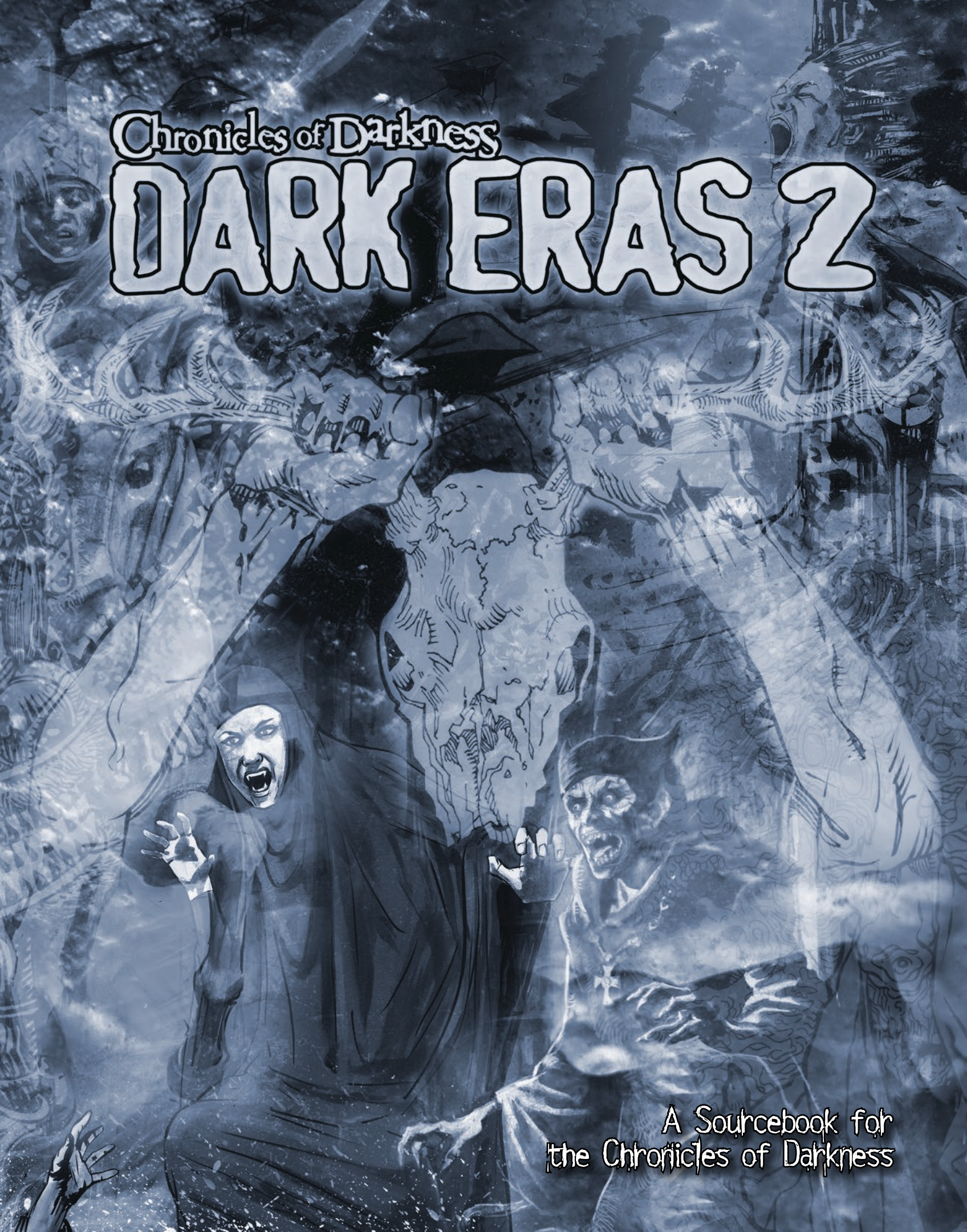
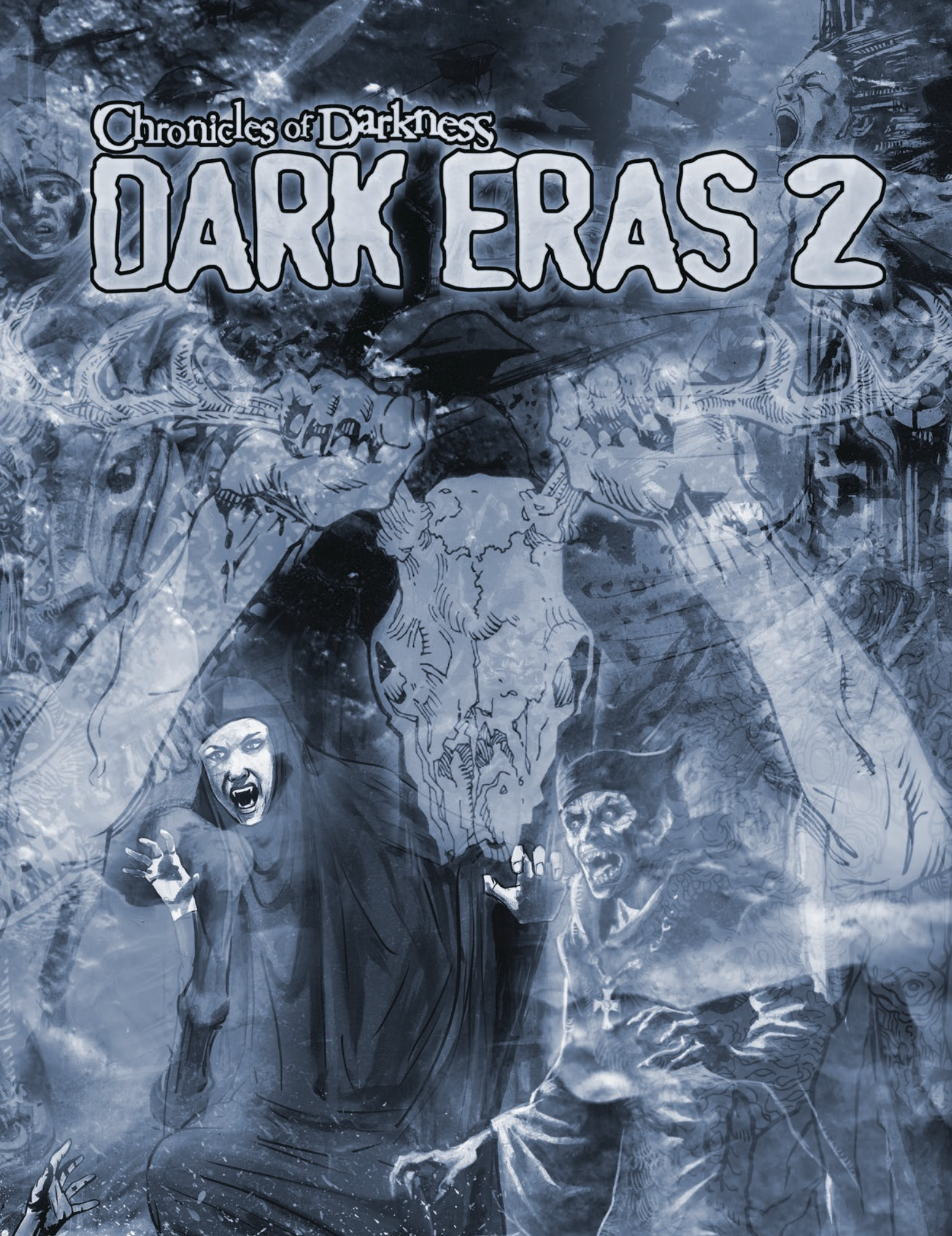

Chronicles of Darkness
DARK ERAS 2
A Sourcebook for
the Chronicles of Darkness


Chronicles of Darkness
DARK ERAS 2



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Introduction

Welcome to **Dark Eras 2**. Much like **Dark Eras** and the **Dark Eras Companion**, this book explores chapters of history through the Chronicles of Darkness. Each chapter presents two or more game lines set against a backdrop of historical intrigue and events. The materials presented in the chapters are compatible with **Chronicles of Darkness Second Edition** rules.

Following a description of the eras, a list of historically appropriate Skills has been included for use in your chronicles.

We are not makers of history.
We are made by history.
– Martin Luther King, Jr.

What's in This Book?

Dark Eras 2 consists of 13 eras, at least one for each Chronicles of Darkness game line. The eras are presented here in chronological order, beginning with the oldest:

- **Promethean: The Created/Beast: The Primordial/Werewolf: The Forsaken** — *Hunger in the Black Land* (1806 BCE): Sobekneferu was the last pharaoh of the Middle Kingdom, ascending to power during a time of transition. Her father built a pyramid and a mysterious labyrinth at Hawara, near Shedet (modern-day Faiyum), but she completed the labyrinth and may be the only one left alive who knows its secrets. The Greeks will later call Shedet "Crocodilopolis," for the crocodile god Sobek and his children reign supreme there. The Forsaken fight a war over territory and pride with their reptilian cousins, while Prometheans deal with the disparity between the Nepri — worshipped as kings and gods — and the others, evading mortuary alchemists and mummified animal Pandorans. Meanwhile, the Begotten seek allies to deal with the rise of senseless violence among Heroes and the waking Insatiable of the Nile.

- **Changeling: The Lost/Promethean: The Created** — *The Seven Wonders* (286–226 BCE): As the locations of the most significant manmade structures in the world are revealed, adventurers from Greece and beyond seek them out to bask in their glory. It is tragic, however, that some wonders must be kept secret. The Gentry do not respond well to their Hedge being disturbed, and the seven wonders are coated in thorns for the unwary. There is no telling what they will do when they encounter the Created, who have heard of these wondrous places immune to war, the ravages of time, and Disquiet. Though the Created seek to protect the wonders like a mother would a child, the Gentry have their own reasons for safeguarding them.

- **Hunter: The Vigil/Changeling: The Lost/Vampire: The Requiem** — *Arthur's Britannia* (400–500 CE): You've heard the stories of King Arthur and Mordred, Merlin and Morgana. Inspired by medieval romance, the Arthurian myth lives on. Get behind the myth, find the source of these tales, and adventure in Great Britain during the legendary King Arthur's

rule. For, in the Chronicles of Darkness, nothing is what it seems. The shadows we explore will expose darker secrets that follow King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table wherever they roam.

- **Beast: The Primordial/Vampire: The Requiem** — *One Thousand and One Nightmares* (832 CE): The Islamic Golden Age during the reign of Caliph al-Ma'mun is a time of great advances in science and culture, but it's also a time for getting into the mystic as the House of Wisdom brings the *One Thousand and One Nights* tales into the light, exposing records of true supernatural events and sparking unprecedented human curiosity about the unknown. The Begotten reach out to help their vampire kin (and others) cope with the mortal situation that's swiftly turning the tide against the night's horrors; the Islamic covenants must decide how to redefine the Masquerade in a changing world. During this time, the powerful Al-Khayzuran, mother to the Caliph, ensures the tales' power over human imagination through her mysterious connection with the Primordial Dream and the ancient queen Chehrazad.

- **Hunter: The Vigil/Demon: The Descent** — *Empire of Gold and Dust* (1337–1347 CE): Founded by King Sundiata, the vast Mali Empire was formed after several smaller kingdoms were consolidated and lasted from 1230 to 1600 CE. At its height, the empire stretched from the Atlantic coastline, past Timbuktu, to the edges of the Sahara Desert. Ruled as a monarchy, the Empire of Mali was multilingual and multiethnic, with Islam being the dominant religion. This period is a time of turmoil. Following the death of the legendary Musa Keita I in 1337, the empire suffered from a series of short-term, faulty reigns beginning with his son's four-year rule. With the empire's security and prosperity at stake, the creatures of the Chronicles of Darkness are on the move.

- **Deviant: The Renegades/Mage: The Awakening/ Demon: The Descent** — *Light of the Sun* (1630–1640 CE): Galileo. Kepler. Newton. On the heels of the Italian Renaissance, reason and belief clash at every turn. Scientific discoveries disproving heliocentrism are subverted and deemed heretical. Scientists, mages, and astronomers are arrested by the Inquisition, and their books are banned. In response, intellectuals on the brink of discovery turn to alchemy and the magical arts, and create deviants to defend their laboratories and universities. Not all in this age agree violence is the option, however, and worry the Church's power is too strong to fight. What's more, no one expected the deviants to have a mind and will of their own.

- **Mummy: The Curse/Hunter: The Vigil** — *Rise of the Last Imperials* (1644–1661 CE): The last Imperial Dynasty, the Qing, was established by Nurhaci following the takeover of Beijing. Masters of northern China, the powerful Great Qing successfully usurped weakened Ming rulers, but their rule was marked by their treatment of the Han Chinese. Despite this, the Shunzhi Emperor, assisted by his co-regents Dorgon and Jirgalang, began to preserve centuries of Chinese arts and literature while searching for mummies rumored to be active in the area. Caught between the present and the distant past, mummies clash with rival Arisen, sweeping Han Chinese hunters into their wake who must face many threats to uphold the Vigil.

- **Mummy: The Curse/Geist: The Sin-Eaters** — *The Scandinavian Witch Trials* (1608–1698 CE): Scandinavian countries quickly adopted the witch trials from Germany after the Reformation, and were even more cautious about magic and witches, as they knew they lived closer to hell than most other countries. Magic was no longer seen as a tool to alter fates or change the course of lives, and it was no longer directly linked to communication with gods. Those wielding magic were no longer respected and sacred, but were hunted and condemned by society, friends, and family, as witchcraft became directly linked with the workings of hell. A constant paranoia dominates the Nordic countries. No one knows when it might be their turn to burn for heresy. Sin-Eaters struggle to balance their will to live against their need for revenge, while the Arisen awake to a dangerous world and must decide what role they play.

- **Mage: The Awakening/Geist: The Sin-Eaters** — *The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (1716–1717 CE): Like the Great Below and the many mysterious places mages roam, the ocean's depths are seen only in glimpses, filled with wondrous and terrifying things that never see the light of day — but willworkers and the Bound have the means and the will to stare into these abysses. Although there's nothing kind about cutthroat pirates, the promise of equality and honor among thieves appeals to those downtrodden by the system, whether that's the British Empire, the Diamond, or the Kerberoi. Mage society teeters on the brink of civil war as the Silver Ladder allies with the Seers of the Throne to stamp out Nassau's Nameless Order, while the Bound sail with their brotherhoods to stop marauding Reapers and plumb the haunted seas.

- **Vampire: The Requiem/Demon: The Descent/ Mummy: The Curse** — *The Reign of Terror* (1793–1794 CE): Enlightenment philosophies and revolution shake the long-standing institutions of



monarchy and hierarchy in France to their core. Immortal Kindred hidden within the House of Bourbon scheme to hold onto the power and privilege they crave, while the beginnings of the Carthian Movement scheme to kick in some fangs and make the elders bleed alongside disenfranchised mortals yearning for liberty. The Arisen question whether they, too, should rise up against their Judges, drawn to Paris by the mysterious Empire of the Dead in the catacombs below the city. The God-Machine has its own plans for the catacomb's Lifeweb, and while mummies work with vampires and demons to unearth its secrets, the Unchained Agendas splinter into factions over whether the revolution is the Machine's way of cleansing France, or an opportunity to openly defy it and finally find Hell on Earth.

- **Changeling: The Lost/Mage: The Awakening** — *Mysterious Frontiers* (1874 CE): Five years ago, the First Transcontinental Railroad was completed, revolutionizing travel and trade across the United States. But the law still has a hell of a time reaching its long arm out here, and many are left to fend for themselves. The American West sees the rise of changeling folk heroes: defiant marshals and their deputies who win victories against Fae forces, badass Lost strangers wandering from town to town evading recapture wherever they go, and wily Hedge pioneers. Many mages succumb to wanderlust and ride west for new opportunities in the wild blue yonder. The Lex Magica and Diamond traditions don't hold much sway out here, and ain't nobody gonna tell an Awakened what to do out under the open sky with Mysteries hidden under every rock, like gold for the prospecting.

- **Geist: The Sin-Eaters/Werewolf: The Forsaken/ Promethean: The Created** — *The Great War* (1914–1918 CE): The Great War displayed humanity's potential to commit to wholesale, ceaseless slaughter of their own species. In such an era, the Scar tears asunder, and the Beshilu rejoice in the mire of the Western Front. Meanwhile, soldiers who, by every right known to mortals should be dead, stand back up to rejoin the battle — or fight back against the Reapers stalking battlefields throughout Europe. Now, both werewolves and Sin-Eaters will struggle to coexist, do their duty, and avoid getting caught up in one of history's deadliest wars.

- **Deviant: The Renegades/Werewolf: The Forsaken** — *Fear and the Golden Promise of Tomorrow* (1938–1946 CE): On the heels of pulp fiction, the first Golden Age of Science Fiction allowed the science-fiction genre to blossom in the public eye. Science fiction represents possibilities and in a wartime era, readers can't get enough of Isaac Asimov, Leigh Brackett, Ray Bradbury, and Jack Vance. Though these stories are works of fiction, it is often said that all tales have kernels of truth. In the Chronicles of Darkness, experience the Golden Age of Science Fiction as you never have before, through the eyes of its creatures.

Skills

The following summarizes pre-modern Skills presented in **Dark Eras**.

Archery

The Firearms Skill didn't exist before 1500 and didn't completely eclipse the Archery Skill in ranged combat until the mid-1800s, when cheap and reliable hand-carried guns became available. Characters born in the transition period may have training in both Skills, or just one. Crude, early firearms use the Athletics Skill to fire rather than Archery. Common Archery specialties include: European Bow, Japanese Bow, Longbow, Pellet Bow, Poor Visibility, Short Bow, Trick Shot, and Wind and Weather.

Archery works identically to Firearms except for dramatic failures: restringing a bow takes one turn just like clearing a gun jam, but damage to the bow itself renders the weapon useless until it's repaired. Storytellers might rule that an Archery dramatic failure results in hitting the wrong target instead, or running out of arrows if the game tracks ammunition narratively.

Sailing and Navigation Skills

The Skills a character needs to operate a sailing vessel will depend on the size of the ship. Smaller ships that can be operated by one or two characters will require less Skills than a full-sized naval vessel. Some suggestions follow for appropriate Skills based on the character's role on a mid- to large-sized ship but may be adjusted for smaller boats and canoes.

Professional Training	Asset Skill
Boatswain	Crafts, Intimidation
Cannoneer	Crafts, Firearms
Carpenter	Academics, Crafts
Cook	Crafts, Persuasion
Deckhand	Athletics, Streetwise
Navigator/Pilot	Science, Survival
Surgeon	Empathy, Medicine
Striker	Survival, Weaponry

Ride

The Drive Skill didn't exist before the late 1700s and didn't become commonplace until the mid-1900s when cars became more than luxuries for the wealthy. Transportation by animals uses Ride, whether the character rides them directly or drives them via coach or chariot. During the transition period, aristocratic characters might learn both Skills. Characters can also use Ride to perform basic veterinary first aid on common mount animals and build relationships with them. Common Ride specialties include: Jumping, Particular Breeds, Riding in Combat, Tricks, Tailing, and Unfamiliar Horses. A mount animal has a Handling score like a vehicle, which starts at the animal's Wits rating and increases or decreases based on treatment and training.

Ride works with Social Attributes except in cases where Wits is more appropriate, such as a roll to tail someone while mounted. Dramatically failing on a mount usually involves injury to the mount or uncooperative behavior, like throwing its rider or refusing to move.

Enigmas

The Computer Skill didn't exist until the 1980s, with the invention of the home computer. Before that point, characters use Crafts or Science to interact with cruder computer-like technology. They use the Enigmas Skill to manipulate information, navigate complex systems, solve puzzles, and create or decipher codes. It shouldn't replace interactive problem solving and roleplaying but should help offer specific answers and new options. Common Enigmas specialties include: Bureaucracies, Codes, Conspiracies, Research, and Social Networks.

On a dramatic failure, the Storyteller gives a dramatically appropriate misinterpretation of the information or solution. With failure, the character knows she failed and can try again with a –1 penalty. On a success, the character successfully decodes or obscures the information. With exceptional success, the character gains more answers than she was looking for or hides information exceptionally well.

Decoding Ciphers is an Intelligence + Enigmas extended action requiring between five and 20 successes, with each roll representing one hour of work. Encoding Information is a Wits + Enigmas + equipment instant action that takes between a few minutes and a few hours depending on the complexity. Mastering Complex Systems is a Wits + Enigmas extended action requiring 10+ successes, with each roll representing three hours of interaction or observation.





Nebt settles on her haunches, surveying the glistening slime with a squint. The nauseating muck coats the dark silt of the field in a fetid smear; rotting stalks of dead barley bend and crumple into the morass. It fills the irrigation ditches with night-black ichor.

The priestess tilts her head as a darker shadow emerges from the mud brick of the farmer's home, footsteps squelching.

"It smells like blood," Nebt calls out. "But sour. Rotten."

The figure draws closer till she can spy the holy envoy's withered skin, see the stitched incisions in Khenemsu's flesh. The rotting ichor almost drowns out his scent of salt and resin.

"I think," he replies drily, "it does not take the blessed wits of Wepwawet to know that." The Weret-Wesir wrinkles his nose in evident disgust.

Nebt snorts, and gestures at the prints in the sucking morass. "Nor to see that the scribes came this way," she says, straightening up again.

Khenemsu frowns. "Could they not be the farmer's?"

The priestess shakes her head. "So, he is not in his home? And no. These are not barefoot. See, they are the shape of papyrus sandals, and they are too many."

The two pick their way through the filth in companionable silence for a while, drawing closer to the river's edge. "Nightmares," Nebt says eventually. "The farmers here speak of nightmares of the ichor. The farmer must have fled to safety already."

"Nightmares?" Khenemsu's face remains fixed in a frown. "One of the weda rewet, then?"

Nebt shrugs. "Perhaps."

She catches another scent mingling with the sickening stench. Blood, but fresh.

Ahead, the scribes. They have come apart, the permanency of their flesh unwoven and disentangled. Each of the five men must have crawled through the muck; there, their skin, as if flayed from their bodies, then the tatters of muscle, the uncoiling ropes of their innards. At last, each has come to rest as a blood-slick tumble of bones, settled by a larger heap in the glistening silt.

Nebt's gut lurches in an uncomfortable sensation at the scent of blood — not *disgust*, but *hunger*. "What does your god make of this?" she mutters.

Khenemsu opens his mouth to restart the tired, old argument that hangs between them, but falters.

Something in the dark silt shivers and squirms.

They both stare at the heaped mud where the flensed scribes' remains cluster. It shakes, rises, sloughs muck to become a distinct shape that violates the eye with its atrocity.

The thing that lurches forth snaps with a crocodile's maw, claws its way free with the powerful limbs of a lion, but all are rotten and decayed, a patchwork of cadaverous flesh soaked in the black blood of Iteru. The eyes, though, burn with harsh blue light.

Its jaws swing open, threads of glistening ooze hanging between its jagged teeth, and it hacks and spits forth a gurgling cackle underlain with the screams of tormented souls.

"Desecration," gasps Khenemsu. "Chaos."

Nebt snarls, her jaws lengthening, flesh remaking itself as rage floods through her spirit.

"Then let us bring order!" she roars, and the killing form's fury takes her.

Hunger in the Black Land

1806 BCE



I am he who protecteth you for millions of years. Whether ye be denizens of heaven, or of the earth, or of the South, or of the North, or of the East, or of the West, the fear of me is in your bodies. I am he whose being has been wrought in his eye. I shall not die again. My moment is in your bodies, but my forms are in my place of habitation. I am "He who cannot be known."

– The Book of the Dead

Iteru is Kemet's eternal heart, granter of the Black Land's fertile soil. It is an artery of life-giving water nourishing successive civilizations that rise upon its banks. The river's rushing cycles underpin the very *ma'at* of the realm — the harmony between gods, humans, and land. Beyond Iteru, the Red Land is only dust and dry wind, a bleak desolation haunted by the howl of lost gods. The river is *everything.*

And now, it dies.

Bled by a pharaoh's hubris, the once-turgid waters ebb away. Iteru's recession reveals the river's sickness through drought and, in places, a festering, oozing ichor that smears its black silt — the tainted blood of a dead god. Ghastly chimeras of bone and withered flesh lurch from the mire, driven by terrible hunger. Discord festers in human hearts. The sacred becomes the profane.

Proud Sobekneferu sits upon the afflicted kingdom's throne, last of the 12th Dynasty of Kemet. Her reign is troubled, founded not on stone but on clay, for she surged to power on a tide of unrest and division. Ripples of chaos linger in a court rife with suspicion and conspiracy. The pharaoh seeks solace and tranquility in reverence of Sobek, and gifts that god's cult with great wealth; and in completing her father's legacy, the Labyrinth of Hawara, she hungers for recognition of her own authority and greatness. She struggles to restore the balance of ma'at to Kemet before discord and disaster consume the land.

Myth and magic interweave with the lives of the common folk who labor through the burning days and cool nights of this beleaguered land. Ravenous Beasts seek a new purpose before the dead god's hunger devours them in turn; Matet rise upon the mortuary slab, some as souls returned from A'aru to serve as divine envoys; and wolf-priests howl to Wepwawet with the rising of the moon. All turn their attention now to the basin of Atef-Pehu, where lies Crocodile's divine carcass.

Theme: Twisted Reflections

The cosmic harmony of ma'at comes undone. Chaos floods the Middle Kingdom. The land becomes a twisted mirror of itself. Gibbering, dead aberrations crawl from Iteru, their patchwork carcasses a blasphemous mockery of the gods' divine aspects. Cultists of Sobek profane themselves through cannibalistic communion, warped monsters pretending at holy mandate. Walking nightmares grow more desperate as humanity's connection to the Primordial Dream weakens, threatening backlash against Begotten excesses. Iteru itself hosts a horrifying Insatiable, its waters transforming from giver of life to vessel for a terrible hunger.

The Black Land's sickness manifests in strife both human and divine. Officials simmer with resentment; rivalries fracture the state's bureaucracy. Alchemists and demiurges blaspheme against ma'at, reaching beyond their station through power they should not possess. The withered, rotting god Crocodile turns in its slumber, a divinity older than the laws of death. Death Wolf battles with her malevolent *sheut*, a ghostly echo driven by hatred of the creator who abandoned it. Mortals and divinities alike share the blame for transgressions that leave Kemet teetering on the brink of oblivion.

A Note on Language

Although the ancient Egyptian gods and other aspects of that civilization are well-known in the modern day, we often call them by names the Greeks or others later gave them. In this era, we use their original names:

- Anubis: Anpu
- Egypt: Kemet
- Horus: Heru
- Isis: Aset
- Nile: Iteru (literally "river")
- Osiris: Wesir
  (thus, Osirans are Weret-Wesir)
- Ra: Re
- Thoth: Djehuty

The word "Promethean" is also Greek; in the Middle Kingdom, most people referring to the Created don't use one umbrella term, simply calling them by their individual Lineage names, such as Weret-Wesir or Temi-Nebu. When the Created themselves use such a term — aware the Weret-Wesir and other Lineages are all empowered by the Divine Fire, despite what the former claim — they call themselves the *Matet*, a word that can mean "likeness" or "copy." It also refers to the boat in which the sun god Re ascends during the first part of the day, in which context the word means "getting stronger." The Created liken it to their Great Work.

Other Kemetic terms are called out in the text as they're introduced.

Mood: Foreboding and Arrogance

The 12th Dynasty of the Middle Kingdom has seen incredible progress. Rivalries mend before the pharaohs' authority, great monuments to the gods rise up, and soldiers sweep away enemies. The people prosper. Now, though, a sense of endings hangs over the realm. The folk of Kemet fear losing all they have. Everyone, from pharaoh to farmer, obsesses over the question of life after death, of holding onto their accomplishments for the eternity of the hereafter, and hunt for any edge they can find — placating gods, employing sorcery, and cheating mortality's shackles, regardless of consequences.

What Has Come Before

It is *now*. Sobekneferu sits upon the throne, named for the beauty of Sobek and bearing divinity's mantle. She serves as sacred intermediary between humanity and gods, she is benign mistress of all who dwell upon sacred Iteru, and she is head of a vast, bureaucratic hierarchy of state. She is all these, yet Kemet slides into the mire of chaos. Gods stalk the land. The dead rest uneasily. Things that were never alive rise from the muck.

How has it come to this?

The answers are scattered throughout time's ripples, hidden in history's shadows, and buried in deep eons.

Dead Gods

Here — a moment too ancient for human eyes to witness. Iteru is eternal and, even in this dismal recess of time, has already torn a deep gouge through living stone. It may thread a different tracery of veins over the land as ages pass, marking new courses with its constant scouring, but it is always the same river. Something insatiable stirs in the silt, born of the cycles of ebb and flow that define Iteru.

Here — a death, of sorts. Something massive slouches and oozes into a great basin that will one day be called Atef-Pehu, its innumerable thrashing limbs rending the crater deeper. This is a god of hunger, colossal in size and meaning, a pillar of the world now broken and cast down. The jaws of an even greater predator have torn open the story of its flesh — the work of ancient Pangaea's boundary god. Crocodile writhes in earth its blood and immanence

Truth and Fiction

Given the passage of time and the scarcity of historical sources, the actual events of this era are unclear. Amenemhat IV was *probably* an adopted successor, and significant unrest does seem to have plagued his reign before Sobekneferu's accession. The events surrounding the death of Sobekneferu's sister, Ptahneferu, are even more opaque. Iteru's surging and receding waters seem to have played a significant part in the Middle Kingdom's end, much as they did in the end of its predecessor. The Labyrinth of Hawara remains one of the enduring mysteries of the era, both in purpose and appearance.

This era hews to true history where it can — monsters notwithstanding — and makes some best guesses to fill the gaps based on available sources and the spirit of the time and place.



churn to mud, seeking respite from Wolf's endless pursuit, and slowly meets its end. But its hunger never dies.

Here — a death, of sorts. A wolf, young but coming into her power, given freedom to pursue her strange hunt. Driven to question, never satisfied, she is called *Kig-Ur* — Seeking Wolf. She comes to a boundary unlike any other she has crossed. She crawls inside — a passage, a cave, a doorway into *somewhere else* — and perishes. Alarmed, she snatches back her Ka as it tries to escape and withdraws to the living world, but she leaves something behind. Her shadow wails, unheard and lost to the cold, empty tunnels. Lost souls have a way of coming back to haunt the living.

The Old Kingdom

Here — 900 years before *now,* from the crumbling ruins of an ancient scorpion empire of blood and death rises a truly human endeavor, suckled on Iteru's teat. The works of the Shan'iatu are lost to dust and desert. The survivors cling to the eternal river and to half-remembered truths from lost Irem. Broken images and gleaming relics give rise to a pantheon of animal-headed deities. Girded with violence, human ambitions unify upper and lower Iteru into a single whole. Kemet, the Black Land, is truly born.

This kingdom, later the Old Kingdom, witnesses monumental acts. Pharaoh Djeser raises up the first great pyramid, kicking off the funerary obsessions that thread throughout Kemetic society as a dominating drive. The grinding wheel of time sees pyramids, temples, and palaces burst from the black soil, the handiwork of a people united in vision.

All is not well in this great flourishing. Pharaohs and elites jealously guard the mysteries of death and afterlife, denying them to the common people. Tomb monuments and mortuary palaces are for the rulers, not the ruled. The pharaohs are not an intermediary between gods and humans, but gods themselves, growing distant from their subjects. Into that void step the *haty-a*, chief bureaucrats of the administrative *sepats* that divide Kemet. The haty-a hungrily gather titles and privileges, and the distant pharaohs' central authority crumbles.

Here — the first Sothic Turn since Irem's grim demise. Ancient dead rise in a brief return of the lost city's legacy, throwing Kemet into civil war. In the aftermath, the dead god in Atef-Pehu shivers in sympathy. Oracles dream of hungry mouths and crocodile fangs, and flay their own limbs with their teeth. The profane revelation slithers through the morbid faith of Kemet, becoming a prayer carved into the pyramid of Unas, a cannibal hymn exalting the pharaoh as the devourer of gods.

The dead god returns to silence. Over decades, the prayer's ravenous grip on mortal minds fades.

Here — the Old Kingdom ends, in discord and hunger, four centuries before *now.* The haty-a have grown overmighty, with too many rights and too much authority to pay heed to the wider state. *Apep*, the serpent of chaos, and *Isfet*, Ma'at's counterpart who embodies injustice and deception, coil through human society and are reflected in Iteru. The river recedes; drought dries the land with its thirst, and crops crumple in the withering heat. Something stirs in the silt; the eternal Insatiable rises from mud and slime to replenish its vitality. It stalks and consumes Beasts fattened on the misery and fears of Kemet's people.

Kemet cracks apart like dried mud as the Old Kingdom topples. The century that follows is a fallen age, where weak pharaohs vie for the right to rule. The Old Kingdom's glories, its treasures and monuments, are defaced, tarnished, and broken not in barbaric ignorance but through brutal clashes of new politics and ideals, a struggle of beliefs about the place of the pharaoh and their claim to rule. Iteru, sated, returns to its turgid splendor, but chaos remains abroad. The Ninth Dynasty's founder, Meryibre Khety, throws himself into the jaws of a crocodile.

The Middle Kingdom

The wheel turns; the people crawl back toward order and ma'at. The haty-a of the city of Waset found the 11th Dynasty and make war on their rivals. Menuhotep II is pharaoh when Kemet is finally unified once more. He inherits a realm scarred from memories of discord and violence. Even commoners bear weapons, and dissident voices threaten the authority of this new power that will one day be called the Middle Kingdom.

The new pharaohs learn from the mistakes of the Old Kingdom's hungry, grasping government. The luxuries of death are no longer withheld for the elite, but thrown open to all. Menuhotep's faithful soldiers, whose deaths in battle won him his kingdom, are entombed with honor and ritual. Some are interred with too much care and intent on the part of their mortuary priests. Several Nepri — called *Weret-Wesir* in this era — rise from the tombs, a cadre of warrior-Created made with the Middle Kingdom's emergence and whose Pilgrimages are intimately tied to its progression.

Here — the Middle Kingdom blossoms into a golden age. Now all may entreat the gods, and temples flourish. The people raise up new monuments. The pharaohs' pyramids are not as grand, and many lessons of architecture must be relearned. Still, the civil works of the new order build a sturdy, efficient foundation of infrastructure to harvest Iteru's bounty. Prosperity returns. Where old borders crumble under invasion or rebellion, the pharaohs' soldiers march forth to restore Kemet's glory. This is a time of vigor and culture.

Here — the 12th Dynasty wrests power from the 11th through civil war, the last gasp of overly mighty haty-a. He who will be Amenemhat I is first vizier to the 11th Dynasty's last pharaoh, rallying other haty-a to his cause when he challenges the throne. He in turn dies to assassins' blades, the final spite of a dynasty undone. The tumult is constrained. Amenemhat spent years in co-regency with his son Senusret before his murder, tying the bonds of succession tighter — a clever scheme future generations

repeat. Senusret restores order and tightens his control. His father's ghost whispers to aid him, and his scribes record Amenemhat's deathly wisdom.

Those scribes also set some of Amenemhat's final words — those Senusret is willing to share —upon papyrus and tablet. Literacy flourishes. The written word is no longer the province of aggrandizing pharaohs and worshipping gods. It underpins the empire Senusret rules through administrative documentation — a form of lifeblood as vital as Iteru's waters. Officials write one another to ask for resources, seek aid and advice, and complain about rivals or ill fortune. Some even create stories without sacred or official import — just tales to amuse, entertain, or inform.

Here — Kemet's new heart is the capital Itjtawy, on the edge of Atef-Pehu's great basin. Somewhere out there, beneath the arid land, Crocodile lies dead and dreaming. Its presence scratches at sensitive minds, sowing seeds of hunger and violence. This new encroachment of human souls upon its tainted ground stirs the ancient cannibal hymn, scratched into stone with bloody fingers and chewed into bone with ravenous teeth.

Here — the Dynasty's warrior kings are a revered memory. Peace holds sway for generations, barring ventures to seize mineral riches glimmering amid the Red Land's desolation. The pharaohs now are administrators and builders, the helmsmen of Kemet's prosperous barge. Iteru lies at the heart of their incredible wealth, but not without reminders of its primal nature. In the reign of Amenemhat III, father of Sobekneferu, it surges and floods in destructive excess, far beyond the ability of humanity to contain.

Surveying the devastation, the pharaoh embarks upon an audacious plan. Sweating droves of laborers carve a massive canal that bleeds water from Iteru into the basin. The basin's heart, once feared as a wild and cursed place, transforms from moldering swamp to the burgeoning lake called Moeris; the lands around it become a fertile engine of agriculture. When Iteru's waters rise high again, the excess pours into Atef-Pehu. The settlements bloat and sprawl, fed by this fresh prosperity. Iteru's life-giving, life-taking waters soak into the earth where Crocodile's dead hunger seethes.

Amenemhat III's long reign accomplishes even greater deeds. He bestows the priesthood of Sobek with great temples in Shedet, the city that now stands proudly at the edge of gleaming Lake Moeris. He raises up pyramids for himself and his family. At Hawara, he begins the arduous process of building a labyrinthine necropolis.

Here — Amenemhat III has no son to serve as successor. He grows woefully old and his judgment stumbles. He raises up a man of the haty-a to be his successor, Amenemhat IV. Seeds of unrest sprout into dissidence, then open defiance. Many nobles and officials want a true pharaoh of the dynasty's blood upon the throne, not a rival nomarch raised up to usurp the divine mantle. Their fears seem justified; the land convulses. Under Amenemhat IV, Iteru recedes. The sun's harsh gaze scours fields into parched, barren lifelessness and, in places, Iteru's black blood stains the earth with sickening rot. Rebels gather in the margins; Canaanite settlers agitate. Isfet returns, and Apep's chaos writhes through Kemet once more.

Here — revolution throws Amenemhat IV from his throne. Supporters of the old dynasty raise Sobekneferu up in his place, and she becomes the first woman to truly bear the pharaoh's mantle.

It is *now*. Sobekneferu is pharaoh. Iteru flows at the kingdom's heart, eternal yet dying, and Kemet dies with it.

Crocodile

Crocodile is a dead Pangaean, a primordial entity from a time when such gods roamed the Border Marches that split the spirit realm from the world of humans. After Wolf's death howl brought an end to Pangaea, Crocodile's divine carcass slowly transformed into something entirely of the Flesh, but the god's cold, reptilian hunger still echoes within its corpse and taints the land around it. For more information on Pangaeans, see **Dark Eras**, p. 58.

Where We Are

Sobekneferu's kingdom stretches from where the great Iteru delta empties into the sea along the length of the river, until her authority peters out before the lands of Kush far upstream. Iteru vomits a yearly deluge of silt and water into the valley, a seasonal rejuvenation that renders the land incredibly fertile — but beyond the floods' embrace, the land is arid and desolate. The kingdom's heart is the Black Land, representing harmonious order, while the deserts rasping its flanks are the Red Land, where discord dwells. Despite the Red Land's inhospitable bleakness, it is not nearly so empty as it first appears.

For the people of the valley, the natural and supernatural intertwine with no meaningful distinction between them. The cosmic laws of the world and the gods weave through reality. Monsters lurking amid dry dunes and oozing silt are as real in the people's minds as the crocodiles and hippos of Iteru; divine authority is as manifest as that of human government. Living in accord with ma'at's sacred tenets is the best way to maintain order, and to prepare for death and existence thereafter.

Now, though, the divine cycle is off-kilter. Fear squirms in the hearts of those who look to an uncertain future and wonder how the inhabitants of the Duat will judge them when the time comes to attest to their actions in this chaotic era.



Sobekneferu

Proud Sobekneferu, pharaoh of the upper and lower kingdoms of Kemet, has only a precarious grip on her throne. Her adroitness in court and politics is a necessity, honed by threats that loom all around. She faces powerful bureaucrats and officials; those who raised her up expect to reap the rewards, while Amenemhat IV's surviving supporters plot her downfall.

She inherits a land tormented each year by Iteru's receding waters; prosperity threatens to slip between her fingers. Some see this disaster as the legacy of Amenemhat IV's false pretensions to the throne's divinity, but others wonder whether the holy power of the pharaohs is no longer as sacrosanct as it once was.

It does not help that she is a woman, the first to hold the pharaoh's title. Amenemhat III raised up a non-royal as his successor despite two daughters, each capable in her own right, owing to the tradition that men sit the throne. Traditions work in her favor, too, though: the sacred blood of dynasty *matters*, and cannot be set aside because of an inconvenient lack of male heirs. The tumult of Amenemhat IV's reign is ample demonstration of the consequences.

Sobekneferu regularly travels the Black Land during the season of *akhet* to take stock of her kingdom, and to oversee the levies of common folk who labor over her monuments and great works. She sees and is seen, reaffirming her ties to the populace over which she reigns and their confidence in her.

The pharaoh has no husband or consort, and no children to succeed her. As each year passes, worry gnaws more deeply at the hearts of those who fear for Kemet's future, and the ambitious gather like hungry vultures.

The Queen and the Crocodile

Sobekneferu is named for the beauty of Sobek, a statement of divine allegiance, and she offers great favor to the crocodile god's cult. She gives glory to Sobek's name through monuments and grand temples in the city of Shedet and pours resources into the great necropolis at Hawara. In the great marble courts of the labyrinth, the crocodile-priests appeal to her pride and the memories of her father and sister; they claim the labyrinth's mysteries will ensure eternal life in A'aru for her and all her family. Sobekneferu, wracked by grief over her sister Ptahneferu's death, is easily swayed.

Yet the queen is no fool. She knows the priests manipulate her and pits their influence against that of the other powers in her court: the greedy haty-a, the sacred Weret-Wesir, and the ferocious wolf-priests of Wepwawet. Nor is she without her own resources: Loyal warriors, mortuary priests, and alchemists gather in her shadow.

Iteru

Whether peasant or pharaoh, all owe their lives to Iteru's bounteous waters. The year breaks into three seasons in accordance with the river's tides. In *akhet*, its waters rise to cover the land, and the bustle of agriculture comes to rest. This is not a time of repose, though, for the pharaoh calls her subjects to form veritable armies of laborers who raise up monuments and build infrastructure. In *peret*, Iteru recedes, but leaves much of itself behind, bled out into the irrigation channels and reservoirs carved into the ground, feeding the thirsty farmlands for another year. The earth, rejuvenated with fertile silt, is primed for the farmers to gouge, plow, and seed for the coming season. *Shemu* follows, crops rearing from the fields for harvest. Once they reap this bounty, the people turn their hands to preparing the channels, canals, and ponds once more before akhet's deluge returns.

Iteru is a gleaming ribbon of commerce, communication, and transport — the backbone of the kingdom. Kemet is scarred by dusty roads but, under the hot sun, a boat of reeds or timber turns Iteru into a finer highway than any dirty track. With oar and sail, the river is the vital artery through which trade and administration flow. The pharaoh's authority follows its course, soldiers ferried up and down the river to protect the realm.

Iteru gives, but it also takes. The floods sometimes reach too far, causing ruin or death, or do not stretch far enough and leave fields abandoned to the sun's cruel gaze. Under Amenemhat IV's reign, the latter became disturbingly common. Ravenous crocodiles and surly hippos wallow in its waters and claim many lives each year.

Now Iteru is a slit vein for the sickness bleeding out of Atef-Pehu. The black blood staining the shores with ichor is thankfully rare, but each akhet brings more of the reeking corruption. The river suppurates in places, a vile womb of ghastly horrors that crawl from its oozing banks.

This chaos cannot be left unchecked.

Righteous Order

Where once rigid hierarchies kept the pharaoh far from the people, Kemet's social order now offers greater freedom. The pious see all of society as interconnected, bound together by Iteru and the gods. Everyone has their place.

At the apex of the pyramid is the pharaoh, Sobekneferu herself. At the bottom labor the peasants who till the fields and the artisans who turn the wheels of Kemet's industry. Between the extremes is a cascade of scribes, bureaucrats, and priests of varied import and influence. Certain strata are discernible; the haty-a administrate the sepat districts in the uppermost echelons.

The grand bureaucracy is efficient and organized, but many lines between castes and classes are blurred through ambition, opportunity, and a level of social mobility. A priest may also possess a farm, the administration of which is more of a daily priority than temple ceremonies. A scribe may, through good service or ambition, climb the ranks and achieve greater power. Some positions are hereditary, granting successors titles, lands, and even priestly privileges.



The supernatural is an accepted part of the social order. Above the pharaoh are the gods, and Sobekneferu is herself believed to possess divine power. Seers are afforded respect for their portentous dreams, even those Oracles whose visions lead them to take up copper blades and guide soldiers to root out the terror ravenous Begotten spread. Weret-wesir are revered as divinely empowered intermediaries of the gods. Alchemist-priests toil in mortuary complexes, hunting the secrets of deathly apotheosis and eternal life. Twisted Claimed live in temple sanctums, worshipped as the physical manifestations of whatever gods' hybrid glory they most resemble.

The pharaoh's copper-clad fist is her army, its ranks mustered from peasants and artisans under the command of ministers of war. They gird themselves with hide shields, copper axes and spearheads, and curved bows. The Black Land faces few military threats from without; the great warrior-pharaohs of the 12th Dynasty's earlier years pacified the valley and raised up fortifications to protect it from the Red Land's dangers. Still, Sobekneferu maintains a loyal, professional core of career soldiers in the permanent garrisons of border forts. Foreign mercenaries from the south and the east bolster her loyalists' ranks, though this makes some subjects uneasy.

The pharaoh's administration enforces her law. A complex system of courts oversees judgments and arbitrations; a peasant's complaint might be elevated all the way up to the pharaoh herself should matters of corruption or injustice be grave enough. The worst punishments are reserved for those who desecrate the dead, threatening souls in the afterlife through the theft or destruction of funerary treasures.

Women have less of the influence and independence the Old Kingdom afforded them. In this era, they work, serve as priestesses, own property, and enjoy full legal rights, but a clear division of power exists. Few women hold positions of true authority or governance. Even matters of the afterlife are segregated: People believe Wesir favors masculine prowess and virility, so the funerary rites and spells for women serve to emphasize these qualities or recast them as men for particular stages of the journey through the underworld.

Bounty of the Black Land

Kemet's incredible prosperity stems from the fecund silt Iteru's channel births. Sheer fertility and sophisticated irrigation ensure even the least people of the Black Land can live in plenty.

Grains are the primary crop, valued for making bread and beer. The gritty bread grinds teeth but is crucial to filling hungry stomachs. The beer is thick and yeasty, its brewing often the province of women. The fields produce more than just grains, though — fruit and vegetables of all kinds sprout from the fertile earth. People add sweetness to their meals with dates and honey.



Cattle are the mainstay livestock, grazing on land unsuitable for crops, along with sheep and goats. The people hunt and eat river birds and fish. Even farmers and artisans enjoy occasional meat, especially at times of celebration and festivity, honoring the gods through expressing their plenty.

A harvest tithe takes a portion of the fields' bounty to the kingdom's coffers, and the pharaoh levies the people's labor during akhet to perform great civic works. Each year, workers set to digging and repairing irrigation channels and canals, hauling stone, and raising up monuments under the oversight of architects. The state's hunger for muscle and minds descends through the hierarchy, officials and haty-a mustering a workforce to meet the demands for each specific project.

While commerce thrives, no money changes hands. Trade occurs through barter, with standardized bags of grain called *heqat* as an underlying unit and the *deben* as a measurement of weight. Beyond the Black Land, the kingdom barters its produce in the markets of Kush, Pwenet, Retenu, and Crete.

Though life in the fields is hard work, people enjoy enough free time to relax and entertain themselves. They play board games such as Hounds and Jackals, Aseb, and Senet — although the latter takes on an increasingly ritual significance, representing communication between the living and the dead. They hunt, fish, and engage in sports, including tug-of-war, gymnastics, dance, wrestling, and handball. Children play with rattles, papyrus balls, spinning tops, and wooden toys; lions and hounds are both popular. The year is littered with festivals in honor of various gods, each an excuse to celebrate in relaxation of social norms.

The people revere the power of the word, spoken and written. The state is borne on the backs of scribes, not warriors; it pays for its achievements not in blood but in a churning stream of papyrus-inscribed messages and reports. Oral storytelling is a powerful medium among the masses, who listen, rapt, to the divine messages of the Nepri and shiver at the fearful stories the Begotten spread. These latter days of the 12th Dynasty also see a flourishing of written literature — not just stories about gods or pharaohs, but tales of life, of the regular concerns of people of the fields and streets, with all the compliments, complaints, loves, and hates that mark the passage of their lives.

Faïth and Death

The pyramid of power grants its authority from the divine, with the pharaoh as benevolent intermediary. The masses invoke gods with prayers and offerings on a continual, personal basis, not as the cogs of an organized religion but as individuals seeking aid with the problems they face.

An abundance of temples thrives in the kingdom's towns and cities, each ministered by priests and supported on grants of land and grain from the state. A priest's duty is to perform ceremonies that honor the temple's patron god, not offer the shrine as a place of worship for common people. Each temple is the sacred backdrop for performances that offer the gods their due, and often plays host to a manifestation of that god — an icon or animal believed to represent the divinity immanent in this world. Sometimes, those manifestations are Claimed or spirits.

During festivals, the priests bring these manifestations from their sanctums to be seen and revered, where the masses can petition them and seek their wisdom. Music and song, dance and spectacle play their part in honoring the sacred, both within and without their sanctums.

Magic is *hekau*, both concept and god, intertwined with the fundamental vitality of the world. It is the force through which gods act, but also through which humans can affect change — particularly through language, for words have terrible power. A cannibal-priest of Sobek who can take the form of a crocodile is hekau, as are the daily ceremonies in the temple of Ptah. So are the personal rites by which a farmer invokes a good harvest, a wronged party utters a curse, or a funerary priest carves an amulet with a spell to deceive the heart, so it does not reveal any of the dead soul's sins to Anpu. Magic is neither deviant nor inherently wrong; it is judged by the way it is used, and whether it brings chaos and disorder into the world. Talismans and spells inscribed in stone are popular to ward off ill fortune and protect the soul from evil.

Death is Kemet's principal obsession. The judgment of the Duat awaits the dead and determines the fate of the soul, an anxiety that worries at minds great and small. No longer are funerary ceremonies and preparations reserved

The Eloquent Peasant

The *Tale of the Eloquent Peasant* is a story of one man's battle against iniquity and the faceless machinery of state — but the man is a peasant, his foe merely an official who confiscated some of his property, and the tale depicts his arduous efforts to achieve restitution.

One section of the story helps showcase the land's incredible bounty in this time, and the sheer breadth of goods in which even farmers and peasants deal. When he prepares to travel to market, his wife measures out barley for his rations of bread and beer, and then he loads his donkeys with the following:

"...vine, purple nutsedge, natron, salt, pieces of wood from Farafra, hides of panthers, skins of golden jackals, pondweed, stone, [unidentified plant], wild carrot, serpentine, [unknown], [unidentified plant], ochre, wild mint, hedge plants, pigeons, birds, gutted fish and plucked fowl, [unidentified plant], shrubs, beans, fenugreek, and anise."

for the most powerful — although theirs are the grandest and most intricate. Anyone with enough wealth seeks as ornate a tomb as possible and mortuary goods for their own passage to the afterlife — after all, the luxuries of this world are a brief and passing experience compared to eternity. Some undertake elaborate schemes, spells, and offerings to cheat their way past particular otherworldly judgments, offload posthumous labor onto *ushabti* figurines, or protect their remains from desecration and decay. The Ab of the fleshy heart is the seat of the soul, even in death, so the heart must be protected at all costs.

The Fivefold Soul

The soul is rendered from five main aspects. The *Ab* lies in the body's heart, the driving force of emotion and mind. The *Ba* is personality, that which makes an individual unique. *Ka* is the essence of life itself, the breath that makes a person vital and animate, and departs through death — but can be sustained through offerings of food to the departed. The *Ren* is the name, the sum of experiences and memories, maintained after death through inscriptions that can be read, spoken, and remembered. *Sheut* is the shadow, always present, manifested through statues and replicas of the person's likeness — or even trapped and stored in the darkness of a ritual casket.

A'aru, Ma'at, and the Duat

The people of Kemet believe that, after death, parts of the soul travel west to the Duat, an underworld region where everyone must submit to the verdict of 42 Assessors and Anpu's test of ma'at. The worthy pass before Wesir, reborn for eternity into the fertile, starry paradise of A'aru where they farm and live in divine prosperity. Wesir throws the unworthy to the jaws of Ammut the devourer, who utterly destroys them.

Ma'at is both goddess and concept, a notion of divine harmony brought about by positive qualities such as truth, justice, and moral behavior. This ethical code reflects a sacred connection between humanity, gods, and the land. After death, Anpu judges the soul's adherence to this code, weighing the *Ab* of the heart against Ma'at's feather. When ma'at is violated, the consequences are grave not just for the individual but for the world in which they dwell, plunging lives into chaos and threatening the cycles of nature upon which the Black Land depends.

The goddess Ma'at has no temples. She is too important to be so confined; everyone in Kemet can worship her through the act of living a righteous life.

The state of physical remains has a huge impact on the soul's existence in the afterlife. Mummification preserves the corpse well, with all organs but the heart — seat of the Ab — removed and preserved separately. Often, embalmers place several scarab amulets within the mummified corpse as well: backup hearts if the fleshly one should decay or suffer damage. Temples offer mummification to all, but only the wealthiest can afford the best ceremonies and grave goods. Spells inscribed in stone aid the dead further, protecting their souls from harm, emphasizing those aspects most appealing to the gods, and concealing their flaws and sins from the Assessors.

Ghosts are usually seen as the ravenous Ka broken loose from the body, denied the nourishment they need. Death Wolf's ghost, though, is her Sheut: her shadow that has torn itself free and gained malevolent sentience.

Locations

Crocodile's hunger slinks out from beneath the bones of Shedet to pervade all of Atef-Pehu and even beyond, carried by Iteru's waters and permeating the Black Land's rich loam.

Shedet

Shedet is the greatest city of Atef-Pehu, perched on Moeris' shore in the large basin roughly 160 miles from where the river empties into Uat-Ur — what will later be called the Mediterranean Sea. A terrible blasphemy lies concealed beneath its temple stones and mud-brick streets. Lake Moeris is fed by the waters of Iteru coursing through Amenemhat III's magnum opus: a vast canal that transforms Shedet into a paradise — and a spiritual channel through which the dead god Crocodile now reaches forth in mindless hunger.

The cult of Sobek provided Amenemhat III with support and the fortune of the gods during his mighty endeavor, and he named his daughter in honor of the crocodile deity. Shedet is the cult's reward; Sobek's temples dominate the city, drawing in a hefty tithe from the surrounding farmlands and towns to feed its priesthood. Pampered crocodiles live in sacred ponds, and two monstrous specimens sit ensconced within the largest temple, bedecked with silver finery and worshipped as aspects of Sobek called Petsuchos and Pnepheros.

The splendor of Sobek is plain to see here. During festivals, Petsuchos emerges from the temple to walk the streets as a beautiful man, bestowing advice and aid upon petitioners. Those priests most deeply initiated into the cult's mysteries can shed their skins and crawl from the bloody ruins of their bodies as crocodiles, or echo Sobek's divine fusion of human and beast as towering champions of scale and fury. Bolstered by these sacred displays, the cult effectively rules the city. The haty-a who nominally oversees Shedet, a man called Thethi, is little more than an advisor to Petsuchos. Sobek's chosen are so ubiquitous that when the Greeks arrive, they call Shedet "Crocodilopolis."



As a religious center, Shedet is filled with monuments. Obelisks and statues line the lake's shore, intricate crocodile-pens spill from the waterline, and mighty spells invoking Sobek's protection are chiseled into markers at the city's edge. Sacred chambers and corridors delve into the earth, reaching down to warped caverns where lies the rotting god Crocodile, concealed from the eyes of the uninitiated. The priests have only excavated a small part of the leviathan, carving away its withered flesh with sacred knives for their bloody rites of apotheosis.

The Official

Khu is one of Shedet's leading administrators, ranked just below Thethi. Despite the city's sacred significance, the bulk of its inhabitants are artisans and scribes, and Khu's task is keeping order among them. He's terrified of Sobek's priesthood, which he serves, and he tries to pass that fear on, acting severe and callous in his dealings with others. Those who break the laws of Pharaoh and gods here do not receive traditional punishments for their crimes. Instead, the authorities hand them over to the crocodile cult. At night, their screams echo beneath the ground, and chase Khu through his dreams. **Academics 2, Intimidation 3, Politics (Shedet) 3**

Asyut

Asyut, city of wolves — which the Greeks will later call Lycopolis — rises on Iteru's banks not quite 200 miles upriver from Shedet. It is home to branches of several cults allied under the Uratha's influence — principally that of Wepwawet, but also Anpu, and Wesir in a wolf-aspect. Werewolves gather in the hallowed halls of these gods' temples, Wolf-Blooded priests tend to their lupine idols and pampered wolves, and spirit totems squirm beneath the world's skin, invisible but vigilant for threats. Death Wolf herself looms over it all, for an aspect of the death god lurks in the warped deep Shadow of Asyut.

Asyut is capital of its sepat, and the region's haty-a are all either Uratha or Wolf-Blooded under their sway. This powerful bond between the cults and the local authorities makes them dangerously independent of Pharaoh Sobekneferu's will. The city is prosperous not just from Iteru's bounty, but as a central hub of trade and commerce. The vast state storehouses are filled to the brim with foreign produce and the fruits of industry.

The city's priests render strange sacraments to their wolf gods. Golden wolves gather around the city, offered meat and jewels. They protect Asyut from would-be attackers alongside their two-legged counterparts and walk obediently at the heels of officials hunting for criminals. The finest wolves are revered as manifestations of Wepwawet and, when they die, the priesthood mummifies and entombs them.

The Traveler

Asyut lies along a trade route where east meets west, and where caravans braving the desert's dangers meet the wolf-cults to do business from far-off lands. For merchants like Senbi, the city is a place of respite after arduous journeys into the Red Land. Senbi has the slightly distant stare of a man who has seen strange things out there in the desolation, and he claims to have learned mysteries of foreign hekau from the people of Retenu. His most prized possession is a statuette from that land, a twisted, horned figurine depicting the god Ba'al Hadad. **Persuasion (Bartering) 2, Occult 3, Survival (Red Land) 3**

Itjtawy

Itjtawy is the capital of all Kemet, heart of the kingdom, and symbolic representation of the Black Land's soul. Here dwells Pharaoh Sobekneferu in her divine glory, ensconced in a grand palace of stone and beautiful artwork. It is a confluence of mortuary expression, sitting among several necropolises where pyramids and tombs stand as eternal monuments to the dead.

The city is only a little older than Shedet. It overlooks the mighty canal that feeds the basin at the edge of Atef-Pehu, and here Iteru throngs with vessels of all sizes as they bring a constant stream of tithes, messengers, and offerings to the pharaoh's stronghold. A district of temples surrounds the palace, and though Sobekneferu maintains as fine a balance as she can between the influences of the cults, the temple of Sobek is largest and most impressive. The crocodile god's priests attend her court and whisper advice into her ear.

Although an entire district is given over purely to storage and administration for the mountain of resources pouring into the capital, Itjtawy is a place of beauty and expression. A community of talented and experienced stoneworkers, masons, and sculptors work tirelessly on new monuments to the pharaoh and the gods. Workshops and drying fields are devoted to the production of enough papyrus to feed the city's hunger for the written word, and innumerable scribes labor over messages, reports, and poetry.

The Priestess

Shepset is a priestess of Hep, god of Iteru's flood and fertility, and a linchpin among those who raised Sobekneferu to the throne. Her intent to be a power behind that throne falls into disarray. The influence and respect the priestess spent years carefully cultivating collapses due to reports that Hep himself has manifested in the river's waters — but far from bringing benevolence, he spreads destruction. Shepset scrambles to consult Oracles for an explanation for this dire omen, while rival courtiers close in. **Academics (Religion) 3, Persuasion 4, Socialize 3**

Hawara

Not far from Shedet, where the lush Iteru-fed fields fade into desert, Hawara stands as a gateway between the living and the dead. Pyramids erupt proudly from the dusty ground, their mud-brick guts faced with limestone and capped with gleaming golden *benbenet*. A great mortuary district of temples, funerary chambers, and workshops dedicated to the mummification process serves as a thriving center of activity, but the silent monuments of Kemet's devotion to death

surround it. This is a true necropolis, a city where corpses outnumber the living, its industry claimed by the afterlife.

The labyrinth stands apart from it all.

Amenemhat III began construction on this massive monument, his levies laboring to not only raise up an incredible complex of palatial temples, courtyards, and galleries, but to excavate out an echoing maze of chambers beneath it. Sobekneferu finished his work, still hearing his whispers in her ear. Waters run through a dizzying array of channels and pools among the marble structures, pouring down into the spaces beneath in patterns rich with occult meaning. Incantations to the Duat's denizens score the walls. In the darkness of the labyrinth itself, sacred crocodiles wallow and splash. Processions of funerary priests stride ritual paths through the maze. Not every priest emerges.

Beside the pyramid of Amenemhat III, a more modest tomb was recently built — that of the pharaoh's sister, Ptahneferu. Its doors are firmly sealed, so none may see the void within; for among the funerary goods and treasures, Ptahneferu's sarcophagus lies empty.

The Mortician

As she works with embalming fluids and cutting tools, Henenet likes to wonder what secrets the corpses in her care carry with them to the afterlife. Everyone who passes through her funerary workshop has their own story, after all, even if her only part in it is the practical task of excising innards and inserting amulets. Henenet has seen all manner of eerie hekau at work over the years, even a body rising from her embalming table as their soul returned from A'aru, and she has gleaned some understanding of the morbid power that seethes beneath the labyrinth. **Crafts (Mummification) 4, Empathy 2, Occult (Restless Dead) 3**

Walls-of-the-Ruler

At the eastern edge of Iteru's delta, where the silt's fecundity gives way to the relentless expanse of the Mafkat desert, a line of defiant bastions rises up against the Red Land's discord. These are the Walls-of-the-Ruler, created by Amenemhat I to guard Kemet's east flank. They stand vigil over the caravans and expeditions that wend into the sands — and against the monsters and raiders that dwell beyond the Black Land's harmonious order.

The bands that venture into the desert under the shadow of the Walls-of-the-Ruler are primarily miners. The Mafkat may seem like an empty waste, but in truth it is a land of hidden riches. The people of Kemet tear at its skin to find the bright treasures beneath — veins of turquoise, copper, and other stones and minerals of value to the state's eternal exaltation of the gods. So too do military expeditions march from the fortifications to suppress invaders and raiders, although the bloody work of Sobekneferu's predecessors left little need for the current pharaoh to take such punitive actions.

The fortifications themselves are grand designs with rearing stone walls, each a bastion against almost any form of attack of which the people of Kemet can conceive. Permanent garrisons stand vigil here, and the heart of a standing army is born within the Walls-of-the-Ruler — veterans who have seen battle under the Mafkat's glaring sun and learned discipline and coordination starkly superior to that of levied troops.

The Commander

Djaw is restless beneath both the mantle of his authority and the desert's harsh sun. He waits for the day to come when the plan is finally set into motion: when his fellow conspirators rise up to overthrow Sobekneferu. Djaw's role is to bring the veteran troops of the fortification he commands into the fray. The problem is, he's not completely certain their loyalty to their captain is greater than to their pharaoh. He often dispatches those he trusts least to investigate the Red Land's most dangerous phenomena in hopes they will conveniently remove themselves as problems. **Academics (Warfare) 2, Socialize (Soldiers) 3, Weaponry 3**

Children of Iteru

The fertile river valley hosts an abundance of life — and of danger. Golden wolves, lions, and leopards stalk the land, but the most terrible beasts dwell within the embrace of Iteru's waters.

CROCODILES

The people fear and venerate the crocodiles of Iteru. Even at the best of times, they are a grave threat; a crocodile can trivially snap the bones of a fisherman or farmer caught in its jaws. Ridges of thick scales and tightly packed muscle protect the beasts from the copper spears and arrows of human retaliation.

These are *not* the best of times. The crocodiles' cold patience gives way before a dead god's hunger, and they eagerly drag screaming victims into the river's depths.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 3; Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5; Presence 4, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3; Intimidation 2

Merits: Hardy 2, Iron Stamina 2

Willpower: 6

Initiative: 6

Speed: 12 (17 in water)

Defense: 6

Armor: 2 (thick scales)

Size: 7

Health: 12

Weapons/Attacks:

Attack	Damage	Dice Pool
Bite	2L	9

River Predator: The Storyteller gains 8-again on a crocodile's Stealth rolls while it's in the water.

Terrible Jaws: Crocodiles can make a bite attack without having to grapple the prey first. When a bite attack hits, the crocodile may reflexively establish a grapple in addition to dealing damage normally.

HIPPOPOTAMUSES

The hippos of the river have long been a scourge. The bloated creatures are huge and aggressive. They smash boats apart and kill human sailors with their huge tusks; they sometimes emerge from Iteru's sucking silt to raid fields, trampling or goring hapless farmers and devouring crops. The beasts are so vicious that even crocodiles keep clear of them, preying only on those too wounded, too ill, or too young to defend themselves properly.

The sickening ooze that now seeps into the waters and clings to the shore maddens the hippos further. Some sicken and die, or are devoured by Crocodile's children, but the remainder are more dangerous than ever.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 2; Strength 7, Dexterity 2, Stamina 9; Presence 5, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Survival 3; Intimidation 4

Merits: Demolisher 3, Hardy 3, Iron Stamina 3

Willpower: 3

Initiative: 3

Speed: 14

Defense: 5

Size: 8

Health: 17

Weapons/Attacks:

Attack	Damage	Dice Pool	Special
Tusks	3L	9	Armor Piercing 2

Crush: On its turn, the hippo makes a reflexive attack against any structure with which it comes into contact while participating in violence; this represents the beast's great bulk, and its devastating effect on anything so crude as a papyrus-reed boat or mud-brick hovel.

Fury: When damage fills any of a hippo's rightmost three Health boxes, its attack rolls gain +2.

What Is to Come

Praise be to Sobekneferu, her reign wise and just. Isfet retreats from the Black Land. Even as the feuding between the priests of Sobek and Wepwawet threatens open war, the waters of Iteru return in full flow. Their currents purify the oozing filth, and the ravening monstrosities collapse back into the mud. By the end of Sobekneferu's reign in 1802 BCE, the floods return in such strength they threaten once again to spill too far and drown settlements. Even in Kush, far upriver, the surging tides reach new heights. Praise be to Amenemhat III, who in his wisdom gouged the great canal that consumes the worst of Iteru's overflow, just as it was designed to do.

Yet if it is Sobekneferu's divine benevolence that saves Kemet from the drought and the sickness, why is her glorious rule so curtailed? She perishes after only four years upon the throne. She bears no children, leaves no successors to pick up the mantle of rule. Once she's gone, chaos stalks the land once more.

After two years of discord, a new dynasty seizes the throne in 1800 BCE, but it cannot ease the strife. The first of these new pharaohs calls himself Sobekhotep after his ascension, but he chases a futile dream. Flattering Sobek no longer brings the divine aid it once offered, for the cult of the crocodile god is now a pale shadow of its former glory; the victorious werewolves of Asyut have brought it to ruin.

His successors stumble; the power of Kemet crumbles. In its wake come outsiders who snatch the opportunity to reap Iteru's bounty and raise up their own dominion. Some come as settlers, peaceably stepping into the void the pharaohs leave behind; others are invaders, conquerors, and soon kings. The greatest of these are the *heka kasut*, the Hyksos, who come from the east to rule. In 1650 BCE, they raise up a dynasty of their own.

Rival kingdoms carve up the Black Land's fertile earth, a patchwork of dynasties rising and falling along Iteru's gleaming ribbon. The Hyksos consolidate their power, but eventually they too fall. Order and harmony return to Kemet in 1550 BCE under what will become known as the New Kingdom.

The years are not kind to Shedet or Hawara. While Sobekneferu still lives, the conflict between the cults of Sobek and Wepwawet comes to a head — and the children of Crocodile falter. For all their blasphemous might, the spirit magic of the Forsaken and the treachery of the Pure are their undoing. Death Wolf descends upon Hawara, hungry for reunion with her wayward Sheut. In desperation, the crocodile priests attempt one grotesque last gasp of fusion between their rotting god and the divine symbolism of the pharaonic mantle. Sobekneferu does not survive, and with her dies their hope.

The werewolves bury Crocodile once more, and the Sobeki scatter. In the hour of her triumph, Death Wolf is

also denied her prize; the god's mad Sheut slips the grasp of her jaws, glutted on Crocodile's Essence and stronger than the Firstborn expects it to be. She howls her frustration, and the Shadow shakes.

Sobek's mortal cult survives, stripped of its carrion power. The temples are still home to pampered, slothful crocodiles laden with jewels. Alexander the Great brings conquest to a weakened *"Aigyptos"* in 332 BCE, and in his wake rise the Ptolemies. Ptolemy II renames Crocodilopolis to Arsinoë in honor of his sister-wife, the Queen of Thrace, and a new cult dethrones Sobek's — for Arsinoë is herself venerated as divine.

What is left of the ancient husk of Crocodile is almost forgotten — but not entirely. Dark things slither through the cool shade of Kemet's night; some suckle or gnaw on the dead god's flesh. Others study it, or push themselves into desiccated union and become withered cankers in the divinity's body. A strange cult to Apollo Lykeios emerges beside that of Arsinoë in the city, its wolf-priests hungry to delve into Shedet's old secrets.

Soon, the world changes again. The Romans, beneath their gleaming golden standards, subjugate *"Aegyptus"* and make it a province of their own in 30 BCE. Arsinoë is just another settlement in the region now known as Arcadia, part of the great breadbasket that feeds Rome's relentless appetite. In time, the rise of Christianity sweeps away the last traces of old gods. Arsinoë becomes the seat of a bishopric. Lingering echoes remain; a proclivity for heresy and schism is common among the bishops of Arsinoë. Many of the crocodile city's priests have a certain hunger that sets them at odds with the greater church.

Almost nothing remains of the sacred passages beneath the city now. Yet, even as crawling blood drinkers learn secrets of divine sorcery at the feet of an angel beneath the city of Thebes, a handful of their kin cavorts in the darkness beneath Arsinoë, slaking their thirst upon ancient, black blood.

The Begotten of the Black Land face a paradigm shift after Sobekneferu's fall. Beasts and Oracles — now Heroes — settle into their future roles as the clamor of innumerable human hopes and fears drowns out the Primordial Dream's song. Heroes no longer receive clear omens, seeing only Beasts and their nightmares with any clarity.

Begotten excesses lay the foundations of their own doom. No longer able to pierce the static and reach the Dream, humanity's stories coalesce into a new framework of understanding that replaces the old, instinctive connection to that realm — and these stories solidify into tales of monsters that must be slain, because of how so many of the Begotten acted during Sobekneferu's reign. The efforts of the Sages are for nothing, but the Assessors, at least, salvage a future from the wreckage; their tenets of teaching lessons, and the guidance that fear can bring to a life, remain even once the Middle Kingdom's glories are no more than dust.

Beast: Portents of Hunger

Man must learn that what he does may have consequences.

— Inscription in the Karnak temple complex

In Kemet, myth and monster loom large in the fragile minds of humanity. The Black Land is defined by its opposition to the Red Land — the dangers lurking in the shadows, the wilting heat of the wastes that lie beyond the pharaoh's authority, and the unrighteous whose iniquity threatens ma'at. Kemet's people place great faith in the stories they tell one another of gods forging harmony from discord, and of monsters that creep in the margins but are held back by the power of righteous living. As the black soil is fertile ground for bounteous crops, so are the people's minds a rich bed for the many threats they fear to bloom in. Nature is vast and uncaring, humanity easily broken before its thoughtless cruelty.

Beasts of future ages think the Middle Kingdom must have been a time when the Begotten strode the lands, fear in one hand and wisdom in the other. The Children must have thrived, taught, and played their part in Kemet's grand mythos, shaping how its people understand the world.

The Beasts of Sobekneferu's reign possess no such splendor. This is not an apogee for the Begotten, but a nadir, mired in hunger. Crocodile's influence makes it harder for the Children to hold on to their ideals and reject becoming nothing but appetite — but they struggle onward nonetheless. Some end up little more than ravenous solipsists, the unwanted psychic effluvia of the collective unconscious ejected into human form. These wretches have no concept of lessons, no instinctive notion of a Dark Mother, and stand as a stark warning to the rest. The Begotten of this era must shape their understanding of the world through the lens of Kemet, and it is a harsh, cruel light in which to stand.

Thus, Beasts grasp at a higher purpose. They gather in sects, dreaming of a future in which they are not the foes of ma'at, but its grim guardians. Time will tell if their dream is realized, or if it becomes just another nightmare.

The Clarity of Dreams

For millennia, humanity drew wisdom from the Primordial Dream. Sleeping humans sensed growing threats propagating through its psychic medium, an uneasiness taking shape in the figments of their minds. A Beast's depredations or the advent of some calamity would ring clear; the Primordial Dream would spread the warning into the slumbering thoughts of peoples who had never met. It served as a shared, subconscious archive of potential perils.

While the Dream still lingers close to the slumbering thoughts of humanity, the sea of sleep is ever more disturbed.



Humans are victims of their own success. Once, a few hundred might gather together, but now each encounters thousands of other human beings over the years. Great cities produce a bubbling psychic broth of innumerable sleeping minds. The tide of humanity surges more strongly with each passing century. The sheer weight of dreamers now adrift in the astral seas obscures the Primordial Dream's portents and omens behind the insistent buzz of their anxieties and irrationalities.

Most are no longer closely in touch with the Dream except when a Horror is near. The narrative of the dreaming species has not yet cemented those whom Beasts will know as Heroes in future ages into that role; they are born with a stronger link to the Dream than their peers, and its portents burn brightly in their minds still, though the messages are now often vague or terrifying rather than elucidating.

Like Iteru's waters, the Primordial Dream overflows with fears, flooding from the sheer weight of humanity. Beasts are that flood — the psychic pressure of the Dream given outlet into the fertile soil of the populace. In turn, those Devoured today fear they may have no greater purpose — that they may not be the Begotten but the *mis*begotten, a violation of the mind vomited forth into the world only to ease the roiling currents of the Primordial Dream. Searching for true meaning and a bulwark against the relentless hunger, they gather in sects and seek to forge a new way forward.

More change is coming. The Dream's tides surge more fiercely yet as the weight of humanity grows. Civilization builds a growing body of stories that guide understanding. The narrative of Beast and Hero is not yet set in stone.

Dark Mothers and the Divine Apex

Three Beast sects have taken root by Sobekneferu's reign, each seeking purpose for the Begotten rather than living only for their own satiation. Though small, the sects see how the changing Primordial Dream may define the future relationship between Horrors and humanity. These Beasts are visionaries, hungering for more than just the next meal.

