR THAT KNOWS THE HUNGER INSIDE. OPEN IT.

Child of Stars, Child of Omens

THIS... ISN'T LOOKING GOOD. HMM. YOU SEE, THE THING IS, OH, HOW CAN I PUT

THIS? WELL, YOU WOULDN'T BE A FAN OF UNENDING SORROW, BY ANY CHANCE?

Walker of The Feral Path

OH BENIGHTED FERAL WAYS! NO, I'M NOT WEEPING AS I GAZE INTO YOUR FUTURE. NO, I DIDN'T FLINCH WHEN I TOOK YOUR HAND. OH, YOU POOR POOR WALKER.

Blood Friend of the Breathing Shadows

BLOOD FRIEND, YOU'RE ENTERPRISING AND BRAVE, RIGHT? YOU WOULDN'T BE DAUNTED BY WHAT AN OLD CARRION OAK WHISPERS INTO YOUR KEYHOLE AT NIGHT, RIGHT?

Crone of the Blood and Bone

OH CRONE! WALK OUT BENEATH THE PURE LIGHT OF THE HUNTRESS MOTHER MOON. LISTEN TO ITS INSTRUCTIONS. YOU KNOW WHAT MUST BE DONE. GOOD LUCK.

You Who Have Not Heeded Warnings and Seek That Which You Know Not

OH SEEKER, YOU PIONEER IN SPIRIT! ALWAYS FORGING AHEAD INTO DEEP, DARK, FORBIDDEN PLACES. OPENING LOST FERAL DOORS. OH! SEEKER? RUN?!

Child of Impossibility

IMPOSSIBLE CHILD, BEWARE OF MIRRORS... AND CROWS, AND TREES, AND SHADOWS, AND TEETH, AND FIREFLIES, AND PASTRIES, AND DIVANS, AND THE SKY.

THE VYSKANT DO NOT EXIST. YOU SHOULD NOT WORRY ABOUT THE VYSKANT. THE VYSKANT ARE UNDER CONTROL. THIS MESSAGE PROVIDED BY THE COUNCIL FOR VYSKANT REFUTATION AND CONTAINMENT

CHRONICLER NOTE: FINAL ENTRY

I wish I had never taken on the task of debriefing Escatoph Tembrark. Any knowledge he might afford us is not worth this. I know that is heresy, but it is also my sincere belief. As this is my last entry, both as Chronicler and as a Delver, I will let the record stand.

I was sifting through a collection of items found in Tembrark's crypt when I came across a worn leather folio. Inside, I found an intricate papercut mask, completely covered with Katakos glyphs. I foolishly read the glyph on the forehead without erecting any quarantine wards, and thus sealed my fate. The glyphs immediately peeled themselves off, gliding towards my face.

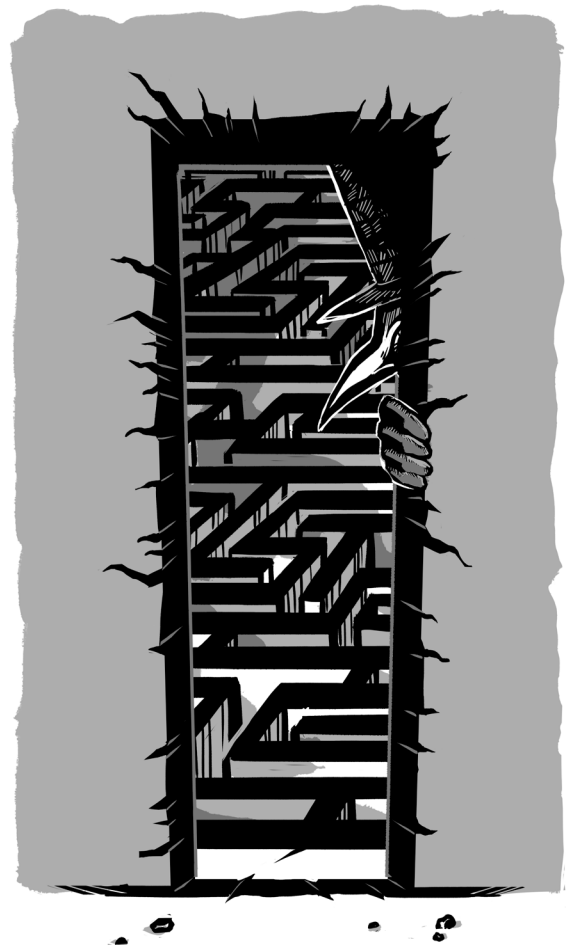
I was unable to escape. I felt the cold presence of sorcery as they attached themselves to my skin. From each glyph, shadowy tendrils reached out to the mask and levitated towards my frozen face. The mask pressed itself to my skin and oh, goddess, the things I saw...