The **Assessors**, or *weda rewet*, are the largest sect. They believe their Dark Mother is Ammut the Devourer, she who waits to consume the souls of the unworthy; thus, they name themselves divine judges, like the 42 Assessors in the Duat. The demonic Devourer is the lingering hunger behind all things, the waiting doom that catches the unwary in her jaws — yet she is not a mindless destroyer, and does not seek to spread chaos. The Assessors declare Ammut not the enemy of ma'at but a necessary threat against which righteousness can be defined. Without Ammut, those who stray from the path of order would not suffer for their failings.

This sect believes their duty as envoys of Ammut is to judge humanity, winnow out the unworthy, and teach the folly of iniquity and sin. Their task is to prowl the Black Land, root out isfet, and make a terrifying example of those who spread chaos so the rest may learn.

The **Sages**, or *rekh khet*, fight their Hunger, desperate to find a deeper meaning in the Primordial Dream and to understand their origins. Hunters of truth and keepers of lore, the Sages set themselves apart from other Beasts and consider the Hunger an enemy or obstacle to be overcome rather than embraced. They see the Begotten as the poisonous children of the Dream, cast out into the world without apparent purpose after having somehow angered their Dark Mother, whom they believe to be the night-sky goddess Nut.

Yet the Dream grows ever more distant. One day, even the Oracles of the gods will no longer hear its warnings. The rekh khet see an opportunity to step into that void, to become shepherds to humanity and teachers of the Dream's wisdom — if only they can somehow find a way to shuck the Hunger's terrible grip upon their souls.

The **Exalters of the Apex** are the third and most deviant sect. These Beasts gather to recite the cannibal hymn first wrought under Pharaoh Unas and seek divine Inheritance through a "Dark Father" of sorts. The ravening appetite Begotten bear within them is clearly powerful hekau, and the cannibal hymn speaks of the consumption of the gods themselves, seizing their power through the alchemy of flesh and guts. While humanity drifts away from the Primordial Dream, the Exalters seek to anchor their connection and draw power from it.

The Exalters kill priests and despoil temple sanctums, because they see divinity as a zero-sum game; if they are to raise up a god of Beasts, they must first tear down another god. Following the stirring pangs of Crocodile's hunger, the Exalters of the Apex settle their gaze upon Shedet and seek a way to pry a gobbet of the dead god's flesh from the Sobeki's jealous grasp. Once they do, they plan to build a grand Hive deep in the Primordial Dream, founded upon the terror of humans who have witnessed the gods' power shattered, there to thrust Crocodile's heart into the Dream's farthest reaches — where it can be truly reborn as a dark father and divine patron.

Hunger's Lonely Children

In Kemet, a monstrous hunger seethes under the land — the tainted presence of Crocodile, the dead god beneath Atef-Pehu. This insatiable force resonates in the Devoured souls of the Begotten, driving them toward greater excesses of gluttony in a desperate attempt to sate the abomination that gnaws at their Horrors.

Perhaps due to the open jaws of Crocodile, more are Begotten in the Iteru valley than anywhere else in the world. Still, they are too few to often encounter one another soon after the Devouring, and it is rare for another Beast to perform it. Most suffer alone, seemingly cursed by the gods with terrible nightmares, until one day the psychic pressure is too great and the dam within their mind breaks, letting a Horror in. From then on, they risk becoming slaves to their Hungers. The sects scramble to find the newly Devoured and offer guidance before they fall victim to gluttony.

Every Beast in the Black Land, even a ravening and solipsistic one, comes into her inheritance with the baggage of Kemetic culture, and this shapes how Begotten see themselves. Their Horrors' shapes are often formed in reflection of Kemet's particular anxieties. Twisted, leering giants represent the fear of foreigners and outsiders who bring chaos; things with reptilian mouths or feral aspect reflect the dangers of the Black Land's predators; amalgamations of man and beast represent fear of offending the gods, of ma'at trampled underfoot and the natural order overturned; cadavers of withered flesh, rasping sands, and gibbering wind speak of the Red Land's cruel desolation; and monstrous hybrids that hunger for hearts are borne upon Kemet's obsession with death and the afterlife. The Begotten have no notion of such Family names as Eshmaki or Makara.

At first, many newly Devoured Beasts wonder whether the gods have chosen them as Oracles. Their Horrors may mimic the appearance of the divine, and they obviously possess powerful hekau. A few cling to such pretensions, lounging in the sacred halls of temples as manifestations of whatever god onto whom they latch and supping upon the anxieties of cowed petitioners. These cuckoos are most likely to be Collectors or Tyrants, and rarely last long; the Dream sings of their presence too clearly, and remaining in place makes them easy targets for tergiversatory Oracles, the Exalters of the Apex, other supernatural beings, or the pharaoh's judgment against a seeming manifestation of isfet.

If not intermediaries to the gods, some Beasts come to believe they are, instead, demons or spirits of chaos. It's all the excuse they need to indulge their appetites as much as they desire, disregarding the human cost of their excesses; they give in to Crocodile's hunger and become utter monsters. They do not teach lessons or strive for a higher purpose; they don't even consider the possibility. Such Begotten see themselves as *honest* nightmares: They take what they want to fulfill their Hungers and to survive, reveling in the power they wield over mortals. All three sects reject these indiscriminate savages, barely regarding them as kin anymore. The sects often clash directly with these monstrous figures, hoping they might be redeemed if they're not yet too far gone, or prevented from spreading further discord if not.

Systems

Although the Beasts of this era have no universal names to put to their Families, the Families function the same way they do in the modern day, and some Children of the time — particularly Sages — give other names in their own language to the Family groups they observe through their Horrors' similarities.

The Chains of Appetite: Beasts in this era lose Satiety faster than normal due to Crocodile's hunger; treat the Lair



NEW KINSHIP NIGHTMARE: DEAD HUNGER (SOBEKI)

You are hungry, relentlessly hungry. Nothing sates your hunger but raw, dripping flesh. You look down at your own arm and salivate.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Satiety vs. Composure + Supernatural Tolerance

Normal: The victim suffers the moderate Sick Tilt during action scenes, and also suffers from a general −2 to all actions in other scenes, from the monstrous hunger in her guts.

High Satiety: The victim feels so ravenously hungry she cannot spend Willpower except in pursuit of feeding herself. When faced with an opportunity to eat something edible, she must comply or suffer the Deprived Condition, which can only be resolved by gorging on human flesh (someone else's or her own).

Satiety Expenditure: The victim is driven to deal one point of lethal damage per Satiety point spent — to another or herself — via consuming flesh, overriding all other concerns until sated.

Exceptional Success: The character immediately deals lethal damage to herself equal to her Strength, causing the Arm Wrack or Leg Wrack Tilt in the process as she gnaws at her own flesh.

rating of a Beast character as three higher than it is for purposes of calculating the loss of Satiety over time. Furthermore, all feeding rolls suffer a two-die penalty as the mummified divinity's maw leeches away some of the sustenance a Beast might otherwise glean. Such hunger lends the Begotten an edge, though: Beasts of this era may access the low-Satiety effects of Atavisms they possess even at medium Satiety.

Ripples of Horror: In this era, *all* humans in an area sense the effects of dramatic failures on rolls to enter the Primordial Pathways through a mortal's nightmares and rolls to determine the effects of a starving Horror's depredations, not just Oracles, although the disturbance visits other humans' minds only as vague nightmares and confusing fears. Normal humans do not gain a sense of the Beast's direction, but if they enter her direct presence after sensing such a failure, they gain the Fugue Condition.

Heroes of the Black Land

Stories are the spine of Kemet's culture, granting guidance through tales of heroism, divinity, and malevolence. The Oracles of the Black Land are not enslaved to these mythological cycles, though. They are interpreters of the Dream's warnings, even as the portents grow ever more garbled, but they can still choose how to act on these omens.

Nor do Kemet's Oracles see themselves as the center of the land's stories. The Middle Kingdom's great mythologies raise up the pharaohs and the gods; it is the place of Oracles to be official seers, priests, and viziers, advising and aiding such true heroes in maintaining ma'at. The people see them as vessels for the gods' guidance.

Oracles can perceive the depredations of the Begotten with more clarity than Heroes of later ages. An Oracle can clearly see how a Beast's terrors might stir a wayward community back toward the path of harmony, and how a marauding monster might have a meaningful place in the stories' insight. However, the omens grow less clear with each passing decade. Some Oracles cleave to the older ways, but others can't see Beasts as part of the greater story anymore. As the Primordial Dream fills with more noise, the Begotten begin to seem like mere monsters, rather than envoys of A'aru's wisdom. Beasts who fall victim to Crocodile's influence aggravate the situation further.

A crocodile-headed Makara who slaughters farmers does nothing to teach the people any fear of Iteru's reptiles they don't already possess — he just indulges his Hunger with no concern for those he harms. No lesson exists here to be passed on to the community. Commonly, then, Oracles guide Kemet's masters to root out such nightmares. They urge warriors to take up copper blade, spear, and bow, and drag these shadows of isfet into the light where their end will truly offer a lesson — reinforcing faith in authority and the harmonious order of Sobekneferu's rule.

Systems

Oracles are not yet slaves to stories, and therefore cannot draw upon all Heroic aspects of future ages. They do not possess the improved healing of later Heroes, nor do they possess the capability to recruit followers in their dreams, relying instead purely on natural persuasion or charisma. All Oracles possess the Loremaster Gift (**Beast: The Primordial**, p. 213) and the Omen Sensitivity Merit (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 58), both of which manifest in the form of dream portents and divine visions. Rather than Legend and Lore, they still possess Vice and Virtue.

An Oracle receives clear omens that point to the presence of Beasts at large. She does not need to spend Willpower to engage in Heroic Stalking, and gains a bonus equal to half the Beast's Lair (rounded up) to do so. In addition to the usual ways, she can place Anathema by uttering an omen or story to a group of at least five humans that reveals the Beast's weakness, in his presence; she must be aware of the Horror's nature to do so, and must succeed at a (Presence + Expression) roll, opposed by the Beast's own, to convince the audience of her story's truth. Placing Anathema this way costs two Willpower points and takes at least one minute of continuous speaking; as normal, the Oracle cannot regain these points until the Anathema ends,

or she or the Beast is dead. A Beast or his friends can try to interrupt her tale through violence or other means rather than opposing her Expression roll, but she can continue to speak while fighting unless forcibly stopped — and stopping her this way usually convinces the audience of the Anathema's truth just as well, unless the Beast can use social actions to justify his behavior.

HEP, INSATIABLE OF ITERU

"Oh, you've piqued my appetite. I'll stay my jaws, though, little human, if you know where I can find a more fulfilling meal…"

Background: Something monstrous stirs in Iteru, something older than humanity. Iteru's Insatiable manifests in Hep, the darker side of the river's duality that balances the gift of its fertility.

The Insatiable is tied to Iteru's cycles at a deep, primal level. She is sated and quiet when life-giving waters surge, slumbering in the muck and silt for decades at a time. Hep only stirs when the mud cracks with the scars of drought, when crops bow and crumple beneath the sun's cruel gaze. She emerges then to feed.

The Sages believe that Hep — or another Insatiable like her — has lurked in Iteru's waters for centuries, emerging to consume Beasts and cause havoc when the river is at low ebb. This time, though, the tainted waters Amenemhat's colossal canal carries do more than drain Iteru's excesses; they spiritually connect Hep to the empty hunger that lies beneath Shedet.

The Insatiable falls to the dead god's influence. Her appetite can no longer be sated.

Hep's Schism spreads with her depredations. Men drown and murder one another in the river's embrace. Villages desert their fields to wallow in the oozing muck, or bury victims alive in Iterus' sickening black blood as misguided sacrifices seeking Sobek's protection. The Gauntlet withers away as if desiccated; spirits of hunger, drought, and fear writhe through into the Flesh. The tainted sludge vomits out raveners (p. 47) at an alarming rate.

Hep is not alone. Two Tammuz *Mesu Betshet* ("children of rebellion," whom the Greeks will call Centimani) follow in her bloody footsteps, worshipping her as a perfected form born in Flux from the monstrous mud — and as so-called proof the Created should aspire to be like the gods, not mere flawed humanity. Raveners gather in her wake like vultures, sensing the dead god's corruption that lies within her heart, and obey her commands like obedient hounds.

Description: Hep appears as a woman of Kemet, hale and healthy, a personification of Iteru's fertility. When she awakens, she crawls from the water caked in mud — and the kingdom's Tammuz, so tied to the rich soil, are awestruck — but after she has been active for a while, the Insatiable relents to the notion of human clothing so she can better stalk her prey upon the banks of her home. This time, though, Hep's healthy vigor gives way to a sickly cast to her skin and eyes, the mark of Crocodile's grim weight in her soul. Hep's Horrible Form is a ghastly amalgam of scaled limbs, teeth, tusks, and pulsating muck.



Her Den is the river itself; Beasts and humans alike often find bones and rotted flesh washing up on slick, black soil.

Storytelling Hints: Hep's hunger drives her to look beyond immediate feasting upon the Begotten. She sets her sights upon Shedet, intending to devour the divinity that lies beneath it — and everything else along the way there.

Moment: Primordial Seas

Hunger: Prey

Legend: Ravenous

Life: Lustful

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 6, Resolve 7; Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 7; Presence 6, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Skills: Investigation 3, Medicine 2, Occult 4; Athletics (Pursuit) 4, Brawl (Underwater) 5, Stealth 3, Survival (Iteru) 5; Empathy 1, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Danger Sense (Advanced), Demolisher 3, Direction Sense (Advanced), Double Jointed (Advanced), Fist of Nightmares, Iron Stamina 3, Killer Instinct (Advanced) 3



Satiety: 3
Willpower: 10
Initiative: 6
Defense: 7
Armor: 2/0 (scales)
Size: 5
Speed: 14
Health: 12
Lair: 0
Esurients: Body of Mouths, Channel the Lifeblood, Foul Mess, Laws of Man No Longer Apply, Terrible Form, Your Power Is Mine
Nightmares: Behold, My True Form!, Everything You Do Is Worthless, Run Away, You Are Alone, You Cannot Kill It

Kinship in the Black Land

Beasts in this era actively seek family to help fight off their unnatural cravings and give them purpose.

Kemet's **changelings** are fierce and righteous, known for honor and orderly conduct, for only ma'at — the fairer side of what later Lost will call the Wyrd — protects them from the *Saaiu*, or evil fiends; Iron's bulwark still lies in the future. Changelings of Kemet worship Anpu, Heru, and Wesir as guardians of the order that keeps the Saaiu on the far side of the *true* Red Land — not the desert the eye can see, but the devilish land they step through mirrors and doorways to reach. Thus, they also worship Wepwawet alongside the Forsaken, as he who governs passage into the Desert of Fiends, and aid them in their war against Sobek's brood. The Lost make common cause with Assessor Beasts too, to protect themselves and humans from Saaiu predation; fiends enter the Black Land to take the innocent, not offenders against ma'at, for leaving the offenders free spreads isfet further. Changelings here have no rulers but the pharaoh.

Demons Fall among cracked stone pillars and massive copper gears emerging from desert sands in the Red Land's farthest reaches, or in foreign lands where Kemet's gods hold no sway. They see Kemet as a terrifying surveillance state, the God-Machine's animal-headed angels standing sentinel among graven idols of deities and pharaohs, and every great monument designed in accordance with Its occult schemes. Many Unchained infiltrate Begotten sects or temples housing Oracles, seeking to subvert these perceived tools of the enemy to their own cause; in the wild Beasts consumed by their Hungers, though, some Saboteurs see potential collaborators. Those demons who discover the rotting god under Shedet wonder whether it holds the key to Hell — after all, if one aspect of God can die, why not others?

In hidden temple sanctums, priests jealous of Sobek's supremacy pry at the fivefold souls of volunteers and victims, cracking them apart and destroying their parts to draw divine immanence into the void left behind. They Remake these **Deviant** servants to break Sobek's cult and take over Shedet, but many go Renegade to punish those who destroyed their eternal afterlives and inflicted them with corrupt hekau. They team up with wandering Matet Pilgrims and Begotten struggling to contain their Hungers, seeking something to offer Anpu in place of their wrecked souls. Some believe they can fill in their souls' gaps with other things, like ghosts, spirits, or beings that lurk in the Dream beyond Begotten Lairs.

The **Sin-Eaters** of Kemet see Death Wolf's mad Sheut and other ghosts driven by Crocodile's hunger to devour each other as signs that the Underworld, of which they believe the Duat is the most important Dominion, suffers the same tumult. They follow Iteru's corrupted waters to the Great Below and find the twisted hekau infecting the Rivers there, too; many believe it's the other way around, though — that the infinite hunger of the Ocean of Fragments has risen to the surface and spills over into the material realm. *Aakebi* (krewes) of mortuary priests, embalmers, tomb architects, and other such workers position themselves to watch for lost souls and recruit them to their causes before hunger can overtake them; Reapers become bolder and their numbers increase daily. Some seek alliance against Crocodile, a force they believe is the manifestation of a malevolent Chthonic God; they fear that, left unchecked, the cannibal hymn will sink all of Kemet into the Underworld.

Magic and nature are one and the same, and the gods' servants walk the world. The Code the **hunters** of Kemet follow makes allowances for divine messengers, up until the point when these messengers fall to isfet; once they do, all bets are off, as many hunters of this era view themselves as Ma'at's agents. Others are heretics who believe the gods ought to stay in the Duat where they belong and leave the Black Land to humanity. These *Mesha-Shentu,* or Soldiers of Blasphemy, form a compact dedicated to cursing anything openly supernatural to damnation, accepting their own exile from starry A'aru in exchange for a Black Land where humanity is no longer ruled by pharaohs and greedy cultists. Many hunters serve as professional soldiers or priests who craft warding talismans. They often work closely with Oracles, and lately they've begun to take advantage of the way some Oracles seem to lash out indiscriminately. The Ascending Ones have a strong presence here as well, and the Aegis Kai Doru in Greece makes frequent overtures to get its hands on the Black Land's ancient relics.

The **mages** of the Weret-Hekau play a dangerous game here; Crocodile's waking hunger makes it harder for them to avoid Apep's curse and act according to ma'at, but the Mysteries of Atef-Pehu are numerous and enticing. The sorcerers' best-known stronghold is the city of Adbju, roughly 270 miles upriver from Shedet, but individuals act as high-ranking priests, scribes, and haty-a across the Black Land. Sages among the Begotten treat these powerful figures with caution and respect, seeking them out to compare notes and

benefit from their knowledge, but many Awakened employ Oracles and would not hesitate to use the Children for their own enigmatic purposes. The Exalters of the Apex often run afoul of these mages in their desecration of temples, finding nasty surprises when they think the priests they're trying to murder are ordinary mortals. The Weret-Hekau usually view Assessors, as self-proclaimed envoys of Ammut, with suspicion and fascination both, wary but willing to cooperate in exchange for studying their origins and Lairs.

Few **mummies** walk abroad in this era; Amenemhat's great works of excavation disturbed several of their tombs, but Crocodile's hunger gnaws at their Sekhem and drives them to swift Descents. Still, their cults rouse them to help deal with rampaging cannibal monsters and to safeguard precious relics against the many blasphemies plaguing Atef-Pehu. Arisen here find strong echoes of lost Irem and push the Black Land toward a more perfect imitation, consciously or not. They often clash with the Assessors and the Exalters of the Apex, seeing them as heretic pretenders and agents of Ammut, but find common cause with the Sages' quest to quiet their Hungers and teach lessons based on the Judges' values. Shuankhsen find the dead god's influence invigorating, and actively seek out the Begotten and the Sobeki, either to form alliances with those in whom they sense a kindred power, or to devour them.

The **vampires** of the Black Land are the *mekhet*, their Ka split from them to become hateful ghosts while their souls' remnants stir the corpses into a ravenous hunger that mirrors and is empowered by Crocodile's own. The mekhet scheme in temples and necropolises far from the unforgiving Red Land and its endless sunshine, shadows behind thrones supping on the blood of heretics and sacrifices to the gods, quietly disturbing mortuary rites to spawn more of their own and taking advantage of the chaos for their benefit. But their own inner Beasts wake violently and often, making them eager allies for the Begotten who struggle against their worst instincts and the Created who seek New Dawn — for if they could reunite with their own Ka, they believe they might once again walk under Re's holy light.

Promethean: Refining the Fivefold Soul

May Isis kneel over you and wash your newborn form, may she set you on the good path of those who are judged innocent in the face of any enemies who'd accuse you before the judges of Tomb-world, on the blessed day you pass beyond.

— Jacob Rabinowitz, *Isle of Fire*

Kemet is a powerful crucible for the Divine Fire. Its mortuary priests and alchemists obsess over the secrets of life after death, reflecting their culture's addiction to the afterlife. These practitioners hungrily pursue the mysteries of body and soul, and their rites give rise to the noble Weret-Wesir Lineage — and many other marvels besides — while Flux floods the Black Land in place of Iteru's waters.

Those Matet born from sacred rites are the fortunate ones. The people believe the soul is firmly rooted in the flesh of the body, and interpret the Nepri as souls returned from the Duat to once again inhabit their own mortal shells. Their Ba and Ren wash away in the River, leaving them without memory of identity or deeds; but as far as the priests are concerned, these Matet are dead people returned to life, not entirely new people. They see other Created as dark spirits hijacking corpses or vessels, who doomed those poor souls now bereft of their fleshly anchors to wander the Earth.

The Created here view the Pilgrimage as a manifestation of Iteru's seasons, seeing its great cycle as the model for how they should shift from Role to Role and Refinement to Refinement, exploring all that life can offer. Since the great river leads to the Duat, and indeed most Matet visit those banks at least once before they complete their journeys, they believe that by following its example, they too will one day stand before Anpu, who will weigh their Divine Fire on his scales and judge whether they're worthy of true resurrection with a brand-new soul and *khat*, or body, shaped on Khnum's pottery wheel. Even the Nepri's Azothic memory tells them this should happen, causing some to question whether the priests really did bring them back from the Duat, or whether they're no more human than the ushabti from which the Tammuz and Unfleshed are made. When Created of this era perform the Measure, they are Anpu's emissaries, weighing the Azoth of other Matet against their own to see who is closer to ma'at's ideal.

Milestones in Kemet

Modern Prometheans consider their Great Work to be made up of six universal milestones based on alchemical processes, but the Created of Kemet view them as earning one piece of their human soul at a time, with Vitriol as the physical proof. Thus, they name the universal milestones after those pieces: *sublimato* results in crafting the Ren, defining themselves by Roles and Refinements; *separatio* crafts the Sheut, showing the darker side of themselves that accompanies them on the Pilgrimage; *ceratio* crafts the Ba, defining their personality by comparison to others like themselves; *fermentatio* crafts the Ab, catalyzing a dead heart into beating; and *multiplicatio* crafts the Ka, teaching them to breathe life or knowledge into another through an act of will.

Finally, Matet believe the *projectio* milestone crafts the *sahu*, the spirit-body beneath the skin that will someday form the ***khat*** they inhabit when they achieve New Dawn.



Divine Emissaries

The Osirans of this age are called the Weret-Wesir, the "great ones of Wesir," and are welcome in the Black Land. They claim divine heritage with Wesir himself as their progenitor, and the humans among whom they walk openly accept this. They are emissaries returned from the Duat to serve as intermediaries between humanity and the afterlife. Just as Wesir mounted a new throne in the Duat after his rebirth, so are his chosen few reborn not into A'aru, but to the world whence they came. To the people, the Weret-Wesir work the gods' will in the world as honored messengers, closer to the pharaoh in divinity than anyone else. They expect, and are given, the respect and reverence due those who speak for the divine.

Arising from Kemet's elaborate burial rites, Weret-Wesir are a holy caste unto themselves. They enjoy sanctuary in temples to Wesir and Nepri, granted tithes from the state's granaries and draped in jewels. Haty-a, high priests, and even the pharaoh herself seeks their counsel. Most Weret-Wesir embrace the luxuries of this cossetted life, wearing elaborate headdresses or painting their skin to better resemble a particular god they feel an affinity for. They view the Principle as the gods' will and its *qashmallim* as their messengers. Athanors and other sites of Azothic import are sacred places that Kemet's priests seek out and take possession of, keeping them for the eyes of the Weret-Wesir only and denying access to other Matet. They do the same with the rites that can create their divine emissaries, but these they keep even from the Weret-Wesir themselves, fearing obsolescence and losing the power they hold over commoner and pharaoh alike.

Unlike the Osirans of later ages, members of the Lineage now believe Wesir to be nothing less than a true god, and themselves to be his servants. They believe the harvest god Nepri was the first of their kind, whom Wesir sent back from the Duat, and honor that deity with special reverence, even adopting his name as a second Lineage name. Indeed, some see Nepri's divinity as the ultimate goal of the Pilgrimage; after a second life spent in service to the gods, they will earn a similar lofty position for themselves.

Able to move openly, the Weret-Wesir can share knowledge with each other without relying solely on the Azothic memory, including the means to avoid the worst of Disquiet's ravages and Wastelands; the power of Iteru helps, but the Nepri also move regularly from city to city, up and down the river. They are traveling mystics, following the surging and receding waters to bestow wisdom, bring news and blessings, address problems and mediate conflicts, then move on. Yet, while these Created travel the Black Land and draw upon its human experience, they wallow in their role's luxuries and responsibilities. It is not their place to meddle with the remains of the dead, making it nearly impossible for them to create others of their kind. Bound strictly by law and belief to their few specific duties, they stagnate easily, running out of new Roles to explore.

The last of Menuhotep's warriors, created at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom's rise, serve as the most powerful and revered Nepri envoys. These elder Matet have utterly calcified within the ceremonial cycles that dictate their lives. Younger ones sense that these ancient, grim Created have subsumed a vital spark, and that progress is needed if they are to avoid the same fate. On the rare occasion that one of Menuhotep's champions does change Roles, a monstrous Firestorm erupts across the region. After the first during her reign, Sobekneferu and her death-priests journeyed north to Khufu's Horizon, the great pyramid at Tiperses (modern-day Giza), chasing rumors of its power to soothe the Divine Fire when Wesir grows wroth. Whatever they found there allowed her to become a living Sanctuary Athanor, who could — as they saw it — intervene as pharaoh on the Nepri's behalf.

Some Nepri escape their regulated lives, seeking new answers in the wider world or simply growing bored of the soft, undemanding opulence, knowing in their hearts they need more. Others become angry at being denied their eternal reward in A'aru; after all, judged as worthy souls, surely they should be enjoying that paradise, not getting thrown back like a fisherman's unwanted catch? Of these, a few entomb themselves, seeking the reward of the afterlife via correctly performed funerary rites and grave goods; they fear that simply throwing themselves into the embrace of death without such preparations will make them unworthy in Anpu's eyes. Others get bogged down by Disquiet and Wastelands, which their attendant priests interpret as signs of Wesir's displeasure with an emissary; not willing to interfere with divine business, they entreat the Nepri to disappear into the desert for a while and come back when the gods are smiling on her again. If they're lucky, she complies. A few Weret-Wesir, especially those who spend too much time in Shedet absorbing its Flux, turn Mesu Betshet, determined to spurn servitude no matter the cost.

Children of Black Silt

In Sumer, the Tammuz are much like their future descendants. It's unclear whether the ritual that creates them was brought to Kemet or simply developed in tandem by another civilization with careful burial rites. Here, though, the humans call them *hemew* — servants. They themselves go by the name *Temi-Nebu*, or "born on the bank," considering themselves children of Iteru's black, fertile silt. Some are born directly from it, their dead flesh buried beneath the sucking soil in old, crude rites performed by cold-eyed peasants. Others rise from the withered remnants of those buried and naturally mummified in the desert's hot sands, and they thirst for the river's quenching mud.

The most fortunate are those whose bodies are wrought from high-status corpses, but whose flesh was so terribly damaged that the remains had to be repaired with clay and earthen simulacra of the missing parts, with heart-scarab amulets or inscribed spells in place of the original meat. These Temi-Nebu are embraced as Weret-Wesir, the human priesthood seeing no difference between the two. A few Named rise from the remains of the poor or the unknown, afforded only the least funerary rites to see them on, and are seen as mistakes or escapees from Ammut's jaws desperate to avoid judgment for a life of sin — a shame upon the priests who performed their ceremonies. Even these are lucky, though, for they are not created to be slaves, like the *ushabti* are.

Mundane ushabti are idols, grave goods made in mimicry of human or beast to serve a dead soul in the afterlife. Inscribed spells bring them to life there as tireless workers, shouldering the burden of the soul's duties of labor — for while A'aru is a lush paradise, its inhabitants must still farm to produce the land's bounteous harvest. Some demiurges produce a far more potent form of ushabti, though — ones that take on a darker burden for their masters, not of posthumous labor but of the creator's own sins.

When a soul passes through the Duat, it faces 42 Assessors who look upon its sins and pass verdict. Dead bodies used as ushabti are pariahs, scapegoats, the remains of the dead blasphemously defiled to bind them into slavery and take on the punishment meant for another. Their creators intentionally shear Ba and Ren away to throw into Ammut's jaws, leaving the ushabti crippled and the master's soul able to pass unharmed. To enable the disguise, the demiurge covers the corpse in a crude façade of mud sculpted into a vague likeness of herself.

Whether or not these illegal sacrifices have true power in the Duat, the abused bodies do sometimes rise as newborn Temi-Nebu. They are traumatized from their first moments, waking to find words and names that mark them as sinful creatures carved right into their flesh. Once risen, these hemew receive no more kindly treatment, forced to do the bidding of the sorcerers who created them. Some demiurges bind their ushabti in concealing garments, copper masks, and other paraphernalia to make them seem like animated constructs powered by their hekau: they cannot afford their crimes of desecrating the dead becoming public, so they conceal their vile deeds behind the lie of an occult miracle.

The Temi-Nebu often resent the adoration the Weret-Wesir receive. Where the Nepri are noble, the hemew are lowly; where Nepri can walk the streets and be welcomed, hemew are usually hunted, objectified, and kept captive. Eventually, most of these Named kill or escape their creators, drawing away from human society to live close to their beloved river instead. Even those who escape aren't always left alone, though; their demiurges and anyone else who assisted the blasphemous rites try to silence them to keep the truth hidden, by any means necessary. Thus, the Temi-Nebu of Kemet are the most avid seekers of their own kind, the catalysts that form many throngs.

Monuments and Idols

A craftsman looks upon his finest work — an ushabti figurine sculpted in perfectly lifelike form. His pride and obsession spark its hekau before it ever reaches the tomb. The figure comes to life, stretching pottery limbs as she stares in wonder. When she hears Rambles of a throng of others like her in the distant desert, survivors of some older civilization still following their creator's last commands to dig out an incomprehensibly gigantic tomb beneath the dunes, she doesn't even pack a bag before she sets out.

"Quick," the tomb robber hisses, "hide your face! Do you want the mask to curse you?"

"…I think it's too late," her partner whispers. Stone and fired clay move in the darkness; the torch flame flickers for a moment on a pair of painted eyes. "Run!" she cries, and they do, lurching footsteps following just beyond the firelight.

For decades, the golden idol graced the altar, soaking up hymns and silently accepting offerings in the bull-god's name. When he steps out of the temple for the first time, his gilded flesh gleaming in the hot summer sun, he doesn't yet know the lengths to which the people will go to make sure he continues to grant them blessings.

Even now, the origins of the Unfleshed are shrouded in mystery. Most believe the gods animate them with their own wills as a reward for perfection of form or devoted service, but since prayers and rituals are the norm whenever skilled hands perform works in the gods' names, no one knows which ones have the potential to ignite the Divine Fire — or whether, perhaps, they *all* do.

Foreign Creations

Other Lineages of the time were not native to Kemet, but the Matet are inveterate wanderers, and they always make their way to the Black Land, even if only for a while.

Amirani

The Amirani (**Dark Eras Companion**, p. 98) are few, but when they come to Kemet from the northern land of Egrisi (which the Greeks will later call Colchis) with their copper bones and blazing eyes, they inevitably pass judgment upon the indolent Nepri and urge the Temi-Nebu to rise up en masse and take for themselves a place in their beloved Black Land.

Riven

From further-flung lands, Riven shamans come to pursue Rambles that speak of a dark scar marring Shedet's secret heart, or to appease the wailing of spirits touched by the cannibal hymn or Hep's terrible Schism who fled the Black Land seeking solace and aid. Here, greedy cultists of low rank find the Riven and strive to repeat their Creation process, attempting to forge their own intermediaries to the gods beyond the world's flesh out of envy for the Weret-Wesir's privileged handlers. They stitch their intended vessels together from organs purloined from canopic jars; a Kemetic Riven may sport the liver of a pharaoh nestled alongside the kidneys of a recently dead scribe.

Xibalbans; or, the Denied

Finally, few and far between here, the pre-Galateid Lineage of the sanguine humour known as the Xibalbans hails from an unknown land far to the west, fashioned in the throes of human sacrifice on altars that run with blood. The mortals there fear them as fierce, vengeful death-spirits, signs that their gods rejected a sacrifice or that rival gods hijacked the offering. Thus, they're also known as the Denied: those robbed of the right to face their trials in the Underworld like other dead souls. These bold, passionate warrior Created find joy in simple pleasures and yearn always to find something or someone to fight — and heroically, gloriously die — for, but joining armies or mercenary companies never works for long: Xibalban Disquiet drives others to murder them in as ignominious a fashion as possible, to send them back to the Underworld "where they belong" in shame.

The Xibalban Lineage suffers Torment as an all-consuming, bloodthirsty frenzy. Its members perpetually seek causes or leaders to satisfy their bloodlust with excuses to charge into battle; they appear vigorous and attractive to humans, full of vital energy that draws people in and gets their hearts pumping. Their Bestowments are Unearthly Mien (**Promethean: The Created Second Edition**, p. 108) and Blood Offering.

New Bestowment: Blood Offering

With this Bestowment, your character can shed her own blood to make up for her failure to die properly, sustaining miracles by its power. For every point of lethal damage she inflicts upon herself with the intent of using this Bestowment, she regains three points of Pyros; however, if she heals this damage by any method other than naturally, she loses the Pyros for her attempt to cheat the gods out of their due.

Matet Systems

The Jaws of Ammut: Crocodile's hunger and isfet's corruption stir Flux. Dice pools for Pilgrimage breaking points and generative acts suffer a one-die penalty, and all Lilithian Firestorms have +2 Strength. Dramatic failures on rolls to use Distillations produce rank 1 Pandorans in addition to their usual effects. Finally, rolls to use the Distillations of Flux achieve exceptional success on three successes instead of five.

Phlegmatic Waters: The link between Iteru and the Weret-Wesir is more than just a story. The river soothes the Divine Fire and eases its raging. As long as a Nepri bathes in the waters of Iteru at least once per chapter, treat

her Azoth as one lower than it actually is for purposes of resisting her Disquiet and the creation, area, and festering of her Wastelands.

Akhekhau

Innumerable *akhekhau*, which the Greeks will call Pandorans, lie dormant across Kemet as the detritus of centuries of human and Matet arrogance. Some lie within tombs among ushabti and guardian statues; others are part of palace and temple architecture. These creatures are a common threat for unwary Created, and their genesis grows ever more frequent as Crocodile's rising hunger stirs Flux to excess.

Matet and priests see akhekhau as manifestations of isfet and Apep's influence, brought about whenever a soul tries to escape Ammut's jaws by fleeing back to life. The Flux that seizes the body is the chaos caused by this defiance of ma'at's natural order, so every botched generative act that creates akhekhau is a sign of the dead body that gave rise to the monsters being that of an evil individual. Some akhekhau arise from stranger sources, created from the mummified remains of animals subjected to the same rites that might otherwise have created a Matet, if the corpse were human.

Akhekhau from any source tend to take on hybrid animal forms, in mockery of the gods.

Systems

An akhekhau's Consume Pyros power (**Promethean**, p. 240) grants it one Pyros for each point of bashing damage it inflicts, and two Pyros per point of lethal damage.

Alchemists

Alchemists gather in temples and courts, seeking the gods' power for themselves. The fivefold soul is as central to Kemetic alchemy as notions of mere physical transmutation; the prize these alchemists reach for is life eternal, whether on Earth, in A'aru, or even in the Duat itself. Most mortuary priests who legitimately claim access to true supernatural power are alchemists of one sort or another.

The alchemists of the **House of Re** work for the pharaoh, at least nominally, and appoint themselves as the self-proclaimed handlers for the Weret-Wesir. Ostensibly, their job is to provide the Matet with anything they require, weed out petitioners who aren't worth their time, and help out with alchemical remedies whenever their Created nature gets in the way of their duties. They do these things with varying degrees of proper respect, but behind the scenes they constantly scheme to control the Nepri through manipulative obsequiousness and lies by omission. They ply the pharaoh with potions and gifts to gain her favor; she grants it because their marvels provide a useful counterbalance to the powerful and influential Weret-Wesir, reminding them that their divine status is inferior to hers. The House of Re wields the authority of the state when they hunt for lesser Matet, eager to find new sources of Vitriol.

The **Maw of Unas** is a rabid cult. These alchemists fell under Crocodile's influence and work in cahoots with the Sobeki. In their secret rendezvous they sing the cannibal hymn's verses — particularly the one in which the pharaoh consumes even those who "come with their bodies full of magic from the island of fire." Members of the Maw believe they can achieve divinity by eating the flesh of the Matet like the akhekhau do, either fresh and raw, or combined with magical elixirs. They induct, study, and try to create *sublimati* as both experimental subjects and mentors to their gluttonous excesses.

The goddess Ma'at has no temples, but the **Flowing Water** believes it comprises her priests, nonetheless. These alchemists see Iteru's waning waters and black blood as a warning that humans and gods alike take too much from the river's vitality, and to restore it they must give something back. They hunt Matet as sacrifices to Iteru, brew concoctions from Vitriol that they believe heal the river's sickness, and worship in the wake of the Insatiable Hep — the personification of their beliefs, the river's hunger given physical form.

PTAHNEFERU

"You probably shouldn't be here. The priests don't like it when someone sees me. …so please, stay a while."

Background: The priesthood of Ptah hides two terrible secrets. The first is that the body of Ptahneferu, sister of Sobekneferu, was never interred in her tomb beside her father's great pyramid. As they prepared her body for the afterlife, the Nepri overseeing the rites looked upon her face and was moved to tears by her beauty and the tragedy of her death — which is the second secret, for she was ruthlessly murdered. The sudden catalysis of his ancient, sluggish humours and emotions rocked the temple, calling a Firestorm down upon them all. In its wake, the new Matet lurched upright, confused and frightened. Now, the priests keep her confined to the temple of Ptah in Shedet, alone with her Weret-Wesir mentor, her precocious new mind, and all her many questions.

The humans believe her to be Nepri too, but they're wrong. She's one of the Matchless, and although that wouldn't otherwise matter to the priesthood that should embrace her as the gods' messenger, they can't; she represents a huge threat to society's stability, one to which she herself is blissfully oblivious. It was Amenemhat III's wish that, should Amenemhat IV perish without an heir, the throne would go to Ptahneferu as the older sister. Should Ptahneferu suddenly reappear — as a divine emissary, no less! — she would have a much stronger claim to the throne than the current pharaoh. It doesn't matter that she doesn't *want* the throne and doesn't remember her life as a royal;



Sobekneferu's enemies would leap at the chance to weaken her rule, wielding the Extempore as a weapon against her authority. The priests of Ptah, closely allied to the elder princess in life, still see it as their duty to aid and guide Ptahneferu — but also to protect the kingdom from her.

Description: Ptahneferu looks much like her predecessor did in life, a statuesque woman with bronze skin and bright eyes outlined in kohl. When her Disfigurements flare, though, her skin is pale blue and transparent, and the saltwater that runs through her veins can be clearly seen pulsing through her and oozing out through raw scars that never fully heal, from where her organs were removed. Unfortunately, she wasn't dead before her killers — cannibal priests who believed Sobekneferu would make a more pliable puppet on the throne — started removing them, and when they were done, they ate them instead of preserving them in canopic jars. Inside, the Matet is a treasury of occult replacements. Many of her innards are now facsimiles of clay and precious stones inscribed with spells, and her heart is a beautifully carved scarab of lapis lazuli.

As an Extempore, she doesn't behave the way the humans have come to expect the Weret-Wesir to behave. She shares their curiosity and natural inclination to collect followers, but in Torment she succumbs to intense loneliness, bitterness, and cruel spite. Her humour is tears; her Disquiet makes those around her grieve over losses great and small, no matter how long-buried, and they desperately try to force her to fill in for whatever they've lost. Eventually, they come to believe she *is* the lost one, and no amount of convincing can dissuade them. Her Wastelands culminate in a deluge of rain and despair, the sky opening to pour saltwater onto the Black Land while people lament everything they can never have.

Storytelling Hints: The longer she stays cooped up in the temple with limited exposure to human society or other Matet, the faster she runs out of experiences that would allow her to progress on her Pilgrimage. She's grown restless and reckless, and she seeks escape. She longs to walk among the people and be one of them, learn what they know and see all their wonders. Soon, she plans to find help and make a move, though whether she'll quietly slip out in the dead of night or loudly expose the priests' secrets to the world remains to be seen.

Lineage: Extempore

Refinement: Mercurius

Elpis: Sorrow

Torment: Merciless

Aspirations: Make friends; Meet Sobekneferu; Discover who killed the princess

Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 2; Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Skills: Academics (Religion) 2, Crafts 4, Enigmas 2, Medicine (Herself) 2, Occult 1, Politics (Cults) 1; Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1; Empathy 2, Expression 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize (Nobility) 3, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies (Priests of Ptah) 3, Famous Face 3, Good Brain (Crafts, Empathy, Politics) 3, Safe Place 5, Striking Looks 1

Pilgrimage: 2

Willpower: 4

Initiative: 5

Defense: 4

Armor: 0

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Health: 8

Azoth: 2

Pyros/per Turn: 11/2

Bestowment: Revivification

Transmutations: Alchemicus — Elixir; Vulcanus — Sanctus Aspiratus

Werewolf: Echoes of the Past

A crocodile does not die from worrying, it dies from hunger.

— Insinger Papyrus

A true god walks the fecund earth, driven by the divine urges of the sacred hunt. Death Wolf's shadow falls upon Kemet, and at her flanks come her howling children — the Uratha of the Bone Shadow Tribe. The Bone Shadows are masters of the holy city of Asyut, openly ruling as envoys of the wolf-gods. They come, now, with souls aflame and blood humming with joyous, primal song, the presence of their Firstborn queen bright and cold in their hearts. Werewolves were forged from spirit and flesh to be god-killers above all else, and they have gods to kill.

The river valley is an occult battleground. The Uratha face a ghastly foe: the rising power of the *saharusum*, the children of Crocodile. Sobek's priests dug too deeply under Shedet, and fell under the sway of the rotting god there. Though they pretend at a pious faith in Sobek, their blood-caulked smiles show the truth of their cannibal theft. They steal the Pangaean's lingering power for themselves through charnel rites of transgression and gore, gorging themselves on eldritch energies that human flesh should not — cannot — hold. Alone, this transgression would demand furious response from Wolf's children, but the Sobeki's profane butchery is buttressed by something far worse.

Death Wolf's lost soul lies waiting in Hawara, a doom for the living and the dead.

Beyond the incense wafting through shaded temple sanctums, beyond the gleaming marble and painted faces of the courts, beyond blood-slick sands where wolf and crocodile clash and dusty tombs where shadows caper in dark rites, those werewolves not caught up in the larger battle do their best to keep hunting. The Pure are resurgent, spirits crawl through the withering Gauntlet in an ever-greater tide, and a deep, gnawing hunger chews at their guts — one that tempts the Uratha to embrace the cannibal feast, and glut themselves on the crimson bounty the Black Land offers.

The Shadow of Wepwawet

As Iteru recedes but renews, full of life, so Death Wolf perished, then chose to return. She came back bearing a cornucopia of revelation — yet in her wake, she left something behind. Even now, the god's soul bears a great, weeping wound, a yawning chasm of loss she yearns to fill. Now, the hour looms close for Death Wolf's triumphant apotheosis.

Her twisted reflection, the missing piece of her heart, is her ghost. When she died, her Ab tore free, but the Firstborn seized it in her jaws as she departed the Underworld — all but a fleck, seething with spiritual immanence. That gobbet nailed her Sheut in place and gave it a dread animus as the divine ghost Death Wolf should have become. When at last the Firstborn saw that her shadow was gone, it was too late, for the Sheut was awake and raged through death's endless tunnels. It is a mirror of Death Wolf that possesses only her hunger for power and knowledge, bestowed with her cunning but not her wisdom. It craves freedom and wants to seize its progenitor's vitality for its own; to eat her heart, that it might finally fill its own gaping void within.

The Opener of the Way

Death Wolf's Sheut is an immensely powerful ghost, all white fur, ice-blue eyes, and snapping jaws. Like Death Wolf in this era, the ghost is a Rank 7 entity, though it has not yet come into its full power, only recently having attained its current Rank. It cannot yet enter the world of the living — no mere Avernian Gate can withstand its metaphysical weight — but when it does, it is too powerful for Uratha to face directly unless they can find its Bane or weaken it with rites and potent hekau.

For centuries, the two have feuded: a god of death and a dead god, warring through werewolf and ghostly intermediaries or, for brief and catastrophic moments, pursuing one another directly. The Sheut tore through the Underworld, snatching secrets from phantasms and bartering with deep, ancient things. Now glutted on that realm's dark mysteries, it turns its attention to the world of the living, seeking a path into the hunting ground of its sister-mother that could possibly sustain its passage.

It found Crocodile's carcass, the rotting divine presence lodged between the gates of death — unable to live and unable to die, spiritually mutilated by Pangaea's fall. The ghost reaches its influence through the breach in the Autochthonous Depths that enfolds the god's carcass, and twists the minds of priests and pharaohs to open the way.

A showdown between god and ghost approaches. Death Wolf comes to reap the harvest of knowledge that her ghost has gathered for itself, to make herself whole once more, and to shatter the dead Pangaean's waking power.

Bone Shadows: Priests of the Wolf

In Asyut, city of wolves, the Bone Shadows stand openly as priests and acolytes of Kemet's wolf-gods: Wepwawet, Anpu, and an aspect of Wesir. The werewolves claim these deities' divine sanction through demonstrations of their spirit magic, taking lupine form, and battling monstrous threats that slink in from the Red Land and, recently, Iteru's depths. The people have no doubt that Asyut is a place of powerful hekau, where the gods are manifest and active in the world.



Kamduis-Ur and Kemetic Belief

The Uratha of Kemet know it is Death Wolf herself they venerate, but they still see the world through the lens of the culture they inhabit. They revere Wepwawet, Anpu, and Wesir as aspects of Death Wolf; these are not false masks, but merely another way of understanding the Firstborn's nature. Wepwawet is the central figure here, the Opener of the Way resonating deeply with Death Wolf's wisdom-seeking and passage between realms.

Wepwawet is also revered as an aspect of another of the gods of Shadow — that of the Secondborn child of Fenris known in some farther lands as Garm, and liege of a Lodge known here as the Fangs of Wepwawet (see **The Pack**, p. 82, for more details). This sharing of divine aspect between two spirit gods causes no conflict in the eyes of adherents; instead, it binds them closer together, and the Lodge is a major pillar of martial strength supporting the Bone Shadows' efforts in Kemet at this time.

Asyut is the hub of the struggle against the *saharusum*, a mustering ground for packs and resources. The haty-a here are either werewolves, Wolf-Blooded, or ordinary humans under the temple of Wepwawet's thumb. Spirit-totems cavort through Twilight, sometimes manifesting to reap rich tithes of Essence from a populace awed by their power. Foreign Bone Shadows come, hearing Death Wolf's howl and hiding among the ranks of foreign mercenaries or presenting themselves as visiting dignitaries to local Lodges. Other supernatural allies of the god of death come too, bearing knowledge they wish to barter or seeking opportunities to exploit. The city thrives, a cosmopolitan meeting of monsters.

Bone Shadow priests stalk the courts of Pharaoh Sobekneferu, resentful of the favor she grants the *saharusum* and fighting for every scrap of influence they can glean within her palace's marble halls. Farther afield, members of the tribe hunt among the death gods' priesthoods or rob tombs for any scrap of wisdom in Kemet's funerary practices they might turn against the rogue Sheut and its ghostly thralls. They watch vigilantly within the human ranks of the cults of Anpu and Wepwawet, for the ghost's seductive whispers already stir new sects — ones who see it, not Death Wolf, as the true representation of those gods, and strive to aid its escape through the Labyrinth of Hawara.

Forsaken Tribes

Outside the dominion of Asyut and the power of the Bone Shadows, an Uratha's life can be hard. The slaughter and confusion a First Change brings can seem like curses or the work of evil spirits, and people often persecute or drive out nascent Uratha. Near Asyut, Bone Shadow priests intercede to whisk the new werewolves away; elsewhere, it's up to whatever local packs exist to gather these outcasts up before anything worse happens. With the war against the Sobeki, the Pure grow ever bolder too, snatching away *nusuzul* in greater numbers.

Even so, followers of Death Wolf's siblings are scattered throughout the Black Land, hunting as they always have. Iteru's fecundity provides a thriving crop of prey. Packs used to migrate out of the valley during the season of akhet to hunt in the Red Land for a time, but the resurgence of the Pure puts an end to such traditions. Bottled up in Kemet, Forsaken packs experience growing tensions.

Now the rising hunger of Crocodile gnaws at their stomachs, stirs their blood, and sometimes sets werewolf against werewolf. The patchwork of territories threaded along Iteru is a kettle boiling over.

The **Blood Talons** vent their anger in the war against the Sobeki. The *saharusum* may not be werewolves, but many of the tribe feel these shapeshifting children of a Pangaean god are still worthy prey — even if they stole their power through abattoir rites rather than inheriting it. Worse, the Pure now rise again, allied with the Sobeki. It's a call to arms for the *Suthar Anzuth*, and one they embrace with bloody glee. The tribe is on the edge, wild-eyed and kill-hungry, prone to chaotic excess that worries their allies.

The **Hunters in Darkness** have long prowled the borders of the Black Land, slinking in the shadows of its great fortifications as servants of Wesir and Aset who hold back the Red Land's chaos. The tribe sees all of Kemet as sacred ground; the Black Land and Black Wolf are one and the same, for this is the place where the Firstborn gave birth to her litter of Secondborn, sustained in her labor by Iteru's Essence, and her lifegiving act gave the soil its fertility. Iteru itself is the holiest of holies. The black blood that now stains it, the raveners **(p. 47)** slithering from its tainted waters, and the vile hunger seething beneath Atef-Pehu are all utter blasphemies against Black Wolf. The tribe feels cold fury, willing to set aside their vigil against the Red Land's crawling Hosts for a time to destroy this insult.

Known in later centuries as the Iron Masters, the **Watchers Beyond the Flame** are a moderating force in the alliance against the Sobeki, questioning whether the other tribes' ferocity and zeal blind them. The tribe is eager to bring down the *saharusum* — they are a new and dangerous threat, yes, and indeed the Watchers see the reptilian shifters as their own favored prey, since they are not true children of Pangaea but jumped-up priests seeking a bloody shortcut to power. The Watchers' concern comes not from



a lack of stomach for the fight, but concern about other dangers that may spring from the chaos. Sobekneferu has no children and is tied closely to the cult; if the Sobeki fall, she may go with them, and isfet will take the Black Land.

The **Storm Lords** revel in the current chaos, for it renders Kemet a grand crucible in which Wolf's heirs can be tested. A surfeit of Claimed stalk temples and fields, a bountiful herd of prey to pursue, and the tribe considers the raveners its prey as well. Iteru's floods and droughts give the *Iminir* something meaningful to endure. For too long, the Black Land's fertility has cosseted human civilization; the herd has grown fat and indolent on prosperity, and so too have the hunters. This new, bleak hunger is a grand challenge indeed.

Pure Tribes

Slavering Pure prowl at the Black Land's margins, ready to sink their fangs into the soft, weak Forsaken and raise up the dominion of the *anshega* once more. It was under Amenemhat I that the Pure lost their grip upon Kemet; the Forsaken outmaneuvered the Ivory Claws in the new courts of the 12th Dynasty and drove the Fire-Touched out from among the temples. Over the generations that followed, the Forsaken took the best hunting grounds until, at last, only a handful of Pure still clung to the fringes; the Ivory Claws largely retreated south to Kush, and the Fire-Touched east towards the Levant. Now, though, the ravening Predator Kings have come, mustered by the eternal hunger of their Firstborn totem, Dire Wolf.

If Death Wolf wants to make this a battle of the gods, then so be it.

The servants of Dire Wolf gather in the west, symbolically emerging from the direction of the Duat to spread havoc and terror. The rotting god beneath Shedet draws the Firstborn's attention, though whether he intends to devour the dead divinity himself or raise it up to take a seat among the great totems of the Pure, the Forsaken don't know.

Though Predator King clans form the heart of the new Pure army, the other tribes also worry at Kemet's flanks. Once more, the Fire-Touched worm their way in among the populace, spreading blights both physical and mental, and creating a new generation of enslaved Claimed in hybrid mimicry of the gods with which they influence the temples. The Ivory Claws gouge out positions for themselves in the state's bureaucracy, and work their way ever closer to the court of Itjtawy and the glimmering prize there — the ear of Sobekneferu herself.

The Pure have forged a pact with the Sobeki, an alliance of mutual benefit, for neither force is strong enough alone to assure victory against the Forsaken. Predator King elders emerge from the sand, their hunger matching that of the *saharusum* and forging a bond of understanding between them. The tribes promise to hand the cities and towns they conquer to the Sobeki, claiming no interest in filthy hives of human iniquity.



This is a lie. The Pure see the Sobeki as upstarts — just arrogant humans, playing with fire that is not theirs to wield. No place for these aberrant shifters exists in the future the Predator Kings plan. The disgrace that is Kemet's civilization will crumble, all but the bastions over which the Ivory Claws and Fire-Touched will rule, and the land will be scoured with fire and pox and blood until the wilderness of the Red Land reclaims it from the last traces of humanity's hubris.

As soon as the Pure no longer need the Sobeki, the alliance will end in carnage, and the Predator Kings will tear Shedet apart to reach the slumbering god beneath for their Firstborn's dark desires.

Slaves of the Crocodile

Crocodile has long slumbered beneath Atef-Pehu, its corpse caught in a liminal state. Severed from Pangaea by the fall of that realm, its heart shattered to wreckage by Wolf's jaws — though not utterly destroyed — the hoary being fell into languor, a dormant divinity suspended on the threshold between life and death. The turning of the ages saw the Earth's flesh around it shiver and shake, sometimes spilling down light, sometimes sealing it away once more. In those ancient days, strange eyes fell upon the dead god and performed alien sacraments upon its withered corpse, but never did Crocodile rouse.

When Amenemhat III commanded the foundations of Shedet laid, terrified workers stumbled upon the twisting caves carved by no human hand, and fetched the priests of Sobek. Whispering incantations to invoke their crocodile god's protection, those fearful pioneers followed the heady scents that wafted up from the chasm below — natrum, dried blood, rot — and found there a revelation: the merest glimpse of the leviathan's carcass revealed from the dry earth around it, mummified by forces unknown.

Only the cult of Sobek may enter the sacred tunnels and witness the carrion rites held therein. Acolytes hew moldering meat from the seemingly endless corpse. Priests abase themselves amid dried viscera in a shrine surrounded by Crocodile's curving bones, all carved in hieroglyphs declaring Sobek's glory. Devotees harvest delicate, twisted tangles of thread-like organs, glimmering with hekau, and store them in canopic jars. An eager whisper always hangs just at the edge of hearing — *eat, consume, partake*.

It's not enough for a human to gorge themselves on the god's flesh. Doing so doesn't grant power, just nightmares and, eventually, a loss of control — meat warps and bones twist in agony, sculpting the victim into the semblance of a crocodile but clearly wrought from the crude matter of a human. These victims die slowly and miserably. To truly feast, to eat the god and absorb its power, is a complex cannibal hymn. The would-be *saharusum* must prove herself a worthy vessel through the consumption of a living human's flesh. Thus do the cult's prisoners perish in bloody mouthfuls upon ceremonial slabs beneath the earth.

By themselves, the priests of Sobek might have assembled the truth of this cannibal rite given enough decades, but the secrets of flesh and guts didn't only come to them from Crocodile's broken soul. These mysteries, these hungry whispers, are the work of Death Wolf's Sheut.

The deluded Sobeki believe themselves true children of their god; devouring the Pangaean's flesh warps their minds so they can no longer see the depravity and madness of eating a deity. Their hunger and the symbolic act of their feasts stir Crocodile from its deathly sleep. That alone would be grave enough — the basin of Atef-Pehu resonates with the Pangaean's power — but in connecting the basin with Iteru, Amenemhat symbolically linked the dead god's domain with the river, and its hunger with its ebb and flow. Lake Moeris stands where once festering swamps oozed, bubbling with the dead god's blood. Now that same ichor, rising from where the resurgent waters filter down through dust and stone to touch the reeking carcass, flows out into Iteru itself. It consumes the land's lifegiving energies, smears riverbanks with reeking muck, and wallows in the minds of the Black Land's inhabitants — a vast bow wave pushes through the Bright Dream, the psychic ripples preceding a colossal presence ascending in humanity's collective nightmares.

Unimpeded, Crocodile will rise again — but not as the pure, foundational god it once was. Glutted on the Black Land's vitality, cut off from the balancing realm of Pangaea, Crocodile will be a ravening terror, an insatiable god of Flesh, an undead blasphemy Death Wolf's ghost will ride to usher in the apocalypse.

Creating a Saharusum

The *saharusum* are shapeshifters, also known as the Sobeki. These werecrocodiles are not Crocodile's intentional legacy, but carrion-eaters stealing the Pangaean's power through blasphemous rites. They are humans crudely fused with primal hunger, an ill-suited metamorphosis next to the Uratha's natural harmony.

The Cannibal Hymn

A human can become *saharusum* by eating the flesh of another human being who is still alive. The would-be Sobeki must eat a full meal's worth of his victim's meat, blood, and marrow. Then, he must gorge himself on Crocodile's flesh, eating until he cannot force down anything more, and then subject himself to a ceremonial initiation rite of further profanity, blood, and dirt. What follows is a ghastly transformation as he vomits out a cocoon of flesh and gristle, pupating within for six days before emerging as a werecrocodile.

Primal Hunger

A *saharusum* character possesses a Primal Urge rating and Essence pool equivalent to a werewolf's, and regenerates in the same way, but does not cause Lunacy or suffer the other effects of Primal Urge. However, a Sobeki must eat the flesh of a living human at the same frequency as a werewolf must hunt. *Saharusum* keep their Integrity Trait. At Integrity 3 and lower, *and* at Primal Urge 5+, they suffer the Persistent Addicted Condition (**Promethean**, p. 305) for consuming the flesh of

Crocodile. As a result, high-ranking cultists hold powerful sway over their subordinates, and restrict access to the cavernous chambers beneath Shedet with violence if necessary.

Sobeki cannot perform rites or form packs, but can consume the Essence of spirits they bring down in the same way as an Uratha under the Sacred Hunt. They can also regain Essence by eating human or crocodile flesh, and by draining loci. They can sense loci the same way werewolves do and can cross between the Shadow and the Flesh at such locations.

Crocodile's Might

Upon becoming *saharusum*, the character increases his Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina by 2 each, which can raise them above 5. However, he still may not *purchase* more than five dots of any Attribute.

Devourer's Maw

A Sobeki can open his mouth wide to drain power from others, sucking light and life into the void in his soul.

Cost: 3 Essence

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Primal Urge vs. Composure + Supernatural Tolerance

Action: Contested

Duration: Instant

Roll Results

Success: If the prey has a pool of supernatural energy that fuels powers, she loses two points from it; if not, she loses one Willpower point instead. Additionally, if the prey has used a lingering supernatural power that currently affects the environment or scene itself, the *saharusum* may immediately trigger a Clash of Wills; if successful, the power ends.

Exceptional Success: The Sobeki regains two Essence, if the prey lost supernatural energy, or one Willpower point if not.

Failure: The power fails.

Dramatic Failure: The power fails, and the Sobeki suffers the Deprived Condition (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 288), which resolves when he consumes enough human flesh to deal at least one point of lethal damage to either himself or someone else.

Divine Form

For 1 Essence, a Sobeki can change form as a reflexive action. As well as their human shape, *saharusum* possess two others:

Crocodile: +3 Strength, +2 Stamina, +2 Size, 2L bite attack. The *saharusum* gains the natural armor and the River Predator and Terrible Jaws traits of an Iteru crocodile **(p. 26)**, and can swim at his full Speed. Upon dealing damage in a grapple with his bite attack, he may spend 1 Essence to also inflict the Arm Wrack or Leg Wrack Tilt.

Divine: +5 Strength, +4 Stamina, +3 Presence, +3 Size, 2L bite attack. This colossal hybrid form fuses the features of human and crocodile into a monstrous whole. The *saharusum* gains the Terrible Jaws trait of an Iteru crocodile, Armor 4, and the Primal Fear trait of a werewolf's Gauru form; furthermore, his rate of regeneration in this form trebles, he can wield appropriately sized weapons, and he can speak.

Flesh Panoply

In any form, a *saharusum* may reflexively spend 1 Essence each turn to reshape portions of his body in vile metamorphosis, twisting flesh and bone into shields of cartilage, cancerously overgrown musculature, or bursts of crocodilian teeth. Flesh Panoply grants one of the following: +2 Armor and +1 Defense; +2 damage with natural weapons; healing a single point of aggravated damage; or the ability to attack with natural weapons at a range of up to (Primal Urge x 5) yards. Only a single benefit applies at a time, but as long as the Sobeki has Essence to spare, he may change which benefit he receives at the beginning of each of his turns.

Lord of Crocodiles

By spending 1 Essence as an instant action, a *saharusum* can communicate with crocodiles and gains an Animal Ken Specialty for them, until the scene ends.

Furthermore, by gathering five human corpses and anointing them with the Sobeki's own blood, the character may spend 5 Essence as an instant action that takes one minute to inflict a grotesque transmogrification upon the carcasses. Convulsing and thrashing, the meat and bone rework themselves into a living crocodile, completely obedient to the *saharusum* for the story. He can sense the general condition and location of the crocodile as an instant action, including whether it is engaged in violence or injured. At the end of the story, or if the *saharusum* dies, the crocodile collapses into rotting human body parts. A Sobeki can maintain up to his Primal Urge in charnel-crocodiles at a time.

Vile Craving

By touching an item of food and spending 1 Essence, a *saharusum* may infuse it with Crocodile's corruption for the scene. Anyone who eats it must succeed at a Composure roll, with a penalty equal to half the Sobeki's Primal Urge (rounded up), or gain the Deprived Condition, which can only resolve by eating Crocodile's flesh.

PETSUCHOS

"No need to scream. Your entrails are a sacred offering. You will live on in us, and thus in Sobek."

Background: First of the *saharusum*, Chosen of Sobek, Petsuchos is the sacred crocodile of Shedet and the priest who first lifted the bloody meat from a screaming victim to his mouth as the cannibal hymn echoed around him. Beasts know him as the Apex of Atef-Pehu, the elder Sobeki whose ravenous hunger gnaws at their dreaming Lairs.

The mad high priest has a vision for the future wrought in gristle and blood. Sobek is a god of protection, and it is Petsuchos' duty to protect Kemet from the chaos without.



He believes the best way to achieve this is to induct Sobekneferu herself into Crocodile's mysteries. She would truly become the beauty of Sobek, a queen gorged on the power of the gods just as the cannibal hymn portends. Her connection to ma'at would forge a holy communion between humans and divinities, and all would revel and devour and raise up temples of bone and gore and joy.

Description: Petsuchos usually takes the form of a great, bloated crocodile in Sobek's inner sanctum, bedecked in silver and jewels as priests gather to incant the god's ceremonies around him. He emerges briefly during festivals to publicly change shape and serve as the god's intermediary for the common people. He is a strikingly beautiful man, skin clear and healthy against the alabaster white of his robes, but his eyes are shot with veins of black and, sometimes, his flesh undulates or bulges as if something squirms just under the surface.

Storytelling Hints: His placid demeanor shatters when the Uratha threaten Shedet or when officiating over human sacrifice in the gore-spattered caves of Crocodile's tomb — both of which are occasions when he takes on the monstrous, divine fusion of Sobek's form. Free to indulge himself, Petsuchos is a grinning, laughing monstrosity.

Virtue: Patience

Vice: Pride

Aspirations: Induct Sobekneferu into the cult; Protect Shedet from the Uratha; Live a life of gluttony and luxury

Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 5; Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 7; Presence 5, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Skills: Academics (Religion) 3, Enigmas 3, Investigation 2, Occult 3, Politics 3; Archery 1, Athletics 4, Brawl (Grappling) 4, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Weaponry 3; Animal Ken 3, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion (Inspiring) 3, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Fame 2, Fortified Form (Divine) 5, Iron Stamina 3 (**CofD**, p. 48), Language (First Tongue), Living Weapon (Divine) 4, Resources 4, Status (Cult of Sobek) 5, Striking Looks 2

Integrity: 2

Willpower: 7

Initiative: 7

Defense: 7

Armor: 0

Size: 5

Speed: 16

Health: 12

Primal Urge: 5

Essence/per Turn: 15/5

Notes: Petsuchos suffers from the Persistent Addicted Condition for Crocodile's flesh.

Other Systems

All loci in Kemet produce Essence as if their dot rating were one lower; this means the least loci produce no Essence at all, although they retain their other qualities. This diminished bounty drives far more spirits than usual into the Flesh in search of fresh resonance to sustain themselves, which is worsened by the withering of the Gauntlet inflicted by the Insatiable Hep (p. 45). Ridden and Claimed are extremely common.

Werewolves gain an *additional* point of Essence whenever they consume human or wolf flesh. Furthermore, characters using the Facets of the Gift of Hunger (**Shunned by the Moon**, p. XX) gain a three-die bonus to their activation rolls.

Other Prey

A scant few Ghost Wolves cling to the Black Land's margins, unwilling to give up the fertile hunting grounds for the Red Land's freedom. Some gather strange mystery cults, calling themselves "shepherds" and touting a philosophy by which werewolves, as beings closer to the gods than humans, should rule all of Kemet. They envisage a far firmer tyranny than the Bone Shadows' authority in Asyut — the very pharaohs should be wolves, as humanity needs the Uratha's firm hand to guide them away from isfet.

The spirit courts of Iteru are a complex, mystifying web of alliances, enmities, and rivalries. The greatest are the

elemental broods of earth and water; in akhet, the water spirits seize dominance, but in peret, the elementals of earth and mud return to supremacy. Always, the broods of sand and dust stalk close by in the Red Land, and now the courts of hunger rise to great power as well.

Powerful Helions meddle with the human cults of Re. These furious angels of the sun stir up a new faction in the cult war, claiming the shapeshifting servants of Wepwawet and Sobek both are nothing but monstrosities that should be purged. These new cults are obsessed with purification by fire; where the black blood of Iteru stains its banks, they torture and burn hapless peasants whom they declare guilty of sins and evil hekau that must have invoked this dark phenomenon.

Playing the Game

This era of dead gods offers a plentiful spread of reasons for Beasts, Matet, and werewolves to meet and interact — sometimes as rivals, sometimes as allies. Besieged by Crocodile's appetites, the ominous schemes of Death Wolf's Sheut, Iteru's drought, and unstable human politics, the monsters of Kemet may find they need to rally together lest they fall alone.

Hep the Insatiable can bring Uratha and Beasts together. Faced with her depredations, the Begotten sects seek out werewolves, seeing connections between the hunger that gnaws at their souls and the madness that grips the Insatiable. Werewolves, for their part, are drawn to Hep through investigations of the collapsing Gauntlet wrought by her Schism — and, in her, they see another symptom of Crocodile's terrible influence.

Weret-Wesir are burdened with the mortal courts' anxieties and concerns: nobles and officials who fear the drought's effects, Iteru's black blood, and the strife spreading in Kemet's shadows. Sobekneferu herself might ask a Nepri to investigate, as the gods' emissary, and advise her. They cross paths with Sobeki and Uratha in doing so. Once it becomes apparent that the cult of Sobek is responsible for the chaos, even if unintentionally, the Nepri may side with Wepwawet's priests — which in turn may challenge Sobekneferu's favor for the Sobeki and draw the Weret-Wesir into further court intrigues as those who oppose her seek the support of the Matet. Nepri forming or joining throngs is less common than elsewhere, particularly across Lineages, but between visiting foreign Matet with their exotic Rambles and the potential for the Temi-Nebu to become powerful enemies if they side with other supernatural factions to escape poor treatment, many opportunities arise for Nepri trapped in soft lives of veiled manipulation and stagnation to reach out to others.

In Asyut, Wolf-Blooded priests of Wepwawet try to hold open the threshold between life and death and create their own divine emissaries to aid them in the battle against Sobek. They have captured, recruited, or studied at least one visiting Riven and are trying to replicate their creation. Aided by werewolf ritemasters and conjured spirits, some of these funerary rites take hold, creating a fresh generation of Kemetic Riven. Once or twice, when they've tried it with Uratha instead of humans, bizarre Extempore arose instead.

New Environmental Tilt: Iteru's Black Blood

Filthy ichor covers the ground, killing crops and befouling the earth. It reeks, and stains whatever it touches with its greasy, nauseating corruption.

Effect: Characters with open wounds suffer the moderate Poisoned Tilt for the scene. Consuming the ichor inflicts the grave Poisoned Tilt. Humans who come into contact with the black blood gain Gluttonous as an additional Vice for the rest of the story, and failing a breaking point roll in the ichor's presence inflicts the Madness Condition. Beasts lose a single point of Satiety *every turn* while in contact with black blood.

Causing the Tilt: The rotting flesh of Crocodile beneath Shedet oozes this black filth out into Moeris' waters; when the waters recede after akhet, the vile mucus stains Iteru's banks in many places.

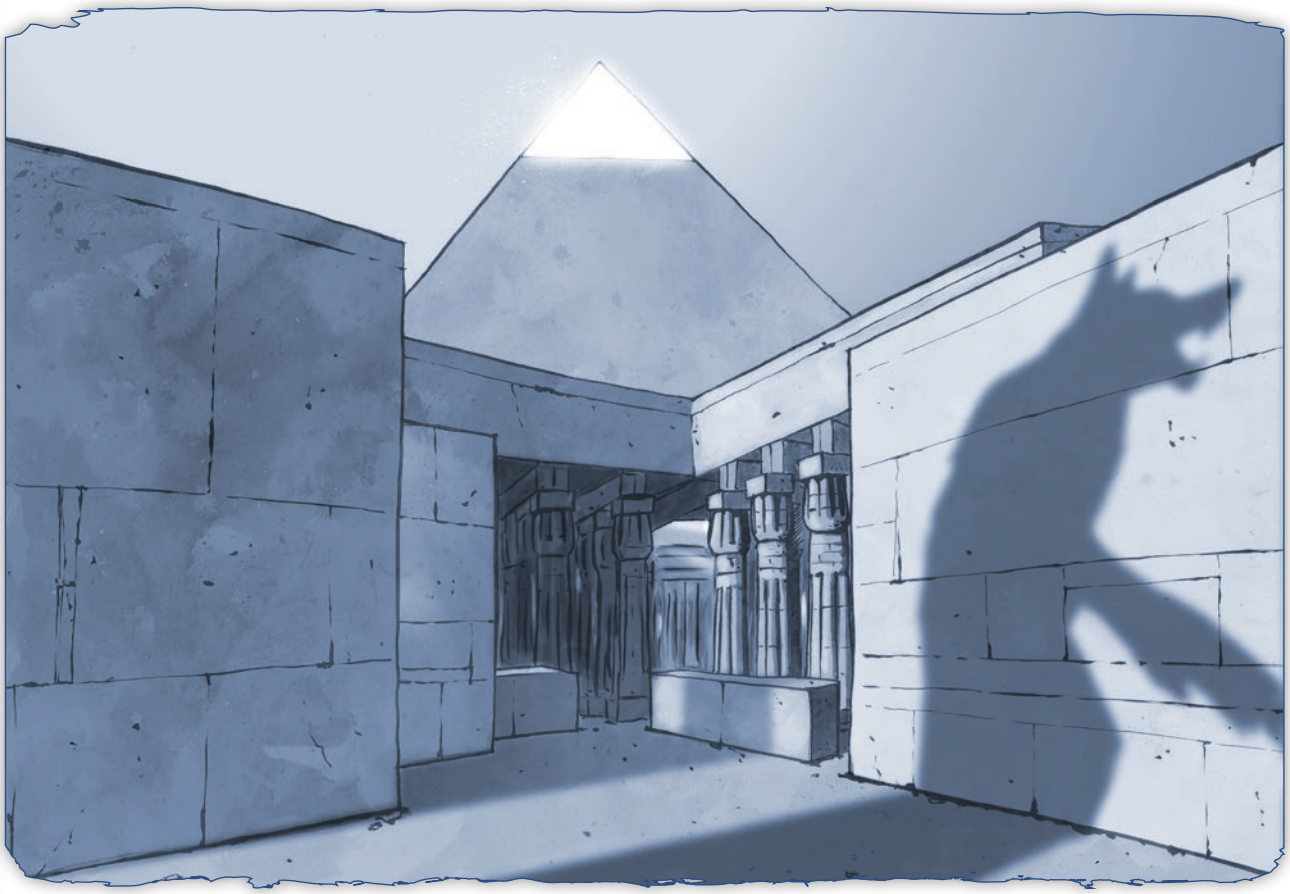
Ending the Tilt: When Iteru's waters next rise, they purify the god's foul blood and carry it away.

The Labyrinth of Hawara

The sprawling Labyrinth of Hawara is the greatest monument of Amenemhat III's reign, finished by his loyal daughter Sobekneferu. It is a grand symbol of death, a demonstration of the incredible architectural knowledge and wealth of the Middle Kingdom — and the largest gateway to the realm of the dead on the continent.

Aboveground, the labyrinth is a complex of galleries, pools, courts, and strange chambers. Everything is wrought in marble and inscribed with a dizzyingly complex scripture of life and death. Through its twisting maze, retinues of priests march dutifully to perform their daily ceremonies, following particular paths to work occult meaning into the patterns they stride. Beneath, though, is where the real power lies — a labyrinth far more twisted than that above. Under the earth, chambers seem to stretch off forever, colonnades and galleries open onto echoing spaces in the empty dark, and channels of water splash into the plunging pools where sacred crocodiles wallow and wait.

This underside is the labyrinth's true purpose. Its knotted halls are built in sympathy with the writhing tunnels of the Autochthonous Depths, a tangled maze that blurs the lines between this world and the Great Below. Ghosts find it easy to enter the world here, but the labyrinth is, in turn, a defense against them — while they might breach the realm of the living, they cannot find their way out of the maze. This confusion is metaphysical, not mundane; a phantasm who thinks they can simply pass through the



walls or roof finds themselves back where they began, and careful mapping is to no avail. The only means of escape is the guidance of a willing human priest.

Amenemhat III built this place to assure the passage of souls to the Duat. The pyramids rearing up around the labyrinth are filled with spells and grave goods, but the labyrinth is the greatest work of them all — a thoroughfare into which the dead might march directly to the Assessors, untroubled by evil spirits. Death Wolf's Sheut whispered the inspiration into his ear, seeking a gateway into the world that could support its vast power. As Sobekneferu's architects and priests finish the labyrinth's vast occult patterns and the incessant funerary rites strengthen and widen its gate, the Sheut's time approaches. Already, it sends through a stream of enslaved ghosts to whisper dark exhortations to sleeping dignitaries, to carve messages in the flesh of its Sobeki dupes, and to vex and curse the Uratha. An extrusion of itself now walks the labyrinth's lowest levels, a great, baleful white wolf with cold eyes.

Yet, Amenemhat and his priests were no fools. The labyrinth is a ghost trap that not even this divine shade can easily thwart. The Sheut cannot escape the tangled halls, and cannot shatter this occult prison with its mystical might, for doing so would break the gate before it widened fully. It cannot retreat, either, caught in the spiritual maze like a fly in a web. Still, in time, the way will be open. It simply bides its time until it can lure the right guide or find the right spell to speak, and then it can shed its cage.

Entering the Labyrinth

Accessing the labyrinth to plumb its secrets, stem the flow of slave-ghosts, or confront the Sheut itself is a difficult proposition. It sits at the hub of a vast necropolitan network, droves of priests working at its periphery. Proud guards stand at every entrance, armed with blades of copper and silver, vigilantly examining every acolyte who would step across its threshold. Warden ghosts are chained to the galleries and gibber in the spaces beneath the earth, a morbid garrison of the dead; some puppet corpses, actual mummified bodies lurching through the depths' nightmarish halls. A handful of Sobeki also watch over the labyrinth, performing blood sacraments and feeding the crocodiles in obeisance to the Sheut's commands, delivered to them as omens and portents in the minds of Sobek's diviners and Oracles. Stranger defenses yet await the daring — the clattering mechanisms of simple traps can catch the unwary with deadfalls and blades, while some of the funerary inscriptions seethe with sinister curses.

On the other hand, Beasts sometimes find that opening Primordial Pathways from Chambers with Traits like Maze, Darkness, or Currents while trying to get to the material world deposits them in the labyrinth's depths unbidden; then the problem isn't getting in, but getting *out*.

Pilgrims in the Underworld

A Matet who ventures into the labyrinth's deepest passages, where reality blends with the Great Below, and drinks from the River tributaries that flow there can achieve *anastasis* without actually dying. This attunement to death is deeply meaningful for the Created of Kemet, particularly the Nepri, because stepping across that threshold this way grants the Matet a sense of understanding that what lies beyond, in the Duat, is *not* calling to them as souls sent back by Wesir. While some may despair upon learning no divine hand touched them, others realize they are not bound through death to duty to the gods, but are instead free beings allowed to make their own Pilgrimages as they see fit.

Apep's Brood

Raveners, also known as the spawn of Apep, are gibbering, warped horrors actually born from Crocodile's fell presence. They crawl from Iteru's tainted silt to drag away screaming victims and feast upon their entrails. Each is a patchwork monstrosity of rotting flesh and bones, an amalgam of beasts that have fallen to the mud. One grins with a festering crocodile head atop the body of a lion; another prowls on the legs of a goat, staring at its prey through a leopard's fanged skull and reaching with twisted, suppurating human arms.

At each ravener's core burns its profane source of power — a captive human soul. This ill flame sputters from the eyes and maw of the beast as a cold, blue light. Trapped, unable to pass on, these tormented souls are torn from those who die in the river or succumb to the tainted ichor.

A ravener is a force of chaos manifested in earthly form, driven by rabid hunger and a base, animal cunning. The monstrosities cannot speak beyond mad cackles or turgid burbles, but gather in impromptu packs to stalk prey under cover of darkness. They can only hold back for so long from the urge to rip, tear, and gorge, but raveners have enough sense to retreat from overwhelming force and seek more vulnerable victims instead.

Raveners eat anything living, including crops, livestock, and humans. When their hunger is briefly sated, the horrors drag victims away to entomb them in the mud or drown them, in a hellish mockery of a breeding instinct to create more of their kind. Beings of supernatural power drive them into an unstoppable frenzy of craving.

Raveners are a twisted fusion of Flux, undeath, and Pangaean power, and seem to possess a certain kinship with both akhekhau — particularly the *praecipitati* — and *shartha*; the Uratha call them the "Soul-Claimed," while Matet scholars view their cold flames as a sort of anti-Azoth. Some raveners display additional capabilities usually associated with such creatures, like the ability to track Pyros or discorporate into their component parts. Others display more alien powers. Storytellers creating unique raveners should add Dread Powers to represent their custom abilities.

RAVENER

Virtue: Implacable

Vice: Gluttonous

Aspirations: Eat everything; Spread the black blood

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3; Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5; Presence 4, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Skills: Occult 1; Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Stealth 3, Survival 3; Intimidation 3

Merits: Iron Stamina 3

Willpower: 4

Initiative: 5

Defense: 8

Armor: 1/1 (natural)

Size: 5

Speed: 19

Health: 10

Potency: 4

Bane: Pure freshwater from a clean spring

Dread Powers: Beast of Black Silt, Home Ground (Iteru silt), Natural Weapons (Bite, Claws) 2, Numen: Blast (Ichor Vomit), Spawn of Apep, Toxic 1 (automatic)

Weapons/Attacks:

Attack	Damage	Dice Pool	Special
Bite/ Claw	2L	10	Armor Piercing 2

Beast of Black Silt

Once per turn, by reflexively spending 1 Willpower, a ravener may regenerate two points of bashing or lethal damage. While on their Home Ground, this does not cost Willpower.

Numen: Blast (Ichor Vomit)

This functions identically to the usual Blast Numen, except that opponents hit with the ichor vomit also suffer the grave Poisoned Tilt.

Spawn of Apep

All breaking point rolls triggered in a ravener's presence suffer a three-die penalty, including rolls triggered by steps backward on a Matet's Pilgrimage. Uratha suffer the penalty for rolls toward both Flesh and Spirit.



Storytelling Hunger in the Black Land

This era is set at the end of an epoch, the fall of the Middle Kingdom to the chaos that follows. The pharaoh sitting upon Kemet's throne is doomed, the prosperity and accomplishments of her dynasty will crumble, and the world will change. For a Storyteller, the challenge comes in playing out a tale that embraces these momentous events without drowning out the actions of the characters.

Running the Game

Although the ravenous hunger of dead gods simmers beneath this era's stories, the themes and mood of the period are what give those stories substance and structure. When emphasized, these elements drive drama and push events forward amid the wet silt and dry sand of the Black and Red Lands.

The foremost theme is that of twisted reflections. The gods and ma'at face the warped mirror of Crocodile, Death Wolf's Sheut, and the chaos that spreads through the land. The players' characters should encounter such stark comparisons, too. The easiest way to show this is to pit them against their more depraved counterparts. Begotten involve themselves in the consequences of their own siblings' predations, especially Hep and purposeless Beasts who live for nothing more than their Hungers. Uratha clash with Sobeki and Pure, particularly the Predator Kings whose almost nihilistic vision of Kemet's future is so contrary to Asyut's carefully cultivated tenets of society and order. Matet sometimes face those at the opposite extreme of their own social status, but Mesu Betshet unknowingly empowered by Crocodile offer the clearest and darkest reflections — particularly those who see the Insatiable Hep as a goddess more fit to emulate than humanity.

These reflections ripple out further than such classic antagonist face-offs, though. Show players the struggle between scribes who hew to Kemet's conservative, static traditions and those willing to buck the system and fulfill their own ambitions. In sacred sanctums, show how grotesque, monstrous Claimed twist human faith into disgusting acts of self-desecration and sacrifice. Even Sobekneferu herself has a dark mirror waiting in the wings — her own sister's corpse, Ptahneferu, risen to walk again. And what guilty secrets does the pharaoh keep about the night her sister was murdered to clear her own path to the throne? Show the clash between ma'at and isfet at every level of society, in conflicts between order and chaos, tradition and innovation, obedience and selfishness.

So too do cycles dominate Kemet. Storytellers can lay out chapters and stories to match the seasons. The floods bring a great change or new antagonist; the receding waters accompany a subtle twist or new discovery; and as the crops grow tall in the fields, ready for harvest, the arc comes to an end with the characters facing the repercussions of their actions. The river serves as a backdrop to each tale, and its ailing health can provide a sense of pace and consequence. As the droughts worsen, the stakes grow higher, and foes grow fiercer. A victory over sinister forces in a sepat might cause Iteru's fresh waters to wash away the black ichor staining its banks; but failure, when isfet takes hold of a community and plunges it into depravity, may cause the river's sickness to gush forth more strongly, causing powerful raveners to lollop from the slime.

Storytellers can bring Kemet's obsession with the other great cycle, that of life and death, into a chronicle through the words and actions of humans with whom the characters interact. Death is a preeminent worry at every level of society; people pour their wealth into securing the best tombs and funerary preparations they can. These efforts are a major status marker; characters who seem unconcerned with arrangements for the afterlife face confusion or even censure for their nontraditional way of thinking. The antagonists of the era are just as embroiled in this focus on death; Crocodile is a vast, mummified god, and Death Wolf's Sheut is a ghost trapped halfway between the Underworld and the living world.

Introducing a Paradox

In a world where supernatural characters can act relatively openly, it's easy for players to drive the era off its historical track. What if they avert Sobekneferu's death, and she consolidates her power and establishes her lineage? What if something happens to Iteru to restore its waters rapidly, or aggravate the problem further and bring down Kemetic culture entirely with a lengthy period of terrible drought? What if an actual Pangaean god rises up and crushes cities underfoot like a Bronze Age kaiju?

Don't panic — it is *absolutely fine* for a historical game to diverge wildly from actual history. When considering the ramifications and ripples of such events, choose some major and interesting consequences and run with them. For example, if Sobekneferu lives, perhaps the Hyksos invaders arise earlier and clash directly against the still-sturdy structure of the Middle Kingdom rather than the crumbling edifices of the following chaos, letting players experience the struggle to keep the kingdom intact in the face of such an outside threat.

The moods that pervade Kemet in this time are arrogance and foreboding; the civilization teeters on the cusp of its fall, and fear ripples among the people. Common folk flock in droves to priests and Oracles, seeking advice and guidance; they see many characters who display supernatural powers in much the same light. A character may find themselves pursued by desperate or hopeful petitioners seeking their favor and use of their hekau. The less credulous already take steps to ward themselves against the future; powerful haty-a gather resources and allies in preparation for the coming turmoil, and supernatural characters may represent powerful allies they want to keep on their side — or frustrating rivals they need to clear out of the way.

Despite the fear, many march on as if nothing were wrong. The 12th Dynasty has brought such prosperity and order to the land — why would that change now? Many are the officials who wallow in their riches and power, assuming they can weather the storm on the basis of unearned titles and inherited privileges. Even as the end of Sobekneferu's reign approaches, still the great, grinding edifice of state works to raise up new glories in her name. The helmsmen of disaster's barge, the Sobeki, think themselves proud priests of a noble god who harnessed a divine phenomenon and have it entirely under their control, while all along they are unwitting pawns of a mad ghost and an unnatural force. As often as the characters encounter the fearful and desperate, they should face the arrogant and proud — those who consider themselves the inheritors of a godly civilization, and who see no need for change or even the admission that any problems could threaten mighty Kemet.

Gameplay Tiers

Although this era sees characters caught in the monstrous machinations of mighty spirits and rotting divinities, not every story needs to contend with this highest tier of play. The troupe may plunge into the clash between cults, seek secrets in the labyrinth's bowels, and write the Ramble of how the class disparity between Nepri and other Lineages is upended for better or worse, but Middle Kingdom Kemet offers plenty for smaller scopes as well.

Mid-tier games might focus on a particular city or sepat. With the drought, the pestilent ichor, and the restless clash of cults, a smaller region still holds plenty of opportunities for action, horror, and accomplishment. A Beast may fight to establish a Begotten sect's philosophy as the primary one among a sepat's Children and bring the local Hive under its influence, or try to take down Petsuchos to raise up a less-depraved Apex. A Matet might spend a whole chronicle as the advisor to a haty-a, fending off threats of unrest and starvation, or could work to liberate Temi-Nebu or break the power of a local alchemists' guild. A werewolf pack might be part of a Protectorate that guards against the Pure advance, or deal with the flood of spirits into the Flesh and the accompanying problems in one city.

Drilling down to street-level games, a personal focus serves well for supernatural beings in a world where travel is slow and arduous — even for those blessed with hekau — and where Crocodile's hunger warps lives regardless of their distance from the clash of gods. A Beast focuses on day-to-day survival, trying to balance her Satiety as the dead god stirs her Hunger — she can't sit idle, but must feed regularly or risk her Horror running loose. Without an established Begotten culture, she must *make* a framework of understanding to dwell within, exploring Kemetic religion or looking to ties of Kinship to make sense of her condition. Matet are always well-suited to street-level games, moving from one place to the next to deal with personal dramas and reach milestones: a Weret-Wesir expected to give the common people advice to help them overcome their struggles when he barely understands the human condition himself, or a Kemet-born Riven just trying to build a throng in peace while the haughty Asyut wolf-priests train her to fight cannibal monsters. A werewolf pack anchored firmly to its territory's immediate problems is naturally focused on this tier of play, and the Storyteller can easily bring in Beasts and Matet as problems or potential solutions.

Story Hooks

The following tales are but a handful of possibilities for story hooks appropriate to Hunger in the Black Land.

Book of the Dead

Someone is systematically murdering priests of the gods of death and afterlife, particularly Wesir and Anpu. Each dead cultist is subjected to horrific torments as they perish, botched rites of mummification visited upon their still-writhing bodies.

The perpetrator is a Nepri called Adjemhet. The Weret-Wesir tires of his life in service to the gods; he has a sense in his bones that he needs to *move on*, and a desire has stirred in what is left of his loins to leave a legacy: to create new life. Adjemhet seeks to perform a generative act, but he doesn't know how, and the priests who created him refuse to share the secrets of his Lineage with him. Now he tries to force it out of them, torturing them for the knowledge of funerary hekau, then practicing those rites on their struggling flesh. The priests don't truly know the trick of creating a Matet, torture usually doesn't produce real information anyway, and each sect and tradition possesses mere fragments of knowledge that he must sift through after they're dead and then piece together; it's slow going.

On the one hand, Adjemhet becomes a cruel monster, obsessed with creating life and leaving a trail of bodies behind him. On the other, he is genuinely clawing together the secrets from which the Weret-Wesir may become a real, self-sustaining Lineage. On top of that, the assembled text of funerary lore he gathers is a trove of other deathly secrets that have nothing to do with the Matet. Getting hold of that knowledge either requires taking it from Adjemhet — and



he is fiercely possessive of his hard-won wisdom — or helping him finish his Great Work. But by that point, a great many more priests will have died in the process.

The story of Adjemhet is limited in scope but has significant ramifications for the Matet journey; the tale can be expanded by increasing the extremes to which the Weret-Wesir will go in pursuit of his aims, or the number of Nepri involved in the coup.

Eater of Names

The Predator Kings' determination to tear down Kemet's civilization takes a strange new turn. Wild-eyed packs of Pure rove into the Black Land to desecrate tombs and monuments, scoring stone to obliterate cartouches and the names of the honored dead. This is a terrible affront to ma'at and the legacy of Kemet; those whose names are lost suffer as their Ren are forgotten, casting their ghosts adrift in the Red Land or depriving them of their own memories in the Great Below.

The Predator Kings perpetrating this enforced amnesia are not in control of their actions. Their names have been eaten, too, and something else drives them through the yawning wound of their own missing Ren. Splintered apart from their fellow Pure, these maddened beasts hunt ever-greater names to feed their frenzy. What happens when they reach the monuments of Hawara?

At their least threatening, these may simply be Dire Wolf cultists who undertook an unwise rite, eating their own names to become vessels of obliteration that can ensure they stamp out even the memory of civilization as they drive the herd of humanity back to its rightful state as prey. Something more powerful might lie behind it, though; another force may draw close to Kemet's confluence of dead gods, another great power exploiting the chaos for its own benefit. Are the Predator Kings thralls to a potent spirit of loss, or a malevolent Arisen who knows the ancient secrets of Ren magic? Are they a ghastly form of Claimed, a nightmare spawned in the Red Land's chaos? Or are they servants to something that overshadows all else, a personification of the end of identity itself — the jaws of a newly awakened Earth-Bound that calls itself Ammut, clamping shut around Kemet in the kingdom's final days?

Hard to Kill

In the great temple of Re at Itjtawy, the scarred flesh of an old woman gives birth to a legend. Redjemsaf is an Oracle of distinction, a priestess of Khepri who has fought and survived innumerable fiends in her time. In her twilight years, she lays down the bow to offer the wisdom of her portents to the great and the good — even Sobekneferu herself comes to the temple to receive Redjemsaf's guidance.

The Primordial Dream swirls around this old woman. Not simply a seer who aids others, she has herself become the focus of the stories. Her tale calcifies into a foundation upon which future narratives will grow. If she dies of natural causes, it will cement her as The One the Demons Could Not Kill — giving rise to future Heroes who recover swiftly from damage. If she dies to a Beast's claws, this nascent story will unravel.

The Begotten sense this growing threat. Beasts find themselves beset again by nightmares despite their own Horrors, caught in dream-tales in which they cannot end their foes. Even the most depraved of the Children are terrified — and then furious at the notion that anything could so affect them.

Might a Beast penetrate the sanctum of Re and slay the Oracle of Khepri, or are more powerful forces at work protecting her? Killing her may prevent this particular danger, but the inertia of the Primordial Dream cannot be so easily stopped; will the narrative simply latch on to another Heroic story, perhaps one that presents an even greater threat to the Begotten? The death of such a revered priestess will not go without response — might such an assassination stir a brutal purge of Beasts by the remaining Oracles? The answers to these questions determine the scope and tier of this tale.

Redjemsaf herself has earned her reputation of resilience. Could she be persuaded to change the course of her own story, if convinced it's the will of Re?

The Opener of the Way

Death Wolf needs a vessel, a host for her spirit to carry her puissant Essence for a brief-but-vital time on her journey to the labyrinth. The Firstborn cannot easily act in Kemet, even as her children fight and die on her behalf; other great terrors wait for any misstep she makes, ready to pounce, not least of whom is her sibling Dire Wolf. If she draws too close to Shedet, the divine energies of her presence might stir fresh vitality in Crocodile and risk rousing it to shambling, undead animation. Anything she does must be balanced against the colossal damage she will cause to the Shadow, draining it of Essence to sustain her presence.

The finest vessel would be the body of a royal, resonant with the symbolism of Amenemhat's monument. Sobekneferu is out of bounds unless the situation becomes utterly desperate — but Ptahneferu would be an ideal host for the Firstborn. That she is dead is not a major obstacle; Death Wolf could easily puppet her as a corpse.

Unfortunately, Ptahneferu isn't in her tomb. The Bone Shadows scour the land for whichever tomb robbers might have thieved the remains away, thinking her still a dead body. The priesthood of Ptah catches wind of the hunt. Now, they desperately hide their ward, terrified of what the priests of Wepwawet intend for her, and what the consequences will be for themselves for having concealed her from the powerful cult. They tentatively reach out to the Weret-Wesir and other creatures of hekau, forced to seek allies through lack of other options — but perhaps someone else might be able to bridge the gap between parties and find an accord. After all, if anyone could bear the

brief weight of a Firstborn, it would be the Divine Fire of a hardy Created — or so they theorize. They refuse to admit they don't actually have any idea what kind of effect such a possession would have on either of them.

The story of Death Wolf's vessel is an upper-tier tale, but the scope can be narrowed down to focus on the struggles and choices of the characters involved and the negotiations between parties, giving it a more personal bent.

Sources and Inspiration

Storytellers may be hard-pressed to find fictional media that takes place in Kemet's Middle Kingdom, and most of the accounts we have of the places in focus in this era are later writings by Greeks like Herodotus, whose takes on Egypt are questionably accurate at best. For inspirational material, your best bet is to seek out translations of original texts from the period.

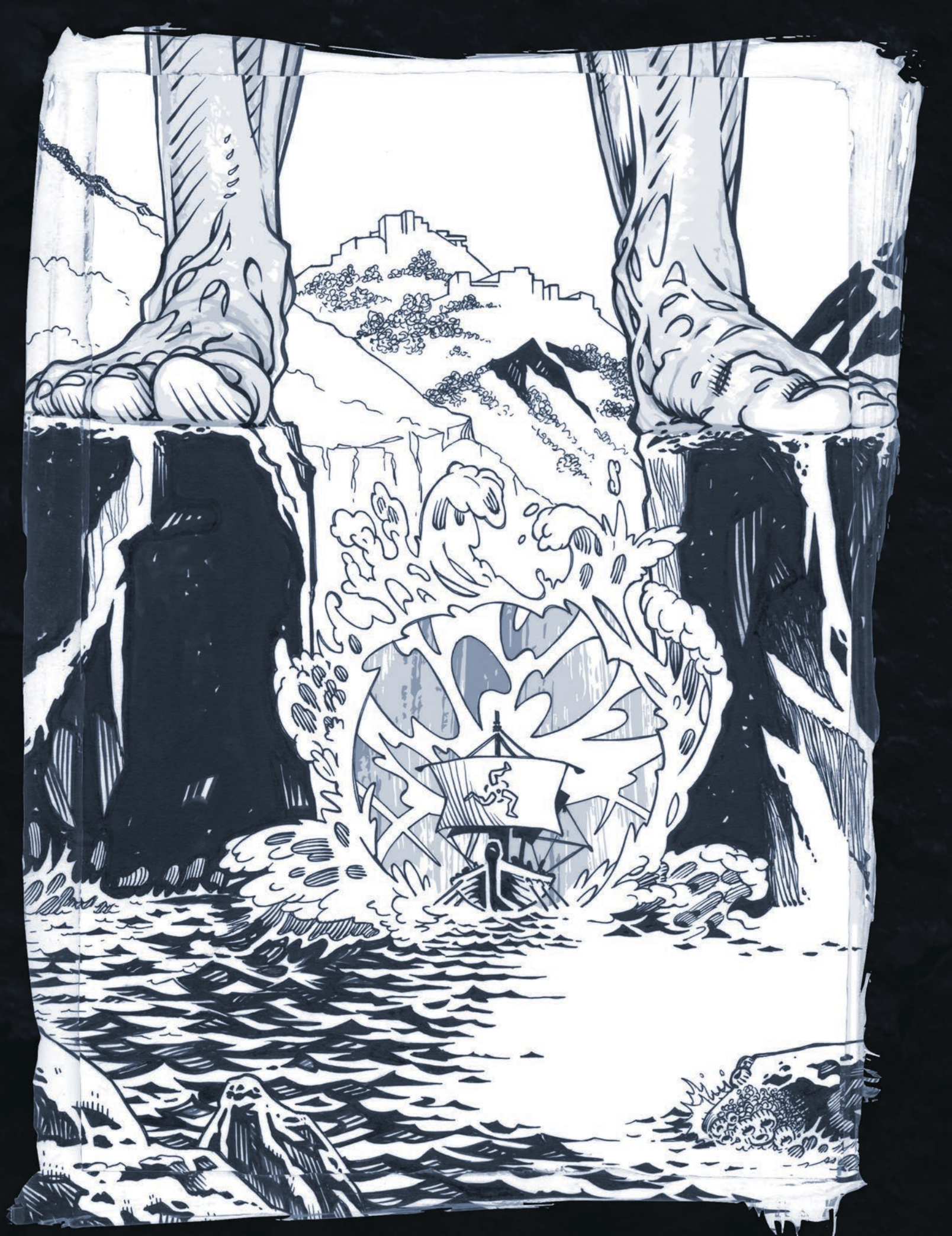
Also recommended is the book *A Hieroglyphic Vocabulary to the Theban Recension of the Book of the Dead*, by E. A. Wallis Budge; you can find the full searchable text, digitized by the Internet Archive with funding from Brigham Young University, at https://archive.org/details/hieroglyphicvoca00budg/page/n7. It gives a huge dictionary of ancient Egyptian words found in original texts with English translations, including a ridiculously useful index of the English entries in the back and hieroglyphs for everything. It's not only good for naming characters or places and giving your game an authentic feel, it's also just a fascinating look at the kinds of things the ancients valued and ways they used language.

The Book of the Dead hails from the New Kingdom, but it is a collation of many of the rites and spells that were in use during the Middle Kingdom and Sobekneferu's reign. Its passages give ample illustration of the beliefs the people of Kemet held about the Duat and A'aru, what dangers and obstacles they felt the afterlife contained, and the means they used to reach the coveted goal of eternal life.

The *Cannibal Hymn* is an ancient passage hailing from the era of Pharaoh Unas, reappearing among funerary inscriptions during the Middle Kingdom. It details the bizarre and grotesque process of eating the power of the gods themselves, raising Unas up as a divine figure above all others.

The Middle Kingdom saw a flourishing of literature, including the *Tale of the Eloquent Peasant* and the *Story of Sinuhe*, offering insight into how the people of the time saw more worldly and mundane matters such as commerce, justice, and ma'at.

The Pack is a comic featuring the rare combination of werewolves and ancient Egypt. It's set in a later era than the Middle Kingdom of Sobekneferu, but as a story of lycanthropes in the ancient world, it is peerless. It also gives a sense of Kemet existing in the context of other places and peoples, as the main characters are themselves Nubians, originating from the land known to the people of this era as Kush.



Rabbit hoisted the package higher onto his back. He looked at Wolf; his brother in life, death, and crime.

"Are you certain?" he asked for the fourth time.

Wolf shrugged, glancing up at the Colossus: "It's not moving now."

No, Rabbit thought, it was not moving now. But stories hinted it did sometimes, and Rabbit was not looking forward to that at all.

"Why am I carrying the package?" he moved to a different tack.

Another shrug. "I'm older."

This was also true. By the time Rabbit had struggled free of the leathery sack of alchemical fluid serving as a womb to him, Wolf had already consumed his first kill. How long ago was that now? The holes in Rabbit's brain made it hard to remember.

"She'll be wanting that," Wolf reminded him.

She would. Rabbit looked forward to handing the gift to her — if Wolf didn't steal it from him first — and seeing her smile. The goddess was beautiful to Rabbit in a way even his Creator had not been. She made him whole, or at least made him feel like he was whole and that was just as good. He thought he loved her, though he couldn't be sure — he'd never felt love before.

He stepped between the feet of the Colossus, eager now to get to the Hedge entry he knew was there. He stopped when he heard stone grinding on stone above him. Towering 30 meters over Rabbit, the statue now looked down. Its great eyes blinked, drawing stone lids over black irises.

Rabbit was aware of metal unsheathing behind him. Wolf was always the braver of them — and the foolhardier. He, on the other hand, was frozen in place with terror.

The Colossus bent forward; stone lips drawn tight, forehead creasing into a frown. Small bits of rock rained down on Rabbit. A needle-thin blade whistled through the air, whipping a stray lock of Rabbit's tufty hair forward, and clanked harmlessly off the stone giant. Now the Colossus' head turned to regard Wolf and an unseen weight fell off Rabbit — still too scared to move, at least he could breathe again. He watched as the Colossus' hand came down, larger than him from palm to fingertips. His brain short-circuited, electric currents sending alarms to his legs, and then he was running. He almost tripped over his feet as he flew past Wolf and ran to the safety of the harbor. He didn't even realize he had dropped the package, landing near the Colossus' feet with a soft thud of flesh — the goddess would have to wait for her quarry.



The Seven Wonders
286-226 BCE

Great deeds are usually wrought at great risks.
– Herodotus

The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World coexisted together for just half a century. In that short era though, they created something never seen before or after: the Web of Seven. The seven wonders form a series of Pilgrimage Markers, drawn together in a roadmap to New Dawn. They serve as bastions against the Gentry: The Great Bargain inscribed on the pyramid of Khufu repels the Huntsmen, while the Lighthouse of Alexandria guides still-enslaved Lost out of the Hedge. Prometheans and Lost wrought their magic separate from each other, but the effects of Pyros and Glamour weave together into the Web of Seven.

Within the Web, a new Lineage of Prometheans hails from a Hedgebound construct. Orphic Lost play at being genitors, hoping to create their greatest work yet. Fetches can attempt the Pilgrimage, mistaken by the Divine Principle for one of its own.

The Gentry, bound by Khufu's Bargain, observe their fetch servants struggle to escape their clutches — but what starts as amusement turns to mounting horror when one fetch comes dangerously close to Redemption. They respond as Gentry would, by finding a loophole in the Bargain and sending loyalists to sabotage the Web. Eventually, through their efforts or unlucky circumstance, the Colossus of Rhodes falls in 226 BCE. Though the giant continues to lie in place for centuries after, its destruction signals the end of the Web. Seven Wonders takes place before the fall, when the road to Redemption is still open.

The seven wonders span a vast distance. **What Has Come Before** breaks them up by empire: Egypt, Greece, and the Seleucid Empire each control several wonders. Meanwhile, **Where We Are Now** places them geographically, from the Hanging Gardens at the Web's most eastern point and the Statue of Zeus at its most western. Both sections provide history, supernatural involvement, and story hooks. **Where We're Going** offers a glimpse of the Colossus hitting the ground, and moves further into the future still: Which wonder falls next, and why does the Pyramid of Khufu alone still stand in the modern era?

Next, **Promethean: Pilgrimage Road** presents a new Lineage of Prometheans as well as Pilgrim fetches, while **Changeling: Keepers of the Seven** describes their struggle to keep the Great Bargain in the face of Gentry posing as gods and an ever-growing loyalist threat.

We move to player resources — guidelines on playing a fetch; new goblin fruits, tokens, and Azothic Objects; Merits; and ways to keep a crossover group together — in **Playing the Game**. Lastly, **Storytelling the Seven** offers a closer look at different tiers for a Seven Wonders campaign, replete with sample stories, and sources for further research into the era. **The Dream Builders** presents a freehold of Orphic Lost who bargained with the Lady of Death herself.

In the Ashes of Alexander

Alexander spent 10 years conquering everything he could, died in Bactria, and left a massive empire behind him — which immediately collapsed. The legacy of this empire was the Hellenistic Age, a period where Greek culture

was spread across the wide breadth of Alexander's empire. The successor states, seized by his generals, would inform the next several centuries of power politics across the world.

There was more to Alexander's conquest than the geopolitical consequences, however — even great generals do not exist in a vacuum. Even as Alexander's empire split, his generals going to war to seize as much of their former comrades' territory as they could, the spread of Greek culture and language enabled a kind of cosmopolitanism that had never before existed in this part of the world. If you spoke Greek, you could travel virtually anywhere (of interest, anyway) and expect to be understood. Among other things, this enabled tourism like never before, and even for those who couldn't afford to travel, travelogues became ridiculously popular — Herodotus, the father of history (and lies) was famous for his.

The Wars of the Diadochi were over by 275 BCE, with power blocs consolidated more or less in the form they would remain in for years to come. Ptolemy's successors controlled Egypt, and already the great Library in Alexandria the dynasty's founder built was known as a center of great learning and wisdom; the Seleucid dynasty controlled most of Asia Minor and all of Alexander's former holdings in South Central Asia; and the Antigonid dynasty had seized control of Macedon itself, as well as most of the Greek city-states.

Ancient Even to Antiquity — The Great Pyramid at Giza

Khufu, known to the Greeks as Cheops, was the pharaoh responsible for inaugurating the age of Egyptian megastructures, ordering a mammoth tomb constructed for himself that took decades to build and consumed labor and lives to a degree unprecedented in history and never matched by the time of the seven wonders. At 481 feet tall, it was by far the tallest structure constructed by humanity, a record it would hold until the 1300s CE, and the construction and architecture was so fine that the sides of the pyramid deviate only by centimeters from one another. Two other enormous pyramids stand astraddle it, built by later pharaohs, and Giza itself is strewn with temples, causeways, and the Great Sphinx. It was a wonder even among wonders, astonishing all who looked upon it.

It was already 2,500 years old when six other wonders would rise up to challenge it, the kingdom that had built it long since buried beneath the sand and rebuilt time and again, ancient but unbowed by time. The Ptolemaic dynasty was only the latest to rule Egypt, and was only a blink of an eye in the long, long history of that country. Small wonder, then, that Ptolemy wished to leave his mark on his new empire, and ordered the construction of a massive lighthouse.

Shining from the Isle of Pharos — The Lighthouse of Alexandria

Many things could be said of Alexander, but not that he was humble — he left a dozen Alexandrias scattered across his empire, founding them as he went. He ordered Egypt's Alexandria built at the western edge of the Nile Delta. Once Ptolemy took control of Egypt, he quickly commanded not only the construction of a lighthouse on Pharos Island, just offshore, but a massive mole that served as a breakwater and stretched from the shore to the island itself. Known as the Heptastadion (from the Greek *hepta*, "seven," and *stadion*, a unit of length roughly equal to 196 yards), it was an engineering marvel in its own right, but it paled before the tower that rose from Pharos.

The Lighthouse of Alexandria was 400 feet tall or more, and such was its brilliance, powered by a purpose-built furnace at its peak, that it could be seen for many miles. In time, it would serve as the model for lighthouses around the world, and the word *pharos* would make its way into dozens of languages as a word for things that give off light.

In Honor of the Lady of Ephesus — The Temple of Artemis

The Temple of Artemis has stood at Ephesus for ages, but the present temple is not the first, nor even the second, but the third and grandest iteration thereof. The first, attributed by many to the Amazons, was destroyed by a flood in the seventh century BCE; the second, built by Croesus of Lydia, a ruler known proverbially for his great wealth, was burned to the ground by a single man who wished for his name to live forever. The Ephesians set about rebuilding the temple themselves afterward, but progress was slow.

Ephesus had long been ruled by the Persians, one of the furthest outposts of their empire, but when Alexander swept through Asia Minor the people revolted against the tyrant Syrpax, stoning him and his family to death even before Alexander could march on the city. Alexander offered to pay for the construction of the temple, but the Ephesians politely declined his offer, saying that it was inappropriate for one god to build a temple to another. After Alexander's death, one of his generals, Lysimachus, took control of Ephesus, and spent the remainder of his reign descending into infamy. First, he forcibly relocated the whole of Ephesus away from the temple site, flooding the city by blocking up the sewers to force the issue, then destroyed two nearby cities and forced the inhabitants to move to the new city of Arsinoe (named for his wife) he'd constructed to replace

He Who Shall Not Be Named

Following the arson, the Ephesians made a law that barred mentioning the name of the man who committed it, on pain of death, to stymie his attempt to immortalize his name. Regrettably, the law did not succeed — his name was recorded by several historians and has since become widely known, to the point of becoming a metonym for vainglorious criminal acts. It's trivially easy to find the man's name should you wish to do so, but we won't be adding to his infamy here.

Ephesus. At the beginnings of the Seven Wonders era, Lysimachus is firmly in control and hated by many, but he is soon to be the architect of his own doom.

One Man's Memory — The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus

Mausolus was a Persian satrap, son of Hecatomnus, who ruled a kingdom in Asia Minor called Caria. A great admirer of Greek culture all his life, when he chose to move the capital to Halicarnassus he spared no expense on making the city suitably impressive. When he died, his wife, Artemisia II (also his sister — the Hecatomnids were known for sibling marriage) ordered the construction of a massive and magnificent tomb, importing famous Greek sculptors and architects to ensure it outdid all others of its kind. Such was her outpouring of grief for her husband, she was thereafter known through antiquity as a model of widowhood.

When completed, the tomb was 150 feet tall, and covered in reliefs of scenes from Greek myth, from the Centauromachy to wars of Greeks against Amazons. The construction took years, lasting well past Artemisia's death two years after Mausolus' — her ashes were interred with his, sealed behind a corridor full of sacrificed animals. At the time, this structure was simply known as the Tomb of Mausolus — the Romans wouldn't be around to coin the term "mausoleum" in its honor for some centuries.

Halicarnassus itself was all but destroyed when Alexander took the city, not by the Macedonian army but by the retreating Persians, who fired it. Winds spread the flame and much of the city was lost, and even after Alexander left the city in the hands of Ada of Caria (who left it to him upon her death) and the subsequent largesse of Ptolemy, the city never properly recovered.

A Forest Within a City — The Hanging Gardens of Nineveh

It was not in the ancient city of Babylon (rightly famed for its great walls, which were called a wonder more than once) that the Hanging Gardens were built, but to the north, in the city of Nineveh on the Tigris River, by the Assyrian king Sennacherib. In his day, the Neo-Assyrian Empire stretched across Mesopotamia and into Egypt and Asia Minor — his conquests are recorded in the Second Book of Kings. The capital, Nineveh, was home to great works of irrigation and mechanism that spread the fertile waters of the Tigris across a great area — and also provided water for the massive garden, built over a many-tiered structure, that remained green even into the blistering Mesopotamian summer. The garden itself housed plants from across the world, meticulously cared for by a staff of hundreds of gardeners.

It was a magnificent work of art and construction in a city made great by conquest — but that city was, itself, conquered. Following the death of Ashurbanipal, son of Esarhaddon and grandson of Sennacherib, Assyria fell into civil war. Never a popular empire thanks to the sheer cruelty of their methods, their many foes fell on them en masse, destroying the empire. Nineveh was besieged, sacked, and razed in 612 BCE, and its people fled.

What was left of Assyria was divided between the Medes and the Babylonians — Nineveh itself was never resettled. The great library of Ashurbanipal is said to have inspired Alexander to order the construction of the Library of Alexandria in Egypt, an order that Ptolemy posthumously carried out. In the time of the Seven Wonders era, the ruins of Nineveh still stand — as do the Hanging Gardens, abandoned, wild, but still green as the lush forests of the mountains.

The Hidden Wonder

The Hanging Gardens is the only wonder for which we have no archaeological evidence — or, at least, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon described by so many ancient writers. Sennacherib's garden, however, is well-attested and was renowned in its time for its great beauty and complex construction. It is certainly possible there was another, equally grand garden in Babylon, but no Babylonian sources mention anything of the sort. We've chosen to set the Hanging Gardens in Nineveh, according to more recent theories, even though the city was destroyed centuries before.

The Shining Glory of the Gods — The Statue of Zeus

The Statue of Zeus predated Alexander by nearly a century, and was created by the sculptor Phidas, who had previously given the Athenians a masterful statue of Athena Parthenos to rest in the Parthenon. At 43 feet, it was by far the smallest of the wonders, but also perhaps the most magnificent, for it was not for its scale that it was known but for its lifelike quality and immaculate construction. Sculpted of ivory and gold over a wooden framework and studded with precious gems, onlookers were invariably overtaken by the sense of majesty and power emanating from the statue. To protect the ivory from degradation, the statue was covered in olive oil, refreshed regularly, that flowed into a reflecting pool surrounding the statue. Legend has it that when Phidas completed the statue, he prayed to Zeus for a sign that he approved of the work — a bolt of lightning immediately struck the floor of the temple.

The temple itself stood at Olympia, on the Peloponnese, site of the Olympic Games — the temple and the statue were, therefore, part of the ritual honoring Zeus of which the games were only a part.

The Sun Astride the Waters — The Colossus of Rhodes

Rhodes is an island just off the coast of Asia Minor in the Aegean Sea. Briefly conquered by Mausolus and the Persians, their rule quickly gave way to that of Alexander. After his death and the partitioning of his empire, Rhodes made a deal with Ptolemy that ensured their autonomy and allowed the two to all but control trade in the Aegean.

In 305 BCE, eager to break the alliance, Antigonus sent his son Demetrius to take Rhodes — but after a siege of more than a year, the Rhodians negotiated a peace with him. The Wars of the Diadochi would not go Antigonus' way, however — he was dead soon after, and the balance of power left Rhodes between the three remaining post-Alexander empires. Blessed with some of the finest sailors in the Mediterranean, they played the three against each other to maintain their independence, and grew rich from it.

The Colossus itself was constructed astride the entry to the harbor of Rhodes in honor of Helios, the patron god of Rhodes, and in celebration of the victory over Demetrius. The youngest wonder was just over 100 feet tall, and was by far the tallest statue in the ancient world. It was also the shortest-lived wonder — it would collapse in an earthquake a mere 54 years later.

Locations

The Seven Wonders are more than just noteworthy works of art; bound in a mystical miasma that pervades the Hellenistic world, they serve as the focal points for a crossing of realms and a bending of otherwise ironclad laws. For changelings living in this time, glamour flows like the Nile, a steady stream that periodically floods its banks, running over with the pure energy of dreams, ambitions, and hopes. For Prometheans, the cast-off half-children of Demiurges caught in the feverish zeitgeist of the wonders, the Principle — the Divine Fire that animates them — is closer and more present in their lives than ever before. Yet, all things must come to an end, even and most especially the good. These few decades will see a flourishing of the Created and the Lost alike, and exchanges between them that will fade along with the wonders, remembered only as legend.

Physics Is a Cruel Mistress

The Colossus of Rhodes is frequently depicted as standing astride the entrance to the harbor of Rhodes. Historically speaking, it almost certainly didn't — the technology to build it without blocking the port (Rhodes' lifeblood) for years simply didn't exist in the ancient world. Moreover, if it stood there, it would probably have toppled into the harbor itself when it fell, and we have numerous accounts that rule that out. More likely, it stood off to one side, and its precise location is a running argument in archaeological circles.

Egypt

Egypt, once-great, a power that stood for as long as history remembers. Egypt, conquered by the Greeks, ruled by the sons and daughters of Ptolemy and whatever lieutenants he saw fit to install beneath him. In the age of the Seven Wonders, the Ptolemaic Kingdom is still young — Ptolemy II Philadelphus, son of Ptolemy, began his reign in 285 BCE, while the Colossus was still being built, and his son will succeed him as Ptolemy III Euergetes in 246 BCE. Ptolemaic pharaohs often share power with their wives (who are usually their sisters, if not another relative), who rule as co-regents or, later, in their own right.

Ptolemy not only created a new god, Serapis, to combine the features of Apis and Osiris, but instituted a state religion centered on the cult of the deified Alexander. His family continued the practice after his death. Many Egyptian gods are portrayed in the Greek style, their animal features pared back or eliminated entirely. Statues of gods from both cultures are modeled on the Ptolemaic pharaohs and their spouses — Arsinoe II, Philadelphus' wife, is used as a model for Isis, Hera, and other goddesses. The Ptolemies themselves take on a divine role within the state cult of Alexander, following in the footsteps of the pharaohs they replaced — many are legally deified following their death, their images subsumed into the growing state cult.

Despite the conquest and the period of adjustment to rule by foreigners, Egypt remains at the heart of trade both in the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas, but reaching into Mesopotamia and Asia Minor as well. Its alliance with Rhodes secures its freedom to trade on the seas, and so the cities of Egypt are thriving cosmopolitan centers of culture.

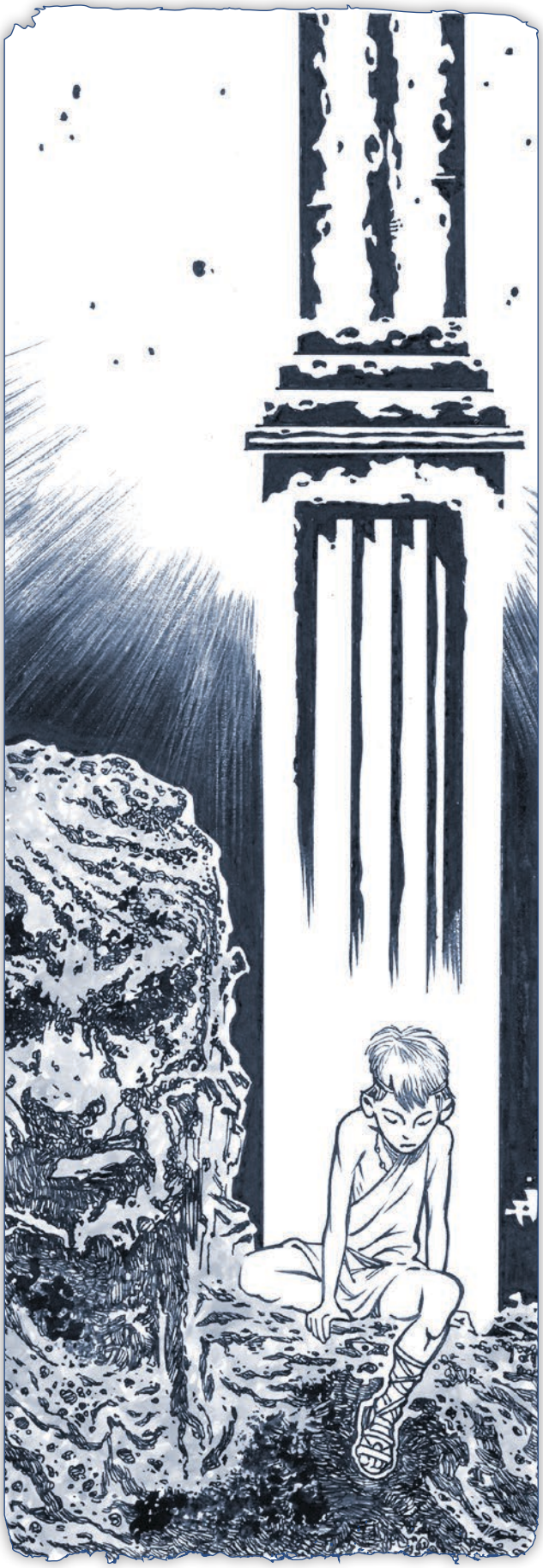
Giza and Alexandria

The Pyramid of Khufu is almost unimaginably ancient — by the time of the other wonders, half of Giza lay buried in the advancing sands, and the pyramid still shone brilliantly in the sun, as heedless as the passage of centuries as the sky itself. It was more than just a monument to a man worshipped as a god, though. Within the pyramid, hidden within stone and sand, buried within the structure itself, lay a secret driving Egypt's greatness.

Savants believe Egypt is the place where the living first caused the dead to rise, creating the first Prometheans. Some go so far as to say that not only were the Egyptians practiced at creating Prometheans, but they institutionalized it, made it part of their state's policy using advanced funerary magic now lost to memory. Those who know of the great strength and unmatched stamina possessed by most Prometheans must admit there are few other ways the ancients could have built such a magnificent structure, one that has endured unmarred for thousands of years. Of course, given that yawning gulf of time, it's impossible to say whether this is true, but the fact remains that Egypt was and is a golden opportunity for any Prometheans who journey there. The land is rich in the Azothic memory, *qashmallim* come and go like the rising and setting of the sun, and when Torment proves to be too much, isolation and solitude is only a short walk into the desert away. Giza is no exception.

The pyramid is not just a tomb, but an Athanor to surpass all Athanors, constructed to guide the spirits of pharaohs who crossed the river of death and returned. The site is known to Prometheans throughout the world, passed on through word of mouth or glimpsed in the throes of an Elpis vision, and rare is the Promethean in this era who does not at least *try* to find her way here. A few make a semi-permanent home here, considering themselves the stewards of this magnificent and ancient miracle — they will venture elsewhere on their Pilgrimage sooner or later, but there is always a newcomer who will happily replace them.

Prometheans are not, however, alone in their veneration for the site. Hundreds of years ago, during a period of chaos and instability in Egypt between the Middle and Late Kingdoms, a symposium of the Lost came together at Giza and used the pyramid — whose power they sensed even if it was beyond their ken — to bind the Great Bargain, though the truth of this deal would be kept a secret for thousands of years more. This was a time before courts and companies, with groups of changelings coming together in informal symposia, loosely dedicated to the seasons and shifts of wealth and water. Henceforth, the Hedge would



Culture Clash

Throughout much of its history, Egypt was remarkably ahead of its time when it came to the rights of women. Though certainly still patriarchal, women could own property, work, manage temples, and in several cases become pharaoh. *Ma'at*, translatable as harmony, justice, law, or balance (and personified as a goddess) was central to the Egyptian view of the world, and ensuring a harmonious and orderly life was essential, because one's station in life would be exactly replicated in the afterlife.

The Ptolemies, however, were very thoroughly Greek, a culture that even by the standards of the time was on the misogynistic side. Women were sheltered from the world, expected to weave, have children, and do very little else. However, when they took control of Egypt, they followed Alexander's example, and left the established social structure in place — Greek law coexisted with Egyptian law, and Egyptian women were permitted to carry on much as they had. Over time, the local culture influenced the Greek ruling class more and more, until they were more a mélange of Greek and Egyptian rather than culturally Greek. It wasn't until the decline of the Ptolemaic dynasty and Rome's simultaneous rise in the first century BCE that the Roman legal system would slowly steamroll local conventions.

be open, more open than ever it had been before or since, and though this would allow the Gentry much more access to the world, it would also leave the doors open for those they took to return, and for those who did so to remain free from the threat of Huntsmen.

So it was for centuries, until Euphrasia, a sage of the Lost hiding within Ptolemy's royal entourage, posed a question as she watched the Pharos of Alexandria being constructed: "Why not gift our trapped fellows with a beacon, that they might easily find their way through the Hedge?" It seemed, to Euphrasia and her peers, that rather than build one of their own, they might instead make use of the lighthouse itself and so, with care and stealth, they worked great magics upon it each night, binding it to their service as well as the service of mariners who followed its light. In the Hedge, the Lighthouse of Alexandria shines like a beacon of pure glamour, visible even from the borderlands of Faerie. It is no surprise, then, that the trickle of refugees from that dread land rose to a torrent. As a result, Egypt under Ptolemy fairly seethes with the Lost, the Fae-touched, and fetches alike.

Priest of Alexander, the Once-Living God

Heliodoros' father served under Ptolemy, who served the Divine Alexander, and so it seemed only right that he follow tradition in the way best available to him — and it certainly helped that with priesthood in the Imperial Cult of Alexander came privileges and prestige that the son of a low-ranking officer who happened to save a relative of the great pharaoh Ptolemy I Soter could otherwise never aspire to. Tending to the Tomb of the Divine Alexander himself, he is surrounded by luxuries from across the world, including many sacred texts taken in conquest and held as the god's personal property, unknown to the great library that bears his name — late at night, when he can arrange to be alone, he peruses these texts, and he has learned much of the secret arts. One day soon, he will test that learning, but not on Divine Alexander. Not yet, anyway. **Academics (Architecture, Burial Rites, Warfare) 4, Occult 3, Survival 2**

Cynical Tour Guide

Ana was born in a village a few miles from the Pyramid of Khufu — according to her mother, her family have lived there since before it was built, but she hasn't believed that since she was a child, long before familiarity with the pyramids bred contempt. Now, grown and with two daughters herself, she makes a little extra money on the side by acting as a guide for wealthy Greeks who visit the area, taking them on a tour of the grounds and repeating the nonsense stories her mother used to tell — about how, before the sands came, the Sphinx would prowl the land, spiriting away any who hoped to burgle the tombs of the pharaohs, or how the stars themselves descended in bodies of light to make obeisance before the pyramids. Whether visitors believe it or not, they pay her well enough for the effort, as do the Odd Folk who dwell nearby and who, best as she can tell, drink down the excitement of the wealthy Greeks the way she drinks down their wallets. She's come to know them all by sight. Some are her neighbors; one is the old woman who watches her children from time to time. They

The First Athanor

The pyramid at Giza breaks all the rules for Athanors, combining multiple types and projecting its effects *much* farther than any "normal" Athanor ever could, bathing Giza in Azothic energies. It is attuned to the Refinement of Gold, acting as a Refinement Furnace to ease the transition from death into life — and despite being unimaginably ancient, any Promethean in Giza may avail herself of this, not merely the long-lost creator. It also acts as a Sanctuary, and is a powerful Pilgrimage Marker as well.

Unfortunately, such benefits do not come without costs — the sheer Azothic radiance of the pyramid is such that Pandorans can sense it for leagues in every direction, and Created who dwell here must always be wary of hungry mouths lurking in the dunes around them, some of them Pandorans, others weird Lifeless creatures known as Shuankhsen.

look at one another, nod knowingly, and say nothing. Ana may be a cynic, but she's no fool. **Academics (History) 5, Empathy 3, Expression (Storytelling) 3**

Greece

The Antigonids rule a fractured Greece from Macedon, ever wary of the growing power of Rome to the west. Ever since Epirus lost the Pyrrhic War and allowed Rome to secure total control of the Italian peninsula, their star rose ever further. The age of wonders sees the First Punic War, where Rome secures control of the western Mediterranean and, shortly after its end, Hannibal ravages Rome's possessions but fails to secure victory. For the Antigonids and their empire, the age of wonders is not an age of peace and plenty, but an age of intrigue, of war, of revolution, and of rapidly shifting borders.

Olympia

Elis, on the Peloponnese, is far from the center of power, and for all that the prestigious Olympic Games are held there, the Eleans themselves are often thought of by other Greeks as barely Greek themselves, their language so accented it can barely be understood. Though Corinth is heavily garrisoned by the Macedonians, their control wavers often — the old city-states, though no longer truly independent, still wield significant power thanks to support from Ptolemaic Egypt, which sees them as a useful catspaw to undermine Macedon.

Olympia itself is a sacred site, far from the city of Elis itself. The Olympic Games, part of a wider series of festivals known as the Panhellenic Games, are the most prestigious of the lot, and occur on a regular schedule throughout the age of the wonders. A truce, the ekecheiria, is observed for the duration of the games, and is not often violated, though the Games have throughout their history been a field of struggle for prestige and games of power, a cosmopolitan bed of intrigue wearing the mask of athleticism and ritual.

At the heart of the Sanctuary of Olympia sits the magnificent Temple of Zeus, and the masterful creation of the legendary Athenian sculptor, Phidas. For the Lost, the statue's gold-and-ivory glory is a never-ending font of Glamour that eclipses even that of the other wonders, lending the local changeling culture a manic energy that never quite fades — during Olympiads, that energy rises to a fever pitch, to the point where it becomes nigh-addictive. Lost elsewhere warn their fellows about the allure of such a place, for it's easy to lose oneself to the awe and majesty such an experience brings. More than a few ecstatic cults of the Lost have been born and flamed out here, and the Dionysian Mysteries are routinely reborn from humans caught in the fringes of their festivities.

Prometheans find the statue no less astonishing, though it is neither Athanor nor Created. Rather, they take great comfort in seeing humans giving reverence to the image of humanity, even if that image represents a god. It is aspirational for them, apart from any feelings of wonder the statue invokes in their hearts as well as in those of humans.

Vainglorious Athlete

Let every Greek call her and her family barbarians (never mind that their own accents are atrocious), Eudokia cares not. Not only have her family's horses won equestrian events for Elis two games running, but in the last Heraean Games, she outclassed her fellow Eleans and even the Spartan women to an embarrassing degree. As tall as her husband and nearly as powerfully built, she enjoys both fame and notoriety throughout Elis for her habit of wearing a man's chiton and for riding the horses she rears up and down the countryside. Somehow, she dodges any consequence of her libertine ways — ill-wishers and plotters seem to enjoy nothing but long runs of foul luck. Eudokia attributes this to her lover, a maid whose horns only she is ever allowed to see. Clearly, Hermes not only heard her prayers, but has taken a special interest. **Athletics (Endurance) 4, Brawl 2, Ride (Horse) 5**

Asia Minor

Stretching from the Aegean Sea and the Hellespont in the west to Armenia Major in the east, Asia Minor is a hilly plateau that has ever been a crossroads. From Lydians to Assyrians to Medes to Achaemenids and finally now Seleucids, a host of empires has marched across it. As a result, it is a diverse region, home to Armenians, Greeks, the aforementioned Lydians and Assyrians, Hittites, Cimmerians, Galatians, and a host of others. Now, that diversity finds itself at the mercy of Greek rulership, and the promulgation of an official language and culture threaten to obliterate ancient ways and languages.

Ruled from Antioch, just to the south, Asia Minor is at the forefront of the Seleucid Empire's attention, thanks to its old connections to Greek culture.

Ephesus

Ionia, the western coast of Asia Minor in the Aegean Sea, had long been a part of wider Greek culture — those in Greece considered the Ionians to be a strange lot, even if being Greek did elevate them a step above "barbarians," a word they coined to describe anyone who didn't speak Greek, and which held connotations of incompetence, untrustworthiness, and an uncivilized nature. Still, many Ionian cities were important cultural centers dating back hundreds of years, and Ephesus was no exception. According to contemporary myth, the city was founded by Ephos, Queen of the Amazons. Unsurprisingly, Artemis, the goddess of wilderness, the hunt, and childbirth found a strong following here.

The Temple of Artemis as it stands today is the third such temple, and the grandest yet. The site on which it sits has been considered sacred for as long as history records, important even to the Leleges and Lydians who preceded the Greeks. Artemis as she is worshipped here (as the Lady of Ephesus) is a syncretic melding of Artemis and Kybele,

and is venerated here not only in her traditional aspects but as a giver of life. The land around the temple is verdant and lush, the forests nearby deep and thick, and the beasts therein large and unafraid to challenge humans.

As humans have long known Ephesus as a sacred site, so too have the Lost among them known the truth — the land is replete with gateways to the Hedge, and the Others ride here with great frequency. Some Lost believe that Artemis, here enshrined, is nothing more than an ancient Gentry so profligate that she is remembered even by humans in myth, but few voice such opinions aloud, fearing not only divine retribution should they be wrong but the ire of those around them. More Lost are inclined to treat Artemis as a patron, especially those who revered her before they were Taken — while more than one True Fae has mimicked Artemis' trappings, many of the Lost who escaped such Gentry tell that the catalyst for their escape was realizing that there was nothing divine about the creature that had stolen and changed them.

The city of Ephesus is second only to Alexandria by population of the Lost, and even here their numbers run so high that they could, were they so moved, fill every office of government with heads to spare. Here, though, they almost flaunt their presence — thanks to the Great Bargain, they know they are safe from Huntsmen coming for them in the night, even if they're not so secure against Gentry, hobgoblins, and other inhuman creatures. More humans are aware of the Lost in Ephesus than anywhere else in the world, and it is a common place for first encounters and curious follow-ups.

Innkeeper

Eirenaios manages a small inn in Ephesus in what some locals refer to as the Overgrown Quarter, the neighborhood in Ephesus where many Lost make their home and where practically every alley holds a gate to the Hedge. Still young, dark of hair and skin like so many locals, he inherited the place from his father, and took a wife, Syntyche, to help him manage it. That she was beautiful, he knew, with skin so flawless it might have been carved from a single piece of marble. Imagine his surprise when, in a moment of deep trust, his wife let her Mask slip, and he saw that she *was*. He knows the whole story now — her durance, her escape, and the long, slow process of carving herself into a shape *she* cared for rather than one forced upon her. Eirenaios found he could not bear to throw her out and add to the cruelties and indignities she'd suffered. She remains an attraction, and more than one tourist, having made inquiries of the right sort of people, arrive in Ephesus not only to see the Temple of Artemis, but to be served wine by a woman of stone. **Empathy 3, Expression 2, Persuasion (Seduction) 4, Socialize 4**



Rhodes

The era of the Seven Wonders began with the completion of the Colossus, a work that took over a decade. When it was completed, the marvelous statue stood watch over the



port of Rhodes, a monument both to victory and to Helios, patron of Rhodes. Many, in the subsequent decades, claimed they had seen the statue move ever so slightly, shifting its weight or glancing to the side before resuming its eternal vigil. Such stories were laughed off as tall tales, the result of too much drink or not enough light — but the stories were right. The Colossus not only moves, it lives.

It is not certain when it became conscious, only that it felt the scurrying of mortal men across its skin, the swaddling of scaffolding, and the passage of night and day. It had no concept of movement at the time, and even now is only capable of the most subtle of motion, even after watching humans going to and fro with ease. Connected to the Azothic Memory, it understands what it is, and what it greatly desires to become — but it also knows that nothing of its like has ever been touched by the Divine Fire. Eager to know the world beyond its gaze, it studied itself, perfecting its own internal alchemy until at last it created life in its own image — a man of bronze pulled itself free from the Colossus' ankle, blinking and confused, made in the Colossus' own image.

Many more have since joined the first — the Colossoi are the only means the Colossus has of carrying out its Pilgrimage, and they have spread across Asia Minor, Greece, and Egypt, studying the other things called wonders beside their progenitor. They hunt down and retrieve Athanors, collect Vitriol, and carry out the Pilgrimage of the Colossus even as they carry out their own. There are always at least a few in Rhodes itself, resting between journeys or pursuing their own Pilgrimages by throwing themselves into roles within the city.

Superstitious Harbormaster

Rhodes' navy is the pride of the sea, and Philandros considers himself a vital part of that navy, for all that a club foot kept him from joining it. Still, with dedication and a bit of luck, he's risen far and become the harbormaster of Rhodes, a prestigious and powerful position that he takes seriously. Apart from the essential duties of his office, he maintains a private set of rituals he carries out any time he has a bad feeling about a ship about to set sail — those few times he hasn't, disaster struck. He doesn't know why it's *his* crutch, or why is has to be the blood of a chicken, or why each ship needs a notch of its own — but he knows all those things have to be done just so, and as ships are built and ships are retired, he's running out of space for new notches.

Halicarnassus

It was Mausolus who decreed that an aboveground tomb should be built for him, and decorated in the Greek fashion, with pomp and finery suitable to a satrap. But Mausolus died before his tomb could be completed, and it was not he but his wife, Artemesia, who completed it. Such was her grief that she died only two years later herself, and when the work was completed according to her designs, she was interred within along with her husband.

But there was always more to the Mausoleum than the splendorous memory of a satrap, or even the grief of a sister-widow. For the two years she survived him, Artemisia spent every moment, every thought, focused on a single thought: *How can I return him to the world of the living?* And so she combed through every scrap of occult information available to her, sending riders as far afield as Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the unknown wilderness to the north and the west. She painstakingly recorded everything, hiding her intentions in her voluminous notes on the particulars of the Mausoleum's construction. When the time for interment came, both were sealed up within, with only a hidden passage of Artemisia's design leading out through a secret tunnel.

The structure itself, still pristine and immaculately tended, is festooned with statues, murals, and friezes, all of them apparently of mythological scenes or of Mausolus and Artemisia themselves — but within the beauty of the tomb's construction, a hidden message waits, encoded in gesture, in symbolism, or in deftly hidden ciphers visible only from certain angles at certain times of day. The Mausoleum is a treasure trove of Promethean lore across Lineages and Refinements, a material Azothic memory left behind by a demiurge who, through her devotion to her husband, became her own creation.

A haven for the Lost long before Mausolus moved the capital, Halicarnassus was home to a great many Lost in 350 BCE, when the Mausoleum was completed and its effects became apparent. Half a century later, when the Miasma took hold, Halicarnassus was one of the first sites where the nature of Azoth became clear to the Lost, who had been studying the Mausoleum ever since their predecessors witnessed the bizarre weather that accompanied its completion and the interment of its inhabitants, now known to be missing.

Indeed, such was Artemisia's design that not one, but two Prometheans awoke within the Mausoleum, and eventually discovered the tunnel and emerged from their marble womb. They did not, however, do so together; all one knows is that they woke up with a corpse, and the other that they woke beside an empty plinth. Both are still young — the Mausoleum took time to work its ritual — and both still walk the Pilgrimage, but they have yet to find each other.

Tomb Robber

A rule of the trade is that a famous tomb is worthless, and there's few tombs as famous as the Mausoleum, but Theron isn't expecting to get rich from the burglary. Rather, some rich snob offered a king's ransom for rubbings — *rubbings!* — of interior walls of the Mausoleum! He's got the parchment and the charcoal, and now he just needs a way in (tomb robbers who wish to have successful careers are advised not to make it obvious). The trouble is, even with the city half abandoned, the grounds of the Mausoleum are still lousy with onlookers, even after dark. With an impatient buyer at his back, he's going to have to take a chance sometime, much as he'd rather not. **Crafts (Forgeries) 4, Larceny (Tombs) 4, Stealth 3**

The Door Between Life and Death

The Mausoleum serves as a Pilgrimage Marker not for its Azothic potential, but for its sheer quantity of information for the Created. It also serves as a Refinement Mentor for the Refinement of Bronze, thanks to Artemisia's loyalty and drive to restore her husband's life.

However, it also has another quality that has yet to be discovered. Were a body (or the ashes of one) to be interred within the Mausoleum, and a host of animals sacrificed according to rites detailed here and there throughout the structure, that body would, without fail, rise as a Promethean. However, the working takes a significant amount of time, between months and years, and the product may be of any Lineage save the Unfleshed, who are not born of the flesh of mortals. In the intervening time, spontaneous Firestorms will strike the surrounding area, creating strange weather patterns or leaving arcane scars on rocks and trees in the immediate vicinity.

Mesopotamia

Once, it was the heart of civilization, home to the Babylonians and Assyrians, and after them the Persians of the Achaemenid Empire who seemed to rule the world entire. Then came Alexander, and the Wars of the Diadochi — the eastern swath of Alexander's empire fell into the hands of the Seleucus I Nicator, who established a dynasty and an empire all his own. In 305 BCE, Babylon was one of, if not the most, populous city in the world — by the age of the Seven Wonders, its population has dropped precipitously, the people of Babylon forcibly relocated to the new regional capital, Seleukeia. Babylon's immense walls still stand, and sacrifices continue in its grand temples, but it is no longer the powerful and influential city it once was, and it never again will be.

Still, their lot is better than that of the Assyrians, whose shining capital Nineveh was crushed and its people dispersed. When Alexander, and later the Seleucids, took control of Assyria from the Achaemenids, they called the region (and Aram and Eber Nari, to the west) Syria. Greek generals and officials replaced Assyrians, who had once been favored subjects of the Achaemenids, and the Greek language replaced Aramaic as the lingua franca of Mesopotamia. The Assyrians have thus far resisted Hellenization, and Ashur, the old capital, has once more come back into prominence in the region.

Nineveh

Nineveh (or *Ninawa*, as it was known in Aramaic) was established before history, before writing itself, but it was not until Sennacherib named it his capital that the city truly rose to greatness. For a period in the 600s BCE it was the largest city in the world, and all wealth flowed to the coffers of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. With that wealth, Sennacherib made the city grand, and built a garden that would be known throughout time — the Hanging Gardens. Using innovative techniques of irrigation and construction, he built a multi-tiered park in which plants from all regions were cultivated and allowed to flourish, alongside a menagerie of animals specially imported for the purpose. His palace and gardens both were called "without rival," but while the palace would not survive the sacking of Nineveh, the gardens did — and survive to this day, still vibrant and verdant with life, uncontrolled and wild, a maze-like artificial oasis replete with connections to the Hedge.

Perhaps it was the nature of the gardens' construction, or perhaps it was so magnificent that even the Others could appreciate its beauty and came often to admire it (or admire themselves within it) — none among the Lost know how every path in the Hedge seems to lead here. The people of Nineveh, those few who remain, whisper tales of strange visitors in the night, and some of their neighbors nod knowingly, for they have been subjected to those horrors themselves. Though the population is small, the Lost make up a significant minority, either as travelers resting from the rigors of travel in the Hedge, as watchkeepers always alert for signs of Gentry, or as Loyalists seeking contact with their masters.

Even among the ruins, however, there are treasures to be found. The legendary Library of Ashurbanipal, a great Assyrian king, remains in Nineveh, collecting many thousands of clay tablets with secrets stretching back hundreds of years or more. It is for this reason that Prometheans (and especially Tammuz, making a pilgrimage to the birthplace of writing itself) often make the journey here — or take a shortcut through the Hedge, with the aid of a guide or without.

Lonely Shepherd

Layah's family was once made up of priests and priestesses, once held power alongside the kings of old Assyria, whose armies once controlled the world. Now, her family (what's left of it after 400 years) lives in a tiny village miles from the abandoned capital, tending sheep and goats and scraping a meager living from the land. Last of her line, she carries a sword her father is no longer fit enough to bear, and has used it more than once to drive poachers away from her flocks at pasture — once, she took a bandit's head with it. More than once, she's drawn her own blood with it, pouring it out on half-forgotten altars and begging the gods in the high speech that so few remember to restore her family's honor and greatness. So far, none have answered



— but she hopes a journey to the old temple in Nineveh will yield better results. **Academics (Ancient Languages) 3, Investigation 3, Occult 3, Weaponry (Shortsword) 4**

The Fate of All Things

Rhodes was great, and the Colossus they built to honor Helios, their patron, known throughout the world — yet fame and renown are no proof against the whims of the gods. In 226 BCE, a great earthquake will shake Rhodes. The city will suffer terrible damage, and the Colossus will not be spared, snapping at the knees and tumbling to the ground. Though many will advocate its reconstruction, and several neighboring city-states will even make gestures of support, the Colossus never stands again. It will remain a wonder and an attraction for many years to come, lying in that very spot for nearly 800 years to come. The Colossoi will fade from history without their great patron to sustain them — whether they achieved a New Dawn with it or collapsed into dust with its fall, none can say.

With the fall of the Colossus, the Miasma of Azoth and Glamour fades, not all at once but over the course of a few years. The Hedge grows hostile to the Created, and the other wonders slowly cease to shine. The Great Bargain broken, a terrible time of suffering and privation descends on the Lost, who are pursued ceaselessly by the furious and vengeful Huntsmen who until now have mostly been kept at bay.

Some time after the Miasma fades, the Hanging Gardens finally crumble under the weight of the wild growth and the weathering of the irrigation system — perhaps its connection to the other wonders was all that held it up. Nineveh, already a ruin, will pass into history, its last gasp of wonder and greatness forever lost. Apart from a few battles, the region remains largely undisturbed until the city of Mosul is founded on the opposite bank of the Tigris in the 630s CE.

Time takes its toll on the other wonders. The Temple of Artemis will be ruined by Goths some 400 years hence. The Statue of Zeus is lost to fire after Theodosius I bans pagan cults and closes the temple permanently. The Lighthouse of Alexandria stands for a thousand years, until successive earthquakes finally destroy it. The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus falls soon after, having endured invasions, sackings, and the elements until an earthquake topples the chariot at its peak. Only the Great Pyramid of Khufu survives to the modern era, and even it is not inviolate — over millennia, the casing is stripped by weathering and by masons, leaving only the core to loom over the sands of Giza.

Promethean: Wonders in Shadow

There is nothing quite so terrible as to live in an era when great works of art and architecture, works of creation itself, are beloved, revered, the sites of worship and festivals, attractions that draw travelers from miles around — and to *be* a creation, a great work, a being made rather than born, that is despised, hated, cast out, excluded from all the beauty and wonder that many humans somehow manage to take for granted. That is the lot of the Promethean in the Age of Wonders — to know that art is beloved, and to know that one's existence is not art, but tragedy, obscenity, an insult to the era itself.

And yet Prometheans are not wholly excluded, for they too can look upon the wonders, behold what is, in a sense, a fortunate cousin of theirs, to be so admired, to be at the center of things instead of the fringes. They approach the wonders with fresh eyes, unvarnished by human expectations or biases — indeed, Prometheans perhaps see the wonders better than anyone, and recognize their kinship with them. This is at once a feeling of awe as well as a terrible feeling of being fantastically insignificant. One cannot but stand beside the Pyramid of Khufu and feel small; to look upon the Statue of Zeus or the Colossus at Rhodes and feel mean and diminished by their very presence; to stand in the *adyton* of the Temple of Artemis and look upon the Lady of Ephesus, only to know that even the attention of the divine is beyond one's grasp.

And yet Prometheans flock to these sights in massive numbers, their Pilgrimage strung out across continents as they make their way from wonder to wonder, taking in everything along the way and catalyzing it as they stand in the presence of a majesty they can but hope to be worthy of. But for all its beauty, the Age of Wonders is not always so easy a world to live in — war, deprivation, cruelty, and a host of other ills are all as common now as in any other age, and Prometheans must bear witness to it all. The wonders themselves seem to float above the tide of misery and the mere human, and while for some Prometheans this aloofness is a call to be better, to be more human even than the humans around them, it is just as much an inspiration for some of the Created to cast aside the Pilgrimage altogether and descend along the monstrous path of the Centimanus.

The Miasma of Glamour and Azoth

Whether it was the Great Bargain that catalyzed the Miasma or the Miasma that made the Great Bargain possible, none can say, but its effects are all too apparent for both Prometheans and the Lost. Accustomed to Pilgrimage, Prometheans were not the first to travel between the seven wonders, but they are certainly early adopters. Rare is the Created in this era who does not, at the very least, intend to walk the route between the seven sites, to bask in the Azothic radiance of each great work and add her understanding of that work to her own as-yet-unfinished masterpiece.

To that end, the paths between the wonders are well-marked and understood by the Created. Only one, the Statue of Zeus, requires transit on a boat, either a short ferry ride across the Hellespont, or a longer journey across the Aegean or the Mediterranean (or, failing either, overland around the Black Sea, through the Armenian Highlands,

the Caucasus Mountains, and from one Pontic Greek colony to another, a journey of months at the very least). However, travel by the seas is not only common, but much faster than overland travel, with the slight risk of a storm at sea or Disquiet provoking fellow passengers or crew to violence.

The interplay of Azoth and Glamour, of the Divine Principle's energies and those of the Hedge and the strange lands from whence the Others hail, suffuse the era, and it naturally colors the Pilgrimages of Created, especially when they visit the epicenters of the miasma, the wonders. Prometheans have encountered fetches, their true natures revealed under Azothic light, and counseled them to pursue true humanity, and they have ventured into the Hedge itself, whether for prosaic reasons (to make for quicker journeys between distant lands) or for the very sake of discovering what lies on the other side.

Setting the Hedge Ablaze

Prometheans have no soul for the Hedge to rasp at with its thorns, but they bring with them with fires of Azoth, of pure creative energy, and the Hedge cannot help but react. Flaring into life, it becomes almost hyperactive, twisting and changing even as the Promethean's attention shifts. For the Created, to whom the natural world is new and yet to be discovered in so many ways, the Hedge's disdain for the normal laws of physics can be troubling, but it can also be liberating — knowing the rules can be broken is often a source of hope for Prometheans whose Pilgrimage is flagging.

However inspirational it can be, changelings often find the effect of the Divine Fire upon the Hedge unsettling, even dangerous — but there are also many among the Lost who are eager to understand the nature of the Hedge, and provoking it thus is an excellent source of insight. With the Great Bargain keeping Huntsmen from easily murdering Lost, forays into the Hedge have become far more common and, if she seeks, a Promethean will always find a changeling willing to show her the way.

New and Modified Rules

- **Pyros is Pyros:** Anything that would be a source of Pyros or allow a Promethean to rapidly heal outside of the Hedge serves the same purpose inside the Hedge, regardless of whatever changes the Hedge has caused to it.

- **Debt-Free:** Prometheans may negotiate for services with hobgoblins with payment in kind and gain Goblin Debt as usual. However, becoming a Hedge Denizen represents a step backward on the Pilgrimage, and risks a breaking point for every chapter they remain connected to the Hedge.

- **Infectious Disfigurement:** Whenever the Promethean displays her Disfigurements, those Disfigurements are echoed by the Hedge, with every hobgoblin manifesting the same Disfigurements as the Promethean. Echoed Disfigurements remain visible for the remainder of the scene — the Promethean's fade normally.