A drow, naked to the waist and maskless, bowing before a beast of metal and sorcery. The beast descends, curls of metal snaking from its gaping maw and plunging into the body of the waiting elf...

A woman standing on a barren plain. Her impossibly long hair flows in inconceivable patterns, drifting through the air. She turns to me and her smile is like a knife wound, too wide and filled with ring upon ring of never-ending saw-edged teeth...

An obelisk stands alone in a room of pure light. From it, a pool of glistening ichor spreads like a bruise. The surface of the pool begins to churn; then a torrent of dark rain falls upwards into the endless white sky...

An ancient door stands alone in a forgotten store-room, propped against the wall under centuries of



dust. Yet there is a sound coming from it. Something is scratching. Something wants to pass through...

A god of mandibles and obsidian teeth waits for customers behind the counter of his shop. He sniffs the air. Something is wrong. A balance has been disturbed...

A band of compatriots look around at the recent carnage of a battle. The broken metal bodies

of ancient automatons lie twisted and charred from sorcery and violence. The group looks towards what they had fought to win. A moon-pale child sits asleep upon a translucent crystal throne. The inscription upon the throne reads...

The smell of blood and burning flesh fills the air. The caretaker fills his lungs and draws the ceremonial scythe once more across the whispering stone on his lap. Soon the Mistress will wake from her eternal sleep and the final hunt will begin...

Deep beneath the city, they burrow upward, chittering to each other. Their hearts pound to the beat of their ancient hate. Soon they will return to what they had been banished from, long ago. Soon all of Spire would cower before the name of...

The boy whimpers in his sleep, his cot cold and hard. Sorcerous tattoos and brandings cover his skin. He does not know what the robed figures are preparing him for, or what The Glorious Husk of Rebirth is. For now he sleeps fitfully, safe for a moment from what lies ahead...

The assassin leaps from roof railing to low-hanging cornice stone. Somewhere behind her, across the maze of grey slate rooftops, something bestial and mechanical roars. She curses under her breath. This was supposed to be a simple job: a low-level city official, minimal security. Something smashes through a grove of chimney spouts. There is nothing simple about this...

The priests sing hymns of guttural screeching and twisting metal. Their god sleeps, but not forever. They will sing their deity of metal and wires to life. They will enter into him and become his beating heart. Soon...

Blood slithers in from every crack and crevice. Three figures are surrounded by it, back to back in the middle of the room. Their hands trace complex wards as they chant, hoarse and desperate. The blood shrieks and circles them, writhing with unnatural life as it gathers itself up for a final strike...

Then the mask was done with me. It withered, crumbling into ash that smeared across my brow when I tried to wipe it away. Those images are still flashing through my mind as I write this; I doubt I will ever be free of them. Despite all my precautions and study, the madness of the Heart has taken me. I always thought that I would be Chronicler until my death. But this city ruins our best-laid plans, and now I flee my life and my calling. I hope I can salvage what sanity I have left.

— Varleis Embryn, Chronicler of the Katakos Delves