- **Disquieted Hedge:** Locations in the Hedge may become Disquieted by the Promethean's presence. The dice pool for all rolls to Disquiet the Hedge are Azoth vs. the Promethean's own Resolve + Composure. If the Hedge becomes Disquieted, it arranges for events and encounters characteristic of whichever Disquiet Condition applies. Additionally, a change occurs in the Hedge as a form of Hedgespinning (see **Changeling: The Lost**, p. 204) with the Storyteller rolling eight Hedgespinning dice to determine how the Hedge shifts.

- **Wasted Hedge:** Wastelands never grow larger than a city block (Azoth 7), regardless of a Promethean's Azoth. Wastelands fester normally, but fade within a scene upon the creator's departure.

- **Remembered Nightmare:** If the Wasteland's creator returns to the site of the Hedge Wasteland within the fade time, the Wasteland immediately returns at full strength.

- **Tormented Hedge:** If the Promethean enters the Hedge while in Torment (or enters Torment while in the Hedge), she must make an immediate action to escape her exacerbated Torment, as per the examples on p. 172 of **Promethean: The Created**. The nearby Hedge immediately becomes Disquieted at level two.

Firestorms

All Firestorms in the Hedge are things of dreams and nightmares, and may have the following Aspects:

Animated Terrain: The area affected by the Firestorm remains an Extreme Environment, halving its intensity (round up), after the Firestorm's conclusion.

Glamour Bomb: All Glamour in the Firestorm's area is stripped. If this Glamour came from a changeling's Glamour pool, she suffers one bashing Health for every two points lost in this way.

Goblin Pandoran: The Firestorm animates topography of the Hedge as Rank 1 Pandorans. These Pandorans are active in the presence of Glamour as well as Azoth, and may steal it as if it were Pyros.

Lineages in the Age of Wonders

Amirani

It is said the Prophets glimpse Azoth in its purest form at the moment of their creation, and spend the remainder of their Pilgrimages chasing that vision, searing themselves to spark visions. In an age of wonders, though, with Azoth



pouring freely into the world, such claims begin to sound a little more truthful, and more than a few of their fellows turn to the Amirani seeking to know more.

Unfortunately for the Amirani, though the wonders surely provoke great personal transformation in them as they do in other Created, they've no special insight into the nature of these magnificent works of art. It can be a moment of great hope and insight, or it can provoke the most miserable to Torment, to look upon the finest of works and still find it wanting in the face of what Azoth *can* be.

Galateids

Galateids know what it is to be adored, to say the words and do the things that make others feel for them, even if Disquiet always ruins it in the end. They know how to love, too — indeed, they are made for it. This is a cosmopolitan era, an era of beauty, and Galateids *are* beautiful. Sadly, it's also an era of violence, of possession, and power — power to control others, to abduct, to *hurt*, and it's a rare Galatean who isn't a target at one point or another.

Drawn to humans despite the danger, Galateids are most often found in cities — the largest in this era are Carthage and Alexandria in Egypt, but there are others — the glory of Babylon is not yet forgotten, and Rome is on the rise, and there are other cities from farther afield, beyond Bactria where Alexander's conquests ended.

Osirans

Though their Lineage is ancient, today Osirans are but one among many. Egypt today is not Egypt as it was — mummification is still practiced, but the great monuments and workings that called upon the Divine Fire are long forgotten to all but the most dedicated and obsessed of practitioners. Still, the waters of the Nile have birthed many Nepri over the ages, and there will always be more to come.

Egypt is their stronghold, and Osirans born along the banks of the Nile will find a community of like minds waiting for them. The lifegiving nature of water is not unknown elsewhere, however, and many Osirans have traveled far and wide before conducting *multiplicatio*.

Tammuz

Writing is a technology that changed the world, and with the Hellenic attitudes towards study and excellence spreading across the world, the age of wonders is one of the most literate yet in history, with Greek as a lingua franca enabling the exchange of ideas like never before. It's a good time to be a Tammuz, if ever there was one — the Library of Alexandria, though not accorded status as a wonder, is as frequent a draw for the Named as the lighthouse with which it shares a city.

Literate as the world is, however, universal literacy is still a dream, and considered by many to be a poor idea — sharing ideas with those unprepared to appreciate them, they say, is dangerous and unhealthy. Tammuz, whether they are educated by their Demiurge or teach themselves letters, are often able to secure better work by dint of being literate.

Ulgan

Despite being born as a Lineage on the steppe, the Ulgan can be found throughout the Hellenic world. Some joined Alexander's army as it marched across central Asia, or followed it at a distance. Others heard tales of grand temples and sought to visit them, to entreat the equally grand gods enshrined within for mercy and transformation. The Hellenic world is replete with faith in gods, spirits, and everything in between, and the miasma of Azoth and Glamour only adds a frenetic energy to the mix that the Ulgan are both drawn to and terribly confused by.

Some in the Hellenic world refer to the Riven as *Orpheans*, referencing the common myth at the center of the Orphic Mysteries — some Ulgan find their way into the cult, but it rarely goes well. For all that they're very like that mythical musician who descended into the Underworld, Disquiet has no mercy.

Unfleshed

The age of Wonders is an age of art, of creation, and of human effort represented in wood, clay, marble, and a dozen other substances. Religion in the ancient world often revolved around deities embodied in physical forms — the Statue of Zeus is simply the grandest example of the practice that dates back to the earliest days of civilization in the Fertile Crescent. More than one Unfleshed was born by a creator driven not by divine inspiration but by the Principle, an attempt to create a god with flesh of gilded marble. As a result, many Unfleshed in the age of Wonders are as beautiful to look upon as a Galateid.

This is not, however, universal. Just as many Unfleshed were given life before their finer details were carved, or were the work of apprentices toying with ideas their masters warned them away from. Some were made for brute force, and no few in the image of Talos, the clockwork soldier of myth.

Extempore

As in every era, there is no shortage of the Created who simply do not fit into any known mold, and in the age of wonders there is one of the Matchless who stands far taller in stature than any other — the Colossus of Rhodes, the living statue that has birthed a Lineage all its own that spreads across the Hellenic world, conducting a Pilgrimage by proxy.

There are others, though, born of the conflux of Azoth and, in some cases in this strange age, Glamour. One is a living extrusion of the Hedge, formed of thorns and vines with a gateway into its parent realm for a heart. Another is the living pledge of two lovers, who fled for fear that Disquiet would drive them apart and that, pledge broken, it would cease to be.

Dur-Sharrukin

Mesopotamia has been inhabited for millennia, and in the wastes there stand cities that have not been inhabited

for centuries, their people forgotten, displaced, or massacred in some ancient war. Dur-Sharrukin, some 20 miles to the northeast of Nineveh, is one of these places. Once the unfinished capital of Sargon II, king of Assyria and father of Sennacherib, it is now windswept and worn by time, the inhabitants a lonely and silent lot. None live within the walls of Dur-Sharrukin save Prometheans.

Unsurprisingly, the land around Dur-Sharrukin is a Wasteland, stippled with the aftereffects of Pyros surging through it time and again. Firestorms are almost common here, and almost always of the Semnai variety; for this reason the inhabitants periodically desert the city when they feel Pyrotic energies building to a peak, leaving only a single sacrificial soul behind to finally trigger the storm and bear its fury — an unhappy duty chosen by lot.

The reasons for Dur-Sharrukin's existence are shrouded in mystery. No one knows who the first Promethean to dwell here was, or why others joined them, or why the otherwise abandoned city has remained a point of congregation for Promethean pilgrims. Some cite the nearby Nineveh, and the Library of Ashurbanipal, and certainly few Prometheans wish to linger there for long and potentially spoil the wild and wondrous Hanging Gardens. Humans regard the area around Dur-Sharrukin as cursed and will not venture there — what were once olive groves and cultivated land have become wild, strange, and twisted by repeated Firestorms.

There are many reasons to venture to Dur-Sharrukin, however. Apart from finding companionship away from humans and the threat of Disquiet, the city has become a treasure trove of Promethean lore. Taking a cue from the many clay tablets and steles still to be found in the city, the Prometheans of Dur-Sharrukin have developed their own writing system, which has already worked its way into the Azothic Memory and as a result can be found in fits and bursts almost anywhere in the world. In Dur-Sharrukin, however, there are entire *volumes* of this written language, several of which are valued not only for their wisdom but because their authors invested them with Pyros and made Athanors of them.

ENHEDUANNA, KEEPER OF THE BOOKS

Background: The sage who made her wanted a servant, someone to transcribe lengthy texts, file them without error, and never speak a word unless ordered. He got an inquisitive mind wrapped in clay and marble, interrogating the texts she transcribed and, in marginalia and on scraps of parchment, composing her own works. She debated the nature of life with herself, derived concepts from first principles, and eventually came to the conclusion that she, too, was worthy of the gift of a soul. One day she was there, faithfully scratching out words — the next, she was gone.

Wanting for a name, she took one from the work that inspired her to choose her own path, a poem and prayer to Inanna. Throughout her Pilgrimage, she has maintained that faith, conducting rituals in her goddess' name and hoping to draw her favor. Through surgery and through alchemy, she has altered the body she was given by her creator, and now dances in the remains of the temple in Dur-Sharrukin, where she makes her home and keeps the enormous collection of books she's accrued over the course of her Pilgrimage. She has seen and endured many Firestorms, believing them to be the closest thing to the full attention of the gods the world of mortals can bear. She guides those who come to her, offering them advice and solace, and never once doubting the rightness of her mission. After all, she has at least one thing in common with her goddess: her teeth can crush flint, too.

Description: Tall and powerfully built with long dark hair and dusky skin, Enheduanna looks much like other priestesses of Inanna, who makes women of men and men of women. She dresses in the tunic and shawls of a priestess, and ornaments herself with jewelry and kohl. She keeps a proud bearing, even on those occasions where she travels away from Dur-Sharrukin and Disquiet draws the ire of those around her. While not beautiful, she possesses a strong countenance, with a stare that could stop a whirlwind. When her Disfigurements are visible, the seams between her pieces become obvious, umber dust shaking itself free with every movement, the perfectly-woven fibers of jet that make up her hair heavy and lank, her eyes burning with the very fury of the dawn star.

Lineage: Unfleshed

Refinement: Aes

Elpis: Maternal

Torment: Pride

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4; Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Skills: Academics 3, Enigmas 3, Occult (Cult of Inanna-Ishtar) 4, Politics 3; Athletics (Dance) 3, Brawl 2, Survival 2; Animal Ken 2, Empathy 4, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Hovel • • • , Language • , Library • • • (Occult), Sleepless • , Weatherproof •

Willpower: 8

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Health: 8

Pilgrimage: 6

Azoth: 5

Pyros/Turn: 5/1

Bestowment: Heart of Steel

Transmutations: Benefice — Control, Corporeum — Charites, Hygeius, Metamorphosis — Verto (Fixed)



ASKLEPIOS, THE KINDLING-SURGEON

Background: Stitched together and branded by a mortal, the thing that calls itself Asklepios in mockery of the mythic healer-god quickly tired of putting humans back together and turned to finding interesting ways to take them apart — eventually, it experimented thus on its creator, and it was much disappointed with the results. Mortality? Humanity? It's all just meat. It can do better than to just be the meat that it's made of. No, Asklepios means to attain divinity, not through piety or blood relation or even greatness — those doors are closed to it — but by reverse engineering it.

Its path led it to the strange realm behind the world, where it spoke to things that were neither human nor like him, but called themselves gods. Well enough, then — but when it tried to twist them apart to see how they worked, they laughed and faded like mist as though it were a game. There was no answer for Asklepios here, but it learned enough to see behind the Masks some people, not quite human, wore, and it found things just enough like itself that it could understand their make. It hunts them now, flensing them apart and trying to figure out how they're stuck together, and it is getting very, very close to an answer.

Description: It used to look human. Looking human had certain advantages. But now that it knows the hidden doors, it no longer needs a human face. Now it's all catching claws and biting jaws, with its original delicate hands held in reserve for when careful examination is required. Hulking, enormous, at turns chitinous and furred, it calls to mind a massive scarab or mantis more than anything.

Lineage: Osiran

Refinement: Centimanus

Elpis: Curious

Torment: Impatient

Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 2; Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Skills: Enigmas 3, Medicine 4, Occult 3, Science 2; Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Stealth 3, Survival 2; Intimidation 4, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Acid Stomach • , Ambidextrous • • • , Double Jointed • • , Giant • • • , Terrible Disfigurement •

Willpower: 5

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Size: 5

Speed: 11

Health: 9

Pilgrimage: 1

Azoth: 4

Pyros/Turn: 4/1

Bestowment: Corpse Tongue

Transmutations: Flux — Mutation, Solvent

Dread Powers: Hunter's Senses (Fetches), Natural Weapons • • , Snare

Changeling: Keepers of the Seven

The Lost didn't build the seven wonders — that was a wholly mortal endeavor — but they did tie their own fate to them. Some of the wonders serve the Lost's cause, keeping Gentry at bay and leading new changelings to freedom. Others are a reluctant trade-off to worship or leave the Gentry new victims. *All* must be maintained — if a single wonder falls, the Bargain is void.

The Great Bargain

The Bargain began with the Great Pyramid, though few Lost remember who struck it or what the particulars are. They know what it does, though. The Lady of Life Beyond Death promises safety for *any* who return from death, including Lost returning from the spiritual death of Arcadia. Lost close to Prometheans believe the Lady was a genitor, whose moment of triumph rewrote the laws of reality that govern the dead returned. Other Lost think she was Gentry trying to unseat a jackal-headed rival who governed the underworld by denying him servants. The Bargain is written on the limestone cover of the Great Pyramid, wedged in between lines exalting Egyptian gods and Pharaoh Khufu. So long as it holds, the Huntsmen cannot enter the mundane world, save for the five nights of epagomenae, which are not beholden to any deals.

Nineveh's Gift

Nineveh is the lost capital of Assyria, home of conquerors, and a source of Contagion. She's also Gentry, genderfluid but often presenting femininely, who found herself in desperate times some two centuries ago. The Warlord of the local symposium blocked her Hedge portals, starving Nineveh of mortal prey. The Gentry offered a trade: a nascent copy of the Great Bargain, given to her by the Lady of Life Beyond Death, in exchange for unfettered Hedge entries and the Warlord's service. The symposium, in all its informal, disorganized wonder, agreed. In hindsight, it was a mistake: For every escaped Lost, Nineveh snatches three back — one to keep, one to lose, and one to send back as loyalist. The Lost weren't the only ones who miscalculated though; Nineveh, too, gave away more than she intended.

The Dream Builders

While only Khufu's Pyramid was worthy of *striking* the Great Bargain, the other wonders were great enough to hold it *once already made* — presenting an opportunity Nineveh had not foreseen. The Dream Builders **(see p. 81)**, masters of weaving dreams into physical form, broke the nascent promise into six pieces and anchored each to the Glamour of a wonder. Now, the Great Bargain encompassed the entire Hellenistic world. Adding insult to injury, they hung one shard on Nineveh's own garden.

The Lost and True

The Great Bargain ensures Lost are safe from the Huntsmen all but five days a year, so long as they stay out of the Hedge, though few abide by this rule due to the wonders the Hedge has on offer. They've become complacent and averse to leaving the mundane world — Hollows sit empty, and Icons remain forever lost. Freeholds consolidate in the mundane world near the wonders, dedicated solely to maintaining them. All freeholds know they have loyalist traitors in their midst but find it impossible to tell *who* — and preemptively killing or tossing new escapees back into the Hedge only aids the Gentry. Only the Dream Builders still travel the Hedge with any regularity, using trods to bypass travel distance and war zones while pursuing greater dreams.

The Gentry, too, are affected by the Miasma. Glamour mixed with Pyros creates an alchemical refinement of the vows and pacts that comprise them, scouring out such weaknesses as loopholes. The True Fae find themselves unbearably restricted by the full weight of the rules that govern their existence, but it also makes them much harder to destroy as changelings struggle to find any purchase into tricking the Gentry to break their pacts.

Symposia

With the Great Bargain yielding safety, the loosely arranged symposia made no bargain to govern the Gentry. For those symposia affiliated with seasons, and seasonal gods, Spring still demands Lost act in revelry and desire, and grants both Spring Mantle and Contracts, but the Gentry are not beholden to attack only out of desire — during epagomenae, the Others may attack for any reason that pleases them.

Spring is the most numerous seasonal symposium, calling to changelings happy to be free and pay no heed to the looming epagomenae. Most Spring Symposia are governed by polyamorous triads or quads, the most powerful being the Three Queens of Ephesus. Autumn and Winter are roughly equal in number, home to Lost who spend their lives fearfully preparing for epagomenae, or already mourning those they will lose. The Summer Symposium is nearly depleted — the Gentry never attack, and when they do it's best to run and hide. The last great Warlord was traded to Nineveh, and none have reclaimed the Crown since.

The **Tide Symposia** (**Changeling: The Lost**, pp. 287–288) control the bustling port of Rhodes. While the symposia of Ebb and Low Tide govern most of the year, they yield control to Flood Tide during the month leading to epagomenae. The actual five days themselves see the warriors of the High Tide fight alongside the Colossus.

Alexandria and its thriving Goblin Market are ruled by the **Traders' Symposia** (**Changeling: The Lost**, pp. 291–292). None of them claims to rule, instead citing that cooperation is most profitable for all.

Kiths

This era is home to nymphs, satyrs and centaurs, cyclops and giants, gorgons and minotaurs, harpies and sirens. You can build such a creature using **Changeling: The Lost Second Edition**: a Beast Nightsinger makes for a siren, while a Fairest with the Paralyzing Presence Contract makes a medusa. The section below offers new kiths to customize this further.

Antiquarian

The Antiquarian is built from secrets. She collects them, hoards them, never spilling as much as a single whisper. She was initially made to hold her master's one weakness, and everyone knows a secret is best hidden under another — and another, and another. Other changelings confided in her, too, sharing names or memories their masters commanded them leave behind. She dug through all of them to find the secret path through the Hedge.

Antiquarians are the most numerous kith in Alexandria, serving in the library.

Kith Blessing: The Antiquarian counts three successes as an exceptional success when using Empathy to uncover secrets.

Secrets and Whispers: Once per session, the Antiquarian may spend a Glamour and roll Intelligence + Composure to find the answer to any question. The Storyteller determines how many successes are needed, and how the answer is imparted. "Who built the statue of Zeus?" (Phidias) requires only one success and can be found in a library. "What is Artemis' weakness?" (The Gentry and her Huntsman doppelganger can never be awake at the same time — **see p. 71**) would require five and be told to her by whispers in her dream.

Chimera

The Chimera is built out of a multitude of shapes. She has horse legs to better ferry her Fae captor across his domain, a lion's head to devour enemies, and a scorpion's tail to assassinate his rivals. Stitched together with pieces from Arcadia's beasts, Chimera share a unique kinship with hedge denizens and goblins. A shapeshifting creature known as a Geryo is said to despise this kith, hunting them wherever possible.



Chimera are plentiful in Nineveh and Ephesus, as both Gentry enjoy experimenting with form.

Kith Blessing: The Chimera achieves exceptional success on three successes when using Subterfuge to detect trickery, spoken or in writing.

Goblin Kin: Each story, choose one Goblin Contract the character possesses; that Contract doesn't incur Goblin Debt when invoked. At the beginning of each story, the player must select a different Goblin Contract for this benefit; no Contract can be selected again until all the others have benefited first.

Dryad

This woodborn decorated his master's garden, a beautiful soul bound to ensure eternal summer leaves of her favorite tree. When the time came to escape, his affinity with all green things compelled the Hedge to reveal the way out. The Dryad still feels more at home with the trees than his fellow Lost.

Dryads hail from the woodland domains of Artemis and Nineveh, as well as the Olympian palace of Zeus, who has an eye for all things beautiful.

Kith Blessing: The Dryad counts three successes as an exceptional success for Survival rolls (tracking, finding the path) made in wooded areas, including the Hedge.

Fade into the Foliage: So long as he has one turn in which he is unobserved, the Dryad may spend one Glamour to hide behind any tree or large foliage. He remains perfectly hidden while unmoving (provoking a Clash of Wills if any supernatural power is attempting to detect him) and adds his Wyrd rating on Stealth actions if he *does* move.

Muse

The Muse inspires, threatens, and cajoles those around her into being their best. She escaped with the aid of other Lost, as they felt inspired to help her.

Muses are the most prolific kith of the Hellenistic world, which was founded on beauty and wonders as much as war and bloodshed. They were instrumental in encouraging mortals to build the seven wonders and hold the respect of other Lost.

Kith Blessing: Once per session, the Muse may interact with other Lost as if her Mantle or court Goodwill (her choice) were one dot higher than it is.

Tyranny of Ideas: The Muse spends one Glamour point and makes a social check (i.e. Presence + Intimidation or Manipulation + Expression) to influence a human target. The target adds the changeling's successes as dice to his own roll to create a lasting work of art or architecture and counts three successes on this roll as an exceptional success. The Muse cannot harvest any Glamour from this act of creation.

Nymph

The Nymph is waterborn, sculpted in the image of Neptune's many children. He escaped through the waterways his Fae master failed to guard. He thrives in ports, serving as the first eyes and ears of the local symposia. In exchange, other Lost sacrifice treasures to his waters and look the other way if he drowns the occasional sailor.

Nymphs guard the harbors of Alexandria and Rhodes, quickly rising to status in the local symposia.

Kith Blessing: The Nymph counts three successes as an exceptional success for Athletics rolls made while swimming.

Gift of Water: A Nymph has both gills and a tail that allow him to move freely and swiftly underwater. He can swim at double speed and grow legs or a tail, which last until he wills them away. Magic allows the Nymph to breathe both air and water. The Nymph suffers no penalties for using weapons or performing complicated tasks underwater.

Into the Hedge

The Hedge runs from the Hanging Gardens to Olympia. Daring changelings use its maze-like trods to travel the breadth of the Hellenistic world, and some motleys even serve as guides to Prometheans. This section describes the Hedge of the seven wonders.

Khufu's Pyramid

Khufu's Pyramid shines with an impossible radiance. The light blinds anyone who looks upon it, yet changelings cannot help but sneak a peek at the angelic figures, cast like stars against its luminous backdrop. Lost have no interaction with these angels, but some learned their name from Created: *qashmallim*. No Huntsman or Gentry can enter the light, ever, and inevitably Lost try to found a freehold within the circle of light. The freehold never lasts, as the radiance burns their flesh — a condition to which Created and others, including mortals, seem curiously immune.

The captivating beauty of the light requires a Resolve + Composure roll to divert the gaze. If the roll fails, any subsequent rolls for the character to avert their eyes are made with a cumulative one-die penalty. Looking upon the pyramid for more than one minute inflicts the Blinded Tilt in both eyes, typically, which resolves itself after the chapter ends. Looking into the light for more than five turns inflicts the permanent Blind Condition.

After two days of exposure, the radiance deals one automatic Aggravated damage per day. These wounds cannot heal, even by supernatural means, if the changeling is still in the light. Wholly inhuman creatures, such as Gentry, Huntsmen, and hobgoblins, cannot enter the light at all.

Prometheans suffer no ill effects.

The Hanging Gardens of Nineveh

The Hedge runs thick, forcing Lost to crawl through on their bellies, and impaling victims on long thorns. Vines alternate from deep emerald green to vibrant cerulean blue, spawning flowers of every rainbow hue. While the trods



themselves are barren, wonderfully ripe goblin fruits hang just beyond the path. Travelers should be wary as they venture into the thicket though, for Nineveh's hounds (Briarwolves, **Changeling: The Lost** p. 257) are on the prowl.

A motley may step off the trods at any time, designating one of their number to serve as guide and navigate the Hedge (see **Changeling: The Lost**, p. 200) to find goblin fruit. After the chase through the Hedge, they must roll Wits + Survival. A success yields a generic fruit, and the Storyteller should grant a named fruit (see **Changeling: The Lost**, pp. 207–208) on an exceptional success. The fruits of Nineveh are of surpassing quality, and don't count toward the maximum goblin fruits a character can carry. However, taking a single bite from a Nineveh fruit immediately inflicts the Hedge Addiction Condition (**Changeling: The Lost**, p. 340) pertaining to Nineveh's Garden, even if the person eating it is not a changeling.

Temple of Artemis at Ephesus

Lost tell tales of a young mortal who tricked Artemis, to steal her heart. The goddess cursed the mortal — a Huntsman vessel — when her love turned out to be a lie, but was unable to heal the halves of her broken heart. Now her ruined love infects her as Gentry and her former lover, now a Huntsman doppelganger of the goddess. As Gentry, Artemis rules over a symposium of Amazon hunters. She is surprisingly kind to those who serve her, allowing them to leave on a pledge of returning. Goddess of life and fertility, she has many mortal followers — plenty to choose from when she desires another changeling companion. The Gentry punishes thieves and liars by turning them into animals, then releases them into her domain to forget about. The Huntsman version of Artemis finds these creatures and tears them limb from limb. She is taller than her twin, with perpetually bloodied hands and eyes the color of moonlight, and unrelenting in her hunt.

Artemis' Temple is far larger in the Hedge and cast in perpetual night. Wanderers get lost in this unending realm of thorns and glades, only occasionally broken by a temple pillar, as trods change with the phases of the moon. Lost know the temple opens into Arcadia on a full moon, and to the mundane world on nights of hidden moon — but that only accounts for a sliver of the lunar cycle. The Ceryneian Hind knows all the trods, and guides supplicants if they make the right offering. The temple also holds a small, currently empty, Hollow.

The Ceryneian Hind

Cerynitis doesn't remember her days as mortal hunter, clever and ambitious enough to steal a goddess' heart. She serves as a doppelganger of Artemis the Gentry, twisted into the form of a Huntsman, testing the mettle of any Lost who enter the temple. If the supplicant impresses the hind (and thus the goddess) she grants any goblin fruit, a token up to three dots, a transformative act performed on the Lost's body (which may remove Conditions and Tilts,



or grant Merits and Attribute dots), or another miracle the Storyteller chooses within Artemis' purview.

The hind is Immortal within Artemis' temple, and further has the Chameleon Horror, Conjure Dreams, Home Ground, Immortal, Know Soul, Maze, Miracle, and The Path Not Taken Dread Powers (see **Changeling: The Lost** pp. 254–256).

The Hollow of the Moon (••••)

A Hollow sits in the thickets of the temple's inner sanctum. Artemis grants use of the Hollow to changelings who impress her, including servants who received leave to visit the mundane world. In these cases, the Ceryneian Hind acts as a Hob Alarm incurring no Goblin Debt. The Hollow also carries the Size Matters 1 and Home Turf properties (**Changeling: The Lost** pp. 116–117).

Statue of Zeus at Olympia

Zeus is the most powerful Gentry in Greece, controlling more than half the Hedge portals in the region. Any Great Bargain *must* bind Zeus or be ineffectual, so the Dream Builders singled out the statue to hold Nineveh's gift. They succeeded, and inscribed the Bargain on the sole of Zeus' left foot. The Gentry caught one of the Builders as he fled the temple, though, and more than a century later his tortured soul still fuels the Glamour fount before the statue.

The Hedge occasionally pours through into the mundane world as a rapidly growing, vicious foliage within the temple, which changeling servants continually clear, so all who enter may properly see the glory of Zeus. The Gentry promises them freedom when the work is done, but the Hedge grows faster than they can clear it — they've been at it for nearly 100 years. None of them dare escape and face the Gentry's wrath come epagomenae.

The statue looks exactly like the Gentry, right down to his favorite golden robe embroidered with poppies and olive branches — Phidias was either an escaped Lost, or Zeus posed for the mortal. The statue's eyes move, keeping watch on anyone in the temple, and Lost dread the day the whole construct animates to channel the Gentry. Being in the statue's presence instills the Cowed Condition (**Changeling: The Lost** p. 335) and most Lost rightly avoid it. Those few who visit either hope to free one of the servants, or raid the Glamour fount. The former is difficult, the latter a trap.

The Glamour fount sits before Zeus, just within reach if the statue were to bend down. The crystal-clear water is saturated with Glamour, giving every appearance of being an easy source to harvest. Should a Lost drink from the fount, he finds the Glamour ephemeral save the tortured screams rushing down his throat. He immediately gains the Immobilized Tilt if he fails on a Stamina + Survival roll, and the changelings tasked with clearing the Hedge now rush to carry him through a passage under Zeus' footstool to Arcadia.

Mausoleum at Halicarnassus

The Mausoleum sits on a gray, desolate stretch of no-man's land. The Hedge vines are black, drinking souls instead of blood, and yielding black pomegranates. The Hedge here contains an alarming number of ghosts and wayward shades, who somehow got snared on the Hedge's intrusion into Twilight. Taking the wrong passage lands a Lost as easily at the River Styx as it does Arcadia or the mundane world. The Dream Builders made their freehold here. Prometheans claim the Mausoleum as Athanor, and any Lost who visits and doesn't at least recognize Prometheans exist clearly isn't paying attention.

Colossus of Rhodes

To hear Lost tell it, the Colossus is either a Huntsman who took pity on his prey and broke free of the Gentry, or an Elemental still partially bound and unable to leave. Some still remember the tale of Nineveh's Warlord and know the Colossus bears his exact likeness. It never occurs to any that Colossus is a different creature entirely, a Promethean, protecting them not out of kinship, but out of empathy and mercy. Nor do they consider that the Colossus is not part of the Great Bargain by design of the Dream Builders, but rather as a weak point — a living thing with its own goals and frailties — born of the Gentry's machinations.

Chains of bronze and copper wrap around Colossus's legs. They creep upward ever so slowly, restraining the Promethean more every passing day. So far, these shackles, supposedly emanating from the Hedge, cannot stop it from defending Lost against Huntsmen. Lost huddle at the Colossus' feet during the five days the Great Bargain is null, and Rhodes overflows with rival motleys — not all of which are happy to share their protector. Rumors persist of Lost throwing each other to the Huntsmen so the Colossus can focus on protecting *them* instead. These rumors are false, and loyalists use them to obscure their own nefarious schemes.

The Breaker

She serves Zeus by ferreting out secrets, finding the weakness that tears a person apart and yields his soul ready for transformation. The screams of captives as she rends them gives her joy; their tears as she re-sculpts body and soul give her new purpose. Now Zeus gave her a greater task: Break the Colossus. It's hard job, but the Breaker is dedicated, clever, and patient.

Story Hooks

- The Breaker sees the true nature of a Created and is instantly fascinated. She plans to kidnap and bring him to her Hollow in the Hedge, to take apart and study. When she's done, she gives him to Zeus.

- Epagomenae is just a week away, and Rhodes overflows with Lost. The Breaker stokes any flames of dissent, and fights break out between motleys and symposia alike. The characters must keep the peace, and recognize social sabotage at work.
- The Colossus has a nightly visitor who entertains him with games and riddles while talking of far-away places and beautiful tragedies. The Breaker is searching for his weaknesses.

Seeming: Wizened

Kith: Antiquarian

Court/Symposium: Courtless

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4; Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Presence 1, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Skills: Crafts 3, Investigation 4, Occult 4, Politics 3; Stealth 3; Empathy (discerning weaknesses) 3, Socialize ("People are saying...") 4, Subterfuge (telling lies) 4

Merits: Anonymity • •, Hollow • • • (Escape Route, Hidden Entry)

Willpower: 8

Current/Maximum Clarity: 3/8

Needle: Chess Master

Thread: Joy

Touchstones: None

Aspiration: Break the Colossus

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Health: 7

Wyrd: 3

Glamour/Turn: 12/3

Frailties: Can never walk backwards

Favored Regalia: Jewels, Mirror

Contracts: Blessing of Forgetfulness, Changing Fortunes, Glib Tongue, Hidden Reality, Know the Competition, Trivial Reworking, Wayward Guide

Lighthouse of Alexandria

The lighthouse holds a second Bargain: Its patron shines a light for *all* creatures in the Hedge to see, so long as Alexandria's librarians copy every book passing the port. The Trade Court grew out of this arrangement, as it's uniquely suited to negotiate and bribe mortals into doing exactly that. A Wizened Antiquarian named Calliope is in charge of maintaining the library. Between the symposium and Calliope, loyalist attempts to smuggle books past the port have all failed so far.

Alexandria's light is visible from anywhere within the Hellenistic Hedge. Gentry may unleash servants and Huntsmen to threaten, kill, and ensnare travelers to Alexandria, but they cannot *block* the trod leading there — following it is far easier than most Hedge navigation, granting any changelings making the attempt an additional two dice to the attempt. When Zeus blocks all Hedge portals in Olympia, Lost can brave the trods from Olympia to Alexandria and exit at the lighthouse. No Gentry claims the lands near Alexandria, as doing so is a sure way to lose servants.

Alexandria is home to a thriving Goblin Market. The goblins sell fruits, tokens, Icons changelings are too scared to retrieve themselves, Goblin Contracts, and amulets to hide the wearer during epagomenae. The latter is a scam, but then any buyer is unlikely to come for a refund. They also offer services to fetches, getting them in contact with a Promethean guide or hiding them from any vengeful Lost. The market employs Hob Alarms, granting Lost time to escape into the mundane world should the Gentry send a Huntsman.

Playing the Game

Created and Lost are mirror opposites. The Promethean is not human, but moves toward being so. The changeling *was* once human, but lost humanity at the hands of her captor. She feels jealousy and sympathy for the Promethean in equal amounts, while his New Dawn invigorates hope she can retrieve all lost parts of herself. The Promethean fully realizes the Lost is no longer human — but when his only other mentors are Created and a Divine Fire that communicates through vague and nebulous memories, having a former human as teacher is a good deal.

This era gives unique and easy opportunities for Created and Lost to strike up a friendship, or at least a working relationship. The seven wonders are both Pilgrimage Road and part of the Great Bargain: Both groups *need* them to survive. The Lost suspect the Gentry plan to sabotage the Great Bargain — it's an easy assumption with all the loyalists about — and seek Prometheans' help to defend the Wonders. A Created brings vast physical power to the table — he's near impossible to kill — while the Lost

Glamour and Disquiet

The emotional catharsis of reaching a milestone allows changelings to harvest more Glamour than usual from Prometheans. The Miasma even provides a bonus to the harvesting roll: +1 for minor milestones, +2 for major, and +3 for superlative ones.

The Miasma also renders Lost immune to Disquiet.

is apt at moving unseen or navigating social waters. The relationship brings practical perks, too: the Promethean is a powerful defender during epagomenae, while the Lost can ferry him through the Hedge from one Wonder to another.

The Dream Builders explicitly welcome Created in their ranks. Another good starting point is the Mausoleum, which sees so many Prometheans it's impossible *not* to meet one of these usually rare creatures. Meanwhile, Lost congregate all year round in Alexandria, and in Rhodes during epagomenae — any Created worth his salt should notice the other not-wholly-human creatures about.

Players should consider how mortal attitudes affect characters. The Wars of the Diadochi are over, but Alexander's heirs are still fighting over the boundaries of his successor empires. The Punic Wars between Rome and Carthage have just begun, and threaten to upset the entire Hellenistic world. Alexandria and Rhodes are in a trade war with the Antigonid and Seleucid Empires. An Osirian may flee to the Colossus, and find anti-Egyptian sentiments rapidly aggravating Disquiet. One of the Lost returns from Arcadia to find Seleucus defeated Lysimachus — and if he supported the latter, where does that leave him? While full-on bigotry doesn't aid any game, a little tension works well.

Playing a Fetch

The Miasma lets fetches attempt the Pilgrimage (see p. 54 for more), leading to a unique attitude toward these half-creatures. A Promethean acts as mentor, viewing the fetch as no more or less human than himself. Even the Lost have some sympathy — the fetch is a broken, half-formed being looking for meaning.

Changeling: The Lost, p. 235, offers character-creation rules for fetches. A few things are different in this era.

Azoth is all about rules — follow these 12 impossible steps, and you too can become a real boy — and the touch of Azoth makes the fetch a more literal being. This lets her bargain for Goblin Contracts. She cannot become a Hedge Denizen (**Changeling: The Lost**, p. 340) though — she's already too closely alike for transformation — and can never accrue more than nine points of Goblin Debt. When she would incur her 10th point, the Contracts simply stop working: Whichever entity is empowering them refuses to until she's paid off some debt.

The player should also consider the Five Questions (**Changeling: The Lost**, pp. 233–234) from a fetch's perspective:

- **When did you know?** You led a human life. You had a family. Then one day, Azoth touches you, or your changeling returns from Arcadia, and you realize: I am not human, I never was. What changed in that moment, and what did you lose?
- **Who knows or suspects the truth?** Are you still with your human family? Did you tell them, or did your youngest child figure it out for himself? Did a hunter see you cut yourself and not bleed?
- **What are you made of?** When someone cuts you, insects pour from the wound. Your bones are made of wood. Your heart is a hollow egg with raging winds trapped inside. How do you cope with these reminders of your inhumanity, as they itch and crawl under your leaf skin?
- **How are you flawed?** You have a tell, something instantly betraying you as inhuman. Your fingers are black and covered in wax from where your Gentry master sealed your skin. Birds try to nest in your hair, recognizing they're really twigs and leaves.
- **How is your relationship to changelings?** Did you meet *your* changeling yet — did she reclaim her life, or does she allow you to share the family? How do other changelings, the local symposium, and the motley you travel with now, treat you?

Goblin Fruits

Artemisia's Sorrow

This fruit grows at the Mausoleum, well-protected by its black vines. Plucking the pomegranate fruit requires a Dexterity + Survival roll to avoid the thorns lest they drain a Willpower point from the changeling. Artemisia's Sorrow tastes like tears and ashes when consumed. Nothing untoward occurs if the fruit is consumed in the Hedge, but in the mundane world, upon eating it the changeling is pulled into State of Twilight (**Chronicles of Darkness**, pp. 124–125). A jetty leading to the River Styx immediately extends before her — she may choose to ignore or walk it as she pleases. She interacts with ghosts and shades as if she were one of them. This State of Twilight lasts until the changeling next sees the sun rise, or she spends a Glamour point and wills it so. If she has no Glamour to spend, she may spend a Willpower point instead.

Cerynitis' Hope

These clear, teardrop-shaped fruits are a rare find in the Hedge of Ephesus. A changeling eating the fruit gains two additional dice on attempts to locate one of her Icons, with the bonus disappearing at the end of the scene. The Storyteller describes the Icons he planned for that character (their physical aspect, i.e. "a flower made of light," though not what they represent) and the player picks one: Her character gains the modifier to locate that Icon.

Colossus' Bane

This fruit of interlocking thorns from Rhodes' Hedge forms a chain just large enough to bind a person. The chain cannot be broken by brute strength, requiring a success on a Dexterity + Larceny roll to wiggle free, or someone else (who must not be bound themselves) to release the captive by touching the chain and spending one point of Glamour.

Tokens

Alexandrian Lamp (••)

This plain copper lamp is available for trade or coin, at a fair price, from Alexandria's Goblin Market. The lamp is placed inside the Hedge (right in the entrance works), and anyone holding the lamp as it touches the ground can always find her way back to it, granting a +2 bonus on checks to navigate back to the lamp and ensuring the path can never be completely blocked. Only members of the original group can move the lamp once set down.

Catch: The lamp bearer cannot hide their presence for the remainder of the scene following their holding the lamp, as their body glows with a flaming hue, regardless of supernatural attempts at concealment.

Drawback: The lamp bearer gains the Lethargic Condition once the lamp is set down, as it drains their energy levels to hold it.

Oath Sand (••)

This sand, taken from the base of Khufu's Pyramid, is one of the reasons Lost travel there. Running the sand through your fingers grants a +2 bonus on any social action that involves giving your word — whether it's negotiating Goblin Contracts, forging pledges, or swearing to the captain of the guard you won't cause trouble in her city.

Catch: The changeling must not have told a lie in the 24 hours preceding this token's use, otherwise it renders no effect.

Drawback: The social action the changeling takes after using the last of the Oath Sand comes at a −1 penalty, as their veneer of respectability vanishes.

Wolf Arrows (•••)

Damage +1, Size 2, Armor Piercing 1

This set of 10 arrows, held in a quiver embossed with wolf motifs, is crafted from the bones of Nineveh's briar-wolves. The bones howl as they fly through the air: anyone hearing the sound must succeed at a Resolve + Composure roll or suffer the Stunned Tilt.

Tools of Artemisia

The ritual implements Artemisia used to scoop out her brother-husband's brain and replace his blood with oil yet survive. These tools are traded in the hidden underbelly of the world, moving hands from alchemists to morally lacking Created and back again.

Athame (••)

Damage +1, Initiative –1, Strength 1, Size 1, roll 9-again

The athame represents Artemisia's first step and determination: cutting into her beloved's corpse to steal him back from death. The knife is razor-edged and eager to be used.

Bowl (•••)

Artemisia burned incense to soothe Mausolus' soul, and blackroot to keep vengeful ghosts away. Burning incense (Resources 2) in the bowl ensures ghosts, including Hedge ghosts, do not attack the characters first. Burning blackroot, harvested from the Hedge near the Mausoleum, repels most ghosts, while major (named and statted) ghosts must succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll to draw near, and even then, suffer a −1 on all actions.

Tongs (•••)

Damage +0, Initiative –1, Strength 1, Size 1, Grapple +1

Artemisia used these tongs to hold her husband's spirit in place. They can reach through Twilight and affect (strike or hold, depending on how the character uses them) incorporeal creatures and objects. If the creature or object could theoretically become corporeal, the character may spend one Essence point to pull it into the mundane world.

Fire Shard (••••)

Artemisia snatched fire from heaven itself and placed it where her husband's soul used to be. It bled off his body, staining the altar and ground. This small shard of marble, taken from the Mausoleum, holds a single point of Pyros that replenishes daily and can be absorbed by a Promethean holding it. Using the Fire Shard in the generative act (**Promethean: The Created**, p. 185) grants a +1 bonus and ensures failure ends in a dead body rather than a Pandoran. Regardless of failure or success, the generative act consumes the Divine Fire and leaves a blackened marble shard.

New Merits

Hedgewise (••)

Some people go the long way around, traveling the world by horse or boat. Not you — you are strictly a Hedge traveler. You gain two dice for kenning a Hedge portal, even if it's hidden (including by magic) and you weren't looking for it, and gain 9-again on Hedgespinning checks.

Librarian (•••)

Trained in the Library of Alexandria, your first social interaction with librarians and scholars is always at an impression level higher than it otherwise would be (average becomes good, excellent becomes perfect, etc.). Depending

on your behavior (kind and thoughtful, or crass and hostile) you keep or lose the bonus on subsequent encounters. You also know where to find any information kept in a book or scroll — even if you don't own it, you know who does — and gain two additional dice on checks to research written accounts.

Storytelling the Seven Wonders

The players made their characters and came up with interesting relationships between them. Now it's your turn. Let's take a closer look at devising a campaign, striking the right mood, and telling stories for Created and Lost alike. Each Tier also presents ready-to-use campaign ideas.

Tier One: A Wonder

This game revolves around a single wonder and is fairly small in scope. Created and Lost both need the wonders to survive, and loyalist saboteurs provide a communal foe. An alchemist may expand her scope from hunting for Pyros to Glamour, trading with hobgoblins for Glamour in physical form. This game has to compensate for Disquiet, lest angry mobs and Wastelands run rampant. Encourage players to pick distinct Lineages in a Branded Throng (**Promethean: The Created** p. 306) or give them access to a Sanctuary Athanor (**Promethean: The Created** p. 189).

Alexandria is great for a Tier One campaign, since the goblins have 1,000 errands to keep anyone entertained. Rhodes, a bustling port, and the Mausoleum with its Dream Builders and resident Prometheans, also offer opportunities for motley and throng to meet.

Mausolus Lost

Epagomenae comes, and Lost hide. No one is taken the first day, nor the second. The third day, Created discover Mausolus gone and a black pomegranate left behind. They ask the Lost to guide them into the Hedge, where Created know these fruits grow, and help find Mausolus. Venturing into the Hedge, they learn — through tracking, divination, or speaking with hobgoblins — that Persephone of the True Fae snatched Mausolus. She plans to merge his essence with a Huntsman, to create an entity neither beholden to the common laws of reality nor the Great Bargain. While the Created are unwavering in their desire to save Mausolus, the Lost have different considerations. They were safe for half the days of epagomenae as the Huntsman hunted different prey. Maybe they should save Mausolus, teach him how to better hide from the Gentry, and quietly encourage Persephone to try again next year. Meanwhile, the Dream Builders are in disarray: Is Persephone the same as their Lady of Death, and is this the prelude to a greater betrayal?

- Persephone has a pet named Cerberus, a three-headed hell hound, who she sends to stop the characters. Use statistics for a Trod Troll (**Changeling: The Lost**, pp. 260–261), but change the Aspiration to "Serve Persephone" and Frailty to "Falls asleep to lyre music", and give him the Immortal Dread Power. Alternatively, make him an ancient and powerful Geryo from **Night Horrors: Shunned by the Moon**, if you own that book.

- A snake approaches as the characters delve deeper into the Hedge. She doesn't want Persephone to succeed either, and offers aid in finding Mausolus. The snake isn't acting on her own though — she serves and loves Hades, and the lord of Halicarnassus worries his wife plans to unseat him. Accepting the deal gives the group a resourceful ally, but how do they stop Hades from stealing Mausolus for himself? The snake uses statistics for a briarwolf (**Changeling: The Lost**, p. 257), but replaces Brawl (Claws) with Brawl (Grapple) and Jump Scare and Prodigious Leap with Chameleon Horror and Hypnotic Gaze.

- The group rescues Mausolus, but he has changed. Initially Created attribute this to Disquiet, but a Lost finds an Icon, a single dove feather, in the Hedge and realizes it belongs Mausolus. Did Persephone — or another Gentry — also find one of Mausolus' Icons, and can she use it to create a fetch of him?

Slavers in Rhodes

Gentry employ loyalists to capture escaped Lost, and Rhodes — which continually sees ships comes and go *and* has chains growing in the Hedge — is perfect for these slavers. Now they've taken the Ebb Tide Prince!

The Ebb Tide Queen asks the Lost to investigate and bring him back — she offers tokens, status, or another boon in return. The Colossus, self-appointed protector to the denizens of Rhodes and feeling derelict in his duty, reaches out to Prometheans to protect the motley. He serves as Refinement Mentor and general fount of Pilgrimage knowledge if they agree. When the characters investigate in the Hedge, they indeed find a Huntsman waiting to take the prince home, but no sign of the prince himself. So, where is he?

- The King of High Tide aided the slavers. With the ruler of Ebb Tide out of the way, he felt High Tide could extend its power — a grave necessity with the rising loyalist threat. The slavers snatched the prince instead of the Queen of Ebb Tide, though, and the King of High Tide refuses to help them past the Colossus into the Hedge with an innocent quarry. The slavers are holed up near the harbor, planning to take a ship to Alexandria and cross into the Hedge there. The king fears the slavers will reveal his involvement and works to sabotage the characters while sending agents of his own to save the prince.

- The Queen and Prince of Ebb Tide had a public falling out (he believes she takes the loyalist problem too seriously) and suspicion turns to her. Even if the characters determine she wasn't involved, they must maintain the air of investigating her lest the Tide Symposia believe they are too lax. There's also the issue of whether the queen might prefer the prince remain lost (after her name is cleared) so she can replace him.

- Nineveh commands this group of slavers. She once, possibly inadvertently, crafted the Colossus from a Summer King's Glamour. Could she create another from the prince? Colossus experiences loneliness on a level even other Created don't, and the promise of a brother might sway him to Nineveh's side.

Tier One Organization: Wolf and Rabbit

Wolf and Rabbit are twin homunculi, soulless servants to an alchemist, who broke free of their master seven years ago. They found their bodies rapidly deteriorating without her upkeep, and in a last, desperate effort released the alchemist's other homunculus. Wolf and Rabbit sent their brothers to catch Prometheans, leading to a rash of unprecedented kidnappings, and figured out how to extract Pyros to keep their flesh animated. They couldn't hunt enough Prometheans to sustain all homunculi though, and soon grew desperate again — enough that they followed a Created accompanied by Lost into the Hedge. Wolf and Rabbit found religion in this strange and wondrous world. The Gentry was magnificent, *divine*, and it fixed them right up — a handful of sand where their heart should be, a little spittle in lieu of blood. Now they, and their growing army of homunculi and loyalists, hunt Created and Lost alike — the former they keep, the latter go to the Gentry.

Tier Two: Many Wonders

These games string wonders together in an overarching story. You can focus on an empire (for example, the Lighthouse of Alexandria, Pyramid of Khufu, and Temple of Artemis are all governed by Egypt) or on a geographical region (the Temple of Artemis, Colossus of Rhodes, and Mausoleum at Halicarnassus all lie in Asia Minor). Or, you could simply mix and match whichever wonders have an interesting synergy (Artemis and Zeus are both Greek gods, and their pantheon was notoriously filled with strife). This game sees the group move, thus solving the problem of mounting Disquiet, but there is the matter of getting around. Long distances, slow travel, and regional disputes are nuisances. The Hedge holds trods from one wonder to another but presents unique dangers — especially to Lost who consider themselves untouchable in the mundane world. You need to thread the needle between danger and excitement — make the decision hard for the characters, but ensure they come down on the side of going in.

The Goblin Queen

An enterprising hobgoblin hires Alexandria's Created and Lost to bring him a plethora of tokens ("and other fine items") to sell. What initially starts as a light-hearted adventure eventually turns dark, as the characters learn the goblin uses the items to power Contracts beholden to a Goblin Queen named Hermione. The Queen doesn't *do* anything — she just signs her name as creditor, and the tokens do the rest. So long as these Contracts remain though, the Queen is bound to her throne and must remain exactly that: a Goblin Queen. Which is just the way of the world, but this Queen is a really a *qashmallim* who got trapped in the Hedge and lost its identity.

- Map the Pilgrimage so it coincides with the hobgoblin's requests. One Created plans to visit the Great Pyramid, and a changeling offers to take him through the Hedge and shave months off the journey — so long as he stands guard while she collects Oath Sand. It helps if this cements him in the Bodyguard (Aes) role, and if a second task includes an encounter that lets him explore a new Role or Refinement.

- Ensure the Lost doesn't feel like she's simply performing fetch quests. She finds an Icon of the High Tide King while collecting goblin fruit in Nineveh, and now she travels to Rhodes on her own accord — creating a chance for Promethean characters to meet the fabled Colossus.

- Create room for players to pursue character goals. A Created wants to find and claim a Sanctuary Athanor. Another only works for the hobgoblin because it promised leads on a Pandoran she created. A Lost works to rise in the Court of Favors, brokering deals between his hobgoblin friend and other changelings. This campaign sees the characters return to Alexandria often, and it's worth detailing the city as you would for a Tier One game.

- The group has several adventures behind them when they learn about Hermione's true nature, leaving them allies if not friends. Now though, they come to a crossroad. To Prometheans, the path forward is probably clear: They must remind Hermione of who she is. Lost might view things differently. The Goblin Queen holds several Contracts in her name — they might lose their power if she's no longer Queen. What if the characters own some of these Contracts, too? Does it make a difference if epagomenae nears, and they can't afford to be weak now?



Tier Two Organization: Trader Goblins

Goblin traders are *everywhere*. Even in the desert near Khufu's Pyramid, where few changelings go, they wait with their goods. They trade favors, secrets, Contracts, and tokens — and Azothic objects. They recently found the Fire Shard (see Artemisia's Tools, p. 75) and hatched a plan to chip *more* shards from the Mausoleum to sell. While the lower levels of the Trader Goblins, which has no formalized name, consist of jovial if crooked merchants, their higher ranks hold a sinister secret: These goblins sell changelings to Gentry, and Prometheans to Alchemists.

Money (be it actual coin, favors, or pledges) flows upward. A character buys a Contract from a friendly goblin for a single strand of his hair, who trades that strand to a more powerful goblin, who knows *just* the buyer for it — until the hair makes its way into the hands of Clotho who spins it into a chain to bind the changeling. A Created trades some of her phlegm for an Azothic object, not foreseeing the spittle making it to an alchemist who uses it to set Pandorans on her. The character should always be the first step in this chain of unseen deals.

Divine Alliance

Twice, Artemis set loyalist saboteurs to raze her temple, and thrice mortals rebuilt. Whatever the particulars of the Great Bargain, it allows time for a single monument to be broken and resurrected. The Lost are now onto her and her spies find it increasingly hard to sneak by them. They even formed an alliance with Created, who asked a throng (of player characters) to guard the temple at Ephesus.

The goddess made an alliance of her own.

Artemis sent a group of loyalists through the Hedge to Olympia. She persuaded her sister-wife Nineveh, whose Hedge remains uncensored by Lost, to send her own loyalists over land. It took them a long time, but they finally arrived and now a two-pronged attack on Olympia begins. Their target: the writing on Zeus' foot.

When the first blow lands, though, the Ephesus throng receives an Elpis vision of Olympia under attack. Their only hope is to ask a changeling guide to take them there immediately.

- The Hedge near Ephesus is devoid of Artemis' servants save the Ceryneian Hind, who leads them astray with her Maze and The Path Not Taken Dread Powers. The Olympian Hedge is guarded by a large group of loyalists.

- The real story comes afterward, when the characters realize three Gentry formed an alliance. With so many of Artemis' followers already out, Nineveh unfettered in dispatching more, and Zeus — the one they're trying to free — the most powerful Gentry in the Web of Seven, the danger of them trying again and succeeding is high. They must devise a grander plan to break the Gentries' alliance.

- With the loyalists temporarily defeated, now is the best (and likely only) time to reclaim Zeus' Glamour fount. Can they simply take it, or does the soul require a special vessel to move (an Azothic object, or the body of a fetch)? Even then it's a disembodied, tortured soul. The changeling's master could reform him. Maybe a Promethean can use the spark in the generative act, and create a new body for it? The rewards are well worth it: This changeling was part of the group that created the Great Bargain. If the Temple of Artemis or statue of Zeus falls, he knows how to re-inscribe the Bargain.

Tier Three: The Seven Wonders

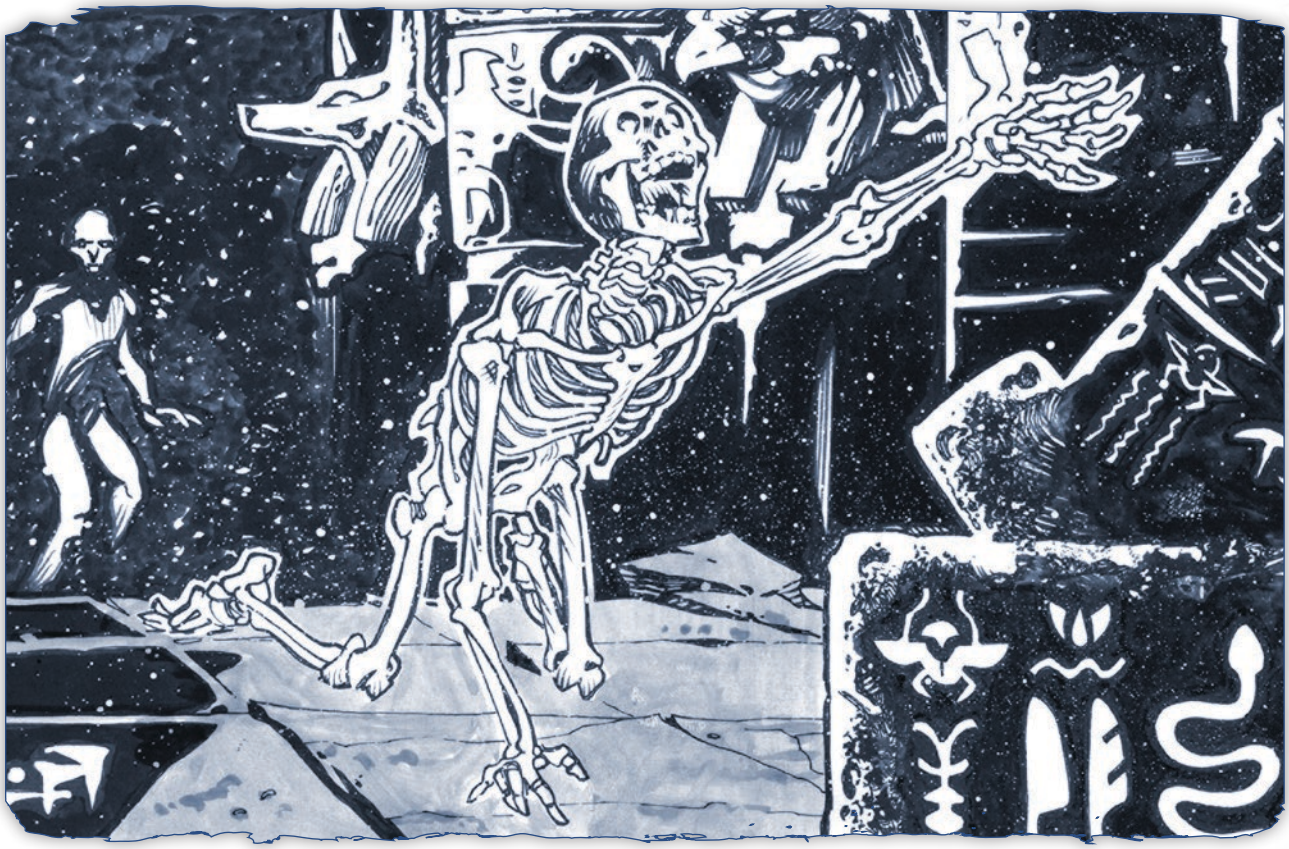
This game takes characters across the breadth of the Hellenistic world, on a trajectory that sees the seven wonders forever changed in their passage. You can use all seven wonders if you want to, but it's not a requirement; this game is about impact and scope, rather than miles traveled. You need to create a memorable threat only the characters can stop *and* make it personal.

The Return of a God

On his deathbed, when a general asked who should inherit his kingdom, Alexander the Great only answered "*toi Kratistoi*" — "to the strongest." That was not as clear as anyone liked, leading to a series of wars and the collapse of Alexander's empire into the smaller Antigonid, Seleucid, Ptolemaic, and Attalid dynasties. Alexander the IV (son of Alexander the Great) and his mother Rukhsana were poisoned in 310 BCE, thus ending the lineage of Alexander the Great.

Rukhsana's sister Pamira now works to raise Alexander the Great from his grave to avenge her sister and nephew. As Pamira is an alchemist and genitor both, she could actually do it. Her main problem? Alexander may have been more than human, and not as easily raised as a mere mortal.

- If you want to visit all seven wonders, here is a list of things Pamira needs (substitute as desired): a resurrection scroll held by an alchemist holed up at the Great Pyramid, who will only trade if they smuggle him back past the *qashmallim*; heart fruit from Nineveh's garden; the blessing of the goddess of life, Artemis (possibly given through the Ceryneian Hind); a tortured soul, conveniently found in Zeus' Glamour fount; and a true light to guide the path, harvested from Alexandria's Lighthouse. Give the characters a fair chance to discover what Pamira needs ahead of time, allowing them to snatch or even replace it with a dummy.



- These are things Pamira absolutely needs: the body of Alexander the Great (she has it, and the bodies of Rukhsana and Alexander IV); the life-spark of the Colossus to call Alexander back across the void of death; and a location thoroughly attuned to generative magic, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus.

- Pamira's Kratistoi attack the Colossus. Their objective is to steal part of its life-essence, then flee though the Hedge to Halicarnassus. While Colossus seems unharmed at first, its movements quickly become sluggish — the theft left it drained of life, and if Pamira's ritual succeeds and permanently anchors that essence in Alexander, the Colossus will become an inert statue.

- The campaign's conclusion comes at the Mausoleum. Pamira already prepared Alexander's body and begins the ritual. The Kratistoi patrol the Mausoleum. If the characters successfully sabotaged her ingredients earlier, they're probably assured of a continued lifeless corpse. If not, the ritual might lead to Alexander as a new Colossus (unbound by the Hedge) or as a Pandoran — either would be terrifying. Regardless of the outcome, the ritual drains the Mausoleum of its generative focus.

- Involve characters personally. Pamira holds the Icon of a changeling and plans to use it in her new Creation, or she is genitor to one of the Prometheans. A Colossoi knows his existence will soon end alongside its progenitor. Another Lost's fetch joined the Kratistoi. The stakes are impossibly high — and also intensely personal.

Tier Three Organization: Kratistoi

The Kratistoi descend from those who lost the Wars of the Diadochi, and are now led by Pamira of Bractia. They comprise mortal soldiers and politicians, as well as alchemists — some apprentices, and other rivals to Pamira — who can field a small army of homunculi. Three fetches joined the Kratistoi, plugging the holes in their being with stolen Pyros.

Sources and Inspiration

The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World by Peter A. Clayton is a critically acclaimed resource on the era.

The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World by Charles River Editors holds amazing art and maps of the seven wonders.

Funeral Games by Mary Renault deals with the death of Alexander the Great and its aftermath. While those events took place before Seven Wonders, their effects are still felt.

The Jason Voyage: The Quest for the Golden Fleece and *The Ulysses Voyage: Sea Search for the Odyssey*, both by Tim Severin, recreate those epic journeys.

Dan Carlin's *Hardcore History* podcast focuses on the stories and people behind history. The "Wars of the Diadochi" and "Punic Nightmares" episodes are especially recommended for this era.



Wonders and Horrors

Vampires of this era belong to a great many sects, the Roman Camarilla's chief rival being the Epigoni of Greece, North Africa, and Persia. These Kindred revere the memory of Alexander as the greatest mortal who ever lived, some even describing a legend of the general finding immortality through drinking of the blood of 100 fallen kings. Vampires of this covenant constantly test the best mortals and "reward" them with the Embrace, looking for their next savior.

Werewolves feel anxiety over the wonders. Each monument warps the Gauntlet in a unique way. Both Forsaken and Pure fear what might come through from the other side should one of the monuments fall, predicting mutated Hosts or gross spirit reflections of human sacrifice and worship.

This is a wonderful time to be a **mage**. The Wonders empower nearby spells reenacting their legend, making them prime locations for cabals to argue over access to in the very first Consilia.

The Aegis Kai Doru are ascendant **hunters** at this time, wielding the weapons of great Greek and Persian legends who remain fresh in mortal memory. Their Vigil is a glorious one as they lead a hunt to the freehold at the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, determined to eliminate the otherworldly creatures desecrating tombs. They will meet the changelings in open battle or drive them into the fields and their ambushes.

Sin-Eaters in this era have made deals with unusual Geists. Some take the form of half-constructed versions of the seven wonders, representing abandonment, renovation, or ruin. These Geists urge the destruction of idols and their creators. Some Sin-Eaters assume these alien Geists are the corrupted spirits of the wonders themselves.

On one hand, the wonders are great and powerful monuments fit for the Judges, on the other, are the **mummies** themselves not the greatest monuments to the gods? Some Deathless balk at the idea of mortal-built temples and statues outlasting them. Only the Tef-Aabhi advocate preserving the wonders, as now they are seven, the nexus point between them becomes a pool of Sekhem that fountains upward and never ceases.

Beasts and Heroes' symbiosis is starting to collapse around this time, as the ages of truly primordial wonder approach their end. The world is ever-more explored. It is now that Beasts slink into the darkness and Heroes pursue twisted ends for the sake of legend. Everyone wants to be Perseus, Theseus, or even Alexander reborn. Thus, the vampires in the Diadochi watch them closely.

A subset of alchemists trying to create or experiment on Prometheans in this era discover a far more reliable procedure: making **Remade** from living humans. Most alchemists believe Remade and Created are the same thing, hunting down other Remade elsewhere the way they would Prometheans, and finding nothing but frustration when they can't find any Vitriol in their victims.

The wonders are not colossal pieces of Infrastructure. In fact, the complete absence of Infrastructure and angelic interest in these monuments is alarming to many **demons** who want to know why the God-Machine's agents appear to actively avoid them. The Unchained are now analyzing these Infrastructure dead zones and wonder if they'll be able to make use of them as environmental Covers.

The Dream Builders

Children of Orpheus (Orphic Lost), Dream Walkers, Keepers of the Wonders

Irena saw the fruit just off the path. A black pomegranate, so dark it swallowed the light. Three steps, she calculated, maybe four, and she could grab it. Three steps off the path and away from the entrance.

"I know you're here," she called out.

Her voice was thick with mockery — she didn't, in fact, know, but it wouldn't be able to resist. Ah, it stepped forward now. Four legged and hooved like a deer, if much taller. A hole sat where its head should be, antlers curving above the void. It stank of rotting meat, and maggots fell from a wound in its side.

"Thought you'd be here," she opened her pack. "You look worse today."

The Huntsman didn't answer.

Irena took a deep breath and ran into the Hedge. The Huntsman galloped forward to meet her. She said a silent prayer to the Lady the goblin merchant was true to his word, and pulled the bronze and copper chain from her bag.

Fortitude

The Dream Builders are not content with just Khufu's Pyramid. They block Nineveh, force her to yield a new piece of the Bargain — and then they're not content to add *one* other Wonder. They break the Bargain into pieces, gambling they can make it work somehow. The Dream Builders' response to uncertainty and danger is to plunge in headlong. They're not foolish, they don't do things they absolutely *know* will kill them. But when in doubt? Says yes; take the risk — a Dream Builder knows the path they *didn't* take is the one they'll regret.

Recklessness

Dream Builders don't expect to survive. They don't discuss it, not even among themselves, but they all know it. Their lot is to blaze the trail, to be front and center in the resistance against the Gentry, and — eventually — to die. Dream Builders meet certain death with a defiant shout or a careless shrug, knowing others will continue their legacy. It's the work that matters, not the single life.

Keeping the Dream Alive

Dream Builders collect dream shards from the Hedge, catching them in invisible nets and on ephemeral threads. They sort them, store them, and gift them to mortals — dreams of hope for the downtrodden, and nightmares of helplessness for the cruel. The greatest Dreams, of things lost under the dust of ages or yet to come, they give to mortal artists and architects.

No one knows if the Dream Builders forged the Great Bargain — it's been 2,000 years since Khufu. But *they* believe they did — a promise of freedom from the Lady of Death — and so they maintain it. No Lost can deny they had a hand in extending the Bargain from the pyramid to the Web of Seven. They roam the Hellenistic Hedge, traveling between wonders to ensure their safety.

Between their passion for creation, and the patronage of the Lady of Death, the symposium is fascinated with Prometheans. It's a recent development, perhaps one to fill the gap now the Web of Seven is complete, but the symposium is moving along at its usual swift pace. They created a freehold at the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, introduced themselves to the Created, and offered to serve as guides into the Hedge. So far none of the Orphic Lost have delved into the dark art of creation, but some already dream it.

Dream-Builders, while a single symposium, divide into three factions: Marvels, Navigators, and Scriveners. Marvels collect dream shards, shaping them to be just right for their mortal target. Navigators, meanwhile, are experts at traveling the Hedge and guide other symposium members to their destination. Scriveners are a new faction to the symposium — former Marvels, they specialize in collecting the dreams necessary to maintain the Great Bargain. Each faction is led by its most experienced member, and the Eldest Marvel leads the symposium as a whole. Recently though, both Navigators and Scriveners scoff at



What if They Do?

None of the Dream Builders are genitors *yet*. But if they can dream it, they can do it. Changelings under the Miasma don't suffer Disquiet, but that does not mean the genitor-creation relationship is smooth sailing. Their Created are Extempore, brought to life by a unique mix of Divine Fire and Glamour. Changeling genitors further take a page from the Gentry's book, crafting their creations with a heart made of insects, or limbs made of branches. These unfleshed Extempore (taking the Extempore lineage on **Promethean: The Created** p. 38) won't have much for which to be thankful. The Fire inside them doesn't burn strongly enough to sustain them after the Miasma falls.

that. The Navigators feel their work is the most important — everywhere but the Hedge is safe, and it's *their* task to guide Lost through that deathtrap. Meanwhile, Scriveners believe supporting the Web of Seven is the symposium's most important task, and they are owed greater deference.

The Bargain

The Lady of Death embodies safety from persecution for the helpless, and punishment for the wicked. This is why Dream Builders are so careful to grant pleasant dreams to those in pain, and nightmares to those who inflict suffering. In return, she gives them the Mantle of Dreams and Righteousness. Some Dream Builders believe she also upholds the Great Bargain. If so, the Lady clearly brooks no competition, as courtiers are forbidden from making any deals to protect themselves during epagomenae — they must simply rely on their cleverness.

Mantle of Dreams and Righteousness

This Mantle imbues the Dream Builder with the ephemeral dream of death: Her hands become translucent, her hair pale as bone, and her voice a whisper only heard on the wind.

- Gain bonus dice equal to your character's Mantle dots to mundane rolls to take a target's measure. The changeling must interact with the target, or observe him interacting with someone else.
- •• Gain bonus dice equal to your character's Mantle dots to mundane attempts at coercion and encouragement of others.
- ••• Your character may name a Gate of Ivory or Dreaming Road, to gain two dice on navigation attempts to find the shortest (not always safest) trod there.
- •••• Your character gains one automatic success when dreamweaving.
- ••••• Your character may spend a Glamour point to either remove one Condition mentally weighing the target down (such as Cowed or Demoralized), or give them the Beaten Down Tilt for one scene.

Courtiers

Hecara, Eldest Marvel

Hecara dreamed of histories forgotten and futures lost. She tasted the journeys of Odysseus and Achilles. Now she grows bored. The Darkling seeks new secrets, new mysteries to uncover — and believes she found them in the Created. Hecara traveled with a throng, observing them and their Pilgrimage. She tries to see them as people, no more broken than she is, but finds it increasingly difficult. She longs to slip her fingers under the seams that hold them together, rip them open, and see inside.

Tehe, Eldest Scrivener

Once, Tehe dreamed of new wonders — a great labyrinth in Crete, or the rebuilding of Troy. No more: Now he only has nightmares of the fall of the seven, the breaking of the Bargain, and the horde of Huntsmen finally coming to claim their prey. That the wonders might fall, all the Dream Builder's sacrifices come to naught, consumes the Wizened. He seeks out prophecies to understand and prevent the fall, and knows the Colossus plays a role. Perhaps, Tehe muses, he should remove the Colossus' soul and anchor the statue in place.

Dinara, Youngest Navigator

Dinara is a Chimera, relishing in the fluidity of zir nature. Zie always takes the road less traveled, venturing deep into the Hedge in exploration of Dream Roads no other Navigator ever walked. Dinara finds Icons. At first zie tried to return them to the Lost, but the task is impossible — there are too many. No other Lost come so far into the thickets, and the pieces of their souls just sit. Dinara comes to suspect the Great Bargain is a burden, a curse of complacency and false safety.

Legends

- Silence behind him. No footsteps. No breathing. His faith wavered and he turned. There she stood: Eurydice, dark eyes full of reproach. Ghostly hands carried her back into the darkness. The story does not end here — Orpheus' obsession was greater than one failed descent into Hades. This time though, Persephone was not swayed by his music; Orpheus *had* his chance. He pleaded and begged, until finally Persephone relented. She would free Eurydice to visit Orpheus in his dreams. He missed the cruel glint in her eye. Eurydice wasn't

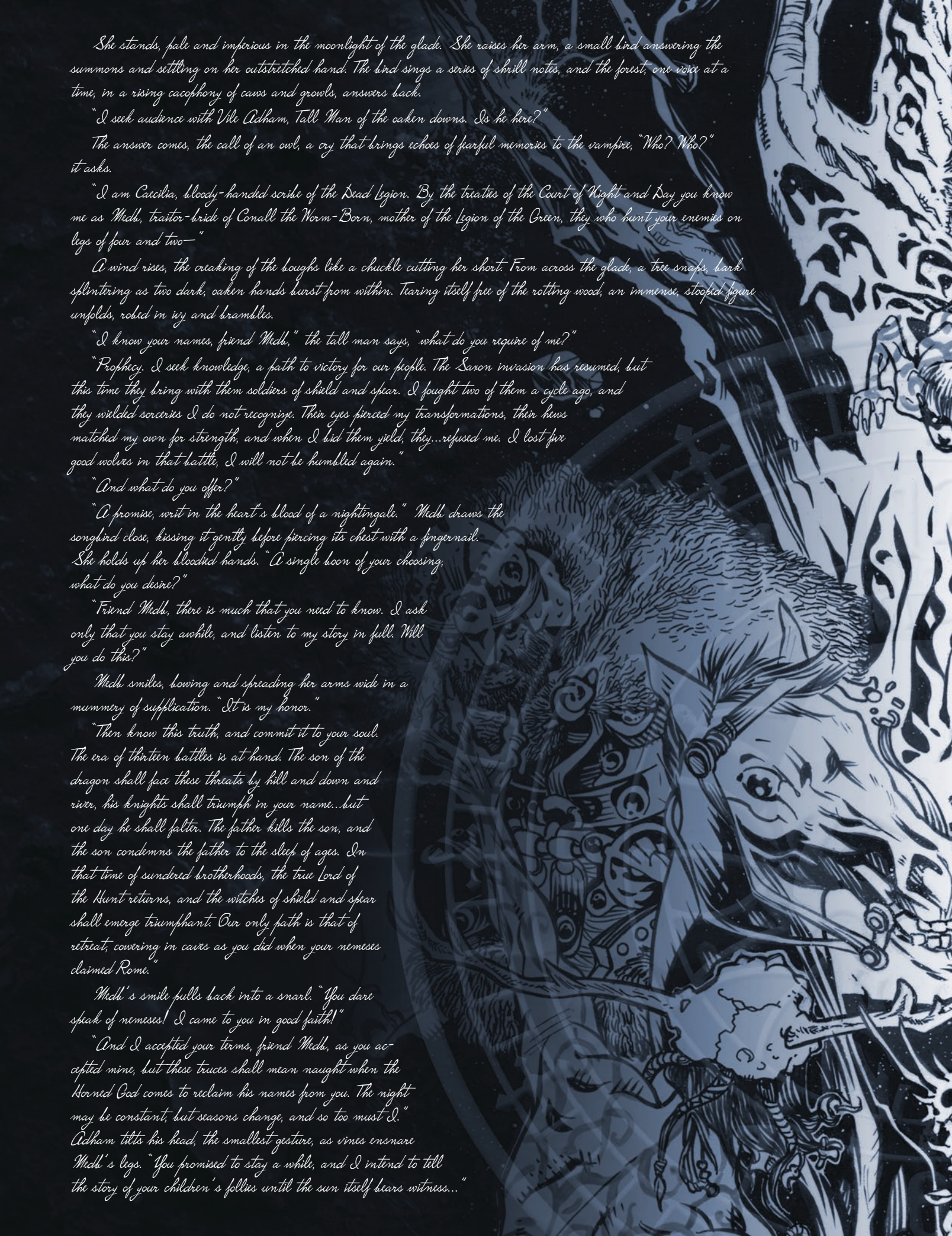
just free to visit Orpheus in his dreams, she *was* a dream, ephemeral and instantly forgotten. No longer trusting Persephone, Orpheus traveled East to Nineveh. She taught him how to capture dreams in marble and bronze and bind them to the admiration of mortals.

- The Dream Builders predate the Great Pyramid. They whispered to Khufu in his dreams until he erected the greatest monument of mankind. On it they transcribed the Great Bargain, given to them by a now-forgotten sister of Anubis. She still exists within the words of the Great Bargain. The Dream Builders work at her behest, starving her rivals on the other side of the Hedge and fueling her own resurrection. When the time comes, if she proves too dangerous, the Dream Builders may yet cut the ties that bind her to this world. Until then, their interests align.

- Eresjkigal was the first Dream Builder. Not a goddess, but a Wizened prophet. Her Dreams took her to a glorious future of white marble and gleaming metal, a towering machine burning with fire, and Arcadia turned to ashes. That's what the Dream Builders are working toward: Shutting down the Hedge and Arcadia forever *is* the Dream.







She stands, pale and imperious in the moonlight of the glade. She raises her arm, a small bird answering the summons and settling on her outstretched hand. The bird sings a series of shrill notes, and the forest, one voice at a time, in a rising cacophony of caws and growls, answers back.

"I seek audience with Vile Adham, Tall Man of the oaken downs. Is he here?"

The answer comes, the call of an owl, a cry that brings echoes of fearful memories to the vampire, "Who? Who?" it asks.

"I am Caecilia, bloody-handed scribe of the Dead Legion. By the treaties of the Court of Night and Day you know me as Medh, traitor-bride of Conall the Worm-Born, mother of the Legion of the Green, they who hunt your enemies on legs of four and two—"

A wind rises, the creaking of the boughs like a chuckle cutting her short. From across the glade, a tree snaps, bark splintering as two dark, oaken hands burst from within. Tearing itself free of the rotting wood, an immense, stooped figure unfolds, robed in ivy and brambles.

"I know your names, friend Medh," the tall man says, "what do you require of me?"

"Prophecy. I seek knowledge, a path to victory for our people. The Saxon invasion has resumed, but this time they bring with them soldiers of shield and spear. I fought two of them a cycle ago, and they wielded sorceries I do not recognize. Their eyes pierced my transformations, their hews matched my own for strength, and when I bid them yield, they...refused me. I lost five good wolves in that battle, I will not be humbled again."

"And what do you offer?"

"A promise, writ in the heart's blood of a nightingale." Medh draws the songbird close, kissing it gently before piercing its chest with a fingernail. She holds up her bloodied hands. "A single boon of your choosing, what do you desire?"

"Friend Medh, there is much that you need to know. I ask only that you stay awhile, and listen to my story in full. Will you do this?"

Medh smiles, bowing and spreading her arms wide in a mummery of supplication. "It is my honor."

"Then know this truth, and commit it to your soul. The era of thirteen battles is at hand. The son of the dragon shall face these threats by hill and down and river, his knights shall triumph in your name...but one day he shall falter. The father kills the son, and the son condemns the father to the sleep of ages. In that time of sundered brotherhoods, the true Lord of the Hunt returns, and the witches of shield and spear shall emerge triumphant. Our only path is that of retreat, cowering in caves as you did when your nemeses claimed Rome."

Medh's smile pulls back into a snarl. "You dare speak of nemeses! I came to you in good faith!"

"And I accepted your terms, friend Medh, as you accepted mine, but these truces shall mean naught when the Horned God comes to reclaim his names from you. The night may be constant, but seasons change, and so too must I." Adham tilts his head, the smallest gesture, as vines ensnare Medh's legs. "You promised to stay a while, and I intend to tell the story of your children's follies until the sun itself bears witness..."

Arthur's Britannia
400-500 CE



Somewhere in the world there is a defeat for everyone. Some are destroyed by defeat, and some made small and mean by victory. Greatness lives in one who triumphs equally over defeat and victory.

– John Steinbeck, *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights*

In the year 410 CE, the last Roman legions leave Britannia. The Empire is crumbling, divided and the "eternal" city of Rome, the light of civilization, is burning. The Camarilla and the Julii are sundered; those that are left cower in the Necropolis or lie in torpor in the catacombs beneath the fallen splendor of Rome. In the wake of its exodus from Britannia, the senate leaves a power vacuum. From the northern border of Caledonia and across the sea from Hibernia, Celtic and Pictish barbarians come to reclaim what once was theirs and punish the Britons for their weakness, for falling in line under the Roman lash. The land is the stage for a song of steel, the rhythm is the heavy footfall of warriors' boots, the clash of swords carries the tune, and the choirs sing with the screams of the fallen.

Older powers revel in their regained freedom. The Weihan Cynn, the golden-eyed Kindred of Britannia, once forced back into the dark depths of the forests by the fire and steel of the legionnaires, return to strike unions and pacts with the old powers and the Hedge to regain their former dominion. Tribes find patronage with old gods, if they really are gods. The spirit of the Harrier, the Herjan, runs with their warriors; is it divine or does it just seem so? Are they swearing fealty to the creatures beyond the Hedge or simply driven by their hand-me-down hatred of the Romans? Those sky-clad berserker warriors among them, frothing and foaming as the warp spasm takes them, are they man or beast... or both?

Within the borders of Britannia herself, chaos reigns. Romano-British nobles left behind vie for dominance, but with no legions supporting them they cling desperately to the power once graced upon them by Rome. Among these holdouts, those Kindred who remain loyal to Rome but were left behind and those who saw an opportunity, remaining to build their own kingdoms out of the blackened ruins of the Empire. Some don the appearance of the changeling courts, seeking to sway the herd who still revere their pagan "gods." This may appear as a boon to those who have escaped the Hedge, but it is a double-edged sword. The obfuscation helps hide the Lost but draws the attention of Gentry and Huntsmen alike. The Kindred arrogantly dismiss the horn blasts of the True Fae, but for the Lost hiding in the herd it is not so easily ignored.

Some mortal lords see a future free from Roman influence and they wage bloody war against those they see as tainted by the Empire's influence. Worse are those opportunists hidden in their ranks, the robber barons who serve only their own base interests. There is a reason these are called the Dark Ages. The pall of ignorance creeping over the cowering tribes of the Britons (who either cast off the iron shackles of Empire or mourn the loss of enlightened Roman society) makes them malleable to those with the will to lead.

Aside from the immortal and the unliving are others who covet the fertile hills and verdant forests of Britannia. To the southeast lie the massed and superstitious ranks of the Saxon nations, Angles, Jutes and Frisians seeking their own opportunity. They see the chance to expand, to conquer and drive the encroaching darkness back, because within the ranks of the brutal invaders comes something new: Mortal hunters experienced at facing down the monsters. Where the Celts and Picts rely upon naked savagery and weapons of bronze, the Saxons bring blades of steel and a formidable thirst for conquest.

There is little to bring hope to the dismayed and demoralized tribes of the Britons but all is not yet lost. From among them one shall arise, the Once and Future King, born to the line of Pendragon and destined to build a legend in unyielding stone. He is the first Christian King of Britannia, Arthur. The Knights of Camelot and the virtues of the Round Table herald an age of light and justice in the face of shadow and oppression. It is a promise that will ultimately fail in the face of mortal appetite and avarice, but a legacy will be born to inspire a nation for generations. That would be cold comfort to the serfs and churls of Briton who labor under the feudal yolk, even if they could see it coming. All they know is they toil for whoever owns them and their land. They know they bleed when they are called to bear arms for a cause they don't fully understand and they know that they all, as one, fear the setting of the sun and the coming of the night.

Themes and Moods

Change

The lands of Britannia are in upheaval. In the wake of the ordered rule of the Roman Empire there are those who mourn the absence of enlightened civilization and those who celebrate the end of oppression and privilege. The Romano-Briton nobles keen and cling to what remains of the marble institutions of the past, desperate for the edge that will let them hold on to their power, while the lords of the newly freed Britannia use any means to savage the remnants of the oppressor's culture. Religion undergoes sweeping changes; the Romans bring with them Christianity and its teachings. The druidic influence of the Weihan Cynn seeks to undo what the Romans have wrought, but to do that they must clash with the new religion to bring back what once was.

Darkness

The light of civilization has set upon this green isle. Those of a darker nature who had been driven away under the order enforced by the Legions of Rome fight and bargain to forge their kingdoms. Those that had served the once-invincible seat of the Empire now cling to whatever they can. Beyond the wars fought for territory is a war of ideology; the enlightened writings and philosophies of Rome are rooted out and burned in favor of spoken histories or legends carried through the times of occupation and revived (ofttimes inaccurately) from the mouths of the newly independent tribes.

Gloom

The land is cloaked in creeping shadows. Those who bathed in the golden light of Roman enlightenment are forced to hide in the smoke of its charred remains. If those who seek knowledge continue to do so then they must do it carefully, the pall of ignorance can easily be ignited by the spark of fervor and raise the cry, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live!"

Those who see the liberation as an oncoming dawn must face the truth; there are those things returning that the strength of the Empire held at bay, and they will find the hours before the dawn are the darkest of all.

Blood

In this time of upheaval one rule holds true: Might makes right. Whether to bind your holdings in a grip of iron, carve a new domain from the lands of your enemies or bring forth the virtues of honor and justice, you must be prepared to get down in the blood and the mud and fight for it. Even those who would barter with the old powers to claim their portion must pay the blood price. Steel is the currency of this dark time for, while people may be bought with gold, they can only be held by steel.

The Empire's Crown

With the Empire of Rome crumbling, the legions withdraw to defend the seat of the emperor. The incumbent King of Britannia, Constans Aurelianus II, is a puppet. Son of Emperor Constantine III, he is a monk turned king at the urging of an ambitious noble named Vortigern. With the emperor dead and the legions gone, Vortigern can take the final step and rid himself of the last tie to the Empire. Slain in his bed by Pictish assassins, Constans' throne is usurped in 411 CE by his trusted advisor and orchestrator of his murder, Vortigern.

All does not go well for the new tyrant. Saxon foedarati (mercenary troops bought or subjugated by the Romans) revolt en masse in 440 CE. Despite the support of many Kindred who see Vortigern (or "Wyrtgeorn") and his covetous nature as malleable, the usurper king needs more swords for his banners. Between quashing the foedarati rebellion, land squabbles between the nobles (those trying to reclaim the glory of Romano Briton and those desperate to relegate the Empire to the ashes of history) and border attacks by the Celts and Picts, Vortigern is driven to approach the exiled Saxon brothers Hengist and Horsa. In 449 CE, these unbound war leaders agree to provide mercenary troops to keep the barbarians at bay and help subjugate the holdout nobles. The brothers, settled on the isle of Thanet off the coast of Kent, send word to their people of "the worthlessness of the Britons and richness of the land" drawing more warriors from Saxony. The strain of supporting these mercenaries taxes the Britons greatly, and Vortigern orders them to leave, but Hengist has other ideas. Over a table strewn with empty wine goblets, Hengist has Vortigern betrothed to his daughter, Rowena. The dowry for this marriage? The Kingdom of Kent and the title King of the Cantware. The Saxons will not leave and, with a clear foothold established, they set their eyes upon the conquest of Britannia.



Vortigern's son, Vortimer (taken by some prophetic vision of the Saxon threat) overthrows his father and assumes the throne to meet the approaching betrayal.

Four Kings

Vortimer fought four valorous, bloody actions against the Saxon invaders, driving them back to Thanet. At the third battle, in a place known as Set Thirgabail, Horsa falls. Finally, upon the shore of the Gallic sea, Vortimer drives the Saxons from Britannia entirely, but his actions cost him dearly. Upon his deathbed, Vortimer instructs that his bones be buried where the Saxons first made landfall to ward against their return, but his words are ignored. Vortigern returns to the throne and, not long after, the Saxons follow.

To Vortigern's surprise, a call for a peace summit in Sarum comes to him from his father-in-law Hengist. The representatives meet but it is almost a death knell for the Chieftains of Britain. This "Night of the Long Knives" is a bloody reminder that the Saxons take what they want by fair means or foul. Four hundred and fifty Briton Chieftains are slain and Vortigern is spared only because of his marriage to Rowena. By this time there are those who are tired of Vortigern's folly, those who weren't old enough to oppose him when their brother was murdered and the usurper took the throne rightfully theirs. Those whose blood traces back to the emperors of Rome: Ambrosius and Uther Aurelianus, who would soon be known as Pendragon.

Ambrosius and Uther had been hidden away in Armorica (Brittany) upon the bloody murder of their elder brother Constans and, under the tutelage of their uncle King Budic I, both became skilled in the arenas of war and politics. Knowing they could not unite the tribes of the Britons with Vortigern lurking in the shadows, they form an alliance with Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre. Germanus is a powerful man, a one-time duke become deacon, elevated to bishop, he practices strict austerity and unyielding piety for the good of his followers. He is also no stranger to war and command. With their combined supporters they cross from Gaul to Britannia to end Vortigern's craven rule. As an initial gesture to Germanus' purpose, to bring the faithful of Briton in line with the new Catholic Church, they first meet with a great crowd of priests and their followers. In an effort to discredit the holy man, Vortigern has his daughter confront the assembly and name him father of her child, conceived out of wedlock. The scheme is proven a fraud; Germanus names Vortigern father of the child and condemns the incestuous relations of the pretender. After winning the support of the priests and their congregations, Germanus gives thanks at the tomb of St. Alban, one of the first Briton Saints, and receives a vision of his own eventual martyrdom. The Cult of Saint Alban swells the ranks of the joint army and Germanus, now leading the clergy of Briton, charges Vortigern in absentia for his crimes and (after a shattering victory over Vortigern's forces in Guollopum) crowns Ambrosius High King of the Britons.

It is 456 CE when Vortigern is tracked to his castle Caer Guorthigirn, in the mountains of North Wales. The druid Merlin foretold of his ruin at the hands of Ambrosius and Uther upon the day he slew Constans, and here the druid stands to witness his prophecy realized. After three days of siege bombardment, Ambrosius gives the order for the castle to be burned with all trapped inside. Some tell that St. Germanus himself called God's wrath and fire rained from the sky in response. A few whisper darker tales that Vortigern, his mind and heart broken after witnessing the death of his wife and kin, and upon realizing what he had done to reach that point, did escape the burning castle. They say he wanders the hills and valleys of Cambria as an empty, ragged husk, possessed only of the hunger he once had in life and cloaked in the darkness that perverted his soul. Maybe he submitted to the Embrace of the Kindred, maybe he became something darker. During the siege, Ambrosius witnesses the passage of a dragon through the sky, perhaps it is what prompts him to burn the castle to the ground but, from that omen, he claims the name Pendragon, the Dragon King.

The Dragon Rises

Even enraged by the death of his daughter, Hengist is no fool. In 488 CE, on the far side of the Humber River, he raises an army of 200,000 warriors and makes to destroy Ambrosius, Uther, and Germanus' paltry 10,000-strong force. But he underestimates the three experienced commanders and the fervor of their warriors. Germanus himself put flight to a vastly superior Saxon army by using the echoes of his battle cry "Alleluia!" in the Vale of the Mold to make it seem like his army was the larger. On the field of Beli Mawr, the Saxons are routed and the Britons pursue them across the fields of Britannia. Hengist rallies his troops at Cunungeberg and turns to face the oncoming Britons. His chance at victory in the bloody battle is snatched away when Armorican reinforcements, seeking favor with this valorous new king, pounce upon the engaged Saxons, sealing the Britons' victory with Hengist himself taken by the Consul of Gloucester and decapitated. As a gesture to stem Saxon retribution, Ambrosius accepts the petitions of the surviving war leaders, Octa and Eosa, who submit to his rule. He pardons them and gives them lands to the north. This both placates the warlike Saxons and places them as a buffer between the lands of the Britons and those of the Picts.

With Vortigern gone and the Saxons appeased, Ambrosius forges the Kingdom of Britannia but not without opposition. Changelings amongst the nobility seek to undermine his efforts, with stability not serving their court's desires. A divided land is easier to prey upon, but the power of the high king's charisma is inexorable as a glacier and he makes ally after ally. Their salvation comes from an unexpected quarter: Vortigern's cancerous influence is not entirely expunged. Whether he escaped the fire of

his father's castle or was never there at all, Pascent, son of Vortigern, clings to a shred of his father's power, claiming the Kingdom of Builth. Upon promise of great reward, the Saxon assassin Eopa poisons Ambrosius as he lies ill in Winchester at a time when Uther is in Ireland quelling a rebellion Pascent arranged. The satisfaction of his revenge is short-lived. Upon news of Ambrosius' death, something savage awakens inside Uther, or perhaps it was always there, held at bay by his older brother's example.

Uther's Rage

Uther crushes the combined forces of Pascent and King Gillomanius of Ireland in a rage against the murder of his brother and, with his new soothsayer Merlin in tow, makes for Winchester to receive his crown and take his place as the High King of the Britons. Unfortunately for Uther, Octa decides that, with Ambrosius dead, his oath to the king no longer holds. Gathering the scattered and demoralized followers of Pascent and Gillomanius to his banner, he marches south to make claim for the throne. Uther meets him in battle at Bernicia but is forced to withdraw south from the lands of Hadrian's Wall to York were Octa triumphs again. Finally, at the Battle of Mount Damen, Uther defeats the Saxons. Urged on by his trusted friend Gorlois of Dumnonia, he sets his army upon them at night while they are drunk on the spoils of their previous victories and carves a bloody ruin through their ranks. Some credit Merlin with calling on a powerful fae enchantment to restore the strength of Uther's knights before the battle. Whatever magic might have been involved, Octa and Eosa flee to Germania to lick their wounds and plan their next move.

While still warring with the Saxons, Uther, his mind increasingly frayed, has become obsessed with Igraine, wife of Gorlois. Aware of his king's darkening appetites, Gorlois sends his wife to Tintagel, the farthest and strongest keep of his holdings, for her protection. Undaunted, Uther declares war on Gorlois and it is while his erstwhile friend is engaged that Uther has Merlin use his powers to give him the visage of Gorlois so he can walk into Tintagel and take his pleasure in Igraine's bed. By the savagery of his desires and the sin of his loins is Arthur conceived that very night, even as Gorlois falls beneath his soldiers' thirsty blades. Taking Igraine as his own, Uther continues his war against the Saxons who still worry at the borders of Britannia but, poisoned by his own nature, his health fails. Even then he insists upon leading from the front. At Verulamium, in battle once more with Octa, the Saxons see him propped in his saddle and call him "The Half-Dead King." It is here Octa finally avenges his father and replays history. He has the well at Uther's camp poisoned and, finally, the Dragon King succumbs to death.

Fearing the Saxons' revenge upon the king's death, Igraine hides her young son Arthur away as chaos once again rages across the lands of Britannia. Saxon raids





are common, and it is all the barons and dukes can do to hold the country from Octa and his army of Goths and Saxons. During this time, Merlin takes Uther's sword and sets it in a stone, inscribed with the words "Whomsoever Pulleth out this Sword from this Stone is Rightwise King of Britannia." Nobles from all the kingdoms come to test their virtue against the druid's spell but it defies them for more than a decade until a young boy wrests the steel free and the new High King is declared, Arthur Pendragon. At the age of 15 he assumes the throne, his youth belying his war-like aspect. The campaign he wages against the Saxons knows not defeat.

The Kingdom from Below

For the common people of the kingdom, Camelot is a remote concept with questionable impact on their lives. The average person in Britain knows the name of the previous king Uther, and the name of the current king. The commoners don't idolize their king, but they are grateful he offers a stabilizing presence that hasn't been felt since the legions left. The more battles Arthur fights against the Saxons, the more his fame grows — among Britons and Saxons alike. The renown of any individual knight is dependent on the location. If a warrior successfully slew the Great Red Boar that was killing woodcutters in the local forest, then the locals consider him the greatest of Arthur's knights no matter his actual standing. Mordred's name becomes wider spread as he gathers more disgruntled warriors to his cause.

Entire books could (and have been) written on the daily life of post-Roman Britain. Some of the key aspects to keep in mind as you build your chronicle include:

Identity: The recall of the legions was a strong blow to the Romano-British. What point was there in being proud Roman citizens when the Empire has abandoned you? Much of Britain is still trying to rebuild a new identity from the remains of deserted towns and unenforced laws. Some see the retreat as a sign they should return to the Celtic traditions possessed before the Romans came, but those traditions are rarely chronicled… though rumor has it that the Good Folk remember.

Faith: The Romans brought new faiths with them, and Christianity is surviving better than the cults of the Roman gods. Britons tear down temples to Jupiter, Juno, and Ceres, sometimes to make new Christian churches, sometimes simply to make new homes. The older Celtic faiths still have a foothold, if a tenuous one, and the Saxons have brought new gods of their own. Complicating matters further is the presence of the fae: The line between an extremely localized god and a changeling benefactor is not very distinct.

Health: Hard physical labor takes a toll on the poor; farmers and laborers often suffer arthritis beginning in their early 20s. Women give birth very young, and childbirth complications often turn fatal for women of all ages. Farmers breathe woodsmoke in windowless houses every day, becoming plagued by lung disease. Virulent skin diseases run through the population. Health improves in larger settlements, however. Though the retreat of Rome means less trade in a variety of foodstuffs, and therefore more limited nutrition, the Romans practiced good hygiene (including oral hygiene), and some families keep up the tradition as best as they can.

Language: In prior centuries, the most common languages were Latin and various Celtic languages, in particular Common Brittonic. The arrival of the Saxons in the fifth century added Old English, still written in runes rather than the Latin alphabet, to the mix. Language may affect a vampire or changeling's ability to blend in, depending on their point of origin; for example, many changelings who unknowingly spent decades or centuries in Faerie speak Celtic languages exclusively.

Technology: The people of the island work in iron and precious metals. Arthur has minted no new coins, so trade is largely a matter of Roman coins from a century ago or increasingly frequent barter. Commoners have wooden and sometimes iron tools. Spears, knives, and bows are the most common weapons; most swords in the land are Roman or

Timeline

The following timeline is a mix of historical events with known dates, historical events assigned arbitrary dates (in italics), and wholly legendary events also assigned arbitrary dates (in bold). This is just one possible timeline for Arthurian Britain; alter however you see fit.

401: The last Roman troops guarding Hadrian's Wall are recalled to defend Rome.

408: Roman army at Ticinum mutinies.

410: Emperor Honorius recalls the last legions from Britain. Alaric's Visigoths sack Rome. London partially abandoned.

430: Vortigern allows Anglo-Saxons to settle on Thanet.

446: The Britons make their final appeal to Rome for help against the Picts and Scots.

455: Hengist founds the kingdom of Kent.

488: Ambrosius' forces defeat Hengist, and the king of Kent is executed.

490: Ambrosius dies; Uther becomes king.

495: Uther dies.

***530: The Battle of Mount Badon:* Arthur defeats the Saxon forces, temporarily halting Saxon expansion.**

535: The Battle of Camlann. Arthur and Camelot fall.

Saxon make, and the crossbow has yet to appear. Mail is a Saxon favorite, and many of Arthur's knights wear a simple mail shirt taken or bartered from the newcomers.

Threats: The Saxons are the clearest danger at the gates. The farther east the settlement, the greater the danger of being subjugated and brought under Saxon rule. Tribes such as the Picts and the Scots still raid along the northern borders without Roman soldiers keeping them at bay. The average commoner fears the thick forests and avoids travel — some wild animals may be dangerous, and wolves are numerous in Britain, but superstitions about ghosts, faeries, and worse run rampant. The superstitions are correct.

Camelot

The true face of Camelot is a matter of speculation for modern scholars; there's little evidence it existed at all, and that gives our stories freedom. Because we can't say where a historical Camelot was, it can be anywhere that best suits the chronicle's themes. Because no clear remains were left, a Storyteller may choose to invoke a truly supernatural end to Arthur's domain, scouring the very stones apart.

Arthur doesn't remain in Camelot year round. He rides out when there's war, of course. But he and certain of his court travel during the spring, summer, and autumn to visit his vassals and settle disputes in person. Several of his quests against supernatural beasts also take place in these months. He inevitably returns to spend the winter here, though, as the weather makes travel more difficult. Several of the king's trusted warriors remain to defend Camelot while he's away, and several of them know more about the supernatural than is comfortable for the vampires and changelings who might like to infiltrate and influence his court.

Camelot is the hope of Britain, though that hope is fading. Arthur's seat is the most splendid human settlement on the islands, outshone only by the wondrous and sinister faerie courts beyond the Hedge. Obviously, it doesn't look like a medieval castle or a Hollywood set, but its Dark Ages beauty should still be clear. Play up its art — Roman mosaics, carved wooden pillars, glass vessels, golden jewelry — as well as the lingering smell of smoke, the darkness at the corners of the ceilings, the thick mists that hang over the town at night. People laugh more, though the songs grow sadder.

Locations

Camelot is the heart of the realm, and what the players' characters experience here will inform how they see the kingdom.

Storytellers should feel free to review the following list of potential sites and choose one that best suits the game you have in mind. A Camelot in the southeast will be closer to Saxon territory, which may suit a game with a strong hunter presence and a focus on mortal conflict. A Camelot in Wales might play to the strengths of a changeling-heavy chronicle.

Camulodunum

Camulodunum, the "stronghold of Camulos," was the first established capital of Roman Britain. Boudicca led the Iceni to destroy the settlement around 60 CE, but it was rebuilt and flourished once more in the following centuries. Many of the Roman works, such as its chariot circus and several temples, are demolished by the time Arthur establishes his court here, but the influence remains. This is a Camelot with beautiful mosaics and repurposed tilework in its new Christian churches.

A Camelot set here has a stronger vampiric presence. What's more, the Saxon settlements at Thanet lie just to the south, across the estuary of the Thames — if Camulodunum is not Camelot in your chronicle, it has likely already fallen. The Christian faith was also well-represented in the town; even if Camulodunum is not Camelot proper, it may house a prophet who knows the path to the Grail.

Cadbury

Cadbury Castle, in Somerset, was a hillfort in the Bronze Age and the Iron Age alike. It lies near the River Cam, which may have lent its name to Arthur's seat. The limestone hill lent itself well to defense, and would have made a fine staging ground for Arthur's defense against Saxons coming from the east. From here, Arthur could defend the lands all the way west to Tintagel.

This is a martial Camelot, and more besides. A short distance to the north lie the marshes surrounding the freehold of Insula Avalonnis, a place of great faerie magic. A Camelot set here would be a fine showcase for intrigues involving Morgana, or indeed any Lost.

Caerleon

Caerleon, in South Wales, began as a Roman legionary fort called Isca Silurum, after the River Usk. Its easy access to the sea makes it a prosperous Camelot, still retaining much of the wealth it gained before trade began to fall off. If you prefer a truly regal court, Arthur may have rebuilt some of the luxuries established by the Romans, such as the grand baths and the amphitheater. The amphitheater may even have been the "round table" itself, in a figurative sense.

Caerleon is fairly well removed from Saxon territory; any hunters here are a bit out of their element. But vampires may be drawn to the splendors of this Camelot, and of course the Lost are not far away.

Dun Tagell (Tintagel)

The site one day known as Tintagel features in modern Arthurian myth as the place where a disguised Uther

raped Igraine by fraud and conceived Arthur. As Camelot, it holds a heavy sense of destiny. Arthur claims the land of his mother, a gesture that would not go unnoticed by matriarchal pagans and Christians alike. The site is also far from the Saxon lands, though a particularly bold enemy might try an attack from the sea.

Dun Tagell's location on the seaside cliffs of the Cornish coast offers plenty of environmental storytelling opportunities. Shipwreck victims, raiders from the sea, furious storms cloaking a True Fae hunt, Hedge-islands out at sea that appear only when the moon is right — Tintagel contributes scene after scene of rich visuals.

Venta Belgarum (Winchester)

The Roman town of Venta Belgarum sits not far from the southern coast and the Isle of Wight. Like other Roman towns, it declined when the legions withdrew, and was abandoned within decades — but as Camelot it would be restored. It sits almost halfway between east and west, and as such is a tempting target for the Saxons.

The Winchester Camelot is not the proudest, or the most defensible, or the most mystical choice. But as such, it may be one of the most evocative. This is the smaller, dimmer Camelot, where the dark is creeping in and the gloom has set about the rafters. Saxon hunters prowl ever closer, vampires taste bitterness in the locals' blood, and the Winter Court comes calling to feed on the mounting sorrow.

The King's Hand

Cai's duty is to keep Arthur's household, a duty personally granted by his foster brother and king. Cai does not owe his prestigious position to his family connections alone: He is a brave and ferocious warrior, who has tested his sword arm against giants and beasts alongside his king. But he is also stubborn and prone to take offense at slights against himself or his family. He was present for many of Arthur's early battles, and carries the scars to prove it. Cai is renowned for his stubborn strength, but it's less well-known that he's considerably cannier than his reddened features and bull neck would imply.

Cai does his job well. He keeps a sharp eye on the servants and guards of the royal household, and is sufficiently mistrustful to make matters difficult for any outsider attempting to infiltrate Camelot. Local rumor holds that a wound from his sword will not heal; the origin of this blessing is unknown, but he's said to have slain a vampire with it (among many other things). Cai's loyalty to friends and family is unstinting, making him a desirable ally and a very undesirable enemy. **Intimidation (Relentless) 4, Investigation (Household) 3, Weaponry (Sword) 5**

The Junior Mews-Keeper

Arden is a scruffy youth, feathers in his hair and white stains on his jerkin, who cares for a variety of birds in the newly established aviary. Falconry is still largely unknown in Britain, but Arthur had word of the practice from the mainland. When he discovered a young peasant with a knack for dealing with birds of prey, he found a place for the youth. Arden cares for the court's hawks, falcons, and a coop of pigeons besides — if the Romans could use carrier pigeons, why not Camelot? The aviary is the only one of its kind in Britain, and Arthur's knights treat the fey-seeming Arden with a mix of befuddlement and respect.

The junior mews-keeper is shy and reclusive, easily overlooked. Arden's exhaustive knowledge of birds could be mistaken for witchcraft, but it's actually the fruit of keen observation. Arden has sharp ears and excellent recall, and is the first one to see the messages brought back from courier pigeons. The strange youth is nearly as well-informed as a spymaster, and nobody has any idea. **Animal Ken (Birds of Prey) 5, Politics 3, Streetwise (Far-flung Rumors) 3**

Arthur's Courts

Like many other contemporary monarchs, Arthur spends a portion of each year traveling to, and reigning from, settlements throughout his realm. Apart from Camelot, he travels a roughly triangular route between three other courts — the north, the south, and the west.

Luguwalion (Carlisle)

The northernmost settlement to receive Arthur's court is Luguwalion, once a Roman town that supplied the forts along Hadrian's Wall. It is at the heart of the kingdom of Rheged, a realm willingly subordinate to Arthur. The people of Rheged are hardy fighters, used to defending their own from the Picts and the Scots. Meirchion Gul is the aged lord of Rheged, and vassal to Arthur; he has a sickness in his bones that enfeebles him, but he has great reservoirs of war knowledge to share. Meirchion's young grandson Urien Rheged eventually marries the enchantress Morgana.

Luguwalion is one of the stoutest fortresses standing in the realm. The town has an impressive stone wall, and the lord has a sturdy castle. Half a mile to the northeast, a Roman auxiliary cavalry fort still stands as part of Hadrian's Wall. The kingdom of Rheged has accepted the faith of Christ, but old altars to the Roman war god, marked to Mars Ocelus, Mars Victorius, and Mars Belatucader, have been carefully preserved within the town. Several of Rheged's most veteran warriors feel it's foolish to throw away the blessing of a battle god no matter your faith. Changelings of the Summer Court believe a battle oath or oath of vengeance sworn before these three altars carries particular weight with the Wyrd.

Two hundred years ago, Carlisle was the seat of Marcus Carausius, a Roman commander who declared himself Emperor of the North. He was assassinated after seven years, and the Empire condemned him to *Damnatio Memoriae* — to be forgotten. Rumor among the Kindred hints that Carausius held more than temporal power, and the Roman

effort to suppress his memories was in part an effort to hide whatever blasphemous power he'd attained. Carausius minted a number of coins with various phrases glorifying his reign, and it's said that a few contain clues to his secret.

Londinium (London)

Londinium has seen better days. It prospered during the Roman occupation thanks to its vital access to the sea, but by the middle of the fifth century, much of the settlement has been abandoned. Several buildings, including a major church and the manse where Arthur holds court during his visits, were assembled a century ago out of masonry reused from other buildings. The town has an oddly patchwork look overall, befitting a kingdom built from two cultures and with a third at its door. A great bridge crosses the Thames, where a smaller portion of the city sits on the low-lying, marshy south bank. A small group of Saxons has established a semi-permanent camp outside the central town, and so far they seem more interested in "Lundenwic" trade than clashing with the locals. So far.

When Arthur brings his court here, he deals in part with the remaining wealthy families who still preserve as much of their Roman way of life as is possible. He also pays his respects to the local church, and to the healer Sister Placidia. The king's visit is both opportunity and danger for the vampires remaining here. There is no better time to try influencing his court, but it is also more difficult to preserve the Masquerade as other vampires close in with similar intentions.

Most of Londinium is Christian by this point, but well-connected rumormongers might hear tales of an enduring mystery cult of Mithras. The Mithraic cult is said to be either a group of hunters unaligned with their Saxon counterparts, or a coven who simultaneously venerate Mithras and a lion-headed demon called Arimanius. Both possibilities pose threats to the Lost and Kindred who frequent Londinium.

Novus Burgus (Newport)

Novus Burgus, in South Wales, was the westernmost edge of the Roman occupation. Now it is the westernmost edge of Arthur's realm. The nearby fortress of Caerleon is, if not Camelot itself, the site of Arthur's court when he rides west. King Gwynllyw is the cantrev's current lord and vassal to Arthur. Gwynllyw was formerly a ruthless raider and kidnapper, but after a vision of a white ox with a black spot on its forehead, he was inspired to convert to Christianity and founded a church on nearby Stow Hill. Some Lost suspect one of their own was responsible for altering the robber-chieftain's dreams, but if that were the truth, it would never do to have it come out. Gwynllyw's son Cadoc is if anything more pious than his father, preferring to serve as a simple abbot rather than take command of his father's armies.

The area around Novus Burgus has a long history of raids between chieftains; King Gwynllyw is but one of many. One of the area's tensions is that the local warriors are used to riding out to take what (or whom) they require, and not all of them have taken well to the coming of Arthur's peace. When King Arthur is attending one of his other courts, some of the knights here inevitably descend into old feuds or attempt to carry off one another's sisters or daughters. Some Kindred use these belligerent warriors as somewhat-disposable catspaws; all it takes is a few whispers at the right time.

The Rider Ahead

One of Arthur's several nephews by his half-sister Morgause, Agravain is a hard-hearted warrior with a knack for carrying grudges. He currently holds the duty of riding ahead of Arthur's court as it travels, arriving in a town a few days early to inform the locals to make ready for the king. In truth, Arthur gave him this position in part to keep Agravain away from court for brief periods of time, so that any slights he may have given or received have time to heal. Sadly, Agravain often takes out his frustrations on any of the town-dwellers that don't seem to be preparing for the king's visit quickly enough.

Agravain is a strong fighter, and well-connected — he holds particular influence with his brother Gawain and his half-brother Mordred. He is ultimately loyal to Arthur and the kingdom, but his arrogance and temper drive him to find some way to distinguish himself. A skilled manipulator might, with caution, be able to make a useful catspaw of the headstrong young knight, but Agravain has many ambitions of his own, and is not always the best at taking direction. **Intimidation 4, Ride (Foul Weather) 4, Weaponry (Broadsword) 4**

The Blessed Healer

When Arthur's court comes to London, the king himself pays a visit to Sister Placidia. The young nun is a member of one of Britain's first convents, no more than a dozen virgins and widows calling themselves brides of Christ. Her grandparents were talented apothecaries who learned their trade before the Roman withdrawal, and Placidia learned at their feet. The town's faithful consider Sister Placidia to be blessed: not only are her remedies remarkably effective, but her skin is free of the all-too-common diseases running among the populace. She has tended to members of Arthur's court and Saxon outcasts alike — anyone in pain may gain her charity.

Sister Placidia has no supernatural gifts of healing, but her knowledge is uncanny. She knows how to treat sword wounds, elf-shot, and disease. Although she knows little of vampires — and many of them are afraid to approach a woman of faith — she recognizes the signs of blood loss and can help a victim recover more quickly. Because her primary concern is alleviating suffering, she is even willing to treat a person's ills secretly… though avoiding the curious eyes of



her fellow sisters might be more of an obstacle. **Academics (Theology) 3, Empathy 4, Medicine (Apothecary) 5**

The Saxon Envoy

When the Saxon kingdoms need to send a message to Arthur under a banner of peace, they send Warian. The Saxon envoy is a scarred man who's survived to middle age, who speaks Latin well and Celtic well enough. Warian carries a diplomatic token given by Arthur himself, allowing the Saxon to visit the cities where Arthur holds his court without being taken captive or beaten. Warian honestly argues for peace when the Saxons speak of truce, and he calmly delivers threats when such is his charge. He often mentions a recently born grandchild during diplomatic measures, by way of proving that he has every reason to avoid a prolonged war.

The envoy's key talent is not his fair speech — Warian is blunt and proud — but his patience. He gladly endures insults and implications thrown his way without losing his temper, a valuable skill for a messenger. He also has a keen memory for names and faces. Warian might praise or make introductions for a Saxon hunter if the need arose, so long as said hunter didn't have a reputation for causing trouble. **Intimidation 3, Persuasion (Patient) 4, Weaponry (Broadsword) 3.**

The Dead that Walk

War brings ill tidings. The camp followers, looting and picking through the dead of the battlefield, know not to tarry too long. They bring shovels and torches, even in daylight, and the more pious among them burn herbs over the corpses. Whenever they claim a coin or scrap of jewelry from the dead, they offer a terse "thank you" so the ghosts of the slain see this exchange as a gift rather than a theft. When night falls, the wisest looters retreat far away and leave the ravens and crows to eat their fill.

The night after a battle, nearby homesteads call their children to bed early. Parents move from room to room with a hammer and nails, shuttering every entrance to the house. A sprig of mistletoe is set over the doorway, and a pinch of herbs is cast into the hearth. Hatchets are held in vigil, and prayers are made to the night sky. Silence is a blessing in these long nights. The alternatives — the wet pad of footprints, the frightened squeals of wounded cattle, the creak of splintering wood — are all far worse. This is a world in which vampires are not a fanciful fiction, they are the inevitable horror that follows in the wake of every slaughter. They rise from the battlefield, feral beasts that lash out at the carrion birds and grave robbers that loiter too long into the night. They skulk through the fields and streets in packs, descending in droves on the unprepared. For days, these hungry corpses drift further and further afield until they vanish into the shadows or collapse from hunger. Travelers that find a dead body with bloodied hands and maw on the roadside know better than to leave it lie, severing its head and burying it if they have the time, burning it if they don't.

As war becomes more commonplace, so too does the plague of the dead. A few wandering corpses becomes a dozen, several score, sometimes even more. Their march drives the small holds and fiefs into isolation, and as the number of slain rises, so too does the hungry aftermath. The Brythonic people struggle under this nightmare, and find themselves beseeching Saxon settlers for aid. These warriors from overseas, raised on the stories of einherjar and draugr alike, are strident in rallying their neighbors, a trend that causes many to see them as saviors in these dark times.

The Bloodied Fields

Over the course of his reign, Arthur engaged in 13 major battles, each having a severe impact on men and monsters in the region, some of which are documented below:

Dubglas — The Battles of the Black River Host

Four of Arthur's battles are waged over an extended campaign in the Linnuis region to the north-east against the Saxon Colgrin. Colgrin, aided by his brother Badulf and in alliance with the Frankish Duke Chedrich, violently subjugates and forges alliances with many of the Scoti and Pictish clans in the region, granting their troops from overseas a significant territorial advantage. Arthur counters this by using Colgrin's sizeable lands against him, staging a series of light cavalry raids along the river Dubglas and ambushing Colgrin's hosts as they patrol the region. These raids culminate in a full, pitched battle between Arthur and Badulf. Taking advantage of an early winter, Badulf moves to cross the frozen Dubglas with his personal guard and outmaneuver Arthur's skirmishing force, but mountain thaws cause the ice to become slick and weak, and Badulf's forces are divided. Arthur's spearmen drive them into the river, damming it with frozen corpses until the waters run black with blood. Lacking Badulf's men to transport goods between them, the fortified keeps of Colgrin and Chedrich are isolated and besieged one after the other, their local allies abandoning them to their fate.

During this time, the freeholds of the Lost active in the region are buckling under oppression from an invading force of vampires that do not honor the Treaties of Night and Day. These vampires hold powerful powers of enthrallment, and control swarms of insects to do their bidding. They use these powers to ravage crops, leave plants sterile, and to poison the minds of humans and Lost alike into mindless servitude. These vampires, known as the Melissidae, have enthralled local tribes into working in tandem with the Saxon invaders, using them to set up a series of hives and forest havens in the region. The Hands of Tyr present among Colgrin's forces seem either unaware of or unconcerned with the vampires that are bolstering their forces, instead hunting down a Circle of Mor that has been kidnapping firstborn children from the isolated homesteads in the region.

The City of the Legions

Built around the Roman fort of Deva Victrix and intended for a time as the center of Roman rule in Britannia, the City of the Legions is now recognized by the Courts of Night and Day as a freehold of the Legion of the Green and is fiercely contested by the Britons of Gwynedd and the Saxons of Deira. This conflict comes to a head when Cadwallon 'Long Hand,' Lord of Gwynedd is ambushed and killed en route to the fort by Ardith Red-Braid, dubbed the She-Wolf of Deira, in a betrayal orchestrated by Cadwallon's brother Maelgor. In return for their service, Maelgor gifts the fort to Ardith and her mercenaries, with whom he allies to ransack his rival lords in the regions of Powys, Pengwern, and Dumnonia. Dragged into infighting, the Brythonic Lords are routed many times before Arthur travels north and rallies them. With the aid of Cadwallon's son, Maelgwyn, Arthur ousts Maelgor from Gwynedd, driving him east for a final confrontation.

The city, having expanded greatly beyond the scope of the old fort, lacks fortifications on its southern side. Because of this Ardith and Maelgor set their armies up in the streets, hoping to lure the Britons into a rash nighttime charge by threatening to execute a number of captured nobles in the main square. Having filled many of the houses with bales of straw, their plan is to hem in Arthur's forces with walls of long spears and start a series of fires that will destroy the city and Arthur's army both.

The Roman Kindred of the Legio Mortuum and the Legion of the Green, having sheltered a number of their sleeping elders within the crypts of the city, are desperate to stop this plan reaching fruition, but they are also engaged in conflict with the hunters within Arthur's court. The Green Knights of the Legion and the Black Knights of Merlin have opposed each other many times in trying to guide the morality of Arthur's growing retinue, and they find themselves in direct and open conflict here. The Lost, with their close ties to Gwynedd, have also taken to the field to avenge Cadwallon, unaware that Ardith's retinue includes two powerful Huntsmen that ride with the She-Wolf as part of their hunt.



Camlann — Arthur's Final Battle

In Arthur's absence, as he supports his allies in Gaul, his vassal Mordred seizes the throne. Mordred declares himself as the bastard son of Arthur, with his claim supported both by his mother Morgause and the queen's sister Gwenhwy. Many of Arthur's vassal lords, angry at his conversion to Christianity, take up Mordred's banner in defense of their faith, allying with Saxon lords in the north as allegiances are permanently redrawn. In this time, Merlin disappears, his whereabouts unknown. Arthur and his loyalist forces, exhausted from battle in Gaul and from infighting in Britannia, muster in the southern riverlands of Camlann in Dumnonia.

A temporary truce is called as Arthur, Mordred, and their retinues attempt to air grievances over parlay. They agree that



neither side will charge until the first sword is drawn, but on the third day of negotiations a soldier on the front lines draws his sword to strike at an adder in the grass, and the truce is broken.

Both armies attempt to use the curves and fork of the river to keep their bowmen and catapults isolated from the melee, with Slaughterbridge and two shallow crossings contested throughout the battle. It rages for days, with reinforcements for both sides approaching day and night from villages and woodland to bolster their lords. Finally, Arthur and Mordred face each other in battle, Arthur wielding Excalibur, the sword of the Lake, and Mordred wielding Clarent, the Sword of the Stone. These men, exceptional warriors born of sorcery and deceit, find themselves each other's match as blades clash.

Members of the freehold of Avalon, long fearing this day, struggle to support Arthur in the final battle, actively hunted as they are by the Kindred of the Lancea et Sanctum. They scour the land in a panic, allying with the Black Knights to locate Merlin before the battle draws to a close. The Hands of Tyr and the Knights of the Green, longtime enemies, propose a tentative truce in service of the old gods, a truce doomed to failure when the forces of Herne take to the field and declares the Kindred knights as imposters of his line.

This conflict is a maelstrom of ill fates, and Arthur's death is near certain. The final battle, then, is not to save Arthur's kingdom, but his very soul. As the freehold of Avalon seeks to inter Arthur's body in the Hedge to rest and heal, so too do the Kindred war among themselves to claim him as an addition to their ranks. The Black Knights of Merlin and the Hands of Tyr meet and struggle to reconcile the similarities in their desires, to let Arthur, beloved king and valiant enemy, finally rest in peace.

Chedrich, of the Line of Childerich

Tall and fair-skinned, Chedrich the Ever-Young was famous for his strength and charm despite his slender frame. Soft spoken, he could command respect with a whisper, and his soldiers were notoriously disciplined, able to fight in formation and shield each other from blows without saying a word. When his body was returned to his homeland and interred, he was dressed in a cloak ornamented with over 300 gold-wrought cicadas at the request of his daughters.

Ardith

Ardith Red-Braid, the She-Wolf of Deira, was instantly recognizable on the battlefield. Freckled and stocky, her long hair belted around her torso, with one blue eye and one green, she was remarked upon as being a uniquely striking. It was a shock to her then, as she hunted alone in the woods, to come across a group of travelers led by a woman who appeared her exact double. Confusion led to anger, as the stranger named Ardith an imposter and monster and drew a dagger. The two fought, and Ardith was aided by two hunters who came upon the battle by chance, eventually emerging victorious. Ardith and her new companions were inseparable from that day, and roamed far as soldiers and mercenaries. How Ardith died, none can say, as her body was never recovered.

Mordred

Mordred spent much of his life unaware of his lineage, serving among Arthur's retinue as a soldier and envoy. Inducted into a secretive order of dark-armored knights, he learned an array of fighting techniques, and developed a reputation as a gallant slayer of monsters and men alike. On the night his mother told him of his true parentage, it is said he wailed in despair and isolated himself in his keep. It took many days before Mordred would look upon another living soul, and when he did he was said to be a changed man, resolute and certain of his right to rule. His eyes, now resplendent and golden, were an omen of his challenge to the kingdom.

Night Approaches

Strange and cruel weather blankets the isle in the years immediately after Arthur's fall. The summers of 535 and 536 are far too cool, with the sun obscured; crops barely grow and trees fail to give fruit. This climate shift is felt worldwide — the historian Procopius would write "For the sun gave forth its light without brightness…and it seemed exceedingly like the sun in eclipse, for the beams it shed were not clear" — but it is a rare Briton who doesn't assign the terrible shift in climate to the loss of the hero-king. A little over a year later, plague reaches Britain and ravages the population even further.

The Saxons expand further in Arthur's absence. They are joined by the Angles, another Germanic people who land on the east coast and conquer much of the northern portion of Britain. By the year 600, the greater portion of Britain falls under the rule of seven Anglo-Saxon kingdoms: the greater

Timeline

As with the previous timeline, historical events that have received arbitrary dates are shown in italics, and wholly legendary events are shown in bold.

535: The Battle of Camlann. Arthur and Camelot fall.

535–536: Climate changes bring famine to the isle, depleting the population.

549: The bubonic Plague of Justinian reaches Britain, killing many.

597: Saint Augustine arrives in Britain, converting Kent and becoming the first Bishop of Canterbury.

1177: Chrétien de Troyes writes *Lancelot, the Knight of the Cart,* one of the works rekindling the medieval legend of Arthur.

kingdoms of East Anglia, Mercia, Northumbria, and Wessex, and the minor kingdoms of Essex, Kent, and Sussex. England would not be unified again for another 300 years.

The further expansion of the Saxons forces the Lost to abandon several old freeholds and found others. Even Insula Avalonnis is left to the crows — archaeologists sift through Saxon artifacts atop Glastonbury Tor many centuries later. This cycle of flight and rebuilding places the Winter Court into prominence in most of the new freeholds. The Court of Sorrow was best prepared for the inevitable fall, and their talents for stealth and secrecy are critical to helping numbers of changelings survive.

Many of the hunters suffer similar decline. The Order of the Black Knight hold what they can with Camelot gone, but their numbers dwindle each year. When more of the Aegis Kai Doru eventually return to Britain, they absorb those cells who managed to survive. Conversely, the Hands of Tyr persist mostly as they are as long as the Saxons keep their culture.

Of the three vampire factions at play in Britain, only the Lancea et Sanctum endures the coming centuries with its core identity intact. The Legion of the Green pay a dear price, their numbers ravaged by the efforts of Saxon hunters and the depredations of the True Fae. Little remains of their legacy but their traditions of oaths, which find their way into the practices of the Invictus. The Circle of Mor turns inward, falling on one another in a cannibalistic delirium. Most of the Bron go forth and fall into a stone slumber, vanishing from the record.

And what if the Threefold Hunter was bound, or even slain? If the changelings and their allies failed to destroy, banish, or bind all three of the Herjan's titles, then the True Fae continues his hunts for centuries to come. He may still be active in the modern era, a terribly powerful bogeyman who has adapted to hunting the alleys as adeptly as anyone ever hunted prey in Whitechapel. But if Herne was well and truly defeated, then things are very different for the Lost for a century or so. The Others actually avoid Britain for a time — they take fewer new captives back to Arcadia, and they suspend their hunts against their escaped chattel. The surviving Lost grow stronger as they grow old, forging many powerful tokens in the years to come as they brace for the inevitable day when the hunts resume.

Hunters: Fealty, Fear, and Fire

"When crops be blighted put the widows on the stake and light the torch."

— Old English Proverb

The day-to-day life of a post-Romano Briton is simple compared to the technological light-show of modern times. The country is split into kingdoms like Brigantes, Coritani and Dumnonii, but there are many others. These early feudal states echo the Roman structure preceding them. The king rules over dukes, earls, and barons, who tithe the peasants for taxes in return for allotments of land to farm. A serf might spend three days a week actually working their land for most of the year, only planting and harvest time require more effort. Periodically, the serf takes their produce or animals to market to sell and receive the latest news (by word of mouth) from other regions in the kingdom. In times of conflict the nobles are called upon by a king to raise soldiers for his army. This levy will no doubt be taken from the young men who work the lands under the noble's authority. Far removed from the politics of kingdom or court, the life of a serf is one of taxes, tithes, and toil, a routine only interrupted by times of war, or should something strange come to prey upon their town.

The reality of facing the creatures of the night as a simple Briton is daunting. While an old lady who collects herbs on the village outskirts might be branded a witch for her peculiar ways, or a lunatic who shambles into town muttering indecipherable gibberish might be shunned as one possessed, they are easy prey for an angry, overzealous mob. In fact, the first point of call for a serf who sees something they deem "unusual" is the local tavern to rouse the townsfolk who will capture the unfortunate and bring them before a priest (if the town is big enough to attract one) or one of the elders of the village. There, among the fervent cries of the other villagers, accusations will be laid (mostly wildly exaggerated) and a test will be set. Stoning is common, ducking (having hands and feet bound before being thrown in a body of water) and pressing (laying of a board on the accused and adding weight until they are crushed) are easily enacted upon those deemed socially unacceptable unless, of course, they really are monsters.

Between the withdrawal of the Roman Legions and the rise of Arthur and Camelot the lands of the Britons are beset by calculating, opportunistic creatures. Aside from the raids of Celts and Picts, there are darker forces at work. The Hedge runs rampant through the deep forests, having been repressed by fire and steel during the Roman occupation. The Uratha, forced out to the hills and borderlands of the savage Picts, return to prowl the hills and valleys. The remaining vampires race to raise fiefdoms, insinuating their way back into the nobility, manipulating mortal dukes and lording their power and influence over the frightened serfs.

In order to prevent rebellion, most nobles forbid peasants from keeping even the most basic of weapons. A serf might have access to a bow for hunting or an inherited bronze sword passed down the generations. Beyond that, they have only the tools of their trade and the protection of numbers. If a real monster comes to prey upon the village, a runner must be sent to the lord's hold to petition for aid, and those left behind can only pray that the local noble believes the story. If they are lucky, the lord's soldiers will come, mounted and armored, with all the tools of war at their disposal. The likelihood is they will still fail, their bodies found sundered or drained in the woods some time later (if they are ever found at all) but, in drawing attention, a lone creature or small group might choose to move on rather than face the hardship of armed opposition.



With most of the literature left behind by the Romans destroyed, any knowledge of the twilight must be passed on in spoken word. Despite this lack of wisdom, there are warriors who seek out monsters for fame or glory and there are those who face the night because they have to, for the good of their tribe or their family. Still, any would-be hunter needs information, which in this day and age is kept by bards, druids, or hedge witches, all of whom ask a price. Wisdom doesn't always indicate honesty, and there are those charlatans who spin tales to suit any occasion, confident in the knowledge they will be gone by morning, or the listener will be dead soon enough. Of course, there is a chance the wise one out in the deep woods has golden eyes and, upon the setting of a price, can solve the township's problem. It won't be cheap, and it's very likely to be distasteful or immoral, but better the devil you know.

The Order of the Black Knight — A Fraternity of Chivalric Hunters

"The force of his blow is as if Heaven and Earth came together, with me in the midst."

— Sir Meriadoc, son of Caradoc, Knight of the Round Table

During the reign of Arthur, the lands of Britannia are a fertile ground for twilight creatures to exploit. Isolated centers of humanity, often days or weeks of travel from soldiers who could defend them, become ripe opportunities for those who revel in the darker side of their nature (whether they are truly monstrous or not). In response, druids of the Aegis Kai Doru inducted those Knights of Camelot who had seen beyond the veil and created the Order of the Black Knights. Although they are hunters, there are as many tales of the Knights colluding with or being steered by the power of mysterious elfin figures like the Lady of the Lake or the Green Knight (though the Order of the Black Knight harbors deep animosity toward the Order of the Green) from the tale of Gawain, as there are tales of them opposing such mysterious powers. Given Merlin's previous pacts with the courts of the fae, it is assumed that, whether the knights are aware or not of the true nature of their guide, there is some secret agreement held between the old druid and some of the courts upon the isle of Britannia.

The Black Knight himself stands as a figure of much controversy. Some call him a villain, some a hero, some question if the figure in the ebon armor is a "he" at all. In truth a number of individuals wore the armor of the Black Knight, all members of the Aegis Kai Doru within the Round Table itself, taking upon themselves the role to face great evils. Sometimes a knight would have to commit seemingly atrocious acts to achieve victory, such as an entire village put to the sword to stave off some malignant influence, but herein lay the importance of the anonymous ebon visor. Most often the knight would simply have to ride against some evil beast and it did not matter who saw them slay whatever afflicted the common folk, though it makes for many confused accounts. What all the knights who donned the guise of the Black Knight had in common was an oath, to never take credit for their actions and to oppose evil by building a reputation fearful enough that it would unsettle even the most savage creatures of the night. Each is a member of the Aegis Kai Doru Conspiracy, but the Order, if multiple Black Knights ever assemble, is effectively a Tier Two Compact.

As a branch of the Aegis, the Black Knight has a responsibility to seek out and obtain any items of significance that might aid humanity against the night, or that the night might use against it. During the height of Arthur's reign over Camelot, the sword Excalibur was the most notable of these items, but it was far from the only one. The Knights of the Round Table became famous for questing in search of the Holy Grail throughout the known world, but that wasn't the only thing they sought. To give the Order of the Black Knight the fearsome reputation it desired, the agents of the Aegis used legendary relics already at hand, taken from the kingdoms of Ireland and Wales in the time of Uther. The armor of the Black Knight is cast from the shards of Pair Dadeni, the Cauldron of Resurrection gifted to the ancient Briton King Bendigeidfran by the giant Llasar Llaes and sundered by the Welsh villain Efnysien. He also wields Assal, the spear of Lugh, which is said to be able to pierce seven warriors in a single throw, never missing its mark, and return to the hand that cast it.

The Armor of the Black Knight

This rough suit of black-iron plate armor is forged from shards of the Cauldron of Resurrection. In times of war, any warrior killed could be immersed in the cauldron and return to the field renewed. What the stories don't tell is that, with each resurrection, the soul of the warrior was eroded and the same is true of the armor.

Rating: 4/2
Strength: 3
Defense: +3
Speed: –2
Coverage: Torso, Arms, Legs, Head
Availability: Unique (●●●●●)
Special: The Armor of the Black Knight is an imposing assembly, it was built to be. The armor gives the wearer +2 bonus dice to Intimidation Skill rolls.

Drawing upon the power of the Pair Dadeni the armor can "resurrect" the wearer should they be slain in battle. The first and second turn after the Black Knight is slain (each time the knight is slain) make Stamina rolls. For every success the Black Knight regains 2 Health and for every Dramatic Failure it loses points of Integrity as the magic burns away their humanity.

Assal — Spear of Lugh, Shaft of the Moon

One of the four treasures of the Tuatha de Danann. The spear that killed the Fomori king Balor of the Piercing Eye. Lughs' battle with Balor left its mark on this formidable weapon. Where once it required a sleeping drought of crushed poppy seed to quell its roaring and struggling to seek battle, its passage through Balor's dread eye has stripped the spear of some of its savagery.

Damage: 2
Initiative: +1
Strength: 1
Size: 4
Availability: Unique (•••••)
Special: As a spear, Assal grants a +1 Defense bonus against opponents who are unarmed or wielding weapons of size 1.

Assal is lighter than any mundane spear so only requires a Strength score of 1 to wield; add to that the enchantments placed upon it and Assal can be used in one hand by any character with dots in the Weaponry skill and confers a +1 Initiative bonus as it seeks out blood.

If the wielder chooses to throw Assal, the spear can strike up to three targets (different targets, it will not strike the same target three times). Make a roll to hit/damage each target in turn. The spear must then be recovered from the ground/the opponents' body.

Excalibur — The Blade of Kings

The Sword of the Lake. Once given to Arthur and (supposedly) returned by him before his final death to the Lady of the Lake, Excalibur is famed as a blade that is unbreakably tied to justice and truth. But, as with so many things, the sword is simply a tool that focuses the will and intent of the bearer, be that will benign or malignant.

Damage: 3
Initiative: −1
Strength: 2
Size: 3
Availability: Unique (•••••)
Special: In the hands of a 'rightful' bearer (should the blade be awarded to a character by the storyteller or used by such an NPC) Excalibur is a powerful symbol and a fearsome weapon.

Excalibur acts as a bane to targets of the bearer's choosing. By invoking the characters Virtue (or Vice) and spending a point of Willpower, the character's next strike causes Aggravated damage.

The scabbard, when worn, grants a +1 Defense bonus against damage and a +1 to any roll against deceptions and falsehoods (such as detecting a lie or piercing an illusion).

TACTICS

Tactics are self-contained group activities that, if successful, incur a specific complex result. The primary actor in a Tactic is the lead, or player who will roll their dice last, and the secondary actors include participating players. Unlike Teamwork, the secondary actors do not have to match their dice pools to the primary actor's.

- Primary actor risks a Willpower point for their roll's outcome.
- Primary actor assembles their dice pool.
- Secondary actors assemble their dice pools.
- Secondary actors roll dice and may risk or use Willpower as normal. The outcome affects the primary actor's results.
- Primary actor rolls their dice pool. Secondary actors' roll results are then added or subtracted, and success (or failure) is determined.
- Primary actor's roll results are calculated as normal.

Any hunter may choose to participate in any Tactic, but *only* hunters can.

After the fall of the Round Table at the hands of the vampires, the soldiers who aided the Black Knight have persisted, but they are haunted by a dark legacy. Of the knights who wore the mantle of the Black Knight, one — Sir Agravaine (son of Morgause and half-brother to Mordred le Fay) — has let the darkness enter his soul. Though there are tales of his death at the hands of Lancelot, the truth is that he rides abroad killing any and all, monster or man. In using the Black Knight in a chronicle, the Storyteller is encouraged to create a creature suited for their own purpose, be it an immortal slasher or a corrupt knight.

New Tactic: The Aura of the Knight (• – •••••)

Prerequisite — Membership (at least one dot of Status) with the Aegis Kai Doru

The surviving members of the Black Knight maintain what links they can with the Aegis, but communication is difficult in these dark times. Many of the relics entrusted to Camelot are lost after the fall and the members scattered. What they retain is knowledge, the methods used to convince a monster that the Black Knight was close, hunting them. It is this doctrine they employ on the hunt and these methods they use to turn fear back upon the monsters themselves. The members of the Order can use the Aura Tactic to prepare, bait, and intimidate a creature they are hunting. Properly applied, they can lay tricks and traps to convince their prey that the Black Knight himself is stalking her.



Properly preparing a trial for a creature plays along the Tactics rules to lay the groundwork. The cell chooses a *primary actor* and the remaining members are the *secondary actors*. As the creature approaches each secondary actor makes an Intelligence + Aura roll vs. the creature's Composure. Each successful trial inflicts a −1 penalty to the creature's Composure attribute. In closer proximity (at the site of the ambush or in combat) the Aura is employed by the *primary actor* as an Aura + Intimidation roll vs. the target's Resolve + Composure to generate further penalties to all rolls as the hunter ratchets up the monster's fear and paranoia.

Saxon Hunters: Blood and Iron

"Wide ne biþ wel, cwæþ se þe gehyrde on helle hriman."

"Far and wide things aren't good, said the one who heard wailing in hell."

— Saxon Proverb

The warriors of the tribes of Saxony are a proud people, unconquered by the might of Rome. They bow before no king and no god save their own. Fearless in combat, they bloody their blades in celebration of their strength and are loath to leave the field unless it is in victory. But, like all mortals, there are those dark and uncanny things even these brutal warriors fear, but what they fear they learn to destroy in honor of their gods. It is from this trait they have learned, over long, arduous, and bloody years the skills of the hunter and for those who observe the right rituals and know which of the wise ones to speak to, there is a better chance of returning from the hunt alive and victorious.

The Tribes of the Angles, Frisii, Jutes, and Saxons bridge the cultural gap between the Norse tribes to the north and the Germanic, Frankish, and Goth tribes of the south. Brutal warriors they may be, but they have many advanced skills, not the least of which are metalwork, seamanship, and trade. The tribes uphold a strict class system of nobles (the *edhilingui*), the freemen (*frilingi*), bonded natives subjugated and sworn to loyalty (*lazzi*), and the slave caste (*asne*). Saxons share many traits with their northern neighbors. They are warriors, raiders, and traders of great ferocity and shrewdness. That which cannot be bought can always be taken. From their southern cousins they inherit their superstitious nature, much as the great Gallic leader Vercingetorix would not fight in the rain as it was seen as an ill omen.

The Saxon gods echo both the Nordic and Germanic cultures. Woden sits at the top, chief of the gods with his son Thunear and wife Frig at his side. The tribes worship or ascribe patron gods for themselves or their enemies. The Saxons worship Seaxneat, the Frisii are led by Ingui, and the Angles favor Freyr. To their northern cousins they attribute Geat, god of the Geats (the tribe of Beowulf), rivers, and watercourses.

The tribes of the Saxons, from single families to larger mixed groups, swear fealty to the current king or aetheling, however this is no guarantee of stability. Squabbles and bloody feuds between families can last for generations, and dissatisfied dukes (or *eorles*) often rise to challenge the incumbent monarch, leading to brutal wars lasting years. The Saxons' first real taste of the rich lands of Britannia comes when King Vortigern of Kent invites the exiled brothers Hengist and Horsa to fight as mercenaries against the Celtic and Pictish barbarians savaging his borders.

From that point, the Saxons covet the island. It is secure, rich, bountiful, a veritable paradise, and, considering most of its people were conquered by the Romans before, ripe for invasion. In a display of cunning characteristic of the Saxons, the brothers manipulate Vortigern, bringing more and more Saxon warriors into Britannia until they have a force capable of staging a coup. This began the first Saxon invasion of Britain, an invasion finally ended when King Arthur beat the Saxons at the Battle of Badon Mount, a campaign spanning decades. This leads to a protracted period of instability and infighting amongst the *eorles* in Saxony lasting until the eventual fall of Camelot itself.

The Saxon tribes have a long-running culture of spoken-word histories or sagas and superstitions that served them well, as they were never conquered by the Roman Empire like their Frankish and Goth cousins. When the time for war comes upon the tribes, they hold a grand celebration to Hretha, Goddess of Glory. The raucous rituals involve feasting, singing, the telling of sagas of victory, the sacrifice of animals to invoke the goddess' favor, and the *edhilingui* drawing lots for the position of war leader. The tribes invite divine providence to choose their leader for battle. A victory is celebrated by the taking of enemy heads as trophies and the Saxons value most highly those heads that whisper prophecies and bring luck. A defeat (if the leader has not already perished on the field) leads to another ceremony with the defeated general as the tribute to Hretha. But not all is barbarism. A particularly skilled opponent, bested but not killed, can opt to enter into bondage and join the ranks of the *lazzi*. Those who do not fight are taken as *asne* and traded or sold between tribes, used as labor or sacrificed in the Saxons' darker rituals.

Close Relationships With Death

If the tribe encounters the supernatural, a similar ceremony would be held where, instead of Hretha, the tribes would invoke Hellia, the Goddess of Death, and sacrifice the lives of slaves in place of the chosen hunter so they might face down the monsters in safety, knowing their place in the afterlife was, temporarily, taken. While war leaders would be chosen exclusively from the *edhilingui*, the role of hunter was open to volunteers from the *frilingi* or *lazzi* and is a means by which a warrior might rise in station within the tribe. A successful hunt will not only ensure the warrior a place in the sagas of the tribe, but entry to the *edhilingui*.

The Saxon tribes have complex, structured burial customs they practice for friends and the most respected foes.

The dead must be outfitted for the afterlife; a simple crafter or farmer will be gifted with clothes, money, and tools to see them well cared for. Warriors of note have weapons and finely engraved armor placed upon them as they are laid in their cairns. However, exemplary warriors (especially those of enemy tribes) of fearsome skill or stature have to be appeased so they will not rise again. In the case of monsters, at least those with a human form, the head is severed, but the grave goods lain as well. In line with their superstitions, the Saxons are highly necrophobic; the dead are feared more than the living. An enemy who is greatly respected is buried with much wealth so their spirit is appeased. A wrathful spirit, an *aptrgangr* or revenant, one who was buried without the respect they were due, is one of the few things that can strike fear into even the most seasoned Saxon warrior.

Monsters don't always come at you with fangs bared and claws ready. The Saxons are as susceptible to trickery as any of those nations reclaiming their place from under the Roman boot. More than most they are open to offers of riches in return for deeds of conquest. Faerie lords and ladies and vampires with the gold to spare recruit these fierce warriors as mercenaries in matters of war both mundane and internecine. The Saxons' rituals and practices make them efficient shock troops to employ against invaders both mortal and supernatural. Their spears, swords, and broad axes back up their renowned ferocity as warriors. Layered leather and iron chainmail protect the *edhilingui* as surely as the round shields protected their *frilingi* and *lazzi* foot soldiers. These arms translate to the hunt as well as they do to the battlefield; however, a Saxon hunter always carries a bow as part of their equipment, along with several stakes cut from a holly tree and brushed with crushed mistletoe berries. The successful hunter drives these stakes through the hands and feet of a vanquished monster, binding them to the earth while standing vigil for two days to ensure the creature will not rise again. After that, the corpse can be brought back to the tribe for the proper interment into the cold embrace of the earth.



The Hands of Tyr — Brotherhood Among Saxons

"In the days of my grandfather's grandfathers Tyr was the father of all things. Then Fenrir took his hand. We will not forget how the Wolf laid our god low, how he stole his power, and we will ensure his children pay the wergild for it."

— Hands of Tyr credo

Spiritual forerunners of the Long Night, the Hands of Tyr are tier one hunters driven by the need to avenge the mutilation of the creator god Tyr at the jaws of Fenrir. They remember the time before Woden rose to prominence, when Tyr was the All-Father. In the shared myths of the Saxons and Norse, the gods attempted to bind the wolf Fenrir with a Glepnir, a ribbon made of the footfalls of a cat, roots of a mountain, fish breath, and bird spittle. The great wolf would only allow itself to be

bound if one of the gods placed a hand in its mouth. Tyr stood forth and offered his. Once the beast was bound it tore Tyr's hand off and thenceforth Tyr was known as "the Leavings of the Wolf." The Hands have never forgotten. Beginning with werewolves (the offspring of Fenrir in the Hands' teachings) but swiftly encompassing all manner of twilight creatures, they exact bloody retribution in his name. The Hands pass their knowledge and membership (including recognition of Tyr as the true father of the gods over Woden) from one generation to the next via spoken-word histories and sagas. Wherever possible, the Hands preempt the invocation of Hellia and take on a hunt themselves, relying on the support of family or other known hunters to achieve the desired goal without raising the suspicion of the rest of their tribe.

The Hands of Tyr can be identified by the unique, silver-inlaid seax knives they carry and pass from generation to generation. Alongside the knives they hand down sagas and eddas of their own, including detailed accounts of how to combat monsters and deal with their remains. A fearsome warrior from another tribe might be beheaded at burial for fear he would rise as a revenant, but the Hands of Tyr know to bury the head of a vampire several feet away from the corpse, or to drive iron nails into the heart of a fae Huntsman before burial, or bind the body of a werewolf with a Glepnir. The mortal Hands of Tyr have no means to create the mythic Glepnir of legend but they do create their own version for the hunt. It is difficult to bind a living werewolf, but the Hands are experienced hunters and often make use of the Glepnir in snares and traps.

The Hands of Tyr are not organized but there is an awareness of individuals following the same practices in other tribes, and some sharing of knowledge in times of need. An elder of the Hands might know of up to a dozen other followers in different tribes, and compiles the accounts of their hunts for sharing with any active member who comes seeking the wisdom. Upon the battlefield, should one of the Hands become aware of another, they avoid conflict unless absolutely necessary. Should circumstance bring them together, loyalty to tribe triumphs and no quarter is asked nor offered. However, securing another Hand as *lazzi* is desirable. Should they meet upon a hunt, unless there is a particularly personal vendetta at stake, they likely join forces to face the darkness.

TEAMWORK RULES

When creating Glepnir or working together on any other great task, one hunter is the *primary actor*, and hunters who wish to help are called *secondary actors*.

- The primary actor must assemble their dice pool.
- Secondary actors assemble their dice pools to match the primary actor's.
- Secondary actors roll dice. The outcome affects the primary actor's results.
- Primary actor rolls their dice pool. Secondary actors' roll results are then added or subtracted.
- Primary actor's roll results are calculated as normal.

The primary actor's roll results are as normal for the action the group undertakes, except that hunters always win ties on contested actions when they use teamwork.

Results

Success: +1 die to the primary actor's roll for each success earned, cumulative for each secondary actor's success.

Exceptional Success: As success.

Failure: Primary actor receives no bonus dice.

Dramatic Failure: –4 dice to the primary actor's roll, cumulative for each secondary actor's dramatic failure. The primary actor must continue; the outcome affects the story.

The Glepnir — Bound by Tradition

As well as their trademark silver seaxes, the Hands of Tyr carry the knowledge of how to craft the sacred Glepnir, a tribute to their god's sacrifice at the jaws of Fenrir. In preparation for a hunt the Hand crafts a new binding (they don't keep for more than a month, though some ingredients can be reused). The Glepnir is made of fine, strong rope shot through with young ivy lengths, hawthorn thorns and silver slivers, then brushed over with a compound of soured beer and crushed mistletoe berries. Access to silver is not a given. The Hand will need some way to get access to silver for the construction.

After collecting the required ingredients, hunters involved must use Teamwork rules to successfully create Glepnir. A Wits + Craft roll is required to create the Glepnir, with five successes required, but it cannot be achieved alone. If the creation is successful, every success beyond five subtracts a die from any escape roll made by a creature bound by the rope, to a minimum of one. For every turn the creature is bound, it takes one point of bashing damage. Any failed escape rolls result in one point of lethal damage. The Glepnir is intended to render the more savage monsters insensible for easy dispatch.

Changeling: Tree, Lake and Stone

Desire. Wrath. Fear. Sorrow. Gloom. The last years of a kingdom are a feast of emotions, but the Lost are in a tenuous position to partake.

The Lost of Arthur's Britain are both stronger and weaker than their modern counterparts. Nothing can truly prepare anyone for the durance — but they were born into,

and returned to, a world that believed in the Others. They have context for what they are: understanding, even if acceptance is harder. And there are few mortal powers to contend with fae magic. Yet at the same time, the Lost share their world with more than hobgoblins and the True Fae — they must come to terms with vampires, hunters, and a king who both believes in and fights against the supernatural.

Arthur's warriors ride out against all threats to their realm, mortal and otherwise. This charge benefits the Lost as Camelot's finest fight the hobgoblins and Huntsmen that would threaten their freeholds, but it also endangers the Lost. Canny changelings do their best to ensure that if humans sense their true presence at all, the humans see the Good Folk. Better to be mistaken for a kindly seelie pooka than a wicked unseelie ogre. The Lost are creatures of the wilder lands, building freeholds in old forests and lonely moors. Some mortals fear and revere them, leaving them offerings in exchange for blessings and protection. A few Romano-British think of them as genius loci; to the Celts they're the Old Ones.

Changelings still feel the temptation to go home, to try living among their former human families. But even if they can hide their true nature with glamour, even if they dearly long for the comfort of their loved ones, the danger of being discovered is too great. This is an age of iron. Both Romans and Saxons brought plenty of iron with them, and the knowledge to find and smelt more. The secrets of finer steel — deadlier to mortals, less dangerous to changelings — won't reach Western Europe for centuries. No matter how powerful the Lost may be, they find it more prudent to live in the forests and mountains and caves.

Yet apart from this grave weakness, changelings still hold a number of advantages. Mortal travel between settlements is slow, and long-distance communication is extremely limited. No human understands the land as well as those who have contracted with the stones and forests. Camelot may fall, but the Lost intend to remain in Britain to remember it.

Faerie Magic

The Hedge is wild and verdant in this era. Some of the special tricks of Lost magic work a little differently than they will in the modern age.

- **Hedgespinning:** *The Hedge is prone to change both by a changeling's hand and on its own. When the Hedge shapes itself, the Storyteller rolls nine dice rather than the modern-era eight. When a changeling shapes the Hedge, the player may spend successes as usual, but the cost of any paradigm shift rated at two successes or higher is lowered by one success. For example, a player may create a goblin fruit with four successes rather than five.*
- **Oneiromancy:** Changelings are stronger in this era, but there are fewer dreamers. The dream world has been shaped less by humanity's subconscious. The Dreaming Roads are more dangerous, and Bastions harder to find. Paradigm shifts follow the above rule for Hedgespinning of requiring fewer successes (though never less than one). Important eidolons have a Wyrd rating of one higher than the Fortification rating of the dreamer's Bastion.

Faerie Etymology

In general, a number of the faerie names we're used to are a bit anachronistic for the time. In practice, that's fine. Even if the word "ogre" doesn't show up until a millennium later, it's easier on all the players to still call the seeming an Ogre. It's a proud tradition to rationalize that some words are much older than etymologists realize. But if you would like something period-plausible for in-character speech, you have a few options.

Fata: The Latin term for the Fates later informs old French and gives rise to "fae" and then "fairy." Consider appropriating this term early and having the Romano-British speak of "the fata" when they mean faeries.

Pooka: Old English puca, Welsh pwca, Cornish bucca, Irish púca. A good all-around term for shapeshifting or bestial fae, especially as it sounds much the same in most non-Latin languages of the era.

Elf: Some Old English works use the term "elf"; you may prefer to use the related "alp" (which can also mean "nightmare") or "alfar" if you want a less familiar variation.

Beasts in the Briars

The Hedge is in full flower, so to speak, in this age. The forests are dotted with naturally occurring Hedgeways. The Hedge entices new visitors into itself with all the usual lures, and one particular to the time — the lure of the quest. Anyone, mortal or immortal, who takes action to pursue a quest near a Hedgeway may be drawn into the Hedge just as if they were indulging their Vice. The mechanics are the same (see **Changeling: The Lost Second Edition**, Chapter Four), but instead of a vision that tempts the person's Vice, they instead see a vision related to the object of their quest — a white hart, a great boar, even a glowing cup in the hands of a maiden who flees into the darkened thorns.

Some say the Saxons brought the giants with them. Maybe the Hedge smells blood and bones. But for whatever reason, a greater portion of the hobgoblins roaming the trods and Thorns are large, ogrish, and hungry. There are trod



trolls, of course, but also giants — savage man-eaters, cunning sorcerers, ruthless sea-raiders, kin of Ysbaddaden and Balor and Gogmagog, forefathers of Blunderbore and Cormoran.

Thankfully, the Lost are clever enough at navigating the Hedge that they can usually slip past the giants without much effort, even if mortals who blunder their way into a hobgoblin giant's territory usually find their way into its larder as well. The true threat, though, is harder to evade. A True Fae stalks the forests and Hedges of Britain, a creature so enamored with the thrill of the hunt that it spends little time in Arcadia. First it was called the Herjan, the Lord of Hosts. Then as his name circulated among the ordinary people, they called him the Herne. Changelings are his favorite prey, but he doesn't restrict himself. When the Lost reach out to find friends outside their freeholds, it's with the knowledge that they need allies if they're ever to be free of the Threefold Hunter.

The Courts

It seems the seasonal courts have always ruled in Britain, even in the time before Arthur. For reasons mythological and religious, the four seasons are distinct in the British Isles, and old Celtic observances of equinox and solstice hint of Bargains that even the humans have tried to strike. The courts do not necessarily share power equally, depending on the freehold. The emotion of the land plays a part as well — for a time, Spring and Summer were ascendant as Camelot waxed, but as it wanes, Autumn and Winter see their time coming yet again.

Spring

It's a difficult time for the Antler Crown. The heyday of Camelot is fading. With the protection of the Roman legions gone, the Saxon threat pressing harder, and the Hunter taking more stragglers, the primary desire filling the hearts of mortals is simply the desire to survive. It's a bitter cup to taste. But if the Court of Desire gives up on joy and surrenders passion, it ceases to be. And the Spring courtiers will not let that happen just yet.

Arthur and his courtiers are powerfully tempting targets for the Emerald Court. While it's still 500 years too early for the concept of courtly love to flourish, the nobles of Camelot are no strangers to passions that burn all the brighter because they're forbidden. But Arthur's court is dangerous ground to tread. If the constant presence of iron weren't enough, vampires are at play in Camelot's halls as well. A vampire might be a potential ally with much in common, or a jaded predator searching for a new thrill, and it's always a gamble to see which is which.

The Antler Crown has waning influence among the other courts. Autumn and Winter are both caught in their different forms of fatalism, and both seem to think that Spring has already had its day. Summer was ever Spring's closest ally, but the Iron Spear is constantly distracted by the Saxons pressing against the borders and the depredations of the Herjan. Some Spring courtiers find themselves looking outward and striking desperate bargains to find new allies.

Summer

The Iron Spear is crisscrossed with scars. The prevalence of iron weapons makes it dangerous business to be the ones holding the wall. Healing magic helps changelings live longer and stay healthier than their mortal relatives, but the Court of Wrath suffers the greatest share of wounds that no charm will heal. Nor are they happy to limit themselves to opposing Huntsmen and hobgoblins in this age of battle. Many Summer courtiers direct their wrath as much against mortal Saxon and Pict invaders as they do against threats out of the Hedge. You can often tell the Iron Spear changeling who holds a grudge against the mortals — she's most likely to bear a terrible scar, an empty eye socket, or a stump at the end of one arm.

Most Summer courtiers have a high opinion of Arthur and his court. Arthur's claim took the shape of a sword. The Pendragon took his throne to *fight*. The Crimson Court aids Arthur's reign as much as possible without betraying its presence to new enemies. With careful woodcraft, Summer scouts have quietly guided his warriors to their foes while never being seen. A few of Arthur's knights carry blessings that they unknowingly owe to the Iron Spear. Yet as Camelot sinks into malaise, the Court of Wrath feels the deepening gloom as much as any other changeling does — but isn't that all the more reason to keep your blades sharp? If Arthur dies with no heir, the realm will fall. War will come again, and the Summer Court will be ready.

Courtiers of Wrath are of two minds regarding the Saxons, and the hunters that came within their ranks. One part of the court respects the Saxons because they're able to fight, and perhaps that could be turned against the Gentry; the other part saw friends and loved ones killed or dragged away by the newcomers, and argues that the Saxons deserve their fury as well. As a group, the Summer Court shows the most respect for hunters who've bound themselves to a martial brotherhood — that, at least, the Lost can relate to. The same holds true for vampires, for if stone and forest and fire can swear an oath, then so too can the dead.

Autumn

The Leaden Mirror is surprisingly strong, perhaps the strongest of the courts throughout the year. Insula Avalonnis is one of the most powerful freeholds in Britain, and a bastion of Autumn sorcery. The Saxons are growing stronger and Arthur has no heir, and so the populace is afraid. This is an era of mysticism where witches are still feared and respected — perfect for the Ashen Court. Or it would be perfect, if the threats that menace one court didn't menace them all.

The Autumn Court is, unusually enough, divided on the subject of Arthur. Some Ashen courtiers see in him the power of a legend, and reason that his extended reign would strengthen the magic latent in the realm. Others argue that as a true king, Arthur's fate is to be sacrificed for the good of the realm — Britain will endure without him, but only if he dies at the proper time. Some are convinced Arthur must



search for the Herne, and in so doing both slay a dangerous Title and die a sacrificial king's death. Messenger familiars scuttle and fly from one freehold to the next, carrying arguments over the latest portent and the necessity of action.

Ashen courtiers are reasonably openminded regarding cooperation with other hidden factions such as vampires and hunters. It's useful to know about the strange powers and cunning tactics they might use, and certainly they all have a common enemy in the Threefold Hunter. When they truck with these others, however, Autumn Lost attempt to be subtly unnerving or intimidating. Better to earn a healthy respect than hope for a polite respect, and to be frank, few members of the Court of Fear wants their allies to regard them fearlessly.

Winter

The Silent Arrow has exhausted its hope. Winter spies flit through the halls of Camelot at night, taking note of everything they can. They see little to encourage them. Arthur has no worthy heir, and his court is in slow decline even as the Saxons grow stronger. The Onyx Court encourages the other Lost to isolate themselves, to draw farther from the world of iron. The presence of the Herne is even more reason to fade from sight and memory. It may not be glorious, but it's a way to survive. And at least sorrow is plentiful in these times.

Apart from a few aforementioned spies, the Winter Court has largely given up on Arthur as a power to shape the realm. At present, the Saxons concern them more — the Saxons, and the dangerous hunters within their ranks. Should Camelot fall, as Winter expects it will, the invaders will expand to occupy the vacancy. The Saxon hunters will be a greater threat than they are now, unless the Winter courtiers find a way to turn them toward a common enemy. The most promising sign is that the newcomers already seem to know of the Herjan. If properly directed, they could be useful catspaws or even allies against the Threefold Hunter. But one must be cautious…

The Winter Court has grave misgivings about the amount of lore that other courts have shared with the vampires. No matter how honeyed the speech of the Court of Night, it rolls off tongues that lick blood from fangs. Certainly, there are crueler and stronger things in this world and beyond than vampires, but the Silent Arrow tries to withhold as much knowledge of banes and tells as they can. Perhaps the vampires could help rout the invaders from the isle, nail the Threefold Hunter below a hill with iron nails. But if they remove a common foe…what happens next? For want of an enemy, would the undead turn on a friend? Best to aid them as is prudent, and always be cautious not to give too much away.

Freeholds

The freeholds of this era are built on necessity. They need to be far enough from human settlements that a stray woodcutter won't bring iron across the boundary. And for that reason, they also need to be self-sufficient. The Lost can't rely on dropping by the local village to purchase groceries, and they can't take too much from the peasants without dooming the mortals to starvation. A freehold's buildings were probably raised by changeling hands; its food might have been raised by Arcadian magic. A freehold might stand in the thickest part of a forest, under a broad chalk hill, or on a lonely island.



Some freeholds carry an extra share of internal tension. Most Lost were born among the original Celtic peoples or the Romano-British, but the vagaries of Arcadian time mean that some Saxons have already been taken into Faerie and escaped. There aren't yet enough Saxon changelings to found freeholds of their own, which leaves the others to decide whether to take these invader-kin in or turn them away. At the moment the freeholds take in more Saxon Lost than they turn away, for the shared experience of the durance is a deeper tie than a shared language. But if — when — the battles turn bloody again, some Lost may forget that bond and turn out their newcomers.

Insula Avalonnis

In the marshes south of the Severn stands a single hill, an island among the wetlands that will someday be called Glastonbury Tor. It is the single strongest freehold in Britain: the Isle of Fruit Trees, the Ynys Afallon — or, one day, Avalon.

Insula Avalonnis is a place of powerful sorcery. Fruit hangs from trees in all seasons, both tart mortal apples and stranger goblin fruits. Secret forges that work metal without iron send out smoke in the dead of night. A powerful and well-guarded trod leads to the second-largest Goblin Market in Britain's Hedge.

The magic of the isle is to be expected, for Autumn reigns here all but year-round. Avalon technically honors the procession of the seasons while keeping the true power largely in the hands of the three sisters who take turns as the Autumn Queen. Before the winter solstice, the first sister passes the freehold's apple-and-thorn crown to a temporary Winter monarch for three days, and then the crown returns to the second Autumn sister. The vernal equinox brings three days of Spring rule, and then the crown passes to the third sister. A Summer monarch takes the crown for three days of high summer, and then it returns to the first and strongest Autumn Queen until the winter solstice, and the cycle continues.

Insula Avalonnis has declared for Camelot — though not *to* Camelot, of course — so long as Arthur shows more wisdom than do those around him. Some of the Lost here play the parts of mysterious enchantresses and warlocks who wander into a knight's story for a moment, offer crucial guidance or a strange blessing, and then are gone without a trace. Usually their aid helps the knight toward his goal — unless the knight's goal is to explore the Severn's marshes and find the freehold, in which case the knight typically awakens in a strange place, his arms and armor replaced with wood and bone mummeries.

Crows' Hold

To the north of the realm, long stretches of Hadrian's Wall stand abandoned. In some places, the forest has already reclaimed the land around it. The ragtag freehold of Crow's Hold is built along one such stretch, where an entire wall-fort has been swallowed by the woods. Ramshackle huts stand next to portions of the wall that still stand tall, while other buildings are built from stone quarried from the wall itself.

Crow's Hold is a freehold of scavengers. The Lost that reside here have a tradition to roam down the trods and visit all manner of places in Britain, carrying away the most interesting things they find. The freehold itself is practically a Goblin Market for those who find their way here. The Crows deal in weapons, tokens, goblin fruits, strange trophies, Roman treasures, Saxon goods, and even rarities from across the Channel. They scrounge things only the fae could find, too: memories from a corpse's skull, dreams of a true love never met, a slander victim's good name. They might have had the Grail once, if it weren't for the Crows' general lack of Christian piety. The Crow Kings and Queens encourage a mismatched faith that takes something from everything. It's being practical.

The freehold's courts share power in the usual fashion, mostly. But even when it's not winter, the Crow King of Winter holds a monarch's share of influence. The present officeholder is Crimthann Rook, a wily old Beast who barters his treasures for secrets around the kingdom. He cheerfully trades with vampires, hunters, even werewolves and spirits, it's said. Rumor has it that King Crimthann sees the fall of the kingdom coming, and he's gathering all the pieces to the puzzle of its fall so that his court can be ready.

The Threefold Hunter

The True Fae took who they wanted from the Celts and Picts. When the Romans came, the Gentry stole away settlers and soldiers. Now Arthur is king, and the Saxons have come, and the True Fae still do as they will. One in particular has become so taken by the hunt that he stalks the forests every night. He is the Herjan, the Herne, the Harrier in the Woods. Bloody-handed and antler-crowned, reeking of entrails and musk and wet fur, an army of Huntsmen behind him, he is the Wild Hunt embodied.

Morgana and Avalon

Morgana le Fay is the kind of legendary figure that is difficult to categorize. She would be a strong candidate to master the magic of **Mage: The Awakening.** But she might also be a changeling, an abducted mother who learned Arcadian sorcery and became an Autumn Queen on her return. She might be a mortal whose witchcraft is little more than misdirection and cunning. She might even be a player character. And why not?

The legend anticipates that Morgana carries the mortally wounded Arthur back to Avalon. Whether that happens or not should probably depend on the events of your chronicle. We assume that Glastonbury Tor no longer houses the freehold of Ynys Afallon in the modern world, and therefore Arthur isn't there either. Your troupe may find it entertaining to discover why.

"The Herjan" is one of the many titles of the Saxons' Woden as well as one of *his*. The hunters among the Saxons know of the Herjan; the vampires have heard whispers of the Herne; the changelings know both, and his third mask the Harrier of the Woods, *far* too well. Most who know of the Hunter's three masks assume they are different accounts of the same being; only the changelings know that each mask is a Title, and all three can hunt at once. Unlike other True Fae, the Threefold Hunter spends little time in his Arcadian realm, returning only to hang another prized trophy from his walls or sentinel trees. The hunt obsesses him, and the hunt is *here*.

None of the Lost have seen an enemy like the Threefold Hunter before. He has a small army of Huntsmen, far too many. He has the talent to scent iron on the wind from miles away, allowing him to strike only where he is at least risk — no warrior who rides out in a mail shirt and with an iron blade by his side will ever find the Herjan. He has learned to hunt vampires. Thankfully, the Herne and the Harrier of the Woods do not pursue prey into human settlements, though the Herjan has been known to do so, at night when there are few to see. The changelings fear they cannot defeat all three faces of the True Fae at once — at least, not alone.

Oath: Blood Liege (•••)

Prerequisite: Changeling

Effect: Some changelings enter into the Contracts of Night and Day to bind their fates to those of the Kindred — or rather, to add a layer of protection between themselves and the True Fae. The character with this Merit has sworn herself to a particular vampire, receiving a measure of protection in return.

While the Oath between the two remains in force, the changeling receives the benefit of a two-dot Mentor Merit to represent the vampire liege's protection. However, the character may surrender this Merit to redirect a Huntsman or True Fae away from the changeling; the changeling's enemy focuses its attention on the vampire instead. If the changeling cancels the Merit in this fashion, the Sanctity of Merits rule applies, and the character receives three Merit dots to spend on an appropriate replacement.

The recipient of this Oath resolves the Obliged Condition and gives the changeling the Oathbreaker Condition, as the Lost becomes a traitor to the Wyrd.

Drawback: While the arrangement is in effect, the character owes service to a vampire liege. Once per lunar month, the vampire may ask the character to perform a task; if the task does not put the changeling in significant danger, the changeling must obey the spirit as well as the letter of the request.

Vampire: Shield, Spear, and Sickle

For centuries, Britannia has stood as a frontier territory of the Camarilla, a site of dispute and war between the Kindred of Rome and the native tribes of Albion and Hibernia. Now, the Camarilla is gone, brought low in a few short nights of fire and madness. The Julii are dead or scattered, and the consuls of Britannia serve only themselves. The influx of Kindred from across the sea whisper of the shadowy nemeses that eradicated the senate, and are even now lurking in the darkness to deliver the killing strike. It is no longer safe to live as a vampire, and so many of the Kindred of Britannia have chosen to become something else, the Court of Night.

The Great Deception and the Courts of Night

The Court's inception began in 230 CE as a manifesto penned by Consul Octavia of the Julii, "Courting the Other and the Taming of Gods." Over the centuries she watched monsters real and imaginary vanish into fable, lingering as stories and superstitions on the tongues of man. The peasantry venerated gods that would never answer. "Why," she asked, "should a vampire spend centuries rising to the status of divinity, when they can simply assume the mantle of a similar, absent god?" Working with her childe, Caecilia the Blood-Scribe, Octavia supplanted loyal Kindred into many of the cults of the region, including the Celtic figures of Sulis and Cernunnos, and many of the Tuatha de Danann. These cults, already coerced by scholars of Rome to regard their gods as an extension of the Greco-Roman pantheons, fell quickly to Kindred control.

This policy of syncretism — of vampires co-opting the mantles of the heroes and gods of folklore, brought the Kindred into swift and troubled negotiations with the resident freeholds of the Lost, some of whom outright claimed to be the figures whose domains and cults were being usurped. Treaties were brokered, both by the Autumn Court of Avalon and the Weihan Cynn of the Kindred, outlying a set of rules that would redefine them as the Courts of Night and Day. The Kindred and the Lost divided their domains into courts, each of which was appointed a leader who held sole responsibility for protecting their borders and subjects. Strict rules on domain and ownership of mortal vassals were set down in fae contracts penned in blood, rules that would shape Kindred society for centuries to come. Once each season, new inductees are presented to the freehold of Avalon and gifted titles by the Mekhet sorcerer Manannán of the Green and notarized by the Goblin Queen Red Teller, granting them a modicum of recognition among the courts



of the Lost. For the Kindred, this arrangement allows them to hide their identities as vampires, maintaining influence in a world where mortal hunters and the monstrous Strix alike pursue them. For the Lost, aware of the true nature of their courts, the benefit is a more closely guarded secret. The titles gifted to these kindred, carefully chosen by Manannán (in truth, a Darkling archivist known as Shackle mac Lir) are echoes of the Titles of the True Fae themselves. By offering vampires the titles of their enemies among the True Fae, the freehold of Avalon creates a legion of monstrous scapegoats to fight their enemies when the Wild Hunt inevitably returns.

The Legion of the Green — The Unconquered Kindred

Composed heavily of members of the Weihan Cynn and displaced Roman Kindred from the Cult of the Augurs and the Peregrine Collegia, the Legion of the Green is the prominent force within the Courts of Night, a confederation of allied lords undergoing the uneasy transition between the gatherings of the Camarilla and the rival fiefdoms of the new world. Their elders, in recognition of their authority, are gifted with aliases drawn from the cults and legends of Britannia, with the rulers of each fief given the suffix "of the Green" to make their status clear. In Gwynedd to the west, Math of the Green holds court, a shapeshifting seer that speaks to animals. In Caer Baddan, Sulis of the Green leads a cult of mortal warriors, reaping praise with her majestic presence and the healing power of her Vitae. Across the sea in Ulster, Conall of the Green commands men and beasts alike as he battles for dominion. Across Britannia, the Lords of the Green fight to claim a land for themselves, sometimes allied with the Lost and sometimes in direct competition, in much the same way Kindred ally and fight with each other. For the Legion, the line between vampire and changeling becomes increasingly blurred, deceived by their own arrogance and the honeyed words of the Lost into thinking they are equals in the fae courts.

In order to distance themselves from the Legio Mortuum, the warriors among the Legion of the Green have cultivated a warrior caste inspired by the legends of the Green Man. The mantle of the Green Knight, the immortal warrior that hunts on legs of four and two, is a useful pseudonym for Kindred that need to influence the wars and courts of humanity directly. When armies clash, the Green Knights charge from the mists on horseback, declaring for no man and fighting for a cause of their own before retreating back into the wilds. Their founder, a Bron known as Bertilak of the Green, is even known to stride into the halls of men, challenging potential thralls and childer to match his warrior ideal. The Green Knights of the Legion, in their efforts to steer the fates of men, have earned a growing animosity with the Black Knights of Merlin, and their forces have crossed swords on numerous occasions.

For their mutual protection the Legion relies on strict liege-vassal relationships imposed by a system of blood oaths that will soon form the foundation of the Invictus. For the purpose of purchasing Merits, Kindred Status in the Legion of the Green functions identically to modern-day Status in the Invictus, including access to Invictus Oaths.

Contracts of Night and Day (•)

Prerequisites: Notary (Invictus Merit), Occult ••

The Legion of the Green, while lacking the full breadth of authority that the Weihan Cynn possess, have developed a limited ability to impose oaths of prestation and fealty upon their allies within the Lost, aided in their transactions by Hobgoblin servants of the Bank of the Red Teller, who store and ferry the accumulated Glamor and Vitae between the liege and vassal of each oath. To the Lost, submitting to such total obedience to another is an unsettling prospect, particularly to a member of the Court of Night. Kindred, too, recoil at the idea of gifting their unique powers to one not of the blood. In the modern nights, such an arrangement would be viewed as abhorrent and worthy of Final Death, but in present times it is a repulsive but dreadful necessity.

Effect: Kindred with this Merit can invoke Invictus Oaths between a Kindred liege and a Lost vassal, granting the full benefits to each. The bloody sympathy of the bond between liege and vassal allows the changeling to use Contracts on their vampire lieges without the expenditure of Glamour, as though they were utilizing a Loophole. As part of this Oath, the affected Lost must imbibe a small sample of their liege's Vitae, incurring a first stage blood bond for the duration of the Oath. Note that this blood bond creates a blood sympathy, making the Kindred liege an eligible target for anyone seeking to harm the changeling by proxy.

The Lancea et Sanctum — Knights of the Lance

Paying lip service to the Treaties of Night and Day, the growing might of the Lancea et Sanctum is a source of contention for their allies among the Lost and the Kindred alike. Following in the wake of mortal missionaries, their demagogues help to reinterpret folklore heroes as biblical saints, and they do this with little regard for the titles formally traded by the Lost and Kindred courts. This practice has led to conflict many times over, and with their acquisition of a number of surviving Kindred from the Legio Mortuum, members of the Lancea et Sanctum find themselves capable of increasingly militant options in defense of their growing territories in southeast Britannia.

This aggressive approach is more than warranted — of all the Courts of Night, the Lancea et Sanctum has the closest ties to Rome, and their battles with the Strix at the empire's collapse is a recent and bitter memory. They hear whispers of ill omen, of yellow-eyed shapeshifters in the wilds, of cultists bedecked in black-feather cloaks that dance by firelight and dispense mocking prophecies, and they ready themselves for the next strike. The nemeses cast a long shadow, one that lurks even in the ruins and wilds of Britannia. It is an enemy that cannot be hidden from with courtly intrigue; the only way to banish the shadows is with the light of judgment.

For this reason, the Lancea et Sanctum gathers every weapon they can in their ongoing war. They sway the hearts of humanity to their cause, not through deception, but through ardent support of the common folk, rallying the masses. They tie legends of the treasures of the land to their new faith, inspiring devout Kindred and humans alike to seek out the mystical artifacts of Britannia that they might be repurposed as saintly relics.

Faith Militant (••)

Prerequisite: Lancea et Sanctum Status •

The bonds of faith bind communities in the Dark Ages, and in these times, as knowledge is destroyed and lost, the church is a bastion of academic knowledge. The Lancea et Sanctum has learned to cultivate the strengths of their flock.

Effect: Your character can treat their Herd rating as Resources for the purpose of procuring services. Once per chapter, you can also treat your Herd Rating as Resources for the purposes of procuring equipment.

The Fine Print

The Legion of the Green's Contracts of Night and Day and the Weihan Cynn's Contract with the Uncanny (**Dark Eras** p. 271) grant the Kindred a great deal of authority within the courts of the Lost. These bargains clearly favor the Kindred, but will not favor them forever. The exchange of blood and titles between the Courts of Night and Day give the freehold of Avalon ample opportunity to twist these contracts to their own benefit, labeling the Kindred as imposters of the True Fae and viable targets for their wrath.

For the duration of their service under these contracts, Lost vassals benefit from the Obliged Condition. In addition, while serving as vassal under an Invictus Oath, the Lost vassal may announce their liege's crimes and impart the Hunted Condition on their Kindred master. Imparting this Condition does not end the Oath, nor does it protect the changeling from retribution from their liege. The bargains of the Weihann Cynn, not being subject to Blood Sympathy, do not suffer from this drawback. Instead, failure to repay a favor of level four or higher granted by a Contract with the Uncanny allows the aggrieved Lost to inflict the Hunted Condition upon the Kindred as punishment.

In each instance, this Condition is invoked only as a last resort, and almost never against a true ally of the Lost. Any attention from the True Fae, no matter how tangential, can be disastrous for the Lost, as well as accruing the full ire of the Kindred of the Court of Night. In the midst of a Wild Hunt, however, such sentiments mean nothing.



The Circles of Mor — Sibyls of the Nemesis

The Morrigan. The Furies. The Kindly Ones. The Valkyrie. Nemesis. These are the names of the Carrion Queens, those who sit in judgement of men and monsters, who teach the virtues of vengeance. Kindred that aspire to this ideal adorn themselves in robes of black feathers, carving runes into their own flesh. They offer up the weak as food for their masters and exult in their continued survival in the face of ever-increasing adversity, prophesizing the death-throes of the world. They are what the Kindred could be, what they should be, they are the Circles of Mor.

The Kindred that join a Circle of Mor choose a life bereft of clemency or negotiation. They are predators deep in the wilds, followers of old faiths that reject the communal weakness of the new gods. Hospitality is an illusion, those that stand at the entrance of your cave are prey, enemies, or both.

The Sibyls do not operate within a broader structure. Each Circle typically comprises three to six Kindred, with twice as many ghouls serving them in hopes of their own ascension. Rivalry is constant; the Circles of Mor depend on outside enemies for any level of cooperation. In times of relative peace, the Circles wage war on each other, and Kindred within the same Circle undermine each other at every step, their Beasts ever restless. When attacked from without, however, they have an alarming unity of purpose, gathering to perform powerful rites to turn the land against their enemies. Some within the Circle take greater steps to focus this hatred outward, traveling into the communities of man to spread their own enlightenment, starting their own Circles as they teach their weaker Kindred brethren the true power of the Beast. Some claim that Morgana's sister Morgause (or someone using her name) ranks among their number, but none among the Kindred have dared to make this accusation and lived to share her response.

Few Kindred endure this path for long; many of the oldest among the Circles are feral, driven mad by their kinship with the Beast. They lead short, pure lives dedicated to the old ways. Some, however, have led their Circles for centuries, ancient beings that work their magic in the darkest places, the yellow glint of their eyes a beacon to Kindred on the true path. Not all Circles are associated with the Strix, and the call of the Beast sometimes leads the Circles into war with them, but the influence of the Owls is an ever-present secret of the order.

Circle of Mor Status is functionally identical to Acolyte of the Crone Status. While the Acolytes will not be formally recognized as a Covenant for many centuries, the rites and traditions that inspired them (including the Blood Sorcery of Crúac) have existed for far longer.

Parliament's Apostle (•)

Prerequisites: Circle of Mor Status •, Humanity rating of 6 or less

Your character serves a coven that worships one of the Strix, though you do not know them by this name. In exchange for veneration and tithes of Vitae, the Owl delights in sharing its knowledge and dark power.

Effect: Once per chapter you can request a boon from your Strix master, treating your Circle of Mor Status as dots in Mentor for the purpose of requesting knowledge. As Ephemeral Beings, the Strix are not limited to a specific range of skills, having access to lore acquired over many brutal lifetimes. This boon can also take the form of the use of a Dread Power with Shadow Potency no greater than your Circle of Mor rating.

Drawback: Each boon must be paid for with Vitae equal to twice the level of your Circle of Mor Status. This Vitae can be gifted by your character, or offered from another captive Kindred. The Strix delight in the corruption of Kindred, and rage at the prospect of redemption. If your character ever increases their Humanity, the Strix commands them to debase themselves, performing rites and depredations until this change is reverted. Refusal or delay causes your character to be marked for death by their Circle, losing their Circle of Mor Status. While the Circles of Mor are disparate and self-serving, with the option of joining another Circle possible, it is by no means assured. Service to the Strix is a dangerous and dehumanizing path, one that few other Kindred would ever tolerate, and the Storyteller is encouraged to make it a challenging experience.

The Encroaching Darkness — Maintaining Touchstones, Humanity, and Feeding Ground in the Dark Ages

The time of vampires is in decline. Rome has fallen, trade and contact with the mainland has collapsed, and the growing animosity between the peoples of Britannia has created an era of death and hunger. The world, no longer an empire, has diminished to a series of warring fiefdoms, small kingdoms that can be crossed in a few days' travel. Every journey is a crawl, inch by bleeding inch, through a thicket of corrupt lords and drawn steel. Arthur's rule did not eliminate war, it only gave it focus, making the armies larger and better equipped. Amid this constant murder and bloodshed human integrity is constantly tested, and so is a vampire's humanity.

The vampire is a predator, and like any predator its survival is dependent on a healthy feeding ground. The peoples of Britannia have been at war for decades, and as they approach the Dark Ages they are becoming lean and paranoid. Division and warfare can be excellent distractions for a nomadic hunter, but for the social hunter it creates additional challenges. When the Legio Mortuum first arrived in Britannia, their report was blunt: "Food is plentiful, but the Kindred struggle for every drop of blood." The blood-soaked fields and hardy survivors of this era have caused the number of revenants and grave-born vampires to rise

sharply. They attack farmsteads and ambush travelers on the road. The survivors speak freely of the damned, demons in human skin that feast on the blood of the innocent and abhor the light of the Lord. There is no Masquerade — the threat is real and the people are rising to fight it.

Kindred have few options in maintaining their feeding grounds. Some abandon society, retreating into the wilds, far from the swords and torches of "civilized" man. They become beasts, preying on animals, or hermits dispensing wisdom and gifts to desperate wanderers over a cup of proffered blood. Others embed themselves among the people, hiding in plain sight among the noble and warrior castes, or scribing in secret in monasteries. Kindred society is a strained concept in these times — travel is difficult and too many vampires in one place swiftly arouses attention. Only in the largest of settlements are regular meetings practical. The Gangrel, and the rising Ventrue and Bron fare better under these restrictions, enduring long journeys or commanding beasts and men alike to act as personal envoys, but all clans struggle to maintain their herds as the boundaries of man change constantly. Even the most active of Kindred struggle to gather more than once a season, and the democratic traditions of the Camarilla are regarded as a failed experiment.

A vampire's Touchstones, the tethers to their humanity, are under constant strain. The great distance between settlements, the increasingly isolationist fiefs, and the bitter winters all make travel difficult, with loved ones moving out of reach for months or even years at a time. With the stability and protection of the Camarilla a fleeting memory, Kindred struggle to rely on people to stave off their descent towards monstrosity. People fight and vanish, mortal households that have held dominion for decades are slaughtered overnight. The scope of the great invasions strips the Kindred soul bare, encouraging their descent. Kindred of this era are more reliant on locations and keepsakes to bolster their Humanity. The country is infested with the ruins of old glories, and Kindred are bound to these places. They gather at castles and stone circles, at abbeys and battlefields. They renew their pledges to the old ways, carving faces into ancient oak trees and staining them with blood, or gather in stone churches in honor of the new faith.

Touchstone Mementos

As war and the seasons force people apart, it is common for loved ones not to see each other for many years at a time. So too are Kindred often deprived of the people and places that acts as touchstones for their humanity.

Mementos help Kindred reassure themselves in this time, acting as reminders of distant Touchstones and helping them to draw on their benefits. They act as surrogate representations of the original Touchstone. Any keepsake with a personal connection to the Touchstone can act as a memento.

A tribal warrior, ruminating on a bloody battle, clutches a child's cloth doll in her hands, knowing she fought to keep him safe. A traveler, stranded in a snowstorm, staves off descent into feral hunger by reading his brother's letters. A missionary, bearing witness to profane rituals, draws strength from the bronze crucifix gifted by her church.

Mementos make it easier for a vampire to defend attachment to their Touchstones, even if they are hundreds of miles away or (unbeknownst to the vampire) deceased. A prominently displayed memento can also help a vampire to resist Frenzy, granting a +1 modifier to the dice roll. Finally, if the vampire permanently loses the affiliated Touchstone, the gifting of their memento can act as a powerful gesture in establishing a new Touchstone.

Vampires feel the loss of these treasured keepsakes keenly. Another individual manhandling or damaging a memento can induce frenzy with a −2 modifier to resist. The destruction or loss of a memento can be as potent a loss as losing a loved one, inducing frenzy with a −4 modifier.

Playing the Game

Your setting is the chaotic years following the Roman withdrawal, the reasonably stable time of Camelot itself, or the dark times following the fall of the Round Table; there is plenty of narrative meat to sink your teeth into. Besides more immediate goals, each group has their own ongoing interests to drive them onward during this unstable period. Vampires are looking for control, or at least comfort, in the newly abandoned lands of the former Empire, the Uratha mainly seek a return to the old ways or establish equilibrium with the new human rulers. The Lost want to maintain their anonymity and avoid the Huntsmen as they ever did, but continue to shepherd the Hedge's growth as a means of hiding from the mortals, creating a struggle between changeling fears. Hunters face the shadows that appear before them and threaten their villages, whether that is a monster from without, in the darkened woodlands, or within, at the seat of local governance. With such incongruent goals how does one create an antagonist that can bring them together? The answer is to look outside. Who has goals that serve themselves at the cost of others? What dark alliances threaten the whole?

The Saxon invasion and subsequent conquest of Britannia looms, and that brings hardship and death for all. The Saxons themselves are superstitious people; they do not tolerate the supernatural (where they become aware of it) but, in this time of strife, they are happy to act as mercenaries for those willing to pay them (even if they only appear mortal). The promise of a Saxon incursion can bring the most disparate of characters together in the face of a greater threat. The Saxons might need an inroad, a safe landing or a way



through the Hedge under the direction of an overambitious Fae who is also manipulating some hapless mortal or even vampire noble to act as host to the invasion. The characters might be offered advance knowledge of such a plan and the opportunity to arrange an alliance to counter the Saxon mercenaries, or a means to coerce the traitorous noble into implicating themselves in the plot before it comes to fruition. A Saxon raiding party focused solely on hunting the creatures of the night might bring an uneasy alliance together with a common goal, a tale of hunter becoming hunted on the heaths and under the old oak branches.

The Old Ways Resurgent

Within Britannia the Weihan Cynn seek to reclaim what once was theirs. The golden-eyed mystics, druids and soothsayers claim the land by ancient right and work dark deals, tithes, and allegiances with any Otherworld entity that encroaches upon their territory (See Contract with the Uncanny, **Dark Eras** p. 271). In the past they relied upon their supernatural aura to cow the herd and ensure respect but, after the Romans drove them into the shadows, they had to watch and learn new strategies for the time when the chance would arise to retake their place at the reins of humanity. In the ages before, the divisions amongs tribes served them, their place as the 'middle-men' in transactions with the Hedge and other powers saw them well kept in payment and favors from both sides. In the centuries to come the Weihan Cynn seek tenuous alliances with the incoming Kindred covenants to preserve their vaunted position of power, but in Arthur's Britannia everything is a struggle. The Lancea et Sanctum come with the new faith trying to expunge the old, but they are far from their powerbase; the Weihan Cynn have been here forever but they are disparate, isolated and recovering from their persecution at the hands of the fallen Empire. Yet, they still have ties among the older gods and creatures, among the courts and with the Owls. There is everything to play for and, whether by Machiavellian intrigue or outright warfare, this is the last chance for the golden-eyed Kindred to assume full control over the isle's cowering mortal herd.

These are the times when, in place of the Camarilla, the Lancea et Sanctum and the Invictus are establishing their power but are starting from scratch. The darkened shores of Britannia are a long way from Rome, but it was once part of the Empire and so should be again. The root of Christianity has been established and it is up to the Sanctified to see it grow and use it as the bridle to lead humanity. Those Kindred who embrace the new ways must fight against the old or the different; those who seek to establish an independent kingdom of their own would do well to do so in secrecy or in disguise.

A vampire who founds their kingdom upon the ways of the changeling courts cannot do so without some insight into those courts. It could be quite attractive to one or more of the Lost (especially the Darklings) to aid a new vampire lord in building such an intricate facade. It might draw the unwanted attentions of a Huntsman but, with only the barest investigation by a True Fae, the illusion of the vampire's court would be pierced and the ruse discovered. The Huntsman moves on and the Lost remain concealed.

Threats Without and Evils Within

Working as agents of a newly established kingdom presents its opportunities, too, if the seat of power is awakened to the threat of the supernatural and wise enough to employ such agents as they can to advise about or protect against it. A hunter of some renown is a logical choice, a Kindred assassin of the Mekhet, and even a Lost of the Autumn Court could profit from such an arrangement. Such a group might form spontaneously in the name of survival, faced with a greater threat like Wyrtogern, the Herjan, or the post-Camelot slasher that is the Black Knight.

Having witnessed the fall of the Empire, there is a chance for players to represent either side of the coming conflict as pagans standing in defiance of the Sanctified, or as Romano Britons still loyal to the lost Empire. Characters from multiple backgrounds might struggle for the pagan soul of Britannia against the encroaching Christian faith. They might choose to undermine the older, established ways of the Weihan Cynn and further the cause of the Invictus and the new god, driving the older powers back into the darkness. Given how successful your characters are in their efforts they might prompt the Sanctified to employ some Saxon hunters to run them down or cause the Weihan Cynn to employ a darker bargain to be rid of them. The most attractive reason for playing in this setting is, of course, to play Knights of the Round Table. Fifty-nine named knights appear in the romantic tales of the court of Camelot. It has also been said that there were as many as 150 at its height, and some histories say the table itself could host 1,000. A chronicle can be written to explore battles, quests, and political machinations both within and without Camelot. In such a game there is scope for intrigue on many levels. What if your vampire character is a member of the Bron, using the knights of Camelot to gain information on the whereabouts of the Holy Grail? Are your characters truly loyal to the Round Table or working to speed its downfall at the hands of Morgana le Fay? Are these elements present despite the characters, do the goals of conspirators and saboteurs clash breeding a shadow war between knights outwardly loyal to the court of Camelot?

Romantically, the period surrounding the rule of King Arthur is considered a time when one man led a nation falling into shadows toward an era of light, a shining beacon of justice in a barbaric world before the folly of human nature struck him down and sundered all he had built. Historically, the era following the surrender of Briton by the Romans is no more or less barbarous or civilized than what went before or came after. Here, the players have free rein to hold up the romanticized ideal of Camelot or to delve into the horror-strewn filth of the Dark Ages and its mythos.

Running the Game

The advantage of a game based on Arthurian myth is that most players are already pretty familiar with the story of King Arthur from various media. This is also the disadvantage. To really share the spirit of fifth-century Britannia at your table, you want to keep your players from visualizing knights in plate armor charging to the strains of Carmina Burana — or worse, doing musical numbers about Camelot. Arthur's story has been told in countless ways, many of them sanitized, cartoonish, comical, melodramatic, or completely anachronistic. But if you can get buy-ins from your players, all of that can fall away as you explore how the rise and fall of Camelot might have played out in an older, darker world.

Setting the Scene

Useful visuals for fifth-century Britain can be hard to find, especially inspirational movies or television, 2004's *King Arthur* and 2007's *The Last Legion* are set in the right place at the right time, but are a bit off-key for a Dark Eras game. Dim the lights during play if you can; if your group is comfortable playing by candlelight, this can evoke their characters' environment.

Audio aids are more readily available. Keeping a low, unobtrusive musical soundtrack running is a common Storyteller technique; you might prefer monastic chants, dark fantasy, or dark ambient, or the more atmospheric tracks from video games such as the *Dark Souls* series. While *Beowulf* won't be written for another couple of centuries, there's no better way to bring Old English to your table than to play a recording of the poem being read aloud in its original language — a solid trick to give the Saxon characters a recognizable voice.

Returning to Theme and Mood

- **Change:** Invoking change as a theme is an easy, two-step process. Step one: Establish a recurring element in the setting, something the players can get used to: a colorful town, an understanding ally, a recurring rival. Step two: Remove or drastically alter the thing. The town is burned by Picts; the ally switches her allegiance; the rival unexpectedly dies to make room for a new, more dangerous rival. Many Storytellers upset the applecart almost by reflex, and when you're stressing a theme of change, you do want plenty of chronicle-altering events. But the trick is making each change feel *earned*. If changes feel too arbitrary, the players' suspension of disbelief is altered. They think of events as driven by the Storyteller's authorial hand rather than by the actions of their characters and others, and they probably develop fewer attachments to characters, places, and causes within the game. Each change needs to feel as though it was bound to happen based on the characters' experiences. Rumors warned of an aggressive Pictish chieftain gaining influence; a vampire character fed on someone close to the ally; the rival was famed for arrogance and poor threat assessment. In this way the setting still feels tumultuous, but it also feels cohesive and real.

- **Darkness:** The darkness theme extends beyond literal poor lighting. People don't see as far as they used to. The future is more uncertain than it was a century ago while Rome was still strong and the Saxons far away. Communities become more isolated: sea trade falls off, and it becomes more dangerous to travel from town to town. Play up this theme by exploring the limits to characters' knowledge. No freehold knows how many other freeholds are in Britain; some might not know *any* other freeholds. Vampires remember, or hear tales of, the world across the Channel, but never the latest news. The hunters know precious little of the beasts and godlings of this strange new island. Everyone is using out-of-date information, and the world keeps changing all the same.

- **Gloom:** The key to establishing a mood is consistency. You don't have to read aloud paragraphs of prewritten flavor text to play up a malaise fallen over Camelot. Be subtler, but persistent. Most characters with whom the players interact seem weary; they may speak a little more slowly, or in lower voices. In the firelight, metal shines dully and colors are darker. News of a lost battle hangs over a castle, and all the bards' songs have changed. The Spring Queen's smile seems forced at times. But remember to add a few moments of genuine joy or humor from time to time. These moments bring a welcome (and believable) reprieve from the mood, and then help reinforce the mood when the moments are past and the gloom returns.

Mutable History

Players are not obligated to follow a script — even if the script of history. They might act to somehow change the timeline as you've planned it. *This is fine*. They don't have to succeed, but they also don't have to fail. You may find the ramifications more fascinating than anything you'd previously anticipated.

- **Kill Arthur:** The most obvious twist is to assassinate Arthur before his fated fall at Camlann. This is, ironically, the least disruptive change. Camelot simply falls ahead of schedule, and the Saxons move in. An entertaining aspect of this change is either describing how the legend changes, or showing how people spread the lie of Camlann to try keeping hope alive. This would be a plot for Tier One or Tier Two chronicles.



- **Save Arthur:** The players might rig events so Arthur survives Mordred and rules on. Camelot endures longer, but it may become clear that Arthur is the only thing holding it together. If the players truly want to change history, they need to find a way for Arthur to have heirs (other than Mordred), and his heirs to have heirs. If your players enjoy high-stakes matchmaking, this might be a delight to play out. This plot works best for Tier One or Two games.
- **Bloody the Saxons:** It's very unlikely that the players will succeed at driving out the Saxons where even Arthur failed, but they might strike a surprising blow. One example would be killing Hengist before he founds Kent. Do the players' actions kindle a vengeful fury in the Saxons, or bowel-loosening terror? Can they push the advantage? Embarking on a war with the invaders is solidly in the Tier Two category, if the players intend a concerted effort to sabotage the Saxon invasion, or Tier Three if they intend to unify Britannia against them.
- **Strengthen the Herne:** We assume that the Herjan is weakened or slain at the end of it all. But what if the players, through accident or stratagem, actually strengthen the Harrier's grip on the isles? The Lost freeholds may be doomed. Changelings are no longer remembered as minor godlings and strange guardians of the wild — they simply become prey in the Herjan's grand preserve. For a time, Britain seems less magical… and then, with one of the True Fae as the Horned King in the woods, it becomes much more magical indeed. Handling the supernatural, especially something as powerful as the True Fae, rests within the Tier Three level of play.

Tiers

If you're not already familiar with gameplay tiers from **Hunter: The Vigil**, and recurring throughout this book, they are a means of setting the scale of your intended chronicle, and perhaps tracking how larger events affect things on lower tiers. The tiers in this era play out roughly as such:

- **Street (Tier One):** A town. A small freehold. A vampire's hunting ground.
- **Regional (Tier Two):** A kingdom — Camelot, a Saxon kingdom — perhaps all of Britain. Arthur's court. Covenant and clan politics. A large freehold, or a pact between freeholds.
- **Global (Tier Three):** Britain; possibly much of Europe. Travel to and from the Saxon homelands, or from territories formerly held by Rome. Communication with covenant elders. Freeholds on the mainland ask for aid, or pledge aid against the Herjan.

Traits and the Threefold Hunter

Mechanics for the True Fae are covered in **Changeling: The Lost Second Edition**, Chapter Five. We don't assign Traits to the Herjan here; rather, we have recommendations.

The Hunter has three active Titles, all active at once: the Herjan (or the Lord of Hosts), the Herne (or the Bloody Antler King), and the Harrier of the Woods. Each Title is associated with a separate seeming (Beast, Ogre, and Darkling respectively). Each Title can possess as many of the following Aspirations, Regalia, oaths, and banes as you see fit — though each one should probably have only one bane, even if the other two are rumored. Each manifestation has *at least* Wyrd 8, which means it has at least 40 dots to divide among its Attributes and another 40 dots divided among its Skills. It may have an even higher Wyrd and higher Traits, if it possesses more titles that that have not made themselves known. Yet.

Aspirations: To bring home the finest trophies; to watch the prey flee for its life; to taste the blood of a ferocious heart.

Regalia: The Leashes and the Reins (Mirror), The Spear Inexorable (Sword), The Horned Stallion (Steed)

Banes: The teeth of a beloved dog; the knife in a child's hand; the smoke from a burnt branch of flowering yew

Tells: Antlers; sharp deer's teeth; leaves hoofprints with his left foot.

Legends of the Era

Stories in this era range from the intimate struggles of individuals attempting to get by in an uncertain time, to nobles dueling and warring for power over an entire region and its people.

Threats to the People

- There was a hanging in the town square today. The condemned raved on the way to the gibbet about monsters and demons even as they dropped the noose about his neck. Strange that his crime was murdering a wandering storyteller. Does it have anything to do with a tale that had spread during the bard's travels, a tale of lost fairy gold in the deep forests, and the people who went looking for it and never returned?

- Bad enough when a mortal finds themselves dragged off into the Hedge and replaced by a fetch, worse still when a mortal draws the attention of the fae by choice. A barren couple, desperate for a child, so desperate the husband traded himself for his wife's happiness so the fae would grant her a babe. Unsurprisingly, the fair folk kept to their word and only their word. Years have passed and the babe is still in swaddling, never growing, never changing, but exerting its will over the village, draining their strength and resources and they can't see anything strange going on at all.

- In the western kingdom of Gwynedd, armies are mustered as the rival lords Lleu Llaw Gyffes and Gronw Pebr vie for the affections of supernaturally beautiful Blodeuwedd. Accounts vary on her origin. Some claim that she is forged from flowers, her soul plucked from storm winds, others that the ghostly spirit of an owl was coaxed into a dying body. Regardless, she has become a prize worthy of killing for, and even the Courts of Night and Day are enraptured by her glamor. Currently her husband, Lleu, and her lover Gronw seek pacts with ancient beings for power.

Threats to the Region

- They say where the path of Wyrtogern lies the dead become restless. The local graveyards have become places where the living fear to tread at night. A hooded figure has been seen in the forest, clad in rags and shambling through the unnatural mist that hangs around him like a shroud. As the sun's rays wane in the evening, ghostly wails and creeping shadows trouble the wooden grave markers and the old priest looks more like a walking corpse every day. Someone has to do something before this evil befalls us all.

- There is a story told of a Roman legion lost beyond Hadrian's Wall, ambushed by Picts and slaughtered to a man. If there is truth in it then there are 8,000 well-armed and well-trained soldiers buried in the north without the proper tribute paid to sate their imperial souls. If someone could find the legion's Eagle, they might rouse them into service once more or lay them to rest eternally, or maybe the dead soldiers are just waiting for the right stars to align and awaken them so they can march south and set their anger against the living?

- We came ashore by night and in secret to raise a fiefdom in this godless land. We sought to strengthen the hold of God's church on these shores in the name of the Lancea et Sanctum but none of the nobles we visited would bargain with us. They feared the golden eyes in the forest and so we readied ourselves to take what we required. That was days ago, now our numbers dwindle; every night more are gone. The shadows move, and shift, and whisper dark things. The owls have come for us and, in the forest, the golden eyes watch and laugh at our strife.

- In the scrublands around Blaeca's Clearing to the east, cattle are gathering. A herd of hundreds converges on the hamlet from all sides, circling and lowing, stamping the image of three interlocking circles, miles wide, into the tall grass. They signal the awakening of the Catuvellauni, a Celtic tribe that defied the invading Romans 400 years earlier. In that time the Legio Mortuum captured 20 tribesmen, Embraced them, and unleashed them on their own families. The frenzied Catuvellauni were staked and buried by their kin and will soon rise, at the heart of Saxon territory. Their people eradicated, and with a fierce hatred of vampires and foreign invaders alike, their allegiance will be highly uncertain.

- The villages of the east coast have a legend, the Black Shuck. A cyclopean hound the size of a horse that roams the fens and pathways. To see the Shuck is to die; but now, whole villages have heard the Shuck howling up and down the coastline. Maybe it heralds a Saxon invasion, maybe something worse. Whatever it is that looms on the horizon, the omen lurking in the fog of the marshes is just as dangerous.

Threats to the Kingdom

- The old gods stir. The Hibernian Celts raid in the name of Crom Crúach, sacrificing their victims in the name of the crooked one of the mound. Whether the tithes of blood they pay are to gain his favor or divert his corrupting gaze from their crops matters not. The tributes awaken stone and metal effigies of the god itself to walk with their warriors: unliving, uncaring, and unstoppable by the efforts of mortals. The cults must be stopped and the golems they've awakened put to rest once more.

- Across the western coasts a new sect of invaders has appeared, gifted with an unsettling power. Entering a battle frenzy known as the "Warp Spasm," these warriors slough off their skin and manifest myriad appendages, transforming into beasts wrought of madness. The Bron witnessing these transformations attack the warriors on sight. The Courts of Night and Day both reject affiliation with these warriors, with speculation on their identity in its infancy. A missionary present at one of their attacks claimed that they were servants of demons, nightmares made manifest. A blind seer far removed from the battle warns that they are diseased, emissaries of a contagion that sickens land and people alike.

- The gates of Camelot seem never to shut. Pictish incursions, robber barons, politics, and threats from far shores occupy as much of the knights' time as questing for religious artifacts and standing against the creatures of the night. Quests are raised to seek the staff of St. Christopher, the bones of John the Baptist and the silver dinari paid to Judas Iscariot alongside the quest for the Holy Grail, and then there are calls to sally forth against the wyrms that live beneath the land of Britannia itself, places like Lambton or Sockburn are plagued by huge, white, maggot-like creatures of entropy that leech the life from the very soil. At times even the simplest task, such as visiting a noble's court to end an ongoing feud, can lead to desperate battles against evil creatures bent upon sowing dissent and chaos between the mortals who want nothing more than safety and security.

War Among the Remains

Werewolves in this era enjoy the people's return to primal darkness and fear, but stalk a fine line between reveling in their role as predators and falling off the path, into untamed wilds where creatures more horrific than they hold court. Beshilu pour through tears in the Gauntlet, left by dreadful bloody clashes and the uprooting of occult tradition, as Pure lay claim to the disconnected regions of the highlands and the moors.

Merlin was almost certainly a **mage**, but whether he's one to worship and aspire to or revile for his flagrant acts of Sleeper manipulation is a cause of hot debate between the orders. Mages in this era capitalize on the resurgence of folk belief and lay claim to any number of mysterious places the Romans abandoned, taking all they can from this new Dark Age.

Tales tell of how the legendary King Nuada lost his arm in the battle at Mag Tuired and his throne when the Fae declared a one-armed king unfit to lead the people. He returned, **Remade**, with a silver arm as part of his Divergence. At first Nuada was a Devoted, ruling over a fiefdom as a mortal conspiracy's puppet, but he has since gone Renegade, and plots to lead an army against the conspiracy as the Tuatha Dé Danaan once rebelled against the Fomorians.

For Romans and **Prometheans** alike, the British Isles exist as a place of abandoned toys, retired warriors, and artifacts too cumbersome to take home. The Created who came here with the legions do not return to Rome, finding their Pilgrimages drawing them to observe and interfere with the activities in Camelot and the Saxon and Angle invasions. There is so much of life's darkest sides to experience in Britannia; the Created just need to overcome each one.

Like the Created, many **Sin-Eaters** of this era were not born here and cannot leave here. Their geists tie them to the Isles, and so they remain as their leaving compatriots depart. Though there's much unfinished business and crimes that have gone unpunished here, there are talks of Reapers pouring through from each corner of Britannia, looking to call an official conclusion to Roman occupancy. They fully intend to deliver Sin-Eaters to their final rest.

Arisen abandon subtlety in this era, striding across fields, through villages, and into holy and mysterious places to claim each one for their guilds. Something of the Isles stinks of the Lifeless, compelling mummies to move fast and secure the sources of Sekhem that seem plentiful here. They care little for the struggles between vampires, hunters, and changelings.

This period is wondrous for **Begotten** who enjoy many of the same boosts in power through fear and nightmare as the Gentry. While Tyrants mourn the loss of unified power as kingdoms crumble, the Eshmaki delight and share toasts with the True Fae, believing Britannia is finally returned to its rightful state — dark, wild, and terrifying.

Saboteurs celebrate as Camelot falls, the **demons** taking broad credit for the assaults on Rome and thus permanent damage to the God-Machine. To them, Camelot was the last holdout of Rome's once-great western reach. With angels losing interest in the Isles however, cryptids emerge in great number, taking advantage of the chaos along Britain's eastern coastline.

The Bron

"This is the only game of consequence. Strike me, and I strike you back. First to die loses."



The unknown soldier challenging knights in their own court, the stoic hermit standing vigil on the mountain top, the painted savage patrolling labyrinthine forests with bloodied spear in hand, these are the guises of the Bron, who have been present in Britannia since the infancy of mortal memory. Their bloodline, twisted by promises long forgotten, recedes and resurges like the tides, reawakening when the fabric between worlds wears thin. Their willingness to take up arms against the monsters of the wild and to court the favor of the fae has earned them the nickname "Hedge Knights," a mockery they have accepted willingly. The rites and powers that called them into being are unclear — some claim lineage to the sun-cult of Sulis, goddess of healing and battle, whose mystic founts were said to cure all maladies. Others claim to be the kinsmen of Bran the Crow-King, the blessed warrior who sundered the Cauldron of Rebirth and pledged his undying body to eternal vigil. Most recently Bron have been tied to legends of the Holy Grail, with vampires claiming to have seen, and even supped from this sacred chalice and transforming their blood. It is possible that all of these stories are true and the magic worked on these vampires is a fuel, rousing a spark of change that has long been dormant within the Ventrue.

The Bron of this era are at the height of their influence, holding court across Britannia. Some are young, newly awakened to their bloodline, serving as vassal knights and guardians of the glades. Some are ancient, roused from the sleep of ages by the drums of war and the distant call of the hunt, claiming rite of rulership from younger vampires in tests of skill, honor, and the sword. Regions controlled by the Bron are prone to upheaval, the Hedge Knights do not live by half measures. Whether they name you friend or foe, the Bron pursue their goals to ruination.

This intense loyalty has created a schism among the Hedge Knights, already divided by myriad awakenings of the bloodline. Those drawn to the towns and cities of man predominantly serve the Lancea et Sanctum. They view themselves as living martyrs, born to endure hardship in service to their lords and their vassals, forcing other vampires to live by their pious examples. They defend the churches, the relics, and the sanctity of humanity, both as the stalwart shield and as the crusading sword. The Hedge Knights drawn to the wilderness, to the feral places of man, are more akin to the beasts in the humanity's stories. In the wild they hunt and fight, guarding their sacred groves and circles from intruders, in service to the Weihan Cynn, or to something far older. Many Bron take to quiet introspection in these times, warning interlopers away from their domains for their own safety, but some are guided to an unwholesome path, enacting rites that call to the nemeses of old. Those they capture become more than food. They are sliced open in rituals, their innards nailed to trees as warnings while the Bron dance by firelight.

Why you want to be us

You do not break. You are a hound of the battlefield, screaming in triumph and pierced by the spears of a hundred slain foes. When you walk the paths at the edge of dreaming, the eaves of the forest dip in acknowledgement of your power. You are no mere vampire; as a Hedge Knight you have tempered the sorceries of the otherworld with your own spilled blood, and in doing so have become what you were always meant to be, a legend.

Why you should fear us

We do not bow. We are not gentle. We are not kind. To intrude on our domain is to face an implacable foe. We track our prey through the fiercest of storms and defy even death in our pursuit, and should our enemies elude us we can nurse our hatred for 1,000 years, biding our time to resume the hunt. They are naught but monsters in our story; they cannot stop us.

Why we should fear ourselves

We cannot bend. There is always another path to walk, another enemy to pursue. We have been snared in the brambles of fickle fate, snagged on threads that pull us from our homes and turns us against our loved ones, and as long as we cannot control it we cannot fully control our own destiny. The Hedge Knights are compelled to ever greater deeds, and we cannot stop ourselves.



Clan Origins

- On a winter's night, a pious pilgrim — tired and wounded from her travels — arrived at threshold of the Chapel of the Grail. Bron, brother of Joseph of Arimethea, offered her shelter and tended her wounds, but in return was cursed with the Embrace. Seeking a cure, Bron ascended the chapel tower, took the Holy Grail to his lips and drank deeply of the blood of the Christ. No salvation came, and the Grail vanished from sight. For his hubris, Bron and his line were cursed to endure calamitous fortune, and since this day they travel the lands in pilgrimage, hoping to rediscover the Grail and become truly worthy of its blessing.
- In the ruins of Caer Guorthigirn, Wyrtogern recovered the burned remains of his wife, her flesh dark and scarred. With trembling hands, he carved a prayer on her brow and buried her in the scorched earth. He fed the soil his own blood, and pleaded to the old stones of his castle to bring her back to him. The ground quaked and broke, and she arose that night, her eyes black and her skin like stone. They kissed and clawed at each other, red and black blood spilling from the wounds, and they walked hand in hand among the hills of the dead to remake their army.
- Bran the giant lay bleeding and still after crushing the skull of the Hibernian king Matholwch in battle. Seeking to enslave him, Matholwch's men

cast Bran's body into the Pair Dadeni, the Cauldron of Rebirth, an enchanted vessel of boiling blood that could return the dead to life as mindless soldiers. Amid the fire and the blood, Bran clung to life, and with rejuvenated strength shattered the Cauldron from within. Matholwch's host fled, and Bran gathered their undying soldiers and claimed their loyalty for his own.

- Around the hill of Tomnahurich, where the ancient Pictish kings were crowned and buried, a forest of brambles sprang up overnight, devouring the nearby villages in bloodied thorns. Fifteen soldiers of the Legio Mortuum strode into this forest with axe and torch in hand. A season passed, and the forest rescinded, but only six of the soldiers returned. In turn they denounced the Camarilla and scoured the eagles from their breastplates, and have remained in the north ever since.

Parent Clan: Ventrue

Nickname: Hedge Knights

Bloodline Bane: The Errant Curse

The Bron are victims of fate, pulled by unknown skeins toward tragedy. They defend what they love fiercely, lest everything they hold dear abandons them.

In addition to possessing the Ventrue clan bane, whenever the Bron's permanent Blood Potency changes, they lose attachment to all their Touchstones. These are not permanently lost, but remain unattached until the Bron successfully defends her attachment (**Vampire: The Requiem** p. 88).

Upon waking each night, the Bron must make a Humanity roll for each unattached Touchstone. On a success there is no effect, but on a failure the Storyteller replaces the Touchstone with a new attached Touchstone of their choosing.

Favored Attributes: Stamina, Presence

Disciplines: Animalism, Dominate, Resilience, Crochan

Crochan

Crochan is a series of rites that enhances the power of Vitae to heal, hunt, and bind others to obedience. The disparate sects of the Bron perform these rites in different ways, from quiet prayer to graphic bloodletting, and the discipline has altered many times in response to these schisms. Derived from the Welsh word for "cauldron," users of Crochan see themselves as living vessels, scions of a unique fusion of vampiric and divine or fae lineages.

Swift Flows the Blood •

All Kindred have an innate ability to heal their bodies through the power of Vitae. Using this discipline, the Bron greatly speeds this process.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Medicine + Crochan

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character's blood becomes unresponsive. For the remainder of the scene, during any turn in which the character wishes to spend Vitae to heal her wounds, she must spend an extra Vitae to shock her sluggish system into responding. Only one extra Vitae must be spent per turn.

Failure: The character gains no additional ability to channel Vitae toward healing. She may try again in subsequent turns.

Success: For each success on the activation roll, the character may spend one additional Vitae over her Blood Potency limit, but only for purposes of healing injuries. For example, Cecilia has a Blood Potency of 4, allowing her to spend two Vitae per turn. She activates Swift Flows the Blood, achieving four successes. This increases the total number of Vitae she may spend this turn to six. Four Vitae can be spent on healing wounds — her player spent one Vitae to activate the power, and the final Vitae may be spent as Cecilia's player wishes within the normal rules.

Exceptional Success: The extra successes are their own reward.

Blooding the Hunter ••

The Bron approach each hunt with veneration and ceremony. Anointing their eyes or brow with their quarry's blood, the Bron is spurred on to greater success. This power can be used at the same time as A Taste of Blood (**Vampire: The Requiem** p. 91), with similar modifiers.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Wits + Survival + Crochan

Action: Instant

Duration: One Night

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The vampire gains no clues from the blood. In addition, they are unable to benefit from A Taste of Blood or Blooding the Hunter for the remainder of the scene.

Failure: The blood yields no new information.



Success: For the remainder of the night, the Bron gains additional dice equal to the number of successes rolled (to a maximum of 5) to Wits + Composure checks to track their tasted quarry. This bonus also applies to Investigation, Athletics, Survival, and Streetwise checks made to pursue their quarry.

Exceptional Success: As above, and for the remainder of the night the Bron can use the number of dots in Crochan to pierce their quarry's supernatural concealment (such as Obfuscate) in a Clash of Wills.

Sealing the Covenant •••

The Bron know the power of contracts and blood promises. By mixing their Vitae with one or more willing Kindred (such as by clasping cut hands together, or signing a pledge in their own blood), they can bind them to a common cause. Many Bron use these oaths to help mitigate the curse of their clan bane.

Cost: 1 Willpower, 1 Vitae (per participant)

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: Permanent (until the Touchstone is destroyed or abandoned).

The Bron binds one or more willing vampires in a declaration of loyalty. The vampires gain an additional Touchstone at Humanity 4 representing this loyalty, determined by the Bron during the rite and agreed to by the participants. Example Touchstones include a noble liege, a secret society, a holy site, or an ancient relic. The Bron leading this rite can choose to witness the oath rather than swearing it, in which case she does not gain a Touchstone (although she must still expend vitae as part of the rite). A vampire cannot possess more than one additional Touchstone from Sealing the Covenant at any one time. This Touchstone is not affected by the Bron's bloodline bane.

Such oaths are not taken lightly. The loss of this Touchstone (such as from its theft or capture) is a Humanity 3 Breaking Point, and the destruction of it is a Humanity 1 Breaking Point. A vampire can abandon an oath and lose the benefit of their additional Touchstone, but in doing so gains the Languid condition.

Blood of My Blood ••••

Blood calls to blood, regardless of the vessel that holds it. By cutting their palm and placing it over another creature's open wound, the Bron can call to the blood of another and stir it to action.

Cost: Varies

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

By placing a hand over another creature's injuries, the Bron can expend Vitae to accelerate their healing.

Using this Discipline on a consenting Kindred allows the Bron to expend Vitae (their own or that of the Kindred being treated) to heal them as if healing themselves, at a cost of one Vitae to heal two points of bashing damage or one point of lethal damage. A single aggravated wound requires one Willpower and five Vitae to heal. Unlike conventional healing, the time required to treat an injury is limited only to the speed at which the Bron can expend Vitae. For example, a Bron with a Blood Potency of 4 (expending two Vitae per round) can treat a single point of aggravated damage in three rounds. The Bron can accelerate this process by activating Swift Flows the Blood as part of the same action. This discipline also allows the Bron to treat their own aggravated wounds.

Using this power on mortals is functionally identical, with the added ability to heal permanent wounds. The cost varies from two Vitae to remove a small scar or restore a missing eye, up to six Vitae to regrow a missing limb. Entirely reliant on the Bron's Vitae to heal the wound, the treated mortal often experiences intense, shocking euphoria as their body rapidly heals and regrows.

Expending Vitae on another in this way does not create a blood bond.

Conquering the Challenge of the Axe •••••

Legends speak of warriors that could withstand any strike, unbreakable on the field of battle. Following Bran, Cú Roí, and the Green Knight, the Bron have gained echoes of this gift. They use this power to act as bulwarks and figureheads, unbowed and unbroken.

Cost: 1 Willpower, 2 Vitae

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: Scene

The Bron shouts an ultimatum, refusing to yield. For the remainder of the scene the Bron has complete immunity to damage, regardless of the source. The sword falters, the axe passes cleanly through the Bron's neck without breaking it, and the flaming pyre leaves her unscathed. Even the bane of sunlight poses no threat to a Bron invoking this Discipline.

This benefit is lost if the Bron takes any hostile actions, such as attacking, grappling, or feeding from an unwilling target. Aggressive, targeted use of Disciplines by the Bron, such as Dominate, automatically fail, and lashing out with the Beast or frenzying also ends the effect. This power does not restrict the Bron from obstructing enemies or tending to injuries, and less direct applications of Disciplines (such as lower levels of Majesty or Nightmare) may be permitted.





I retch at the stench of humanity permeating the streets. The spice and incense in the air are as inescapable as the facade that makes the masses think they can live like caliphs. I hear people drinking and dancing and feasting in the distance. Good for them. They can stay there; the last thing I need is mortals sticking their noses where they don't belong.

Baghdad. I must hand it to al-Mansur; his vision became a reality. Pity he missed the part where the streets didn't smell like piss. I've been squatting on this rooftop for the last three hours because I don't need a div's nose to know something festers within these walls. Before my torpor, only the Fir'awn possessed the secret of Majnun. Now every div in the Round City wields it.

Once upon a time, Saeed was my contact within al-Amin. I arrived hoping he would have answers for me. The Dukhan have their way of knowing everyone's secrets without stealing them. Instead, I find him leading a blood sorcery ritual.

So much for not stealing secrets.

I wait for the ritualists Saeed gathered to disperse, then strike like a leopard. No need to make this messier than necessary. Saeed drops like a lead jar as I land on top of him. Before he can recover, I grab him by the throat and slam him against the alley wall.

"Hello, Saeed. It's been a while. I see you picked up some new tricks. Care to tell me where you learned them?"

"Laila," he wheezes through his collapsed windpipe, "times change. You disappear for so long and come back demanding answers? They aren't mine to give. Baghdad belongs to the Faithful."

"You are the cesspool at the bottom of every vile stream," I snap as I toss Saeed to the ground. "I don't care who's in power. Someone had to teach you Majnun. I want to know who betrayed our secrets and where I can find them."

Saeed isn't listening. I hear a rush of water all around me as the alley floods. Two leathery tendrils burst from Saeed's gullet. They pry his mouth apart until his jawbone shatters and rip a bloody portal in his neck. A withered patriarch with tentacles for legs emerges, dripping in viscera. The Sheik al-Bahr. One of the Begotten. He throws the first punch before I can compose myself, and it hits me like a catapult. Getting back to my feet, I see Saeed fitting the broken pieces of his jaw together, the dead flesh and bone cracking and gurgling as they stitch themselves back into place. I don't have time to wonder how the Sheik is still alive or how the old bastard managed this rope trick. All I know is a vicious Beast has me outnumbered and trapped.

Wallah khalas! This will be a rough night.

One Thousand and One Nightmares

832 CE



"What a strange and lovely story!"

"What is this, compared with what I shall tell you if I survive until tomorrow night?"

– Dinarzad and Shahrazad, *The One Thousand and One Nights*

As-salaam alaikum. Welcome to Madinat al-Salaam, the City of Peace, the heart of the Abbasid Caliphate. Enter the greatest repository of knowledge since the Library of Alexandria. Marvel at the gardens blooming in the desert, where princesses and thieves rendezvous. Welcome to Baghdad, the home of the *One Thousand and One Nights*.

This is a tale of al-Khayzuran and al-Ma'mun. It is the story of how the *One Thousand and One Nights* come to be, when the caliph still unites all Muslims under one banner. When the Prophet Muhammad, may peace be upon him, recited the words of the angels to his faithful, they never knew how high their star would someday rise. Islam is still a young faith at this time, and like all youths, its capacity to learn and adapt far exceeds its elders'. Islamic society transcends cultures and bridges faiths, accumulating the knowledge of 100 generations in the House of Wisdom. The legacies of Athens, Babylon, and Persepolis flourish as translators reimagine the *One Thousand and One Nights* in Arabic, never knowing the truths those words expose.

The Islamic scientists are brilliant, and their curiosity opens the gateway to the occult, revealing secrets to prying mortal eyes. Kindred despise exposure, but they can do little besides crowd into darker shadows. The Beasts sense their cousins' struggles and lend a hand to ease their burden. What is the moral of a story about family, if not to help one another? Together, Begotten and Kindred journey across the Abbasid Caliphate, searching for ways to usurp mortal science to hide once again.

If that were all, it would be too easy. True, it should be a happy time for the Children: the eldritch force they call the Refrain has returned to let them feast on their legendary exploits. But the Refrain is sick, and old knowledge creeps into the people's slumber. Tonight, Kindred and Beasts persevere in the face of this threat as they prowl the streets, seeking their next meals. Adversity is everywhere, but so are opportunity and wonder.

Welcome to the *One Thousand and One Nightmares*.

Theme: Discovery

Science advances in the Islamic Golden Age at a rate unseen in centuries. Islamic scholars make knowledge accessible across cultures, but exchanging knowledge reveals secrets. Sunlight penetrates div dens while Heroes uncover hidden Lairs. Kindred and Beasts walk a thin line between taking advantage of mortal innovation and exposing themselves to discovery. The Refrain stirs mortal curiosity into a sandstorm scouring the monsters at its heart. Discovery means violating trust and invading privacy. Discovery makes the world a better place at the expense of those it grinds to dust.

Science and religion are the two faces of progress driving Islamic civilization forward together, but progress breeds fear of change. Dreamers realize the impossible is now possible. Worlds collide, but collision brings new ideas.

Glossary

"Vampire" is a European word unknown in this era, while "ghoul" is an Arabic word that represents an entirely different type of monster here. During the Islamic Golden Age, the following terms are used:

div: vampire

Emir: Prince

ifrit: Methuselah; also refers to other powerful supernatural creatures, like Beasts' Horrors

Karamat: Theban Sorcery

Majnun: Crúac

Maqam: Elysium

qutrub: ghoul; also applies to Wolf-Blooded and werewolves

qadar: dhampir

In folklore, the jinn are invisible creatures made of smokeless fire. Jinn come in many forms, and the term refers to a wide variety of creatures. In the Chronicles of Darkness, divs and Beasts style themselves as jinn, although the label also applies to Strix, ephemeral entities, changelings, werewolves, and sometimes others.

Mood: Dreadful Innovation

The next great inventor may live down the street or kneel beside you at the mosque. Glory be to God, who changes others and remains unchanged. Science is ubiquitous in the Islamic Golden Age and is deeply tied to mysticism. Scholarship rips away obfuscating veils, bringing the scientist closer to God. The more educated she is, the better she understands the esoteric truths hidden within the Qur'an and Hadith. Reconciling dread of the future with enthusiasm for improvements to society and quality of life leaves people awestruck at humanity's advances and how far they may yet reach.

Mortals of this era don't become disillusioned when they learn uncomfortable truths; instead, they marvel at how clever the illusion was and try to puzzle out how the new truth fits into their worldview. It's the monsters who fear humanity now, who must change their ways if they want to keep thriving. What does a Beast do when people take nightmares as prophecies and learn their *own* lessons? What about when a div clan's hidden weakness is now the talk of the town, repeated on every corner and written down for posterity? Maybe now it's time for monsters to learn from mortals instead of the other way around.

Tone: Wake-Up Call

Humanity is dangerous. Divs and Beasts believe themselves alpha predators, but the Refrain reminds them they are parasites, too. Heroes and Strix are terrifying, but humanity's vast numbers make mortals a far greater threat. Reckless supernatural creatures who forget why they operate in the shadows won't last long in humanity's bright gaze without adapting.

Yet, realism doesn't mean pessimism. God is Ar-Rahman, The Most Compassionate. God is As-Salaam, The Bringer of Peace. God is Al-Fattah, The Opener of Ways. In a world where the caliph can send a clock made of dancing musicians to the Frankish King, who says divs cannot overcome their curse? Mortal science makes fables come alive, and the incredible is now mundane. Persian Kindred who once fed on Alexander's troops marvel at civilization's advance, while Beasts relive the glories of bygone ages. The One Thousand and One Nights are alive tonight for those with eyes to see them.

What Has Come Before

In 610, the angel Jibreel (Gabriel) appeared before Muhammad ibn Abdullah and commanded him to recite the holy words of the Qur'an to the people of Mecca. In doing so, Jibreel marked Muhammad as God's Prophet and the revelation of Islam began. The political and theological unification of the Arabs was fraught with strife and conflict. Families divided as some members became Muslims, while others violently resisted the new religion. Prophet Muhammad's tribe, the Quraysh, tore itself apart. Muhammad's uncle, Abbas, sheltered him, but the Prophet was eventually driven out of Mecca by the Umayyads, another family within the Quraysh.

Unable to remain in Mecca safely, the Muslims fled north with the Prophet to the city of Yathrib (Medina), an event that would become known as the hijra. Among the Muslims on the hijra were Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, and Ali ibn Talib, the Prophet's cousin. Their marriage and their sons' births were early celebrations for the Muslim community, as was Yathrib's wholehearted conversion to Islam. Beyond the city walls, the Quraysh continued their persecution of Muslims, fearful that Muhammad might return with Yathrib's army at his back. The continuous raids escalated into all-out warfare in 630, from which the Muslims emerged victorious. Even the Umayyads converted to Islam as the tribes of Arabia paid homage to Muhammad's victory and his God.

Religion to Empire

In 633, Islam exploded out of the Arabian peninsula. The Prophet's death the previous year saddened the Muslim community, but Muhammad's successors were not idle. Both the Eastern Roman and the Sassanid Persian Empires rotted from within, while the Arabs were at their most unified. The Rashidun Caliphate's armies won victory after victory, convincing non-Muslims to turn on their masters by offering a better quality of life and greater religious freedom to Christians and Jews. But even as the Islamic Empire enveloped Egypt, the



eastern Mediterranean coast, and western Persia, the Muslim community's political unity fractured internally.

The Alids, family and followers of Fatima and Ali ibn Talib, contended that Ali inherited the Prophet's *ilm*, or spiritual wisdom, making him singularly qualified to lead the Muslim state. The Umayyads opposed Ali, using their allies and clients to claim widespread popular support. Civil war once again divided the population, and following Ali's assassination in 661, the Umayyads claimed the title of caliph and sovereignty over the Muslim state. The Alid minority insisted Ali's ilm passed on to his sons, but they were exhausted and defeated.

The Umayyad Caliphate expanded further still, enveloping the rest of Persia, North Africa, and even the Andalusian Peninsula, but conquest alone did not breed loyalty. The Prophet Muhammad had won converts by preaching a message of cultural and ethnic egalitarianism, while the Umayyads imposed heavy taxes upon non-Arabs. Frustrated with unequal taxation and the Umayyads' authoritarian rule, popular uprisings broke out throughout the caliphate. Sensing the opportunity was right to strike, the Alids led a revolution that toppled the Umayyads by 750 CE.

Today, I learned I may be the last Umayyad. Insurgents have slaughtered every brother and sister, every son and daughter, every mother and father. Their blood drips from the Alids' hands. I flee across Africa to evade the same fate. My only solace is that the Alids are denied the throne that is rightfully mine. Their Persian generals promised to make a member of the Prophet's family caliph, but they never said it would be a descendant of Ali. Abbas was also Prophet Muhammad's family, was he not? This Abbasid caliph is a usurper, but there is comfort in knowing the Alids have no more power than I do.

It is a cold comfort.

— Abd al-Rahman, c. 750

The Islamic Golden Age

The Abbasid Caliphate brought with it a massive societal shift. The Umayyads enforced strict Arab superiority, but the Abbasids recruited talented Persians, Jews, Greeks, and Amazighs into positions of power. A meritocracy of influential advisors, judges, and wives surrounds the caliph. With the right skills, even a poor beggar or menial slave could find themselves standing in dirty back alleys one day and the palace's gilded halls the next.

The Abbasid built a new capital in the heart of Persia. Madīnat as-Salam, the City of Peace, rose from the sands on the banks of the Tigris in 762 like a desert miracle. Fragrant gardens and shining minarets replaced blowing sands and muddy flats, while people from every faith and ethnicity flocked to the new metropolis. The citizens of this splendid city of wonders, marvels, and enchantment gave it the nickname that eventually replaced its official title: Baghdad.

In the xenophilic Abbasid culture, it became vogue to translate texts from other languages. Translators converted many works of Greek philosophy and Persian literature to Arabic, among them the *Hazar Afsana*, the Thousand Stories. These tales dated back to Artaxerxes I's reign in the Persian Empire. Artaxerxes cultivated his image after the legendary Kayanid King Bahman. Artaxerxes' daughter Parysatis likewise styled herself as Bahman's daughter and successor, Homai Chehrazad. The *Hazar Afsana* was a gift from Artaxerxes to Parysatis. Storytellers wove classic Persian fables together with tales from distant Greece and India, including the legend of Queen Chehrazad. In this narrative, Chehrazad was the narrator who recited each parable to her royal family, binding the disparate stories together.

The Arabic translation of the *Hazar Afsana* rewrote the tales in an Islamic setting to make them feel more familiar to Muslim audiences. Zoroastrianism became Islam and Chehrazad became Shahrazad, but the stories of *Alf Layla*, the Thousand Nights, remained mostly the same. Vulgar, scandalous, and sexual, the stories became part of popular culture, and their translation embodied the spirit of the age: All cultures possess knowledge Muslims should value. Nothing was beneath translation or examination.

Chehrazad Reborn

During this time of mystery and enchantment, al-Khayzuran dwelt in Baghdad's caliphal palace. She was born into poverty before slavers kidnapped her and sold her into the prince's harem, but the people of Baghdad whispered she had become the power behind the throne. Leveraging her influence wherever she could, al-Khayzuran refused to curtail her ambition or let society's expectations confine her. Intelligent, charming, and powerful, she was a force to be reckoned with.

Whether in the harem or walking the city with her entourage, al-Khayzuran shrouded herself in mystery. Few met her, but all knew her as her exploits circulated the streets. Gossip said she flouted royal protocol by inviting judges, politicians, and generals into her private quarters. Audiences sat enraptured as scandalmongers claimed al-Khayzuran did not bed these power brokers, but negotiated treaties with them, wielding her words as deftly as swords. Dark rumors spread that she commanded her firstborn son suffocated when he tried to undermine her influence. Whispers swirled that she was Chehrazad Homai reborn, a

The Kayanid Dynasty

Myth obscures the historical Bahman and Homai. The story presented here frames the Kayanids as Persian royalty living around 1000 BCE, but it is only as true as you need it to be for your game. The Kayanids may have been entirely fictional characters or misinterpretations of Artaxerxes and Parysatis by later historians. History is ambiguous, so use the tale that suits your game best.

Persian legend in a Muslim age. All of Baghdad mourned her passing in 789. The caliph, al-Khayzuran's son Harun al-Rashid, flouted custom by personally leading her funeral procession and publicly displaying his grief.

House of Wisdom

Abbasid interculturalism evolved under Harun al-Rashid's guidance. Harun established the *Khizanat al-Hikma*, the Library of Wisdom, a private collection recording advances in history, medicine, optics, astronomy, engineering, and agriculture. Even minor intellectuals were granted access to the caliphal palaces, so they could describe the world's wonders.

The Khizanat evolved from a repository of knowledge to a scientific institution under the guidance of Harun's son, al-Ma'mun. Recast as the *Bait al-Hikma*, the House of Knowledge, scholars no longer merely recorded knowledge, but actively sought to expand their understanding of God's universe. Their discoveries transformed Baghdad into a bastion of education and enlightenment, where the marvels of science and faith coexisted side by side. The city's translators received their work's literal weight in gold as payment. Caravans arrived from Sicily, the Indus Valley, and Constantinople consisting of nothing but hundreds of camels laden with books.

The cultural appetite for knowledge became ravenous. The Bait al-Hikma's scientists consumed resources their predecessors only dreamt of to fund their research. The scientifically-minded aristocracy adopted the *Mu'tazilite* philosophy that stated faith and reason must work together to discover the truth of creation. Conservative religious scholars and their working-class supporters raged at this assault on their literalist worldview and the implicit challenge to their political authority.

Timeline

Before 1000 BCE: Reigns of King Bahman and Queen Chehrazad Homai

465–424 BCE: Reign of Artaxerxes I

747–750: The Abbasids and Alids revolt against the Umayyads

750: Abbasid Caliphate founded; Islamic Golden Age begins

756–929: Umayyad Emirate in Córdoba

762: Construction of Baghdad

786–808: Reign of Harun al-Rashid

788–974: Idrisid Emirate in Northwest Africa

799: Harun al-Rashid sends an automaton clock as a gift to Charlemagne's court

809–813: Civil war between al-Amin and al-Ma'mun

820: Al-Khwarizmi writes *Calculation by Completion*, revolutionizing the teaching of algebra

Present Day

832: Al-Ma'mun breaks into the Great Pyramids of Giza

833–851: Rationalist inquisition against literalist scholars

833: Al-Ma'mun dies in Anatolia without naming a successor; al-Mu'tasim becomes caliph

859: Fatima al-Fihri founds Kairouan University in Fez

864–999: Samanid Emirate in Persia

909–1171: Fatimid Caliphate in North Africa

915: Al-Tabari composes a world history using eyewitness accounts, called *The History of the Prophet and the Kings*

929–1031: Umayyad Caliphate in Andalusia

969: Construction of Cairo near Fustat

1025: Ibn Sina compiles all current medical knowledge in *The Canon of Medicine*

1037–1194: The Seljuk Empire rules the Abbasid Caliphate

1077–1221: Khwarazmian Shahs rule Persia

1090–1256: Nizari State in Persia and Syria

1206: Ismail al-Jazari writes *The Book of Ingenious Mechanical Devices*, an early manuscript on robotics

1219–1221: Mongol Invasion of Khwarezmia

1258: Mongols sack Baghdad; Islamic Golden Age ends

1704–1717: Antoine Galland publishes *The One Thousand and One Nights* in French

1838–1841: Edward William Lane translates *The One Thousand and One Nights* to English from Arabic

1946: Nabia Abbott publishes a biography of Al-Khayzuran

1947–1949: Abbott discovers a ninth-century fragment of *The One Thousand and One Nights* from Syria

Blood in the Sand

Even at its height, enemies surrounded the Abbasid Caliphate. The Roman Empire had lost much of its territory, but maintained firm control over Anatolia, leading to frequent border skirmishes with the Abbasids. The few remaining Umayyad and their allies fled to the Andalusian Peninsula during the Abbasid Revolution, eventually founding the Umayyad Emirate in 756. The Umayyads used Abbasid cultural and scientific advances to reinvent themselves, transforming their capital of Córdoba into the jewel of Europe. The Alids fell into factionalism following the Revolution, but the Idrisid branch built a power base in the western African Maghreb from 789-808, coalescing into the Idrisid Emirate of Fez. Each nation checked Abbasid power, bringing more skirmishes. For most citizens of the caliphate these wars were distant, only encountered when battalions of Turkish slave-soldiers marched through town on their way to the front.

The true danger came from within the caliphate itself. Discontented with governing the eastern provinces and fearing his removal from the line of succession, al-Ma'mun revolted against the caliph, his half-brother al-Amin, in 811. The resulting civil war starved the Abbasid Caliphate's population, and Baghdad's suffering was particularly brutal. For two years, al-Ma'mun's generals besieged the City of Peace, street fighting caused corpses to fill the markets, and artillery demolished the capital.





The civil war devastated Baghdad, but when they took al-Amin's head, we thought al-Ma'mun would assume the throne, which would be the end of our troubles. We never thought he would abandon us. Baghdad falls into disrepair, and fires raze what buildings remain standing. Stagnant water floods out of ruined canals into the streets. If al-Ma'mun does not return soon, we may need to find ourselves another new caliph.

Baghdad's neglected population proclaimed a counter-caliph in 817, igniting another round of conflicts just as famine decimated the eastern provinces. Sensing an opportunity to strike, a blend of Alid and Zoroastrian rebels known as the Khurramites launched another revolt in northwestern Persia, citing Abbasid betrayal during the revolution against the Umayyads. Realizing his empire might slip through his fingers, al-Ma'mun made peace with Baghdad and finally returned to the capital in 819. The people resented their mistreatment but, exhausted from constant warfare, they laid down their arms and welcomed the royal family back.

The Khurramite rebellion, however, aggravated the Abbasids for the next 13 years. Led by the charismatic and brilliant Babak Khorrammidin, the Khurramites seized fortresses and disrupted trade throughout the northern provinces, stoking the population's fears of another bloody war. Dread across the caliphate intensified in 831 when Egyptian Christians, frustrated with years of famine and marginalization, ignited another major revolt. As 832 begins, the Abbasid Caliphate is in a strong but assailed position; any misstep could shatter its power.

Where We Are

Rebellious subjects aren't the only reason Egypt occupies al-Ma'mun's attention. For years, nightmares of the Great Pyramids of Giza have haunted the caliph. He sees hieroglyphs inscribed on a wall, knowing they are important, knowing he will die unless he can decipher them, but they are incomprehensible. As he awakens in a cold sweat, one word rings in his mind: Refrain.

Local militias are unable to restore order in Egypt, and the fighting intensifies as throngs of people die in the streets. The bloodshed pauses momentarily when al-Ma'mum arrives at the royal army's head, but the rebels are unwilling to submit to al-Ma'mun's harsh terms and fight to the last man, woman, and child, to no avail.

The caliph doesn't depart following his army's victory; instead, he holds an audience with every scholar, historian, and linguist he can find. One by one, they leave the caliph disappointed as none can translate his hieroglyphs. The people of Fustat awaken awed and horrified to the news that al-Mamun broke into the Pyramid of Khufu in a fit of desperation. The caliph finds the passage that haunted his dreams, but nothing to help him translate it.

While the pyramid's treasure is missing, the secrets remain, and al-Ma'mun's fevered quest draws the attention of others with interest in this place. The Athanor of Giza is a beacon for Prometheans, while changelings comb the sands for evidence of the Great Bargain. Kindred unearth lost Theban rituals while mummies delve for relics and cultural remnants of the Nameless Empire. Beasts seek out their kin in the pyramids' shadows but remain fearful of an ancient terror in the Nile they cannot explain. To al-Ma'mun, they are all sorcerers, and even sorcerers must obey a caliph's summons.

I summoned the sorcerers last night, for all the good it did me. Dozens of magicians, cloaked in blood, oaths, and fear. Many magics, beyond the ability of my pen to describe, all of them crowded into the Great Pyramid to examine the glyphs. They found nothing. They said it was like an engraving on the soul of humanity. I commanded them to continue working on a translation, to which they agreed, some surprising even themselves. They have sworn themselves to this task, saying they worry the world itself is ill. I am unsure whether it was my authority as Commander of the Faithful or my intriguing mystery that enlisted their aid, but at this point, it matters not. They are my last hope.

— al-Ma'mun, Egypt, 832

The Khorramids prove no less frustrating. Babak Khorramdin's marauding rebels receive military and financial support from the Roman Emperor, who is eager to challenge Abbasid hegemony. Subjects loyal to Baghdad cannot make ends meet, as bandits swarm though the hills. Confronted with the royal army, Babak strategically entrenches himself in the hinterlands, forcing the Abbasids to pay in blood for every inch of territory they retake. Not even non-combatants emerge from the experience unscathed. Eventually, Baghdad's forces claim partial victory; the Khorramids scatter, restoring order, but Babak slips away during the massacre to fight another day.

Baghdad anticipates al-Ma'mun's return from the fields of battle, but eagerness mixes with apprehension. The literalist scholars find al-Ma'mun more willing than ever to challenge their convictions, and even the lower classes feel dissenting beliefs are becoming less tolerated. People gossip in the street that in his mind, al-Ma'mun is not only a monarch but akin to the Prophet, a divinely inspired guide for all Muslims. They say he expects his subjects to treat his wisdom with a proper mix of awe and dread.

If only it were just gossip.

Islamic Society

In the Islamic Golden Age, food is abundant but unevenly distributed. Hunger compels the poor to beg along the roadside while the rich feast on an endless variety of dishes. On holy days, caliphs, emirs, and their advisors throw massive public banquets, but such events are few and far between. In those rare times when the needy can dine like royalty, the most desperate gorge themselves, not knowing when the next meal is coming. Among the working class, modest dinner parties with friends are a popular form of evening entertainment.

Despite Qur'anic prohibitions against alcohol, wine is trendy among all classes. Conservative judges deride its consumption as blasphemous, but many pious Muslims question austerity, arguing that the Qur'an endorses moderation rather than proscription. Song, poetry, and storytelling accompany drinking, with classical art juxtaposed against urban fables. In this way, the *One Thousand and One Nights* spread through destitute streets and caliphal palaces alike, spreading their subliminal messaging far and wide.

Dominated by others, the enslaved live brutal lives. The Qur'an forbids the enslavement of Muslims, but slavers rarely bother with determining their victims' faiths. Male slaves become eunuchs or soldiers. The legions of Turkish slaves guarding the Persian frontier swell with each passing year. Female slaves become servants, poets, or singers. Harems are spaces exclusively for women, both enslaved and free, which range from simple private chambers to the luxurious royal complexes. Education and intellect increase a slave's value. Many slaves use these traits to attract a patron's attention in hopes of improving their quality of life or buying back their freedom.

Practicing Faith

Theologians proclaim Islam the completion of the prophetic tradition Judaism and Christianity began. The title *Ahl al-Kitab*, or People of the Book, collectively describes the three religions that each possess a prophetic book God bestowed upon them. The state requires Jews and Christians to pay the *Jizya*, a religious tax levied on non-Muslims, and local rulers protect those who pay from harassment for their faith. Some Muslims also welcome Zoroastrians into the Ahl al-Kitab, but others persecute followers of the Persian religion. Buddhists and pagans live in Muslim states, too, with different degrees of acceptance depending on the region.

The collision between rationalism and literalism divides Islam. Traditionalists assert the Qur'an and the Hadith, the tales of the Prophet, contain the only knowledge Muslims require. They read the Qur'an literally, believing its message existed before God commanded the angel Jibreel to address the Prophet. Rationalists proclaim reason complementary to scripture, which they often interpret metaphorically. Questioning tradition deepens their understanding of God's creation and their esoteric knowledge of Islam. They argue that since God is indivisible and the Qur'an is not God, logically the holy book of Muslims is a divine creation and cannot be eternal.

The Abbasid doom themselves with their petty squabbling. They spend half their time fighting their bureaucrats for power instead of leading. It takes the wisdom of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, to navigate the Qur'an's esoteric complexities. This is why I follow the Alids. Only the Prophet's descendants have such wisdom. If all Muslims were to unify behind a single Alid heir and follow that heir's guidance, we would have unity and peace. Alas, too many Alids have tried to claim the mantle, and I fear the family is becoming as divided as our foes.

Uncovering Knowledge

Education is everything. Without knowledge, we are no better than animals. With it, the wonders of God's universe are ours to discover. I dream of the day everyone receives an education worthy of a prince.

— Fatimah al-Fihri, Fez, 832

Islamic scientists are multidisciplinary, drawing no distinctions between the humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences. Academics study a variety of topics ranging from grammar to medicine to history, rather than specializing. The bedrock of Islamic science is the Bait al-hikma and its translated texts. Islamic linguists convert the accumulated knowledge of Greece, Persia, and India into Arabic, making it accessible to everyone within the caliphate. As more translations become available, Abbasid culture becomes steadily more sophisticated, increasing wealth and quality of life for the entire population, while decreasing inefficiency and corruption within the political administration.

You can be assured your son will receive the finest treatment at our facility. The caliph himself funds the hospital, to ensure his people fear no disease. Our staff practices humoral medicine and uses cutting-edge commentaries, particularly regarding how diet and exercise impact illness. Please note as well how the building is divided by floor and by ward. In less-sophisticated cities, they scatter patients, exposing them to additional maladies. Not so in Baghdad. Here, we group patients by their illness, preventing cross-contamination. With such a mindful and scientific approach, we have no doubt we will have your boy back on his feet in short order.

Islamic astronomy is known as "the mistress of all sciences," and all Muslims understand some astronomy since it predicts the phases of the moon, which dictate the months of the Islamic calendar. Astronomy also plays a central role in prayer: Muslims use the positions of the stars to determine prayer times and to ensure they are facing the holy city of Mecca. Beyond these practical considerations, divination by astrology is both a favorite pastime and an academic field of inquiry. Conservative religious scholars scoff at such fortune telling, fearing people will worship the stars instead of God,

Sunnis and Shi'ites

The chasm between Sunni and Shi'a Islam opens during al-Ma'mun's reign but is still bridgeable. Those who support Alid religious authority call themselves the *Shi'at Ali* and become Shi'ites. Those who give credence to religious scholars, both rationalists and literalists, become Sunnis. The Umayyad and Abbasid families generally align with the proto-Sunnis, but this is not ironclad. Some Alids establish Sunni regimes, while al-Ma'mun himself has Alid sympathies.





but divining the future from the night sky remains popular among princes and paupers alike. Demand for translations of astronomical texts is so high that booksellers cannot keep them in stock. Everyone loves the stars.

How pleasing is the cool shade of a garden in Baghdad's summer heat! The children play beneath the date palms, the merchants sell their wares, and the caliph relaxes in the harem's company. Bismillah, it is not possible without water. You wish for a sign of God's mercy? The Almighty has granted our engineers the ingenuity to bring water into every city. The ancients knew these secrets, with their canals and aqueducts, but we perfected the art. We cannot purify ourselves for prayer without clean water, much less support the world's largest urban population! Truly, this science is a sign that there is no god but God, and Muhammad is his Prophet.

Locations

The following four locations are important cities during the Islamic Golden Age.

Baghdad

Baghdad pulsates, growing in fits and bursts. It spreads along the Tigris' banks like a hungry infection, an urban wound in the desert wilderness. The old city has a structured layout, but new districts grow wherever is convenient. The royal family's power and privilege define the entire city. Baghdad is a city of wonders that make even the most miserable worker feel like a caliph.

Gates of the Round City

Four gatehouses separate the wealthy core of Baghdad from the residential districts around the city. God gifted the Prophet-King Suleiman (Solomon) the ability to speak to birds, control the wind, and command jinn to do his bidding. He imprisoned those who disobeyed using his mystic seal. By Suleiman's edict, the jinn created these gates centuries ago. Anyone possessing the correct Key can walk through the gates into another world, venturing into humanity's Bright Dream through what some sorcerers call Synesi.

The Fief of Dogs

Packs of stray dogs wander around this poor, overcrowded neighborhood. Residents claim jinn haunt some of the abandoned buildings, but the real threats lurk in Twilight. Dog resonance permeates the entire area, allowing dog spirits and barghests to Urge or Possess anything from buildings to animals to people.

The Grand Mosque

The largest and oldest religious building in Baghdad, the Grand Mosque is the city's heart. Most of the population, rich and poor, prays in this opulent building where everyone is equal in God's eyes. For many residents, the Grand Mosque is the closest they come to the royal court. The mosque suppresses supernatural influence on the mind, including the Dominate Discipline and Begotten Nightmares (prompting a Clash of Wills), although these influences resume once the victim leaves the building. Baghdad's divs can't explain the phenomenon, but they hold Maqam here, and the supernatural community at large uses the Grand Mosque as a neutral meeting ground where all parties can be sure their thoughts are their own.

Karkh

The population of Baghdad's primary market district outnumbers the rest of the city. Al-Karkh's burgeoning banking industry supports its status as Baghdad's economic hub, where anything can be bought or sold. According to rumors, a hidden passage in one of the canals is rumored to lead to an ancient underground museum of all the blood sorcery rites ever discovered.

Rusafa

The eastern district of Baghdad on the Tigris' far bank is home to the city's Gangrel and Ventrue. Rusafa houses Baghdad's army garrisons, and while the most prestigious estates are those within the Round City's walls, many elites build sprawling palaces along the river banks. Retracing al-Khayzuran's steps within the district's luxurious houses and gardens grants a fraction of her wisdom but runs the risk of being Claimed by a Dreamborn.

Traditionalist Ulama

Yusuf ibn Saeed possesses decades of experience as a judge and is a revered Qur'anic scholar in Baghdad. Yusuf doesn't oppose the Golden Age's scientific developments, but his conservative worldview places the judiciary as the Abbasid Caliphate's supreme authority. Those in trouble with the law could find an ally in Yusuf, or he could become an implacable enemy making use of Baghdad's bureaucracy to thwart them at every term. **Academics (Qur'an) 5, Politics 4, Subterfuge 3**

The Qahramâna

Unlike most women of the royal harem, Farrah can move in and out of the palace as she pleases. She is a stewardess in charge of organizing and providing for the harem's women and the caliph's political prisoners. As Farrah rises through the ranks, she develops a network of connections across Baghdad and makes herself indispensable to influential people. Farrah isn't above influencing their decisions in exchange for a favor, and she is an excellent informant with valuable contacts throughout the city. **Intimidation (Subtle Threats) 2, Medicine 2, Politics 3**

Córdoba

Carved from the ivory bones of Roman Iberia, Córdoba is the home of the Umayyads in exile. Abbasid Baghdad may be the center of political power and scientific advancement, but Córdoba is the capital of culture refinement. Fashion, fine dining, and sublime beauty define the city, with its unique mixture of Roman, Islamic, and African aesthetics.

Cordovan Gardens

Filled with orange trees, date palms, and pomegranate shrubs, the royal gardens invoke a lost age's splendor. Hidden under one gnarled tree is a secret passageway leading to an underground vault containing millions of keys. Occultists whisper that a copy of every key ever made can be found in the chamber, from the first keys of Egypt and Babylon to the Last Key, which unlocks its bearer's doom.

The Grand Mosque

Formerly a Visigoth cathedral, the grandeur of Córdoba's mosque reflects the Umayyads' power. Abd al-Rahman II prepares to expand the mosque to accommodate the city's growing population and enhance his reputation. From within the cathedral's buried remnants, an alliance of Jaliniyya and mummy cults explores the nearby Roman ruins in hopes of uncovering the Camarilla's secrets while avoiding their mistakes.

Roman Bridge

The Umayyads rebuilt this bridge, on the road leading to Rome's far end, when they first conquered Córdoba. The Nosferatu of Córdoba claim the bridge as their territory, but they built their necropolis too close to the river. Silt and water leak into the library from above, making every night a battle to keep the floodwaters from destroying their ancient texts.

Beleaguered Soldier

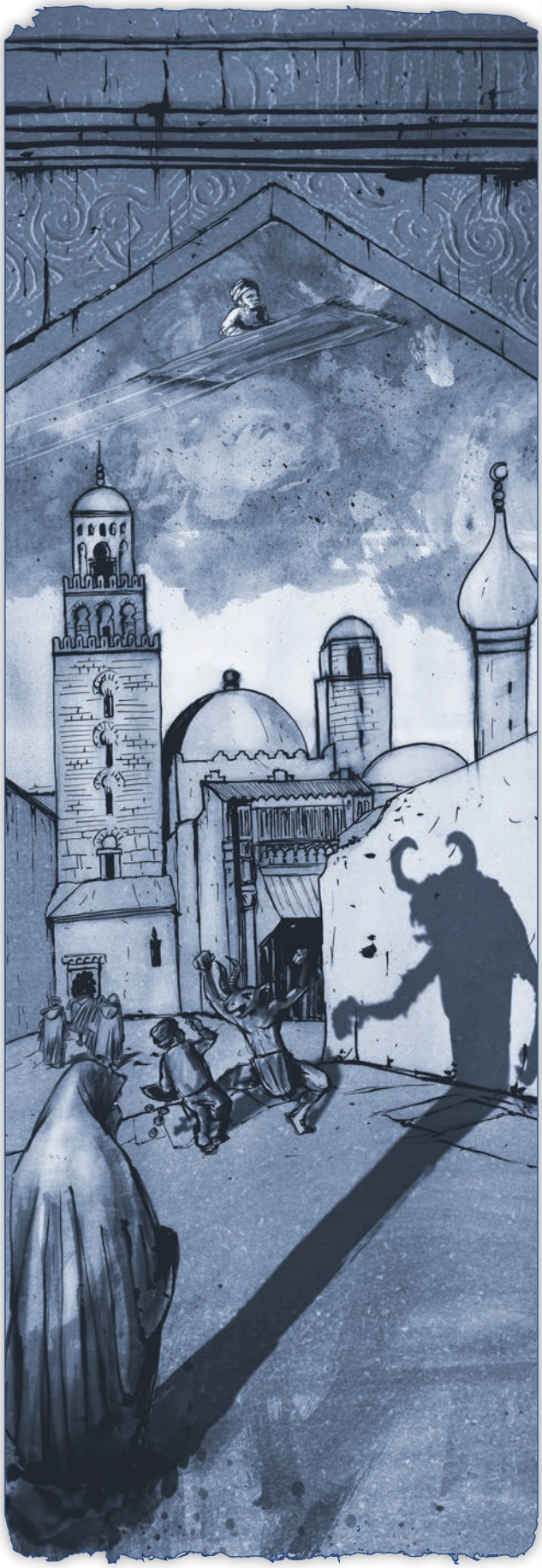
Sisbert is Christian, but he gladly serves the Umayyad Emirs. He fights Carolingians to the north and Idrisids to the south, but a new threat emerges. The Muslims call these oceangoing pagans al-Madjus, but Christians fleeing from the north have another name for them: Vikings. Sisbert operates under orders to investigate al-Madjus activities, verify rumors of their plans for a massive raid on Seville, and organize a defense. Sisbert recruits mercenaries to his cause and pays gold to any who seek out the northern raiders and report intelligence back to him; chilling tales of monstrous, fanged beastmen on al-Madjus longboats give him pause, but he hasn't mentioned them to anyone else. **Athletics 3, Ride (Horses) 1, Weaponry 3**

Educated Translator

Córdoba demands more books, and Nadia happily obliges. She puts her years of education to work translating manuscripts to and from Arabic. Nadia currently works on new translations of the *Hazar Afsana*, a selection of Galen's medical texts, and a book of occult science. She is willing to put those projects on hold, though, if presented with an intriguing subject or commissioned with gold. **Academics (Translation) 4, Investigation 2, Expression 3**

Fez

The Idrisid capital of Fez is a twin city. Madinat is on the River Fez's western bank and al-'Aliya is on the eastern. Fez sits at the intersection of two important trade routes. The





north-south route connects Europe to west Africa, while the east-west route stretches across north Africa, all the way to Baghdad. As a result, Fez is a wealthy city, full of traders and merchants selling their wares. The city is well-known for the indigenous North Africans known as Berbers to the Arabs, who call themselves Imazighen (singular: Amazigh). It's not as grandiose as Baghdad, but Fez's inhabitants are always active in the bustling tanneries, winding streets, and busy markets.

River Fez

The River Fez is the city's lifeline, providing water from the high mountains and a pathway to the ocean. In the mud at the river's bottom sits a glass jar, and inside the jar is a city made of brass. Recovering the jar and speaking the right words would allow one to travel to the supernatural city. Only a fool would believe such a journey free from peril, but learning the City of Brass' secrets could be worth the danger.

Shrine of Idris II

Since his death in 828, Idris II rests under the mosque he built in the center of Fez, around which developed a shrine devoted to the Alid prince. Here, Rasheed, the Ravager Apex of Madinat, holds court and feasts on fears that Idris' passing heralds the city's end.

Amazigh Guide

Although she comes to Fez to pray in its mosque, Daya's heart is in the valleys. Anyone wishing to contact the Imazighen outside the city starts by finding Daya, and she facilitates meetings for parties she trusts. Daya is a devout Muslim, but her faith takes a distant second place to her culture. Daya harbors a deep hatred of the slavers who abduct Amazigh women to sell them into harems. **Archery 4, Brawl 3, Survival (Finding Water) 3**

Caravan Trader

Bassam came to Fez hiding in a caravan from Kairouan, fleeing violent revolution. They had little more than the shirt on their back, but once in Fez, they were able to embrace themselves as *mukhannath*, a genderfluid person. A decade later, Bassam's goods routinely flow both east and south across the Sahara through their trade networks. Anyone wanting to cross the desert can go with Bassam's caravans, if they are willing to pay their way. **Empathy 1, Persuasion (Sales Pitches) 3, Streetwise 2**

Merv

Built around an oasis, Merv is one of the last stops for convoys heading north or east, and it thrives on the wealth they bring. Despite its distance from the capital, Merv is the seat of revolution. The original Abbasid revolt against the Umayyads began here, as did al-Ma'mun's rebellion against al-Amin. While Merv's importance is diminishing due to the provincial administration moving to Nishapur, the city is too critical an ideological and economic hub to ignore. Merv is a center of agricultural innovation, using a series of irrigation canals to support its growth. As their wealth increases, the people of Merv find themselves wondering if it isn't time for another revolution.

Kyz Kala Fortress

The fortress-citadel of Merv, built by the Sassanid Persians in the 7th century, is a central location in the city tonight. Stern and imposing, the fortress reminds everyone of Merv's military past. Anyone living inside or nearby learns quickly not to wander alone at night, for the ghost of Yazdegerd III, the last Sassanid Shah, stalks the halls.

Silkworm Fields

Among Merv's agricultural wonders are large plots devoted to raising silkworms. Distant cities buy the raw silk, where it becomes the finished product. Merv's Apex is Nuh, a Beast who preys upon the nightmares of silk farmers who depend on the crops and fear their failure. Nuh cultivates these fears the same way the farmers cultivate silk and works hard to ensure his crop remains sustainable.

Inventive Artisan

One of the few female artisans in the city, Batya runs a glassworks near her synagogue. She primarily sells her wares to the Radhanite traders who periodically pass through Merv. Batya's passion is not in glasswork, though, but automata. She loves to create ingenious contraptions that can operate independently of their creators. Those with practical purposes she sells in her shop, while the rest line shelves in her back room. If a problem requires a technological solution, Batya is the first person to consult. **Crafts (Automata, Glass) 3, Enigmas 2, Science 2**

Wandering Preacher

Challenging passersby with complex questions of faith is not what people expect from most devout Muslims, but Waleed is not most Muslims. He lives on alms when he can and steals when he must, preaching that enlightenment comes from individual religious experience. Waleed teaches that Ahura Mazda is the same supreme being as God and encourages Muslims to welcome Zoroastrians as their spiritual kin. Waleed is happy to carry messages or teach lessons about mysticism in exchange for food and shelter. **Expression 3, Larceny 2, Occult (Mysticism) 4**

What Is to Come

In 833, al-Ma'mun institutes a rationalist inquisition to eradicate literalists and force the people to accept the Qur'an as a divinely created text. Soldiers drag judges and politicians from their homes, forcing them to stand trial before the caliph. He leaves anyone who disagrees with his beliefs to rot in the dungeon. The caliph's heavy hand leaves the lower classes untouched, but they live in terror that they will be next.

But Al-Ma'mun dies while marching to war later that year. The inquisition continues, galvanizing a growing

conservative bloc to challenge the caliphs for temporal authority. Within decades, they become the Abbasid Caliphate's masters.

The Abbasids' influence erodes again in 864 with the Samanid family's pre-eminence as governors in the empire's eastern administration. The Samanid Emirate pays lip service to the caliphs and remains on good terms with Baghdad, but it is an independent state. Following the Samanid lead, politicians and warlords dismember the Abbasid Caliphate to carve personal nations out of the empire's body.

The illusion of Abbasid control shatters in 909 when Ismaili Alids seize control of Northern Africa and proclaim the Fatimid Caliphate in direct opposition to Baghdad. The Umayyads in Córdoba follow suit and resurrect their caliphal status in 929. Hassan-i-Sabbah, an Ismaili evangelist or *da'i*, annexes castles across Persia and Syria in 1090. Vastly outnumbered, the Nizari Ismaili State practices asymmetric warfare, a technique the Nizari guerrilla warrior — or *fida'i* — Rashid ad-Din Sinan masters. Sinan strikes up an unexpected alliance with the warlord Salah al-Din in 1176 during the Third Crusade. Despite their religious differences, both men have previously survived div encounters and create a new compact of hunters to free Islam from the undead threat: the Ismaili Ahl al-Jabal.

The Bait al-Hikma endures these changes and continues al-Ma'mun's legacy, but the end of its tale approaches from the east. The Mongol war machine's might blindsides the Abbasid Caliphate as it descends upon the empire like the apocalypse come early. Hulagu Khan sacks Baghdad in 1258, obliterating the entire Abbasid royal family. Legends say the books of Baghdad weep ink as the Bait al-Hikma's collected knowledge goes up in flames.

But the *One Thousand and One Nights*' tale does not end. The magic of the *Nights* breaks for a time, but the tales never disappear, nor do the secrets tied to the Refrain. The *Nights* resurface in France in the early 18th century. Publishing between 1704 and 1717, Antoine Galland translates the *Nights* into *Les Mille et Une Nuits* and includes the unrelated tales of Aladdin, Sinbad, and Ali Baba in his compilation (and, unknowingly, in the tales' astral reflection). Galland's translation revitalizes interest in Islamic knowledge across Europe. Numerous writers draw on the tales for inspiration for their own stories, spreading the Refrain further still. European translators immortalize the *Nights*, helping the stories survive to modern times.

The Caliph and the Pyramids

Through it all, the coalition of "sorcerers" al-Ma'mun left behind in Giza sporadically continues its study of the pyramid's mysterious hieroglyphs, even through multiple generations. They obsess over the mystical power of inscriptions unreadable even with decryption magics, connecting with other likeminded groups around the globe who agree with their increasing concern that the writing is a sign of something wrong with reality. When Napoleon later invades Egypt, the unthinkable happens: Khufu's hieroglyphs are suddenly comprehensible. It doesn't take long to determine why.

Reports arrive that Napoleon's troops found a stone inscription in Memphis that will allow mortals to translate ancient Egyptian writing, on the same day the hieroglyphs became readable. The Sworn long ago determined that the Refrain caused al-Ma'mun's dreams, and the *Nights* are popular in France. Convinced that coincidences don't exist, and the Refrain is now more dangerous than ever, the newly christened Rosetta Society's Egyptian branch sets out to investigate.

Beast: A Nightmare for Monsters

"My story is a strange and amazing one which, if it could be engraved with needles in the corner of the eye, would be a lesson to those who heed its wisdom."

— One Thousand and One Nights

In the Islamic Golden Age, the cat's out of the bag and no one can completely stuff it back in. Although humans usually get the details wrong and assume most magical beings they meet are some jinni variant, a few follow paths that lead them to true occult lore, and from there, to monsters' doorsteps. The introduction of paper and improvements to the writing system allow these scholars to share their discoveries readily, and sometimes this leads to crucial secrets falling into the hands of hunters and Heroes — or worse.

Many Begotten have mixed feelings about this. Mortals poking their noses where they don't belong violates a Beast's privacy and, more importantly, slowly inures them to her Horror's power and to instincts that usually prompt them to block out memories of what's in the darkness. On the other hand, the Children still live in the world and benefit from its comforts. The Dark Mother's gifts do not extend to providing her children with hospitals, optics, and clockwork marvels, and Beasts enjoy the poetry, music, and art that flourish during this era as much as anyone.

Because of their Family Ties and the traditional role of lessons in leading humans away from the shadows, the Children find themselves at the heart of an unprecedented — if tenuous and fractured — alliance among many diverse supernatural communities, as humanity turns the light of reason onto the dark corners of their world, applying advanced science to the weird and unusual en masse for the first time and suppressing their fears in favor of fascination. Some supernatural creatures want to outright erase the secrets humanity is learning about the occult and plunge the world back into darkness. Others hope to counter knowledge with misdirection, managing the problem by drowning out the truth with lies. Most are resigned to reinventing themselves, so they can continue thriving among a populace that knows more about them than humans ever have before; if you can't beat science, they say, you'll have to learn how to use and abuse it for your own gain instead.



A Conspiracy of Cousins

Each kind of kin responds to the threat of exposure differently, and that threat takes varying forms. Beasts try to keep their fingers on the pulse of their delicate web of allies, hoping to keep the peace without drawing too much attention to themselves.

Changelings believe they have the most to lose if humanity draws the curtain back too far. It's one thing to approach individual mortals to make bargains, granting wishes in exchange for protection (and letting the fools believe they're in command); it's another for curious scientists to haggle for fae blood samples while obliviously advertising the sanctuaries of the *ummah* (freehold) to the Wild Hunt. More paranoid Lost are the most likely to advocate for trying to reverse the *Nights*' influence entirely; others look askance at this extreme response, viewing it the way later changelings will view Bridge-Burners. Each court has its own idea of what trickeries to employ against exposure, and a few courts withdraw entirely into their Hedge territories. Most changelings are eager to cooperate with the Begotten, but Persian Lost — who call themselves *peris* — vehemently refuse to work with the divs, who have waged a longstanding campaign of kidnapping and enslaving peris with iron; the Persian divs feel the same way, disdaining changelings as inferior creatures.

Demons maintain a bustling trade in pacts, contending with an ascendant God-Machine buoyed by bureaucracy-loving caliphs who blend faith with science. Every scientist has the potential to be a cultist in disguise, and even if they aren't, they increase the risk of compromise as attentive scholars identify demons by their Glitches. Clever demons use their natural gift for language to coax pacts out of distraught Bait al-Hikma translators with incomprehensible foreign texts. Only the most desperate Beasts work with the Unchained, but few demons turn down Begotten requests for aid. A collection of supernatural allies is a potent tool, and many Unchained aim to create Hell by installing themselves as these accords' puppet-masters.

Although world-spanning conspiracies are several centuries away, heightened interest and advances in experimental science and medicine lead to **Deviants** Remade and hunted by local coalitions of conspirators among scholars and physicians, with ties to the larger Web of Pain through noble bloodline offshoots, secret harems, pockets of plotting rebels, mercenary companies, merchant caravans, and guilds of all kinds — craftsmen, thieves, and alchemists primary among them. Many Renegades welcome the prospect of mutual aid from Beasts and other allies, since human conspirators are precisely the sorts of people pursuing knowledge with reckless abandon, but their Scars — or the behaviors those Scars necessitate — sometimes seem like sinful impurities to their Muslim comrades, not to mention the Muslim Remade themselves.

Ghosts do not exist in Islam, but the **Bound** still make their Bargains amid the revolts and revolutions. Many Bound believe their geists are the angel Azrail's servants. Others contend they are *qarin*, ephemeral doppelgängers hidden from mortal eyes. Some Sin-Eater *tariqas* (krewes) welcome mortal curiosity, using it as an opportunity to recruit into their mystery cults, but most fear mortals will find ways to open wide the gates to the Underworld and let Reapers run amok. Already prone to community-building, Sin-Eaters — particularly Undertakers — readily ally with Beasts and have little patience with petty squabbles among their supernatural peers; but some Necropolitan tariqas try to convince everyone not to worry so much about restoring their privacy. If, they say, humanity has gotten to the point where they can handle the idea of angels and devils walking among them, isn't that a good thing?

As opponents, by and large, of the Begotten and their alliance, **hunters** experience a bit of a Golden Age of their own. To them, the *One Thousand and One Nights* is the motherlode of occult lore; once the tales circulate widely, new compacts form all over the Islamic world, and the Bait al-Hikma plays host to an arm of the Council of Bones, a conspiracy of scholar-mediums. Scientific progress gives hunters all manner of experimental new weapons, defenses, gadgets, and potions with which to support their Vigil. Regional sects of the Ascending Ones recruit heavily; occasionally, one of their diplomats approaches the Begotten with an olive branch and an offer of sanctuary for them and their kin (within reason) in exchange for promises of peaceful behavior or willing exposure. It rarely goes over well, but it sometimes gives the Children ammunition for arguing with their more violent and reactionary allies against lashing out at curious humans too often.

The **Awakened** Diamond comprises six Orders: the Adamantine Arrow, Guardians of the Veil, Keepers of the Word, Pancryptiates, Silver Ladder, and Tremere. Debates rage over whether the Sleeper obsession with the shadows should be encouraged wholeheartedly — a position the Silver Ladder spearheads — or shepherded carefully, which the Guardians of the Veil and Pancryptiates agree is wisest. Both sides clash occasionally with scattered Exarchal cults, but the Diamond's most hated enemy are the Accursed: soul-stealing, Abyss-worshipping pagan mages. Many Accursed traditions see themselves as heirs to Sumerian magic the Hellenistic Diamond would like to erase, and the warrior-scholars of the Arrow and the Tremere spend most of their time hunting Accursed hiding in desert ruins, letting their colleagues worry about the Sleepers; the Diamond won't realize their own Tremere are *themselves* Accursed for centuries yet. Many Muslim Mastigos and théarchs practice goetic sorceries supposedly handed down from Suleiman himself and involve themselves heavily in Sleeper affairs, viewing themselves as his successors in more ways than one. Mages agree cautiously to work with the Begotten, particularly once they themselves get their hands on the *Hazar Afsana* and realize they're a treasure trove of Mysteries, but not a few of their new allies end up feeling like they just exchanged one kind of exposure for another.

Mummy cults and lesser immortals thrive in Baghdad's urban underground but increasingly deal with scholars and wonder-hunters investigating their activities, as well as Begotten extending invitations once they're exposed. The Arisen responding to their summonses find the Islamic Golden Age's emphasis on art and learning creates a glut of relics. Some take this gift from the Judges as a sign of Irem's imminent return and prepare their cults accordingly, but danger surrounds them. The era's creativity and progress also produce abundant *seba*, emboldening the Deceived as they race their adversaries to claim human ingenuity. The Mesen-Nebu alternatively compete and cooperate with the Jaliniyya for research and resources. The Lorekeepers and the al-Amin have a similar relationship, each faction developing rival historical narratives. Beasts' requests for alliance create uncertainty for the Arisen, as their ravenous Hungers and devotion to the Dark Mother potentially mark them as the Devourer's minions. For now, their goals align, so mummies who accept work to ensure the Begotten's activities serve their own goals.

Many **Prometheans** consider *ilm al-takwin* (*multiplicatio*) especially important and perform it repeatedly beyond *al-'Amal al-A'zam*'s (the Great Work's) requirements. Unfleshed are more common than usual due to mortal innovation with alchemy and automata; this also prompts many Created to take roles as scientists, detectives, or translators. Prometheans find mortals intrigued instead of repulsed by their artificial natures even when Disfigurements flare, but Disquiet twists this interest into violent and unhealthy obsession. In the face of such cruel attention, they welcome Beasts' invitations, but they remain convinced the Jaliniyya are no better than other alchemists and could unleash Pandoran hordes at any moment.

Werewolves guard *Barzakh*, the barrier separating humanity's world from that of smokeless fire, but the herd's inquisitiveness makes the Oath of the Moon challenging to uphold. While humans rarely seek out Uratha directly, they meddle often in spirit affairs, much to the Forsaken's chagrin. Humans learn to summon or wake spirits to learn sorcery or have wishes fulfilled. Many would-be sorcerers end up Claimed, but those who don't threaten to upset the balance between worlds. Islamic werewolves frequently join Beasts' alliances, but the Forsaken insist Iblis was Mother Wolf and Father Moon's sibling, increasing tension with the Ahl al-Mumit and preventing them from recognizing the similarity in their mutual rage.

God and the Dark Mother

Although those who dream deeply always sense a connection to the Primordial Dream that colors their experiences, the Devouring does not erase a Beast's religious upbringing. Reconciling a Muslim, Jewish, Christian, or even Zoroastrian faith with a life that demands frightening or hurting people requires considerable self-examination and potentially a change of heart.

Some Begotten simply choose to ignore the conflict. This might mean abandoning the faith entirely except for what social station demands of them. In other cases, a Beast may regard his connection to the Dark Mother as something wholly separate from his devotion to God, less a spiritual figure and more a literal familial one.

Others regard the Dark Mother not as an unholy figure but as the Accuser of the story of Ayyūb (Job) or as a commander of the angels responsible for dispensing God's judgment on Earth — those who rained fire down on Sodom or slew the firstborn children of Egypt. She is an archangel, and her Children serve God by serving her.

A smaller number of Begotten stray into gnostic, or even dualistic, cosmologies, treating the Dark Mother as a partner to God. This is rare among Muslims, who regard the idea as *shirk* (polytheism). Christianity has always had some gnostic currents running through it, but official Church teachings seldom recognize it. Zoroastrianism and Mandaeism are much more accommodating of this idea.

Begotten from pagan traditions — or those willing to adopt them after their Devouring — have a much easier time reconciling belief in the Dark Mother with their existing faiths. To them, the Dark Mother is one goddess among many.

Devoted of Suleiman

Tales of Suleiman, including some found in the *Nights*, claim he had the power to bind, command, and imprison jinn, ifrits, and other devils. Some Heroes can replicate this legendary power, which they believe proves God has given them dominion over the devils that run loose in the world. This hearkens back to, and reinforces, stories of imprisoned jinn who grant wishes to those who find the bottle, lamp, or ring in which a mighty sorcerer imprisoned them.

New Anathema: Binding

The Beast is susceptible to binding as though he were an ephemeral entity (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 140); anyone with an Integrity trait who knows the right magic words to speak and the right binding ritual to perform can define a space and command the Begotten to stay within it, without a bane. The words and ritual are different for each Beast. The usual penalty to the binding roll is equal to the Beast's (Lair/2, rounded up) instead of Rank, and the effect lasts for one scene rather than days; but each success on the binding roll inflicts a cumulative −1 penalty (to a maximum of −5) to any roll the Beast makes to oppose the one who bound him until the Anathema resolves. The Beast cannot flee into his Lair while thus bound.

High Satiety: The Beast treats the boundary as though it were a bane, taking one point of aggravated damage each round he touches it. It requires spending a Willpower and succeeding on a (Resolve + Composure − half his Lair rating, rounded up) roll to voluntarily touch the boundary; it takes a number of instant actions equal to his Lair while touching it to break through, should he try. Someone else disturbing the marking of the boundary does not free him.

If the Hero remains within the boundary herself, she may impose a longer-lasting imprisonment; other binders cannot do this. After chanting her magic words and concentrating for a number of consecutive instant actions equal to 2 + the Beast's Lair rating, the Hero chooses a container of Size 4 or smaller within the affected area that can be closed or sealed — typically a bottle or oil lamp. The Beast becomes trapped within the object until the Anathema resolves; even the Hero's death does not liberate him. A Beast trapped this way does not lose Satiety over time and can only spend it when and how he's commanded. However, he can still engage in mundane Mental and Social actions, and anyone nearby can hear him speak from inside the container.

Anyone eligible to perform the binding ritual who speaks the magic words can issue a command to the trapped Beast, which lets him out of the prison. He may twist the command's intent, adhering to its wording rather than its spirit, but cannot ignore or refuse it unless it involves harming himself, accessing his Lair, or achieving the impossible — and he can't perform any other actions until the task is complete. Once it is, he automatically returns to his prison. The command must be a single, discrete task that could reasonably be completed within one scene; the Storyteller is the final arbiter of what commands are acceptable. Once the Beast performs three such tasks, regardless of who demanded them, he is freed from the prison and the binding ritual both.

Medium Satiety: As high Satiety, but Heroes cannot trap the Beast inside small containers or command him to perform tasks; once he drops to Medium, he immediately emerges from a container in which he's bound and no longer needs to complete any task he's been given, but the boundary remains.

Low Satiety: As medium Satiety, except touching the boundary deals lethal damage rather than aggravated. If someone else disturbs the marking of the boundary, the binding is broken (but the Anathema Condition remains).

Beat: The Beast succumbs to a binding ritual or performs a task for one who commanded him.

Resolution: The Beast gains and then resolves the Ravenous Condition.

The ties between the Dukhan **(p. 141)** and the Primordial Dream make them susceptible to this Anathema, too. Substitute Vitae for Satiety and Blood Potency for Lair.

DABBAT AL-ARD, THE BEAST OF THE EARTH

"Stand up. Every wicked man begs God's forgiveness when faced with punishment for his sins. The time to repent was before you met me. Now it is too late for you."



Aliases: The Dabba, Suraqah Shannam, the Apex of Baghdad

Background: Born Suraqah Shannam nearly a century ago, the Dabba dreamed of the end of the world throughout his early life. The Horror visited upon him there was Dābbat al-Arḍ — the Beast of the Earth that features in the Qur'an as one of the first signs of the world's end and whose arrival at a certain spot outside Makkah delineates the moment after which repentance and new faith become impossible. The Horror bears the Seal of Suleiman in one hand, with which it marks the unbelievers for hell, and the Staff of Musa in the other, with which it singles out the faithful.

The Dabba soon surrendered his mortal name and embraced that of Dābbat al-Arḍ. He prowled Baghdad for many years, seeking out and punishing those guilty of *dhanb* — heinous sins against Allah that cause the faithful to stray and prevent others from coming to Islam. He secured a place as a judge, which he uses to feed on the guilty. He grew in strength and influence within the city until he was the most powerful monster in Baghdad, and he has been its Apex for the last 30 years.

Description: When Dābbat al-Arḍ lives as a human, he is an ancient man with a bald pate and a gray beard who walks with the assistance of a staff. He quotes scripture and fables frequently to support his points and comes across as educated and wise, if perhaps a little inflexible. When he dons the garments of a judge, the Dabba possesses a gravitas that makes even sultans and emperors in the room with him seem less important by comparison.

Dābbat al-Arḍ's Horror is a monstrous and huge hodge-podge of animal parts that matches the Beast of the Earth's description in the Qur'an: "His head is like the head of a bull, his eyes are like the eyes of a pig, his ears are like the ears of an elephant, his horns are like the horns of a stag, his neck is like the neck of an ostrich, his chest is like the chest of a lion, his color is like the color of a tiger, his haunches are like the haunches of a cat, his tail is like the tail of a ram, and his legs are like the legs of a camel."

The Dabba's Lair consists of hellscapes sculpted from visions of burning deserts and lakes of fire.

Storytelling Hints: The Dabba's harsh judgments are legendary among Baghdad's people, as is his reputation for delivering some punishments personally. The resurgence of the Refrain (below, p. 151) has only increased his reach.

Family: Anakim

Hunger: Nemesis

Legend: Merciless

Life: Righteous

Aspirations: Punish the guilty

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2; Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Presence 6, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Skills: Academics (Theology) 4, Investigation 3, Medicine 2, Occult (Primordial Dream) 5, Politics 4, Science 2; Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Ride 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2, Weaponry (Staff) 3; Animal Ken 2, Empathy (Guilt) 3, Expression 4, Intimidation 5, Socialize 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies (Beasts) 4, Allies (al-Amin) 3, Contacts (Imams), Contacts (Judges), Contacts (Royalty), Fame 3, Fame (Advanced) 3, Fist of Nightmares, Resources 4, Status (Baghdadi Government) 3

Satiety: 8

Willpower: 6

Initiative: 7

Defense: 6

Armor: 3/2 (see Unbreakable)

Size: 5 (effective Size 13 or 20, see Looming Presence)

Speed: 13

Health: 9 (16 with Looming Presence, 23 with Satiety expenditure)

Lair: 7

Lair Traits: Blazing Light, Extreme Heat, Mirages, Burning (Size 3, Intensity +1), Viscous

Hive Trait: Mirages

Atavisms: Looming Presence, Mimir's Wisdom, Needs Must, Titanic Blow, Unbreakable

Nightmares: Behold, My True Form!, Fear Is Contagious, You Are Alone, You Cannot Run, You Deserve This, You Will Never Rest, We Know All Your Secrets

Weapons/Attacks:

Attack	Damage	Initiative	Dice Pool	Special
Unarmed	0B	−0	9	—
Staff	1L	−1	9	Two-handed

The Refrain

This era sees a resurgence of an occult phenomenon known to scholars among the Children as the *Refrain*, although none of them has yet discovered a pattern in its periods of activity and dormancy. Sometimes centuries pass between manifestations. Other times, they happen only a couple of years apart. They usually last no more than a few years, with the shortest recorded one lasting only three months and the longest stretching out for more than 50 years. The Refrain requires a human host to anchor it, giving her constant nightmares, and ends when that human dies. It has two effects for Beasts:

Campfire Tales: Once per chapter, a Beast can gain Satiety by telling frightening stories of her past exploits to an audience of at least a few people, none of whom can have



heard or witnessed the story or its events before. These stories must be true (though she can embellish) and must prominently feature both her Legend and a successful feeding. She gains 1 Satiety if she regained one point of Willpower from her Legend during the events she describes, or 2 Satiety if she regained all her Willpower. She can gain also Satiety this way if someone with whom the Beast has Family Ties tells such a story, even if she isn't present, but this counts as her one tale per chapter. If the Beast has the Fame Merit, she adds dice equal to her Merit dots to all feeding rolls.

Immortal Horror: Some Children in every age claim a Primordial connection to a famous Beast born, Devoured, and slain centuries ago. A few even go so far as to claim to be the reincarnation of such a legendary creature. Most of the time, the Begotten scoff at such notions. Everyone knows that when a Beast dies, her Horror dies with her. While the Refrain lasts, however, it *does* connect newly Devoured Beasts to Children from the past who share her Legend; it can only connect her to a Beast who has either died or achieved any type of Inheritance. During character creation, a player should either come up with an identity and a few details about their predecessor Beast or leave them to the Storyteller. A Beast doesn't automatically know about her Begotten forebear, but her dreams contain clues she can investigate; many Children in this era run across stories that seem eerily familiar to them when they read the *Nights*. It's unclear whether the successor really harbors the same Horror, kept alive by the Refrain, or whether it's just the Legend itself that persists, but in practice they're indistinguishable.

Immortal Horror allows the Beast to feed by telling tales about her predecessor instead of herself, via Campfire Tales, but she may still only benefit from one of these tales per chapter, and these feeding rolls don't benefit from the character's Fame Merit. Additionally, whenever the Beast's player achieves an exceptional success on a feeding roll that aligns with her Legend, she may draw upon the Primordial Dream's memory of her predecessor's long-lost Lair, gaining a new temporary minor Lair Trait for the rest of the chapter.

For more information about the Refrain, **see p. 151**.

Discordant Dreams

The Refrain is active now, but it suffers corruption. The discordant Refrain has all the usual benefits for the Children, but exhibits additional, troubling effects:

- It spreads knowledge about supernatural phenomena and creatures through humanity's dreams wherever Beasts and their Horrors actively feed, disturbing the Dark and Bright Dreams in a way that dredges up secrets the humans would otherwise have no way to discover and pushes them up through their Oneiroi into their dreaming minds. These dreams about the tales of Shahrazad may reveal anything from div clan banes to the location of an Insatiable's Den. They create more Heroes than usual and make it easier for Heroes to recruit followers. **See p. 148** for systems.
- It causes reflections of kin with whom the Begotten share Family Ties to feature in any nightmares a Beast or her Horror causes, which also spreads knowledge about those kin as above.
- It haunts divs' torpor, granting them knowledge of a dangerous form of Majnun; **see p. 145**.

Vampire: Night Terrors

"I saw in that cavern many dead bodies that exhaled a putrid and loathsome smell, and I blamed myself for what I had done, saying to myself, "By God, I deserve everything that has happened to me."

— Sindbad the Sailor, *The Fourth Voyage of Sindbad*

The Embrace is brutal in this era. The process remains the same: a stranger kisses a neck, a heart stops beating, and a body twists into a mockery of life. In the Islamic Golden Age, the difference is the psychological impact it has on a div. Prolonged exposure to corpses is impure for Muslims. Existence as a self-aware corpse capable of walking around does not lessen the humiliation. Likewise, Islam forbids the consumption of blood, considering it worse than pork or alcohol. Some Muslim Kindred don't last their first nights;

the spiritual contamination is too great to bear. Those who do must find a way to survive without religious purity.

Even for non-Muslim Kindred, the Islamic Golden Age is a dangerous time. Mortal curiosity is boundless, making it difficult for Kindred to practice their Masquerades. Worse, the Refrain infects Kindred with unpredictable blood sorcery, throwing power structures into anarchy and attracting attention from the dread owls. But divs manage to thrive, nevertheless. They are pious beings in impious bodies, a million contradictions modern and ancient. Kindred adopt the curiosity defining humanity in this era, distorting it for their own desires.

Golden Age Covenants

Even at its height, the Camarilla never touched many of the Abbasid Caliphate's lands. The covenants here evolved independently of those in Europe, although pockets where the Invictus and Lancea et Sanctum hold sway exist in the caliphate's western reaches.

Ahl al-Mumit

"My rage is my weapon, but it is also my curse. Inshallah, I will one night overcome it."

You want to join the Ahl al-Mumit because: You are angry that you're dead and you don't know how to deal with it. You think mortals waste their humanity. You are driven to hunt down other monsters.

The big picture: We rage at our cursed condition and the injustices committed against us. We always feel close to frenzy, and one wrong move could end with watching a sunrise. Fortunately, we possess the gift of *Karamat*, the magical rituals Europeans call Theban Sorcery. Karamat reminds us of our humanity, tempering our rage to work miracles. God does not directly intercede to work these marvels; instead, we call upon the gifts God granted us.

It is God's role to convert the wicked and judge the impure. It is our role to execute God's judgment and punish the unworthy. We see every vile act humanity commits and find them wanting. Some Wrathful wish to prove to God that the world is unworthy. Others hunt monsters far worse than divs. Most just want to make it through tonight without unintentionally destroying what little we have left.

Muslims dominate Ahl al-Mumit, but significant minorities of Christians and Jews exist within our ranks. The few European Kindred who journey east and return compare us to their Lancea et Sanctum. We add this presumption to the long list of reasons we are angry at the world. We are cursed enough as it is, and God has no need for more monsters!

Where we came from: The Lancea et Sanctum say they learned Karamat from an angel. We learned it from Iblis himself. God made his anger known when Iblis would not bow to humanity. Iblis asked for a gift so he could be an agent of God's wrath, and God granted him Karamat but cursed him, so his form was no longer smokeless fire, but dead flesh. It was Iblis who sired the clans, Iblis who gave us our path, and Iblis who taught the first Karamat.

Our practices: We use our rage to hunt Kindred, Begotten, and other monsters who lost their humanity long ago; yet we temper our wrath, so we do not become like them. Karamat reminds us of God's mercy, and it is our solemn duty to recover these rituals. We will not allow them to fall into the Lancea et Sanctum's hands, and we take it upon ourselves to keep those monsters out of our lands. We infiltrate mortal institutions, both to eliminate those we deem corrupt and to remind ourselves how to be human.

Nicknames: The Wrathful (informal), al-Hamasoun (respectful), Banu Shaitan (European, derogatory)

When we are in power: The wicked feel our wrath. The other covenants claim our domains are uncompromising, but we only turn our rage upon them if they give us just cause. We ruthlessly hunt down divs who welcome the curse and become true monsters, for God finds them wanting.

When we are in trouble: We lash out against those who keep us down. We are putrid and denied spiritual purity. Now these arrogant bastards want to eliminate our remaining dignity? Let God damn their families! We will crush them with our rage.

al-Amin

"You think we need sorcery to defeat you? Words can move mountains if you whisper them into the right ear. Here, let me tell you a story…"

You want to join al-Amin because: You are dead, but you still have your faith. You believe upholding the surahs and laws you can is better than discarding everything. You look to history to provide role models for how you should conduct your Requiem.

The big picture: Rather than agonize over their cursed existence, members of al-Amin leave it to God to judge their souls and focus on their night-to-night business. Arabia and Persia have long traditions of raising up independent, influential women, who take the initiative to uphold Muslim customs and laws. The Faithful honor these traditions, using them as guides to their imperfect Requiems, but they respect Khadijah al-Kurba and Homai Chehrazad above all others. Khadijah was the first Muslim convert, the Mother of the Faithful, a powerful and wealthy merchant. Chehrazad becomes a popular icon in the Islamic Golden Age, but al-Amin biographers were already regaling her history to the covenant centuries ago.

Members of al-Amin consider it their duty to keep the peace between the covenants, but that peace easily becomes tyranny. The covenant is quick to defend itself against criticism, citing God's as the only judgment that matters. While this belief is sincere, it also prevents al-Amin from confronting their actions' consequences or realizing when they have gone too far and angered their fellow divs.



Where we came from: When the Prophet was but a simple merchant, Khadijah al-Kurba saw how great he would become and proposed marriage. The Prophet refused, saying he could not earn the wages to support a wife, but Khadijah reminded him of her vast trade empire and how she provided for herself. Inspired by her strength and devotion, we resolved to follow her pious example to give us the will to persist. We walked the hijra behind Prophet Muhammad, we stood beside him in Mecca, and we welcomed him in Yathrib.

Our practices: We emulate Homai Chehrazad as storytellers and mediators. Our neonates help others within the covenant solve their problems and keep libraries of all our tales, while elders serve as lore masters who mediate between divs of other covenants and spread stories that manipulate the kine's opinions in ways we desire. ("Propaganda" is such a harsh word.) Others say our solutions can be heavy-handed, but if it weren't for us, they wouldn't *have* solutions. We also take responsibility for facilitating safe travel between cities for Kindred; long desert trips are hazardous, requiring preparation and careful timing. Trade caravans are our favorite transport method. Both Khadijah and the Prophet were merchants, and caravans allow us to enrich ourselves (and keep other covenants in our debt) while providing an essential service.

Nicknames: The Faithful, the Arbiters, the Camels (derogatory)

When we are in power: We keep the All Night Society running smoothly and the caravans coming in on time. The law holds everyone in check equally. We resolve disputes quickly and efficiently, so they do not draw mortal attention.

When we are in trouble: We fight our way back to the top — not with open war, but through our superior knowledge of the law, ensuring our enemies don't get comfortable. We are happy to serve as advisors to Princes from other covenants, all the while hatching schemes to reclaim power.

Fir'awn

"They call us Pharaohs to mock us. But the Pharaohs kept their faith. The Pharaohs were powerful. We accept the name and all that comes with it."

You want to join the Fir'awn because: You won't forget the old ways. You are a polytheist living in a monotheistic world. You have faith but feel that being a div is incompatible with being a Muslim.

The big picture: The Fir'awn (Pharaohs) aren't really a covenant, but a loose alliance of polytheistic Kindred practicing Majnun in the Muslim empires; the group is much larger than most divs assume. Despite the stereotype that they are all ancient ifrits, many neonates flock to their banner, hoping to find a new faith in Arabian paganism, Egyptian Kemeticism, Greco-Roman mystery cults, or Persian Zoroastrianism. Many of these new divs were devout monotheists in life but recognize that God did not intend the Qur'an for them. Now they seek wisdom from sources outside the Muslim canon, hoping to find new meaning for themselves. Most older Fir'awn inherited their faiths as mortals and now seek to ensure their persistence in the face of Islamic supremacy.

Elders are as rare among the Invisible as they are in every other covenant, but every div has heard stories of these elders' terrifying blood sorcery. In an age when any div can learn to wield Majnun, Forbearer elders practice it as if it were second nature. In future centuries, the inheritors of this tradition will join what will be known as the Circle of the Crone.

Controversially, the Fir'awn welcome mortal curiosity in this era. While it is hazardous, many Invisible hope exposure to the occult will bolster their faiths among mortals. Most are canny enough to recognize when to cut their losses and go into hiding, but a few are recklessly close to endangering other Kindred by encouraging inquiry among the kine.

Where we came from: Arabs and Persians worshipped many gods before the Prophet Muhammad's coming, and we worshipped alongside them. We belonged to hundreds of different faiths and small alliances among coteries, but Muslim divs pigeonholed us into a single community. We have never unified, but given the threats we face tonight, maybe it is time for change.

Our practices: We delve into ancient ruins to uncover the secrets of cultures long dead and gone — some of which our eldest remember from life. We are the self-appointed guardians of these sites, ensuring monotheists do not damage or desecrate them. When the Strix return to terrorize our kind and wipe us from the Earth as they did the Romans, we hunt them down, driving the Owls back into the shadows.

Nicknames: The Forbearers (within the covenant, formal); the Invisible (informal); Jinn (Europeans); Mushrikun (derogatory)

When we are in power: We rarely hold power for long, so we make the most of it while it is ours. We don't go after Muslims en masse, but we strike down foes who thought it wise to persecute us when were subjugated. We rule with a light touch and let individual coteries lead their Requiems as they like.

When we are in trouble: When aren't we in trouble? When our backs are against the wall, we do our best to keep our heads down while we take the names of those who wrong us. And we have long memories.

Jaliniyya

"You are having visions of the future and experiencing nausea? Fascinating. I'd like to take a sample of your blood."

You want to join Jaliniyya because: Being dead doesn't stop you from being curious. You practiced medicine or alchemy in life, or you want to learn how in death. You believe science can free you from your curse.

The big picture: We cope with our deaths by immersing ourselves in alchemical studies. The Jaliniyya thrive by adapting the scientific progress that drives the Islamic Golden Age to our own purposes. Science, medicine, and alchemy are all a part of God's plan, so why not use this

knowledge to our advantage? We follow the Mu'tazilite philosophy, and we research nothing more than our own Vitae. If blood taken from the body is spiritually impure, we want to understand the impurity mystically and scientifically.

Our greatest achievement would be to synthesize an artificial substance that mimics Vitae. With this, we could sustain ourselves without violating our spiritual purity by consuming blood. Until then, we explore the supernatural using scientific methods and refine our knowledge of the blood alchemy we call Kimiya. We don't promise to make the Requiem any easier, but we can ensure it will be wondrous.

Where we came from: We were once a minor sect in the Camarilla's dying nights, dedicated to applying Galen's humoral medicine to the study of Vitae. When the Camarilla collapsed, we fled east to the Sassanid Empire and remained when Islam became the new game in town. The Camarilla's fall and the Bait al-Hikma's rise were the best things to happen to us.

Our practices: We postulate, we test, we research. We investigate clans and bloodlines to determine how the blood evolves. Many of us endeavor to found our own bloodlines so we may study their Vitae before and after the transformation. Interviews and anecdotal evidence are useful, but blood samples provide the fruitful research. Few divs are willing to part with their blood, though, so we persuade them when we can and steal it when we must. When other Kindred debase themselves by committing diablerie, we hunt them down and capture them swiftly. Foul as it is, Amaranth changes the blood, and we cannot afford to let the other covenants destroy such valuable test subjects.

Nicknames: Alchemists (formal), Harun's Children (informal), Greeks (derogatory)

When we are in power: Science triumphs over petty politics and all become part of our experiments. We pay lip service to those with worldlier concerns and let them handle the night-to-night micromanagement, while we focus on the big picture. What we learn can then benefit the entire domain. That means some of our subjects walk away with less Vitae than they started with, but it is all in service to the Emir.

When we are in trouble: Left to work in peace, we are unlikely to meddle where we aren't wanted. If you threaten our research or libraries, on the other hand, things get messy. Violate our laboratories and you'll become a bloody smear in an alleyway.

Matters of Blood

Clans, mortal and div alike, are especially significant in this era. The Abbasids, Umayyads, and Alids all wield tremendous influence because they are part of the Prophet's clan. Similarly, neonate Kindred of the Emir's clan, regardless of covenant, wield disproportionately immense political power. The land between the Tigris and Euphrates has been home to the Daeva and Gangrel since Enkidu and Ishtar walked the Earth. The Mekhet homeland of Egypt is another critical province for the Abbasids, but the Shadows make themselves comfortable in every city. The Nosferatu are most influential in the east, often emerging as waterlogged corpses from the sea. The Ventrue hold the west, reigning in cities that once belonged to the Romans. Some Lords wander onto the northeastern steppes of Transoxiana, claiming to be Gangrel transformed by some hideous occult disease. Thriving across all Islamic lands are the Dukhan, a clan of predators who trail smoke while haunting the soul of humanity.

Dukhan

The ones who walk with nightmares.

"Deeper than dreams, beyond the night sky. That's how far I've traveled just to see this look on your face."

The Dukhan were once Mekhet, but they embroiled themselves in the affairs of Beasts and split off into their own clan centuries ago. Tonight, they stalk humanity's soul instead of shadows. While it is rare to find divs haunting the Primordial Dream, the Dukhan are the clan most common and most comfortable within the Astral.

Why you want to be us: You can see the realms beyond, all the wonders and horrors that ever were, fantastic and vile. Once you know them, you become them. *You* are the nightmare. Free from the world of flesh and pain, your imagination knows no bounds. Be any kind of terror you like. Be all of them.

Why you should fear us: The Mekhet may watch you sleep, but we watch what's *beyond* sleep. We know humanity's brightest desires and darkest dreads. We drink deep from the well of the collective soul and learn things about you that you didn't even know were there to learn.

And if that's not enough, we have *other* monsters inside us. We are never alone. The Begotten claim Chambers within our blood. You haven't known terror until you've seen a three-headed horse the size of an elephant force itself through a ribcage like an erupting meat volcano.

Why we should fear ourselves: When you're a vessel for something scarier than you are, you have to wonder where you went wrong. What are the Begotten, really? They say they're kin, but they're no Kindred. They say you hunt and feed together, but what if they're just using you? When you travel in the Primordial Dream, it's *their* territory you're in, but you keep doing it because the world seems so empty without those wonders. Addicted to blood, sure, but addicted to dreams? What do you do when your supplier's a 20-foot-tall cyclops with anger-management issues?

Not to mention coming face to face with the exaggerated mirror of your *own* Beast, for those of us who dig far enough into the Dark Dream to linger where the collective soul of the Kindred dwells. Some claim to have seen the Blood itself as a marauding Dreamborn monster, ever-evolving and always hungry.

Nickname: Succubi, Incubi

Clan Bane (The Curse of Reverie): The Dukhan have strange urges, even by div standards, and can't sustain

themselves on blood alone. If a Dukhan goes (Humanity) nights without visiting the Astral for at least a full scene, whether through a Primordial Pathway, the Nightmare Journey Devotion (p. 143), or some other method, he gains the Languid Condition (**Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 304). It resolves when he either succumbs to torpor or spends a full scene in the Astral.

Favored Attributes: Wits or Stamina

Disciplines: Auspex, Obfuscate, Protean

Vitae Chambers

A Beast can use a Dukhan div who shares Family Ties with her, rather than a location, as the basis for a new Chamber to add to her Lair. The div need not have any traits in common with her Lair, but he does need to have lost Humanity via a breaking point in the Beast's presence. A Chamber created this way is a Vitae Chamber, pulsating with congealing blood and rotten flesh. The Beast's Lair Traits take on a vampiric cast in these Chambers; Slick might lubricate every surface with blood, for instance.

The external end of the Chamber's Primordial Pathway is the host div's body. Jaws distend to vomit up the bloody Beast, cavities stretch in a mockery of birth, or a grisly portal tears open in the div's chest for the Beast to squeeze her way out. It sickens witnesses, usually prompting rolls to resist repulsion, but leaves the host unharmed. Whenever the Beast uses the div's body to open a Primordial Pathway, the div himself can step through it to bodily visit her Lair without the Beast having to Hold the Door. To outsiders, it looks like the Dukhan implodes or eats himself from the inside, vanishing from sight in a spatter of gore.

Bloody Destinies

Predestination is a critical point of theology for Muslims. Most divs perceive divinity in the twists of fate surrounding qadar and declare only God capable of bestowing such powers. The qadar's abilities even fascinate those Kindred who adopt the Mu'tazilite creed and reject predestination in favor of absolute free will. The Jaliniyya host many of these Mu'tazilites and constantly seek qadar blood in hopes of determining its occult properties; they and those who practice Majnun, stable or not, have developed several new — if dangerous and unpredictable — ways to produce qadar, later lost to history when the Bait al-Hikma burns.

Many qadar are less certain about their condition. A common perspective is that their bloodlust is a challenge from God to maintain spiritual purity against all odds. A few even go as far as declaring themselves prophets, although such blasphemy quickly attracts angry mobs. Other qadar believe their foul urges and dark magic can only be God's curse. It is far more common to find these qadar leading mortal investigations into supernatural activity than most Kindred would like to admit.

Systems: Qadar blood mutates similarly to div blood during the Islamic Golden Age, but the effects are not as pronounced. All qadar gain the three-dot version of the Mother's Army Recruit Merit (**Half-Damned**, p. 45) for free without meeting its prerequisites.

Being Respectful

As bad as turning into a vampire may seem for others, for many Muslims a curse forcing them to violate their faith by consuming blood is a cruel injustice. Be mindful of your audience. If anyone feels uncomfortable with portraying Muslim vampires, don't include Muslim vampires in your chronicle. The Islamic Golden Age is cosmopolitan, so use non-Muslim vampires instead. You can easily replace the Ahl al-Mumit and al-Amin covenants with Lancea et Sanctum and Invictus inherited from the Eastern Roman Empire.

New Merits

The following merits are available in the Islamic Golden Age. Fir'awn may purchase Altar (**Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 109) as though they were Acolytes; Dukhan may purchase Dream Visions (**Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 111) as though they were Mekhet.

Ifrit's Might (•••)

Prerequisites: Blood Potency 6+, Fir'awn Status •

Effect: For every Blood Potency dot above 5 your character possesses, choose one Majnun rite. When leading this rite, achieving three successes counts as an exceptional success. If your character's Blood Potency increases after purchasing this Merit, choose an additional rite for each new dot. If his Blood Potency decreases, he retains the benefits, but doesn't choose more new rites if his Blood Potency increases again to a rating for which this Merit already provided a benefit.

Lingering Dreams (••)

Prerequisite: Dream Visions

When you dream of others, they also dream of you. Whenever your character successfully interprets a dream vision about a person, the dream's subject gains the Swooning Condition for your character.

Shahrayad's Tale (• to •••••)

Prerequisite: al-Amin Status •

Effect: Your character enthralls listeners when telling tales, keeping them coming back for more. Once per chapter, she may spend at least an hour telling an addictive story targeting up to her Merit dots in victims. Each listener's player rolls (Resolve + Composure), with a −1 penalty per

Merit dot. Anyone who fails succumbs to the tale's power, suffering Vitae addiction (**Vampire**, p. 99) for both Vitae *and* your character's tales. As long as a victim has an Addicted Condition caused by this Merit, their impression of your character improves by one level; for each additional such tale they hear while already addicted, the impression improves again, to a maximum of perfect. Kindred with Blood Potency 6+ are not immune to addiction caused by this Merit. In addition to the Condition's usual resolution, if your character falls into torpor or suffers Final Death, all Addicted Conditions she caused with this Merit resolve immediately.

New Devotion: Nightmare Journey

(Auspex •••••)

The Dukhan have long stalked the kine from their collective soul. Divs of other clans who learn this Devotion have a mysterious way of disappearing.

This Devotion costs 3 Experiences to learn.

Cost: 1 Vitae + 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

By activating this Devotion at any time while using Twilight Projection, the div may transport her mind to an unclaimed Chamber in the local Hive; which Chamber is up to the Storyteller, but it always has Lair Traits in common with wherever the div is when she uses this Devotion. The div gains a Dream Form (**Beast: The Primordial**, p. 99) capable of using Disciplines and physically interacting with other entities while in an Astral realm; this sends her into true torpor, losing Blood Potency every 25 years as normal, and abiding by her usual torpor duration (**Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 105) and methods of waking. Falling to Blood Potency 0 does not inflict Final Death.

In Dream Form, she may feed from Dreamborn (but not Actors), Horrors, and other Dream Form travelers as though she had the Unnatural Affinity Merit (**Vampire**, p. 114) for them, but gains one Vitae per *two* points of damage she inflicts. She may traverse the Day or Mists into other Astral realms as normal. Her Dream Form functions as any other; she can't defy gravity in the Astral or pass through objects there, and she moves at her base Speed. She can return to the material world as a Twilight Projection by returning to the Chamber where she entered the Hive and voluntarily ending this Devotion, which ends her torpor early as well.

Blood Alchemy: Kimiya

Kimiya is equal parts ritual and scientific process. The Jaliniyya consider Kimiya an occult science rather than ritual magic, a distinction few outside the covenant see. Kimiya initially developed in Greece when Kindred applied Galen's humoral alchemy to Vitae, but it reaches its apogee during the Islamic Golden Age.

Systems: Mechanically, Kimiya is a ritual Discipline and a form of blood sorcery, like Majnun. Only Alchemists in good standing (Jaliniyya Status • or more) may learn Kimiya and its formulae. If an Alchemist loses all status in the covenant, she cannot learn new formulae. Each formula requires spending one Vitae, plus a sacrifice of blood from lethal wounds equal to the formula's dot rating − 1, to a minimum of one. The blood must come from the formula's subject. If the subject is an object, the ritualist sacrifices her own blood instead. The dice pool for activating Kimiya formulae is Intelligence + Science + Kimiya. On an exceptional success, the ritualist may choose the Inspired Condition as her benefit, while on a dramatic failure she gains the Jaded Condition.

Kimiya Formulae

The following formulae are examples of those the Jaliniyya teach.

Spider's Hijra (•)

Target number of successes: 6

The Alchemist sacrifices his own Vitae and spins it into fine silk, weaving webs as though countless spiders had worked for many weeks throughout an area with a radius of (ritual's Potency x 10) yards, centered on the div. These webs inflict penalties equal to (his Blood Potency/2, rounded up) to Initiative, Defense, and Speed, as well as Physical dice pools. Any dramatic failures within the affected area inflict the Immobilized Tilt; the webs have Durability equal to the penalties they impose. The Alchemist himself is immune to these effects. The webs last until the next sunrise.

Sayih's Khol (••)

Target number of successes: 5

The formula's subject must be present. The Alchemist inscribes words of power in blood on the subject's eyelids. For the rest of the night, the subject cannot be harmed or impeded by the ocean's or other body of water's current, pressure, or waves. Living subjects can breathe underwater.

al-Ajsad (•••)

Target number of successes: 6

The Alchemist mixes her own sacrificial Vitae with corpse parts, mercury, and sulfur to create a homunculus that serves her loyally (see sidebar). It can speak, but only in simple language; it can read any language the div can. It can survive indefinitely, but the Alchemist must feed it one Vitae each night for it to remain active; she can feed it additional Vitae to heal its wounds as though they were her own. It dissolves into a puddle of viscera if its rightmost Health box fills with any damage, or it does not receive Vitae by the next sunrise.



Ebony Horse (••••)

Target number of successes: 8

The Alchemist inscribes bloody runes on an inanimate object of up to Size 7 and commands it to awaken. Until the next sunrise, the object gains the ability to move and fly at a Speed equal to (formula's Potency x 2), as well as carry passengers. The object is not intelligent and cannot think for itself, but it obeys the Alchemist's commands and knows how to navigate to any earthly location he knows how to find. The Alchemist can close his eyes and take an instant action to see the object's surroundings, losing his Defense while he does so.

Curse of the Monkey Prince (•••••)

Target number of successes: 10

Contested by: Stamina + Supernatural Tolerance

The Alchemist mixes her victim's blood with mystical reagents, then drinks the potion and speaks aloud to the victim one discrete action she genuinely considers an injustice against her, such as "visiting your secret lover" or "taking my inheritance as your own." The potion no longer counts as the victim's blood for any purpose. If the victim performs the stated transgression before the next sunrise, he transforms into a prey animal between Size 1 and 6, taking (6 − Stamina) points of bashing damage

Kimiya Homunculus

Aspiration: Serve my master

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2; Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

General Dice Pools: Cacophony Interpretation 8, Distractions 6, Lab Assistant 8, Lifting and Carrying 4, Snooping and Stealing 6

Willpower: 6

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Size: 3

Speed: 6

Health: (Formula's Potency)

Potency: 1

Dread Powers: Hunter's Senses (Alchemist's blood sympathy relatives)

as his body warps painfully and unnaturally. In animal form, he uses the animal's Physical Attributes and Skills, Speed, Defense, and Health. He can move and sense as the animal can — a turtle can swim, a parrot can fly, and a monkey can climb and use tools. Any other supernatural ability that would change his shape provokes a Clash of Wills. If the character who used the ability wins, it can change the victim's shape normally and break the curse. Otherwise, the curse lasts until the next sunrise.

Dreams of Smoke

Kindred dream, as mortals do. The Refrain sends their dreams into overdrive, stirring the Beast unnaturally. The Blood twists to unleash rituals that would typically take hard work to master. During this era, the Refrain acts as a conduit for Rodrogune's knowledge (p. 137) and any div can learn the art of **Majnun**, which other cultures call Crúac.

Most Kindred don't know what to make of these mutations to the Blood. The sudden changes simultaneously intrigue and terrify Jaliniyya alchemists. The al-Amin fear the breakdown of the All Night Society, while the Ahl al-Mumit cannot decide between hunting down those who give in to using their unstable Majnun, or letting their own Beasts out.

The discordant Refrain isn't the only plague these nights, and the Beast isn't the only thing awakening. Doom soars on shadowy wings as the great Nemeses of the Camarilla return. Filled with a cold rage the Kindred can't explain over the spread of Majnun, the Strix set to work like antibodies sterilizing a wound. The more powerful unstable Majnun a div commands, the easier it is for the Owls to find them. These nights, no one is safe. They are watching.

Systems: Whenever a div wakes from torpor, loses Humanity, or achieves dramatic failure on any non-ritual roll while in the Astral or a roll to resist frenzy anywhere, he gains a dot of unstable Majnun, each of which comes with a new ritual as usual; if he has five dots already, he learns an additional ritual instead. Whenever he successfully casts a Majnun rite, his player rolls Blood Potency + Majnun + number of additional rituals he knows. If the roll succeeds, the ritualist draws the Owls' attention and gains the Hunted Condition (below).

The Fir'awn have practiced stable Majnun for centuries and only draw Strix when they cast rites they didn't purchase with Experiences. A Fir'awn may spend a Willpower when casting a rite to use only those dots of Majnun he purchased, to avoid risking Strix interference.

Whenever a div with unstable Majnun gains Humanity or achieves an exceptional success on a breaking point or roll to resist frenzy, his player may choose to lose the most recent rite or dot of unstable Majnun he gained.

RODROGUNE, THE DREAMING QUEEN

"I have dreamed for longer than you have drawn breath. Displease me, and my javelin will ensure you do so no longer."

Background: Rodrogune dreamed for decades. She saw eagles the size of whales flying in the sky. She attended parties filled with silk and incense in the wreckage of crumbling minarets. She cowered in the Dark Mother's shadow.

Tonight, she dreams no more.

The world is not as Rodrogune remembers it. Though barely a mortal generation passed while she was torpid, the Kindred world went mad in her absence. Mortals who know too much drive divs into hiding. The Islamic world sees the Strix return to hunt once again. The Blood transforms in unpredictable ways as daysleep becomes day terrors. It is all repulsively familiar to Rodrogune, but she can't explain why or shake the feeling it's her fault. She has stalked the night since the beginning of the 4th century BCE, but uncertainty gnaws at the back of her mind. She intends to find the truth and set things right.

Description: Rodrogune appears to be a woman in her early 30s with black hair framing her tawny skin and cool, dark eyes. She typically dresses in black robes with intricate, night-blue embroidery, indicating wealth without being flashy enough to draw undue attention.

Storytelling Hints: Rodrogune is calm and collected under pressure but prefers time to plan and study her opposition before embarking on anything important. Her curiosity often gets the better of her, especially when it comes to questions of occult significance; she's willing to make deals to learn what she wants, but she's canny enough to bargain intelligently and try to get the upper hand. She possesses a loyal streak, and betrayals infuriate her. Given the choice between staying loyal and surviving, though, she chooses the latter every time.

Clan: Dukhan

Covenant: Fir'awn

Mask: Guru

Dirge: Survivor

Aspirations: Protect Persian culture; discover the truth behind the discordant Refrain

Touchstone: The Zoroastrian temple near her lair

Faded Touchstone: Parysatis, her mother

Anachronism: Recreating the royal javelin hunts of the Achaemenid women

Attributes: Intelligence 6, Wits 4, Resolve 4; Strength 3, Dexterity 7, Stamina 4; Presence 8, Manipulation 8, Composure 6

Skills: Academics (Persia, Zoroastrianism) 6, Enigmas 4, Investigation 4, Medicine 2, Occult (Div, Strix) 7, Politics 4, Science 3; Athletics (Javelin) 4, Brawl 7, Ride 3, Stealth 6; Empathy 2, Expression (Speeches) 8, Intimidation 6, Persuasion 3, Socialize (Royalty) 7



Merits: Acute Senses, Allies (Adamantine Arrow) 3, Clan Status (Dukhan) 3, Contacts (Jaliniyya), Contacts (Maa-Kep), Covenant Status (Fir'awn) 4, Honey Trap, Ifrit's Might (Blood Blight, Deflection of Wooden Doom, Feeding the Crone), Unnatural Affinity (Beast)

Humanity: 5

Willpower: 10

Initiative: 13

Defense: 8

Armor: 0/0

Size: 5

Speed: 20

Health: 9

Blood Potency: 6

Vitae/per Turn: 20/6

Banes: Holy Day (Saturday), Repulsion (blue glass)

Disciplines: Auspex 5, Celerity 3, Dominate 2, Majesty 3, Majnun (Crúac) 5, Nightmare 5, Obfuscate 4, Protean 1, Vigor 2

Devotions: *Annals of Death, *Celebrity, Chain of Command, *Crush of Years, Nightmare Journey **(p. 143)**, Summoning, The Wish, Wraith's Presence

Majnun Rites: Blood Blight, Blood Price, Deflection of Wooden Doom, Feeding the Crone, *Gwydion's Curse, The Hydra's Vitae, Pangs of Proserpina

Weapons/Attacks:

Attack	Damage	Range	Initiative	Dice Pool
Javelin	2L	Thrown	−2	12

Notes: None of Rodrogune's Majnun dots or rites are unstable. Traits preceded by * are found in **Thousand Years of Night**, pp. 72–78.

Hunted (Persistent)

The div has attracted a Strix's ire, posing a serious threat to the character's safety and well-being. The Strix may be intent on direct violence (or worse), or simply wish to torment him.

Beat: The character's persecutors find him.

Resolution: The character stops his persecutors, either through bargains, changes in lifestyle that deny them access to him, or through more direct means, typically violence.

Playing the Game

In this era, mutual defense drives Kindred and Begotten together. Inquisitive mortals and the Refrain give supernatural creatures common cause. The Dukhan clan has ties to the Primordial Dream, but other Kindred aren't in their element there. Beasts are familiar with the Refrain but do not yet understand how this outbreak has gone so wrong.

Astral Nightmares

The Islamic Golden Age is dangerous for the supernatural. Humanity grows intensely curious about creatures going bump in the night and knows secrets it should not. Beasts and divs sense something festering beyond the borders of dreams and fear the end of their world has come. The truth is much stranger and more wondrous.

Rodrogune

Rodrogune was the daughter of Parysatis and Darius I, but history forgot her, despite her niece inheriting her name. Near the end of the 770s, she discovered a copy of ancient Egyptian inscription from Sneferu's Red Pyramid

describing an occult phenomenon linking legendary monsters across time. Rodrogune was an accomplished occultist, but this Refrain was outside her expertise, so she consulted the one person she trusted in supernatural matters: her mother.

Parysatis was long dead, but a Dreamborn impression of the Persian queen persisted within the Bright Dream. Rodrogune fell into torpor to make the perilous journey there from the Primordial Dream. The answers she sought were also beyond Parysatis, but the Dreamborn suggested the explanation may lie beyond the Cave, in the Mother's Land. Never one to leave a mystery unsolved, Parysatis accompanied Rodrogune deeper into the Astral.

Al-Khayzuran

Meanwhile, al-Khayzuran's mystique and power unleashed rumors that she was Chehrazad reborn. Al-Khayzuran did not believe reincarnation possible, but she wondered whether her family had an ancient blood tie to Chehrazad. She couldn't satisfy her curiosity using mortal science, but she summoned the "sorcerer" Meher bint Sultan, a Begotten Obcasus Initiate, into the harem to help her uncover the truth. Unbeknownst to al-Khayzuran, Meher had her own agenda to reawaken the Refrain with al-Khayzuran as its new host. Meher had been experimenting for decades, and now with a suitable test subject, she succeeded in concocting a ritual to forge a link between al-Khayzuran and Parysatis — the queen who adopted Chehrazad's legend — giving the queen the answer she wanted and inviting the Refrain to occupy her soul.

The presence of Rodrogune and Parysatis in the Mother's Land caused the Refrain to spiral uncontrollably, reacting to the div's powerful Dukhan blood. It returned with a vengeance, infesting al-Khayzuran *and* Rodrogune's minds. Their nightmares spill into the Mother's Land and the Primordial Dream, spreading to the rest of humanity. The Refrain disseminates their dreams through its connection to other times, past and future. It points the authors and translators of the *Hazar Afsana* to supernatural secrets, which they subconsciously encode in their stories. Supernatural events also inspire tales that are not yet part of the *Nights* but one night will be, like the *Voyages of Sindbad*, *Ala ad-Din and the Magic Lamp*, and *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*.

The Tale of the Dream and the Dreamer

When rumors suggested al-Khayzuran was Chehrazad reborn, and Meher's ritual linked her to Parysatis, the Primordial Dream listened. Each retelling of the newly translated *Nights* strengthens the subliminal association between Homai and al-Khayzuran.

At some point during al-Khayzuran's life, Parysatis Claimed her and used her political influence to plant Dreamborn-Claimed throughout the Abbasid Caliphate, who are still at large. These Claimed act as secondary hosts for the Refrain and the infection cannot end until all these Dreamborn return to the Primordial Dream — or are destroyed.

Afterward, Al-Khayzuran's experience transformed her into a Hero, founding a Heroic dynasty within the Abbasid family. Not every Abbasid becomes a Hero, but enough of them do; the first sign is seeing Rodrogune's pyramid text in their dreams. This dynasty believes the Refrain is a blessing from God to help them slay Beasts. These Heroes anchor the Refrain through their connection to the Primordial Dream's surface, permitting it to use the *Nights* themselves as another host. Perhaps, if this dynasty were destroyed or somehow disconnected from the Primordial Dream, the Refrain could end.

With Rodrogune, Dreamborn-Claimed, and the stories themselves as hosts, the Refrain did not end with al-Khayzuran's passing. Now, when mortals read the *Nights*, they dream of the supernatural histories hidden within the stories. While the Golden Age's zeitgeist produces mortals with extraordinary natural curiosity and willingness to apply science to the mystical, the Refrain dispenses secrets for humanity to investigate and bolsters their resilience when faced with what lurks in the shadows.

The Refrain prevented Rodrogune from awakening from torpor, trapping her for decades inside a Chamber that Meher's ritual created, which a Beast recently claimed — setting her free. The Refrain also warped the Dreamborn Parysatis, turning her into a nightmarish representation of Shahrazad, who played with Rodrogune's mind and turned her Astral journey into a hell. As humanity discovers monsters and Rodrogune's own torpor nightmares spill out of her Chamber prison, Dreamborn representing these creatures appear in the Bright Dream. The nightmare Shahrazad roams the Astral, recruiting these monstrous new Dreamborn into a massive army that aims to conquer the souls of humanity and the world, one domain at a time.

Astral Worlds

The Bright Dream is humanity's collective soul, a collection of tales, mythologies, and ideas also known as the *Temenos*. Each realm within humanity's Bright Dream has a theme, and the Primordial Dream borders realms associated with fear. The Mother's Land is the name Beasts give to the *Anima Mundi*, the world soul; Horrors are born in the Mists that blur the boundary between this place and the Dark Dream. Separating the Bright and Primordial Dreams from the Mother's Land is the Cave, a misty passage with every language imaginable covering its walls. All of these realms are populated by ephemeral creatures known as Dreamborn.

See the **Beast Player's Guide,** pp. 153–158, for more information.

Taking Control of the Legend

This tale links powerful figures of legend across time periods, creating the discordant Refrain as a backdrop for this era and planting the seeds for cross-era play **(p. 151)**. The most obvious hook for the players' characters is seeking the truth so they can stop the Refrain from making humanity's lifting of the veil worse. Since those goals align with Rodrogune's own, feel free to have someone in the troupe play her. Someone else could play Meher. Players could even make new characters of their own and insert them into these roles. Being the unwitting authors of the Refrain as well as its opponents could be a fun way to tease out more pathos.

Systems: Impossible Knowledge

The Refrain bestows occult knowledge upon its host through her nightmares, making her sensitive to supernatural phenomena. Possessing a torpid Dukhan host during the Islamic Golden Age, the Refrain spreads throughout humanity, bestowing its knowledge upon entire communities. Any mortal who reads or listens to one of the *Nights*' tales risks infection: her player rolls Resolve + Composure, with modifiers based on having had any of the following experiences within the current chapter:

Circumstance	Modifier
Experienced a dream touched by the supernatural	−3
Visited an Astral realm	−3
Dramatically failed a breaking point from exposure to the supernatural	−3
Fed upon by a Beast or Dukhan, or fell victim to other dream- or mind-related powers	−2
Failed a breaking point from exposure to the supernatural	−2
Targeted by any supernatural power and noticed	−1
Exceptionally succeeded on a breaking point from exposure to the supernatural	+2

Failure on this roll infects the character with the Refrain next time she sleeps, causing the following effects:

- Gain the Unseen Sense Merit. Characters capable of possessing Supernatural Merits gain it for free at character creation. You may choose a type of supernatural creature as normal, a type of non-creature phenomenon, or a story from the *One Thousand and One Nights* (even one only included in the future), such as "The Fifth Voyage of Sinbad" or "The Tale of Three Apples." The latter triggers when the character encounters any element of the supernatural truth behind this story. Once per chapter, you may roll Wits + Composure whenever her Unseen Sense triggers. If successful, your character gains the Informed Condition related to the Merit's subject.
- Gain +2 to rolls for breaking points triggered by exposure to the supernatural; infected mortals are less likely to forget when they encounter strange things, even if they fail.
- Each time the character becomes the victim of any Beast's Nightmare, she gains a cumulative +1 die to rolls to contest future Nightmares that target her, to a maximum of +5; this bonus resets to 0 at the beginning of each story.
- If the character is a Hero, *every* infected character within a few miles responds when she gathers followers, regardless of whether they've encountered the supernatural or been fed upon. Characters swept up too often as a Hero's followers can begin to dream the way she does and become Heroes themselves.

Both the *Nights*' adaptations and the original stories are potentially infectious. The Refrain is also connected to Rodrogune, although she hasn't yet realized it; her Disciplines and Devotions, and Majnun rites she leads, automatically infect mortal victims with the Refrain without a roll.

Stories Within Stories

The *One Thousand and One Nights* contain fragments of supernatural history and occult secrets. Here are a few examples to use in your chronicle or to serve as a guide for adapting other tales.

The Ox and the Donkey

Synopsis: A farmer learns the language of animals but will die if anyone finds out about his gift.

The Truth: The div Barmak stalks the Silk Road, draining blood from unwary merchants and stealing their wares, but he craves a human family. He woos a kine woman named Parvin, without revealing to her what he is. Parvin is soon with child, and Barmak fears the horrors his rivals could unleash upon her and their unborn qadar. Lying low to protect his family, Barmak uses qutrub farmhands as spies to lure prey. A feud between Barmak's most trusted qutrubs, the oxen and donkey handlers, undoes his careful planning. Barmak intervenes and puts an end to the feud, but Parvin discovers his secret. Still pregnant, she flees. Barmak and his qutrub family search for his descendants to this night.

The Secret: Monsters play at humanity, giving them human weaknesses. Threatening the illusion of normalcy forces monsters to make rash decisions. Violence is

effective, but far from the only tool for destroying a monster. Alienating a monster from their mortal Touchstones or shattering their self-image is just as harmful as slaughtering their allies.

The Merchant and the Jinni

Synopsis: A traveler's carelessly thrown date seed kills a jinni, whose father demands vengeance. Three men rescue the traveler by telling the jinni's father stories of the curses that transformed their relatives into animals.

The Truth: Traveling through the desert, a Beast named Dina throws a date seed into the sand. The seed disrupts an occult matrix meant to summon an angel of smokeless fire. The defender angel guarding the matrix manifests and fights Dina, believing her blood can complete the summoning. The battle abruptly ends when three old men with their cryptid livestock repair the damage and persuade the angel to spare Dina's life. Her respite is short-lived, as the cultists hook Dina into an infernal clock to power their occult rituals.

The Secret: Monsters have cults everywhere, so don't trust humans. The three old men are members of the Cult of Herdsmen, stigmatics obsessed with creating cryptids. Reem al-Qahir, a stigmatic Hero, leads the cult. Reem uses Dina in an occult matrix to create cryptids to help him track and kill Beasts. Finding Dina requires tracking the cult's cryptid herds back to their base, but freeing her is another matter entirely, as centuries of occult torture have broken her mind.

King Yunan and the Sage Duban

Synopsis: Sage Duban heals King Yunan's incurable leprosy. The King heaps rewards upon Duban, but Yunan's vizier grows jealous.

The Truth: A Strix called the Leper possesses Yunan, a div Emir. Yunan's court fails to rid her of the Leper until a Promethean calling herself Sage Duban appears. Sage Duban exorcises the Strix, but her Disquiet infects Yunan's advisors, who execute the Promethean. The next night, Duban's body reanimates and unleashes vengeance on her Kindred murderers.

The Secret: Yunan's fortress still stands among the Roman ruins in Armenia. Braving its depths reveals a trove of rare medical texts, mundane and occult. Their secrets are worth far more than their weight in gold. The ruin crawls with shadowy Owls and is an Athanor. Yunan's bloody ghost haunts the complex as an Ash that Devours, seeking diablerie victims to reconstitute her body so she can reap her revenge.

The Enchanted Prince

Synopsis: A king discovers a magical palace where an enchantment binds a captive prince.

The Truth: While surveying the mountains around Muscat, Talib al-Rukh, the city's Apex Beast, discovers a palace of black marble perched above a lake. Venturing within, zie meets the captive mummy Ahmose, a curse turning his legs to stone binding him in place. Ahmose's jailer is the Shuankhsen Merseger, who feeds on him to stave off her Descent. Talib defeats Merseger, breaking the curse. The mummy and Beast swear upon the Black Caul to be allies through the ages. Talib gifts Ahmose an ancient Qur'an and oversees the mummy's conversion to Islam.

The Secret: The word of God reaches creatures lurking in darkness just as it does humanity. While this secret isn't destructive, it can be disruptive. A human meddling in the affairs of Kindred or Beasts to welcome them as Muslims can destroy carefully laid plans as surely as a stake to the heart. A Hero who believes a Beast can stop being a monster by following God still tries to impose their narrative on the Begotten.

The Fisher and the Marid

Synopsis: A fisher uncovers a sealed jar containing a vengeful marid.

The Truth: The div Zainab discovers a brass jar half-buried in the tide while hunting for prey in Aden. They pry open the lead sealing the jar shut, unleashing Abu Noor, the smoky Beast Incarnate trapped inside. Furious at his centuries-long imprisonment, Abu Noor rampages through Aden, threatening human and Kindred alike. Desperately, Zainab uses blood sorcery to recreate the magical seal that imprisoned the Incarnate. In his rage, Abu Noor blunders over the seal, entrapping him in Zainab's blood.

The Secret: This tale teaches how to create a variation of King Suleiman's seal, although it requires occult training and reagents. While legends of Suleiman say his seal only traps jinn, the version this story describes can trap any supernatural creature. Heroes appropriate this iconography, using it to develop Anathema to trap Beasts **(p. 135)**. Zainab combined a variant of this seal with Kindred sorcery to bind Abu Noor, creating the Dukhan clan.

Jullanar of the Sea

Synopsis: Shah Zeman marries Jullanar, a princess from the sea. They have a son, Badr, who must seek out a wife with the aid of his uncle when he becomes king.

The Truth: Jullanar, a Daeva princess from the Necropolis Beneath the Waves, emerges from the sea. Shah Zeman's displays of devotion persuade her to marry him, and she bears Zeman a qadar son named Badr. Murdering his father, Badr fulfills his destiny and seizes the throne while Jullanar and her Makara brother Sayih rule from the shadows. Badr develops an obsession with marrying the Sin-Eater Queen Jauhara. Finding his possessive fixation with her abhorrent, Jauhara meets his attentions with contempt.

The Secret: Beneath the Persian Gulf's coastlines, monsters populate necropolis kingdoms. Those who discover these marine city-states find kingdoms of broken mosques, temples, mausoleums, and shipwrecks filthy with seaweed



that monsters use as religious retreats. Some pray to God, others ask for the Dark Mother's blessing, and a few seek the dark gifts of Angra Mainyu. The waves protect these communities from hunters, but the monsters under the sea cannot survive without prey from the land. Begotten Heralds, qadar children, and other servants infiltrate human society and help their rulers feed.

Storytelling *One Thousand and One Nightmares*

The *One Thousand and One Nights* is the most famous example of a frame story. It begins with the story of a woman who marries a sultan, who routinely executes his brides the day after the wedding. To save herself, Shahrazad tells the beginning of a story on their wedding night but stops speaking as soon as the sun rises. The sultan wants to know how the story ends, so he spares Shahrazad until the next day. The following night, she does it again — continues her story, then stops speaking in the middle of events, forcing the sultan to defer her execution yet again. Shahrazad continues this for nearly three years — 1,001 nights — at which point the sultan abandons his original designs.

Within the primary frame story (Shahrazad's gambit to avoid death), many of the stories feature characters who themselves tell stories. In some cases, stories contain stories that serve as frames for other stories. The tales range in length from a single page to more than 50 pages, and range across genres from fables in the style of Aesop, to ghost-town stories such as "The City of Brass," to adventure tales, to an early example of the detective story called "The Three Apples." Many of the stories descend from older tales, often adapted to ascribe moral lessons to them that reflect Islam's teachings.

Frames within Frames

Since Beasts in this era (or any era featuring the Refrain) can feed by telling stories of their distant predecessors, the Storyteller can run these "flashback" scenes as tales within the tale. Each player takes up the role of another character: The player of the focal Beast becomes her own predecessor, while others take up roles as characters in that Begotten's brood. When the player and Storyteller come up with details about the original Beast, each other player should come up with a broodmate to play during flashback tales. You can create full character sheets if you like and play out full-fledged scenes with dice to determine the outcomes, or just roleplay through them with a minimum set of pre-established details.

You can also build these Refrain connections not as a single past brood, but as a network of Begotten and their

kin connected across time through their Legends and Family Ties, by using chronicle-building techniques like Climbing the Ladder (**Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 282) and Spinning the Web (**Thousand Years of Night**, p. 87). Adjust the categories and questions these exercises ask to create a spread of characters and broods you can use to rotate among the players whenever you shift from the main chronicle to a framed story.

Each flashback tale can provide further hooks for the primary characters in the chronicle's present day, as well — for instance, if characters in the past destroy a palace and kill everyone within, the primary characters may later encounter its ruins and the ghosts that haunt them.

In a game that features the Refrain, the main chronicle and its framed stories can operate at different gameplay tiers. Characters operating at a local level could experience flashbacks of broods whose actions had global impact, and vice versa.

Characters should keep Beats their counterparts earn in a framed story.

The Discordant Refrain

The discordant Refrain adds a few options to your flashback scenes, if you decide to use it. Characters within each framed story become aware of characters from the others thanks to the impossibility of its spread throughout the collective unconscious and the Family Ties Beasts build, each experiencing flashbacks or flashforwards of the others, and can communicate with broods in different times and places through these frames. One brood's discovery can aid the investigative efforts of a connected brood 100 years and 1,000 miles away by leaving messages or useful items in places they "remember" encountering in the past or future as different people and sharing vague thought impressions and experiences across time. Use odd "coincidences," such as characters running across places or phenomena they remember seeing in a flashback by what seems like chance, to clue the characters in that the Refrain has become a mystery to investigate — that they are playing out someone else's Legend all over again, or that interacting with mortals who, consciously or not, know things they shouldn't about that Legend is leading them onto that path. If you use the investigation system (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 77), let players earn Clues in flashback or flashforward scenes that apply to present-day events.

You can introduce framed scenes even without a player's Beast feeding through story, to represent the spread of the discordant Refrain. When these framed scenes end, let characters remember bits and pieces of events that took place in the past without even knowing or ever having told the tale — even small details no secondhand tale could relate, such as private conversations. As secrets seep out through the Bright and Dark Dreams, eventually the characters should run into *other* people telling *their* stories as a clear cue that something is amiss.

Cross-Era Play

Although especially appropriate to an era inspired by the *Nights*, the Refrain (discordant or not) can pop up in any time period and in any chronicle featuring the Begotten, even if they're Storyteller characters. Just choose a mortal host and build story hooks around that person to introduce the ordinary Refrain in any time period. This mortal could be a Storyteller or a player's character; games that lend themselves well to mortal characters and could also feature Beasts include **Changeling** (fae-touched), **Mage** (Sleepwalkers), **Mummy** (cultists), **Vampire** (ghouls), and **Werewolf** (Wolf-Blooded) — and, of course, **Hunter**.

Because the *Nights*' influence and the discordant Refrain stretch forward and backward through time, they can be a vehicle for playing a game that spans multiple historical eras and places around the world, using Refrain flashbacks and flashforwards or just playing out each story or group of stories in one era and then skipping forward to see how the successors in the next Refrain era fare in the wake of those events.

The tales' influence persists to the present day and their origins lie in ancient Persia, so almost any period is fair game for introducing this hook. You can use all kinds of characters to bridge the gap, too, like elder vampires old enough to remember the original secrets the tales expose, or Beasts linked through the Refrain to bygone Children who helped solve the problem (or exacerbate it) in the past. Mages, changelings, and demons all have unique relationships with dreams, the Astral, and time itself; mummies wake over the course of millennia and their cults are present in every period; Sin-Eaters deal with ancient ghosts and uncovering the memories of their own geists, any of which could have been involved in these events whether living or dead at the time; and so on. Try dropping the same enigmatic figure into every era and see how long it takes your players to chase the mystery down.

Perhaps the most obvious way to use this hook is to set your chronicle across a bunch of the eras in this book, as well as eras from the original **Dark Eras** and **Dark Eras Companion**.

Finally, this era works particularly well as an extension of **The Contagion Chronicle**. The discordant Refrain could easily be a symptom of a Contagion outbreak, which that book describes in detail how to present with rules. It also contains the Sworn and the False, crossover-friendly organizations that can be used with or without the Contagion; one of them, the Rosetta Society, already has a reason to be involved with this era thanks to al-Ma'mun's Giza shenanigans **(p. 133)**. Note that Napoleon's reign immediately follows the *Reign of Terror* era, which starts on **p. 316** of this book.





Story Hooks

Below are story hooks for use in your Islamic Golden Age chronicle. They can all stand on their own, but they are intended to be appropriate ways of furthering the chronicle's frame story as well. Either way, Storytellers should feel free to modify them as necessary to their troupe's tastes.

Fanning the Candle's Flame (Local)

A mob of fledgling hunters calls the characters out, correctly identifying them as Beasts and divs with too much knowledge about how their powers work and what their weaknesses are, before attacking. The characters can fight, flee, or scatter the mob, but the question of how these humans knew so much in the first place remains — not to mention that most humans in this era react to the supernatural with curiosity, not malice. What riled these people up enough to take up the Vigil, and how are these now-frequent mobs getting their hands on increasingly accurate intelligence about the supernatural underworld?

At first, the Kindred focus their concerns on finding the culprit of a severe breach of Traditions or an occult rival's secret meddling, while the Begotten assume the hunters are some Hero's followers whipped into a frenzy. As the characters investigate, though, they find that all their rivals are in the same position, no obvious point of Masquerade breach can be found, and the hunter mobs almost never work with Heroes at all. Beasts become crucial mediators between disparate supernatural factions with a mutual enemy but little else in common, herding overgrown cats with magic powers and centuries of fierce rivalries.

Investigation tracks these hunters back to a single source: the Bait al-Hikma, and a scribe named Bashir al-Jizi who produces written tales feverishly documenting every detail of his mystical dreams, with notes in the margins pointing out useful passages for taking advantage of monsters' weaknesses, and circulates them to anyone he can find who has a traumatic or horrifying first encounter with the supernatural, thus deliberately exposing as many secrets as possible to the right people to work up mobs of violent reactionaries. If he can't find people with such stories to tell, he manipulates events to *make* them happen. Al-Jizi hides behind anonymity and a network of eager patsies to stay out of the line of fire, but the compact he's building is a wildfire, and soon he'll be left holding the match and wondering how it all got so out of hand.

Echoes of the Camarilla (Regional)

Several divs of various covenants demonstrate forbidden knowledge of Majnun, and the Fir'awn are furious to see their secrets in the hands of outsiders. As Kindred society begins to fracture over it, the characters discover the incidents' correspondence with the arrival of a group of foreign divs who brought Majnun with them. Assuming they're to blame for violating local Fir'awn tradition, the Emir recruits the characters to kill the outsiders, drive them out of town, or otherwise get rid of them to keep the domain's peace.

But not long after their departure, one of the characters themselves or someone they're close to suddenly displays knowledge of Majnun, too. They'll either need to hide it from the Fir'awn or come clean to enlist help in getting to the bottom of the mystery. The Emir and the Fir'awn are threat enough, but the dilemma of whether to share their knowledge or not becomes direr for the characters when they run into their first honest-to-God Strix. Can they keep such an omen secret? Or must they out themselves as false Majnun practitioners to protect themselves, the domain, and maybe all Kindred everywhere?

Either way, the Emirs of the Islamic world can no longer ignore the strigine invasion once it becomes clear that it *isn't* a local problem, or one they can solve simply by exiling or visiting Final Death upon a few traitors. Divs of every domain have mixed feelings when, one by one, their Emirs begin inviting Begotten allies and others of their kin to Maqam, mandating that coteries extend these outsiders every courtesy. Elders who remember the fall of the Camarilla or the nights immediately following, who hear the echoes of flapping wings in their darkest torpor dreams, resolve to avoid the same fate no matter the cost. But what cost each one considers while the neonates and ancillae bicker over bringing dragons, witches, and walking automata into their sacred spaces, only those ancient dead know — until, perhaps, they pay it and let the chips fall where they may.

The Beast of Baghdad (Global)

In Baghdad, ordinary humans are no longer the only ones gifted occult lore in their dreams. Kindred, the Children themselves, and others of their kin experience revelatory nightmares that seed their subconscious with secrets about each other. Moreover, some can dream lucidly to control these revelations, allowing them to seek specific information — such as a rival's weaknesses or leverage that can secure a potential ally's cooperation. When the characters must face a rival group that knows far too much about their private affairs, prying into the cause demands their attention. They soon learn — or experience for themselves — that in mutating, the discordant Refrain brings the urge to punish wrongdoing with violence, and together with the secrets necessary to see the skeletons in everyone's closets, an all-out supernatural war threatens to boil over. No denizen of the shadows is without skeletons in their closet or trespasses against others.

If the characters keep their heads long enough to investigate, they discover that Parysatis and her army of

For Further Reading

Beast: Building a Legend contains a lot of useful tips for designing a **Beast** chronicle and conveying the mood of a region and its hive using the Hive Trait and other setting elements.

Thousand Years of Night, the book about elder vampires, provides several chapters' worth of advice for running games that span eras. This includes how to build and run flashbacks; how to use troupe play to portray cyclical dynasties in which elder vampires take turns being active while the others are in torpor; and a chronicle-building exercise that links elders together at character creation across long spans of time, which could easily be adapted to link disparate characters connected by the Refrain instead.

Dreamborn have invaded the Dabba's Lair and, through him, spread the Refrain in a form even more twisted from its original purpose, taking on his Legend and Hunger as it sweeps through the Primordial Dream and beyond. Destroying him is one option, but his personal power is matched only by the devotion of those who protect him — his own brood, Baghdad's government, his many allies, and even the Strix, who recognize that the discordant Refrain resonates now from him out into the Hive, and from there into Hives elsewhere. The further the Refrain sounds, the more beacons of Majnun call the Owls from their slumber, so they stand watch over the Beast of the Earth unseen as his Legend devours the Astral.

Sources and Inspiration

The *One Thousand and One Nights* is essential reading for this era. The Muhsin Mahdi edition translated by Husain Haddawy and the Penguin Classics edition by Malcolm and Ursula Lyons are both recommended.

Set in Harun al-Rashid's Baghdad, *The Father of Locks* by Andrew Killeen captures the history, soul, and setting of the early Islamic Golden Age perfectly. It also mimics both the genre and the story-within-a-story structure of the *Nights* while remaining engaging to modern readers.

Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* offers a stunning look at the world of dreams; in particular, Baghdad and the *Nights* inspired the tale entitled *Ramadan*.

Robert Irwin's *Arabian Nights: A Companion* provides lots of details about how the Islamic Golden Age regards storytelling and Baghdad's urban life. It also gives a history of the transmission of the *Nights* worldwide, making it essential if you want the events of this era to reverberate in another age. Irwin's fiction novels are also excellent inspiration.

Michael Cooperson's biography *Al-Ma'mun* is a short read, but chock full of relevant information about this era. Cooperson spends a great deal of time discussing the philosophical, scientific, and religious advances of the age.

Christopher Nolan's film *Inception* is all about dreams and stories. Every time Cobb's team dives deeper into the dream world, they create another narrative, which reflects the story structure of the *Nights*. The motif of ideas implanted via multiple layers of dreams is a perfect thematic match for the Refrain.

Putumayo's *Arabic Beat* album provides an authentic Arabian sound. The music is contemporary, using instruments and techniques that did not exist during the Islamic Golden Age, but it conveys the heart and passion of Arabic music to a modern audience.

The core theme of the original *Assassin's Creed* video game is the liberating power of knowledge and the danger it entails. While Baghdad does not feature in the game, it does provide a good sense of urban life in the Islamic Golden Age.


BRIAN
FEBLAN
'19

Aisha moved through the darkened library corridors. She steadied her shaking grip on the lantern clasped in her hand and prayed that the flickering light did not betray her location. The scholar had been loath to bring it, but at this hour, moonlight scarcely reached the floor of the vast, labyrinthine building and going without would surely mean being caught unaware by whatever hideous creature of darkness was rumored to be hiding here. She secured the lance beneath the crook of her arm, so its glimmering tip stayed well ahead of her. If any of her colleagues caught her skulking around with this lantern and a weapon, she'd be hard-pressed to explain herself.

Yes, of course, she imagined herself saying, *the monsters of our nightmares are real, and they lurk within the very structure of our great society itself. I have brought this one weapon and a light to stop them. Absurd. Aisha, however, had no intention to fight, rather to observe and confirm if any of the strange rumors were true. Was Imam Rashid speaking with some kind of devil in human flesh? Had he truly made a compact that would cost his mortal soul? Once she had these answers, she would return to her cell, and they would then make a plan to stop the monsters. One young woman alone would not be enough.*

Ahead, Aisha heard the murmur of soft voices and - against her better judgment - blew out the lantern and stashed it between a collection of scrolls. She pressed her back to the shelf and held her breath, turning the fullness of her attention to the conversation as she crept ahead.

Aisha recognized the soft timbre of her teacher's voice and understood the quiet, pleading intensity of his muffled words. A second voice followed, sterner but feminine. She scoffed to herself. If these wild rumors of unknowable arcane rituals and monsters in human shape were a coverup for an affair, she was going to be furious with the scribe who informed the cell. As she drew closer, she smelled incense, hot metal, and something oily. Beneath the tones of their conversation she heard a strange buzzing - an altogether-unfamiliar sound, like an alien insect. Warm light spilled from the clandestine meeting, and Aisha watched through a space between the books.

Imam Rashid bent over a table covered in unfurled scrolls. Across from him, a fierce-eyed woman Aisha did not recognize fixed the teacher with her intense stare. Arcane symbols impossible to comprehend and hard to look at floated just above the page. Aisha reflexively averted her gaze as her mind raced to forget what she saw.

"All you need to do is agree," the woman said in a rich, alto voice, "and this understanding is yours."

He shook his head, "I have longed to know the truth, but the price…"

Aisha leaned in to get a better look at the other objects on the table when the end of the lance brushed against an improperly shelved tome, knocking it loose with a thud. The woman's burning stare fixed the scholar to the spot.

"It seems we have company."

Empire of Gold and Dust
1337-1347 CE



"From the far reaches of the Mediterranean Sea to the Indus River, the faithful approached the city of Mecca. All had the same objective to worship together at the most sacred shrine of Islam, the Kaaba in Mecca. One such traveler was Mansa Musa, Sultan of Mali in Western Africa. Mansa Musa had prepared carefully for the long journey he and his attendants would take. He was determined to travel not only for his own religious fulfillment, but also for recruiting teachers and leaders, so that his realms could learn more of the Prophet's teachings."

— Mahmud Kati,
Chronicle of the Seeker

The Empire of Mali conjures images of boundless riches. Commanding the trans-Saharan gold and salt trade, Mali is an economic powerhouse. In this era, Mali is one of the largest empires in the world, second only to the Mongol Empire in Asia. From all over the known world, travelers converge on the Empire of Mali intent on sharing Mansa Musa's legacy. Considered the wealthiest man to have ever lived, Mansa Musa's stores of gold were immeasurable. While he was not the first mansa of the Empire of Mali, Mansa Musa is the most famous and successful. Under his rule, the empire expanded to new heights. Claiming Timbuktu for the empire, he established the city as the epicenter of learning in the Islamic world. A devout Muslim, Mansa Musa undertook the hajj, bringing with him thousands of people and enough gold, which disrupted local economies wherever he traveled, for over a decade. This journey affirmed the ruler's wealth but also exposed Mali to new vulnerabilities caused by greed.

Following his death, the empire began to decline. Mansa Musa's son squanders much of its wealth during his four-year reign, and the empire never fully recovers. Court officials seek to maximize their own power, undermining Mansa Musa's heirs in their quest for greater personal wealth and power.

Hunters strive to uphold the empire's legacy, rooting out supernatural threats that undermine their beloved home. The Followers of the Mansa seek information about the creatures secretly influencing their empire, and spread information as best they can, while the Golden Library records as much as possible for posterity's sake. Conspiracies of hunters from across the Islamic world converge on Mali, to learn its secrets and gain what resources they can to aid them in the Vigil.

While hunters struggle to make sense of the shaitan invading their homes, the Unchained recognize the leader's death gives them an opportunity to build a sanctuary for themselves in Mali. After weakening the God-Machine in Niani, the demons thought their victory was assured, but their achievements could not last. As the God-Machine rapidly constructs new Infrastructure, demons of the once-mighty Seven Shadows Agency watch impotently as their Covers erode and the holders of their pacts are targeted. A growing cult of religious demons discover Unchained from across the known world are mysteriously drawn to Timbuktu and the mysteries it conceals. With tensions rising and hunters unraveling their secrets, the Unchained desperately hoard pacts and forge networks of mortal servants to protect themselves from the gathering storm.

Theme: Greed

The greatest king the world has ever known is dead. Mansa Musa's incredible wealth and generosity captivates the attention of the Islamic world and beyond. Travelers from across the known world converge on Mali, intent on taking as much of the empire's legendary riches as they can.

In the capital, court officials and Musa's heirs wrestle for control of the empire and its fortune. Embroiled in court intrigues, the empire's wealth is squandered or diverted into the pouches of foreign travelers. Desperation for gold and salt leads to ill-advised deals and subtle betrayals. Demons seize upon this

desperation, offering pacts for fabulous riches in exchange for services or shards of lives, but they are not above such struggles themselves.

The most powerful demons in the Empire hoard pacts and attempt to maneuver mortal servants into advantageous positions, while demons from outside the empire try to seize its riches to fund their own endeavors. While some demons work together against their foes, most are greedy and selfish.

Mali's hunters know something is wrong, but aren't sure what evil has befallen Mali. While many would gladly sacrifice themselves for the empire, few would leave their loved ones behind, and the temptation to secure their family's future is often stronger than their desire to fight a losing battle.

Mood: Uncertainty

Despite their wealth, Mansa Musa's heirs struggle to hold onto their empire. Court officials undermine them at every turn, seeking to seize the mansa's legacy for their own and fill their pouches from the empire's dwindling stores. The fame of Mansa Musa's fortune has spread far, and the empire welcomes an influx of outsiders who bear no loyalty to the empire or its people. While the rising instability worries the people of Mali, it is far worse for those operating in the shadows. Hunters expect monsters will see that Mali has been weakened, and fear what will happen should they take advantage of the failing empire.

Hunters seeking to protect the legacy of Mansa Musa must contend with both the mortal intrigues and the machinations of the demons lurking in their midst. As the demons attempt to infiltrate their lives, the hunters must cope with the fact that any ally or loved one today might be a devil in disguise tomorrow.

Accustomed to enjoying the fruits of Mali's wealth, demons find their comfortable positions torn away, their Covers unraveling under the scrutiny of hunters even as the God-Machine enjoys a resurgence. The intrigues among the mortal court threaten what security the Unchained retain, rendering their schemes for power more unreliable. Demons from distant lands flock to the empire, but most are at a loss to explain why. Hunter and demon alike see that their futures depend on the right information, and both seek answers to the mysteries of Mali for any edge they might gain for the coming conflict.

What Has Come Before

In 1235, after the defeat of Sumanguru Kanté — ruler of the Susu Kingdom — Sundiata, the rebellious leader of the small Malinké kingdoms, founded the kingdom of Mali. He unified the Malinké and declared the city of Niani, his birthplace, as the capital of his new kingdom. Through his lifetime, Sundiata expanded the boundaries of his kingdom until his death when he was succeeded first by his son Wali, then his son Wati, a brief period of misrule by Khalifa, and onward down the family line until the famous Musa I. Rulers of Mali took on the title "Mansa," which translates to "Master," "conqueror," or "Emperor."

The kingdom grew into a vast empire that spread from the Atlantic coast to what is now known as the Niger River. Mali blossomed into a massive cosmopolitan empire, boasting a diverse population spread across 400 cities, towns, and villages. At the time, only the Mongols controlled more land and people. To help rule this vast population, the empire arranged itself into strict, hierarchical provinces led by governor while cities and towns were presided over by a *mochrif*, or mayor. This decentralization of power gave the empire incredible stability and allowed it to thrive even under poor and fractious leadership. Besides its strong political structure, the empire also had a large army, trained to quash any rebellions and to keep the all-important trade routes safe. At its peak, the army consisted of over 100,000 well-trained soldiers devoted to the empire.

These trade routes ran through three of Mali's major cities: Timbuku, Djenne, and Kawkaw. Each of these cities is situated along the river, readily facilitating the flow of commerce and goods from one end of the empire to the other. From the western side of the empire, mines produced salt and gold, staples of the Malian trade. Wealth moved along the river to the ocean and inland to Mali's neighbors. This was the lifeblood of the empire, and its vast wealth was critical to Mali's lasting power and success.

After the short reign of Khalifa, his rulership was followed by that of Abu Bakr, whose reign was also short-lived. In a coup, a man named Sakura deposed Abu Bakr, but his time on the throne abruptly ended when, after his conversion to Islam, he was murdered on a pilgrimage to Mecca. When the mansa departed for a pilgrimage, he appointed a regent to rule in his stead whose duty would be to ascend to the throne, should something happen to the current king. While Sakura was on his pilgrimage, the man he appointed to the position was none other than the famous Kankou Musa. Musa assumed the title of mansa circa 1312, just 80 years after Sundiata established the empire. Some demons believe the God-Machine turned the tide of circumstance to arrange for the rise of Mansa Musa, though they have been unable to procure any conclusive evidence. His ascendance to the throne was momentous, following strange occurrences. The God-Machine had already proved interested in the West African empire, so demons worked to further install themselves in Musa's court in order to investigate.

The rise of Mansa Musa brought peace, prosperity and stability. He was a figurehead, a celebrity, and a ruler beloved by many. As with any person who held such power and sway, all opportunistic sorts from hunter to demon to monster alike sought to be part of his social circles and have an opportunity to manipulate his choices. Knowing this, hunters struggled to counter these efforts, attempting everything in their power to keep the mansa safe. During his reign, hunters founded the Followers of the Mansa,



adhering to his religious beliefs and his love of academia, and applying these principles to defending their kingdom through observation, study, and cautious approach.

Day to day life in the Malian empire revolves around mining, agriculture, and trade. Miners delve deep into the earth to dredge up blocks of valuable salt and precious gold. Laborers move cargo from riverboats to the shore, or from caravans to the markets. Merchants direct caravans loaded with goods or direct cargo ships to port, along with guides, porters, and navigators. An emphasis on learning brought many scholars to Mali's cosmopolitan cities, some of them secular academics, others religious clerics. Free men and women also enlist themselves in the empire's armed forces, becoming palace guards or going to war to secure new territory. In the capital, courtiers and diplomats attend to political affairs while governors and mochrifs oversee daily, common life. The empire is stable and safe, and the everyday person sees little threat from outside invasion, cruelty, or starvation.

Pilgrimage of a Lifetime

A devout Muslim, Mansa Musa also chose to make the long trek from western Africa to Mecca. In 1324, he departed from Mali to make the trip. His journey, however, was no humble, ordinary affair. To demonstrate the incalculable wealth of his empire, Musa traveled with hundreds of camels and a retinue of 60,000 people: servants, soldiers, scholars, and courtiers. Each person and beast were loaded for bear with chests and sacks of gold. Mansa Musa distributed this gold freely to everyone he met, and he gave generously, casually upending local economies in his wake. Word of the Malian king's spectacle and generosity spread throughout the world. Legends hold that along the way, Musa built a new mosque every week. Musa spent every single ounce of gold he brought with him, and stories tell that he had to borrow money for the trip home.

With such a vast undertaking bringing power and recognition to the Malian empire, hunters, demons, and other monsters alike acted to be part of the mansa's great pilgrimage. They disguised themselves in many forms, from humble gold-carrying servants, to hardy navigators, to financial advisors seeking the ear of Mansa Musa himself. Hunters fought to keep their king safe from overt threats, while agents of interested demons observed and manipulated key figures. They struggled to direct the course of the journey, a subtle tug of war simmering beneath an ostentatious surface while the mansa scattered gold to the four corners of the earth.

Though he was a religious man, Mansa Musa did not force the practice of Islam upon his citizenry. His celebrity and popularity made converting to the religion a common choice, but Musa encouraged personal choice and study. He promoted the creation of mosques and madrasas (centers of learning) and welcomed all comers to his empire as an urbane place of culture and academic discourse. Having heard tales of a kingdom of gold, religious clerics, scholars, and travelers of all stripes flocked to the great cities of Mali.

With the influx of foreigners seeking to invest, trade, and study, more sinister things followed along the trade route. The deposed vampires called for aid from their kindred in Europe, preparing to take back their hunting grounds in Niani. Ghosts and spirits followed along, attached to the thoughts and feelings of traveling academics. As the God-Machine does not work on a miniscule scale, Its agents too traveled into Mali along the trade routes, to clash with the demons nearly successful in building their own Hell in Niani. All the while, hunters struggled to contain and study this surplus of new threats.

Death of an Emperor

All great things must come to an end, and in 1337, Mansa Musa died and passed his reign to his son, Maghan. His death began the slow decline of the empire as instability crept in from all sides. Musa's children did not hold the same popular sway their father did, and enemies from without and within turned their eyes toward the wealthy, weakened empire.

The gradual collapse of the empire has overturned monster haunts as people move, political alliances shift, and money loses value. This chaotic time of slow decline has also created new, vulnerable prey. Desperate people who once held power are willing to make dark pacts or fell agreements to reclaim what they've lost. Those who have wealth and fear losing it find themselves vulnerable to the predation of monsters. Demons learned quickly that the political climate is ripe for targets willing to offer up their souls in return for material wealth, power, and control. Hunters, too, find their societies rocked and crumbling, support networks strained to their brink and resources taxed and diminished.

Beyond supernatural threats, mortal politics threaten to tear the empire apart. First, the Wolof people declare their secession from the empire. In the city of Kawkaw, a rebellion foments; dissatisfied citizens express their quiet desire to be independent of the empire. On the borders, the Tuareg nomads watch as corruption, intrigue, and infighting slowly weaken the decentralized structure of the empire. They wait for an ideal moment to strike, their hungry gaze on the wealth and commerce of Timbuktu. The empire stands a fragile house of cards, ready to tip at a moment's notice.

Where We Are

Mansa Musa's death rocked the world. His reputation and personal charisma put the empire of Mali on the lips of people thousands upon thousands of miles away from the West African kingdom. The vast stores of gold he brought with him introduced the precious substance to places who had previously never seen the mineral, let alone such

material wealth in person. Unsurprisingly this earned the Mali Empire a reputation for being paved with gold, where no man, woman, or child wanted for anything.

After his passing, his son, Maghan I, claims the throne and rules for a brief time before the warlike and ambitious Suleyman usurps the throne and takes his place. Ripples of dissent rolled through the empire. If the king could be so easily overthrown, perhaps the role of Mansa could be claimed by anyone with the will to take it.

Nobles and governors scheme behind closed doors, whispering of who might make the next attempt for rulership. If it is anyone's game, it may as well be theirs. In the royal palace itself, the king ferociously holds to his position, knowing that he is beset on all sides by hungry enemies. It is this instability and greed that will ultimately undo the great empire. Meanwhile, outside the empire's borders, external threats lie in wait, craving to conquer and control the empire's significant resources. Owning even one of the empire's gold mines would make them wealthy beyond belief, and if they could also seize the trade routes, they would rule as kings themselves. All the while, in the shadows of the empire, even darker, more dangerous threats lurk.

Beyond mundane concerns, hunters fight a war besieged on all fronts. Ghosts and spirits stalk the streets in Kawkaw; stranger, more powerful creatures have taken over Niani, and the call of unlimited knowledge tempt academics with a dark side in Timbuktu. Meanwhile, all around them the structure of their empire collapses and resources run dry as the tides change. Some hunters argue for a cautious approach, to study and wait and see, while others demand action. There are certain threats, the cautious warn, that cannot be handled with violence. Stretched thin and weary, hunters in the empire of Mali have their work cut out for them.

Demons struggle against the ever-present influence of the God-Machine. In Mali, the hand of angels is apparent in the empire's wealth, stability, and long-term success. Their success in Niani has been short-lived, and their cosmic enemy continues to move, building a strange machine in the desert and skirmishing to recover its lost foothold. All the while they face opposition from hunters, from the other monsters they deposed, as well as angels and their agents. Demons work their agenda through cults and intermediaries, only acting directly when circumstance dictates that they must. Rarely do hunters and demons clash with each other one on one. A hunter is far more likely to take down a cult leader than the demon herself.

Though the common person enjoys relative safety and comfort thanks to the empire's stability and wealth, they are not safe from supernatural threats. At a local level, Malian hunters pursue reports of hauntings and cursed objects brought in from the river trade. Evil ghosts and spirits attack people on the fringes of society, and those who cannot obtain costly mystical protections afforded to the wealthy must turn to charlatans and hucksters. Riverboat pilots and dockhands spread wild stories of encounters with beasts large enough to swallow a boat whole (or so they claim) that swim beneath the river's surface and await unsuspecting prey. Miners tell tales of dangerous, unspeakable things lurking beneath the earth or of indecipherable writing found glowing on the walls of abandoned mine shafts. Neither hunter nor demon ignore these tall tales lightly, for every drunken story about an encounter with the strange holds a grain of truth.

Locations

The places within the Mali Empire where characters will visit include the metropolitan city of Niani and Timbuktu.

Niani

The capital of the empire and birthplace of the first king, Sundiata, it is the crown jewel of Mali. Niani is renowned for his vast wealth, a bustling hub of commerce, trade, and political maneuvering. At the height of its power, records report that the city held a population of over 20 million people — a city on par with any modern civilization. As a major city, travelers from within the empire and tourists from across the world journeyed to the great city to participate in religious and academic lectures, to study at any of its *madrasas*, or simply to bear witness to the capital made famous by the pilgrimage of Mansa Musa.

Life in Niani is never dull. The jewel of the empire boasts crowded streets, fine food, and any kind of entertainment a person of the era might desire. Fashion trends begin in the capital and spread to the empire along the river and the overland trade. Here the elite rub elbows, being visible on the crowded streets. Foreign faces color the crowd, each bringing their own strange stories and customs. Those fortunate enough might get invited to a noble's soiree, but those without means still enjoy the performances of poets, minstrels, and storytellers. Whether a person controls a portion of the empire's vast wealth or earns a modest living in the mines, Niani promises something for everyone.

Beyond mortal affairs, Niani was once the seat of vampire power. Demons in Mali overthrew them in an overt display of supernatural power, going loud and revealing their true natures to the prince and her court. Faced with monsters far greater than even the apex predators, the vampires fled, abandoning their fertile hunting grounds. While this gained demons a significant foothold in the empire, allowing them time to suborn Infrastructure to their own purposes, the wound to the pride of the vampires still festers, and the undead do not forgive slights easily. Hunters may find unlikely allies against demons among vampire society.

As a seat of power among the Fallen, Niani is the central hub for numerous cults. They send their members into the bustling streets, spreading their message and seeking new membership. A strategic choice on the part of the demons involved, they hope that the ever-growing presence of



these cults will spark the interest of a bored noble socialite and he or she will join. Once they have the attention of a noble, it is a simple of matter of tempting them into a pact and gaining access to the throne itself. Hunters in Niani know the power balance of monsters shifted, and that these new cults are on the rise, and have worked tirelessly to investigate and stop them. Despite their protections and talents, hunters are not immune to persuasion and must take caution when dealing directly with the cults and their charismatic leaders.

Amid the chaos of the political scene in Niani, rumors fly that the theft of gold from royal coffers is at an all-time high. Accusations fly left and right while auditors, accountants, and courtiers scramble to find scapegoats for their missing funds, but even the empire's most talented investigators cannot find the culprit. Hunters in Niani suspect supernatural influence, as the thieves vanish without a trace. The strange, perfect circumstance arouses suspicion among the demons who sense the fingerprints of an angel on these unusual material disappearances. Tensions run high, as for the common person working in and around the palace, it means that someone above them might decide they're to blame.

Hall of Audience

When a citizen of the empire has a grievance or a case to bring before the court, they are brought to the Hall of Audience. More than just a place of reception, the Hall was designed to awe the visitor with a taste of the elites' wealth and power. It was decorated lavishly with stunning mosaics and was famous for its immense, curving dome lined with reflective, silver foil. This receiving area was attached directly to the palace and allowed the common populace to have their voice heard — but also kept them separate from the goings-on within.

Being members of their communities, hunters have plenty of reasons — often mundane — for bringing grievances to the Hall of Audience. Besides civic concerns, hunters may have connections within the royal palace: a patron, a concerned noble, a contact in disguise. Additionally, cult members and cult leaders frequent the hall to request more property, more freedoms, and more subsidies for their "religious" activities. They are tireless, persistent, and, much to the hunters' dismay, slowly gaining ground in Niani. Some hunters have begun to suspect that the cults may have a mole within the palace, an embedded agent greasing the wheels to make sure they get what they ask for.

Royal Palace

In the seat of the impossibly wealthy empire, its royalty resides within the walls of the palace. As to be expected, the palace stood as a monument to the tremendous economic success of the kingdom. Designed to overwhelm visitors (especially foreign diplomats) with displays of gold, treasures from around the world, rare and unique works of art and other, invaluable and precious objects put on display as an economic show of force. While the average person in the empire would rarely see any part of the palace past the Hall of Audience, a character with a diplomatic bent might be welcomed into the more private quarters.

To an outsider, the royal palace appears as a serene place of power and opulence. The truth is that it seethes with quiet instability as monsters crawl in through every crack and open window to corrupt and influence the nobility, while hunters struggle to leverage any opportunity to get within in order to protect those inside from supernatural danger. Demon cults beg for the ear of the nobility and the mansa himself. Meanwhile, purely mundane greed fuels petty squabbling for human political power. With every creature, hunter, cultist, and scheming politician scrabbling for a stake in the control of the empire, life in the royal palace is far from idle and blissful.

Military Garrison

Spartan in comparison to the lavish culture spots and the royal palace itself, the garrison sits squat and fearsome among the other buildings of the city. It is positioned close enough to the palace to make a threat clear to dissenters and outsiders: Any attempt to harm the royal family or their seat of power will be met with violence. With such vast territory to protect, the Malian army is always accepting new members, and eager recruits willing to become soldiers can enlist directly at the garrison. Many other military bases exist across the expanse of the empire, but the garrison in Niani shoulders the burden of protecting the mansa and his family.

Many hunters awaken to the Vigil from military service. These hunters typically prefer a more violent approach to dealing with the supernatural — a lethal choice when it comes to demons — though many from this background are driven by a desire to protect those who cannot defend themselves. Demons find easy Covers among foot soldiers, often using a nameless infantry soldier as a burner Cover to gain access to restricted places. With its close proximity to the royal palace, demons sometimes find it easier to pose as a nameless guard than to co-opt the identity of a more noticeable courtier or princeling.

Court Bureaucrat

Muhammad Nasir always had a mind for numbers and a keen eye for detail. The child of a wealthy family, he was neither the eldest — and therefore destined to inherit his father's money and titles — nor ambitious enough to unseat his brother's claim, so he found himself a bureaucrat working within the Malian political machine. Midnight-dark, lean, and handsome, Nasir is easy to get along with and a good listener. He's good at his job, so people trust him, and if he just happens to overhear something critical, he might be willing to pass it along to an inquiring character for the right price. **Academics 3, Politics 2, Empathy 2**

Guard Captain

Sunjata Kankou's loyalty to the mansa and the royal family is unquestionable. She considers it her upright and absolute duty to ensure the safety and protection of her king and instills that fervent ideology in the cadre of soldiers entrusted to her leadership. Kankou is nearly incorruptible and cannot be persuaded to step away from what she sees as her life's work, but characters not looking to harm the royal family may find a steadfast and trustworthy ally in the guard captain. She cares little for backstabbing and intrigue but can be convinced to assist characters in their political maneuvering, if it would be in the empire's best interests. **Athletics 2, Intimidation 2, Weaponry 3**

Minor Noble

Ziad Ghaazi is the eldest son of a governor. Young and impulsive, he seeks his fortune as a courtier in the capital city. Ziad is ambitious to a fault, hoping to claim his father's title and exceed him as a leader. If a character can offer Ziad anything in line with his political goals or offer to advance his career, he will do his best to return the favor. Given his preoccupation with his goals, the young noble is keenly aware of his peers' plans, connections, and current standing with each other and the royal family. With the right motivation, Ziad is a wealth of information perhaps necessary for a hunter's investigations. **Persuasion 2, Politics 3, Subterfuge 2.**

Kawkaw

Of the cities along the Niger River, Kawkaw (now called Gao) is the most critical, and the most rebellious. A major port along the river, the city sees much of the empire's trade and commerce. Any good or service a person could desire can be found in the markets of Kawkaw for a variety of competing prices. Prior to the rise of Mali, Kawkaw had been the seat of the former Gao empire, and had broken away from the empire after its capture, only be reclaimed while Musa I was on his famous pilgrimage to Mecca. The undercurrent of rebellion runs along the streets in the beating trade heart of the Mali Empire, making the crucial economic city a hotbed of secrets and intrigue.

Rebellion seethes in Kawkaw. With the rest of the empire in turmoil and the structure of society crumbling, those who'd always resented Malian rule now unite to express their displeasure and plan their eventual secession from the empire. Demagogues shout stirring messages in the street while laborers haul cargo from ships to be delivered further into the empire or sold in any of Kawkaw's dozens of markets. While Niani claims the title of most cosmopolitan and fashionable, a person interested in the strange, rare, or unusual can find it for sale in Kawkaw. If a person has money, all doors in Kawkaw are open.

After their defeat in Niani, the vampire court resettled in Kawkaw, adding one more threat to the night beyond ghosts, spirits, violent revolutionaries, and rumors of river monsters. The innocent and the trusting are at risk in Kawkaw; during the day hucksters, con artists and scammers spin yarns to part a sucker from their hard-earned coin. At night, footpads and thieves prey on anyone careless with their money while vampires tempt the naïve into dark alleys to feed on their blood. Hunter cells operating in Kawkaw become seasoned quickly, with no end of threats to manage night after night.

Kawkaw boasts a high population of hunters, thanks to this increased number of monsters. The Followers of the Mansa consider time spent in Kawkaw excellent training for new hunters, as a month spent in the port city will expose even the greenest hunter to a staggering assortment of threats. The Followers keep a scribe stationed in the city to keep an ongoing record of every strange, occult, and supernatural occurrence reported and observed by its hunters. Besides the abundance of opportunities to clash with monsters, easy access to the river makes for easy travel through the empire and the city's hunters claim at least one of the smaller docks and a modest number of riverboats.

Concern ripples through the merchants' conversations at caravanserai when word spreads that slaves have been stolen from shipments of human commodity. Kidnapping slaves is far from uncommon, but concern grows into fear when the stolen people are found, covered in the blood of their kidnappers. Furious, violent rebellion spreads among slave populations — far more brutal and visceral than ordinary humans should be capable of. Hunters immediately suspect the influence of the supernatural, as the stationed scribe makes a new entry in their record of the city's strange occurrences. Is this the work of a possessor ghost, a vengeful spirit, a member of the vampire court, or something new?

River Port

Boats loaded for bear with salt, gold, and other goods cluster in bright groups around the docks. Dockhands glistening with sweat unload crates and sacks of cargo to be transported to the market or exchanged with other merchants. Stern-eyed boat captains check their manifests and grant their travel-weary crews a few days' reprieve in the bustling city. Ships returning to the empire wait patiently for their clearances to be approved and for their crews to return. Characters seeking work can find it readily here, or those pursuing travel through the empire can find a willing vessel and crew to transport them down the river, while other characters might look to intercept a particular shipment before it reaches its planned destination.

The port opens the possibility of travel and exchange with the rest of the empire and, on a greater scale, the rest of the world. Anyone, monster and hunter alike, with the right contacts can spread a message or exchange necessary supplies along the river. Likewise, foreign monsters arrive in the city from the river as easily as local monsters leave. Though for every foreign ghost or spirit following a haunted soul into Kawkaw, a hunter, seasoned by her time in Kawkaw, catches a boat to face down something bigger and more sinister in Timbuktu or Niani. Likewise, critical scrolls containing



information for stopping the latest occult threat arrive from the Great Library, marked with the seal of the Followers.

Bazaar

Beneath the colorful canopies of merchant stalls erected to shade the sellers from the harsh sun, an enterprising buyer can find anything she might desire. Kawkaw is a city of trade and all manner of goods and services arrive within its borders by either land or river. If it can be bought or sold, hired or rented, a character can attain it at one of Kawkaw's many bazaars. Besides the usual items or services available, information flows freely through these marketplaces. Characters pursuing the supernatural need only know where and who to ask, and a wealth of secrets and information will be opened to them.

Treasure hunters set up stalls in the bazaar, selling any number of strange, ominous objects. They promise good fortune, saying they found them in hidden caches beneath the sands of the Sahara. Those who purchase these unusual objects find that the opposite happens, including a death caused by circumstances so unfortunate it could only be called a curse. Kawkaw's hunters have begun to investigate these treasure hunters and their claims. Could the objects truly be cursed? More importantly, where are these hidden caches in the desert brimming with strange, magical treasures? How many more of these objects have already been sold?

Caravanserai

Like the river port, the caravan route merges the city with the rest of the empire via land passage. All manner of wheeled conveyances from simple two-wheeled carts to elaborate trade wagons group together at the city's checkpoint. A blend of dialects and languages fills the air commingled with the smell of metal, salt, sweat, and beasts of burden. Characters seeking passage over land or protection for their cargo can easily find it among the caravan drivers. As caravans often group together to camp, word of mouth travels swiftly along the land routes, and characters looking for news or information about other goings on in the empire can obtain it with a conversation among the caravan workers.

Here, too, traveling merchants spread tales of hidden treasure beneath the Sahara and of some kind of great turning machine, made of gold and infinitely complex. Demons working in Kawkaw pay attention for these kinds of stories and ply traders with wine to loosen their tongues so they talk more freely. Merchants and caravan laborers make for ideal contacts and Covers. If any group of people has access to news and stories about the unusual events of the greater world, it is merchant-caravan leaders. For similar reasons, hunters take care to make friends among those who travel the overland trade routes.

Caravan Leader

Negin Abbasi has deliveries to make and money to earn, and no time to waste with small talk. She's a short, stout woman dressed for the road with a brusque, business-like attitude. Her caravan is an efficient, well-managed organization with a reputation for always arriving on time, come hell or high water. Negin stays on top of worldly news though cares little for petty gossip. If characters need passage across the empire or information about the greater events of the world, Negin is a valuable resource. She hates to have her time wasted, however, and will turn quickly on anyone she thinks isn't worth speaking to. **Drive 3, Science 1, Survival 2**

Dock Hand

Tawfik Boushab's family are miners. His father was a salt miner, his grandfather was a salt miner, and so on, but Tawfik didn't want to spend his life beneath the earth, toiling where the sun doesn't shine. He much prefers to work where the sun *does* shine, and as soon as he was of age, he left his family, joined up with the first riverboat captain who would hire him and made his life moving cargo along the wide Niger River. Tawfik is a large, quiet man who doesn't speak much but is a keen observer. He's willing to do any sort of labor for a fair price, and perhaps for a higher price, will share what he's seen and heard. **Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Survival 2**

Untrustworthy Merchant

Francisco Alvarez is a long way from his homeland, a place he left thanks to a reputation for being a liar, a cheat, and a swindler. This reputation is far from undeserved, and while Francisco is no longer in the company of those who remember his scams, he hasn't stopped trying to perform them. His crew of boatmen are always in on the con, mercenary men and women purchased with the promise of a share in the big score. Francisco has traveled across the globe, seen many places and done many things — if characters can trust what he says to be the truth, he's a wealth of knowledge about both the mundane and the supernatural. **Larceny 3, Occult 1, Subterfuge 2**

Timbuktu

Another major city on the Niger River, Timbuktu also hosts a center of trade, but more importantly, this city is well known in the empire for its academic centers. Where gold, salt, and trade goods cross hands in Kawkaw, philosophy, art, and ideas are exchanged in Timbuktu. Musa I promoted and encouraged learning and scholarly pursuits and made Timbuktu a fixture in the book trade of the ancient world. During his reign the city saw a rapid rise in growth, blossoming into an urbane place of culture and learning in the short span of a few years. The city boasts more libraries than any other of its kind, and is a bustling, diverse place to live.

At any hour of the day in Timbuktu, the curious or the insatiable for knowledge can find a venue to hear a poet recite his work, attend a lecture at the Sankore Masjid or

any of the dozens of madrasas that dot the city, or participate in a salon with other like-minded philosophers. People from all over the world come to Timbuktu to read and learn and study; it is an academic's paradise, where one can have discourse with brilliant men and women from Europe or as far away as Asia. Like Niani, the residents of Timbuktu do not want for things to do.

Timbuktu is the home of the hunter compact the Golden Library. This small group of hunters stations their headquarters within the Sankore Masjid and vets its members through rigorous exams and testing. They focus on studying supernatural forces and archiving information about monsters as well as curating a collection of artifacts and occult objects they deem too dangerous to be in an average person's hands. Any person of academic pursuit who awakens to the Vigil may find welcome among their limited ranks and enjoy access to their personal collection of tomes and powerful items.

Obsessive study has its downsides. Some scholars grow too curious, delving further and further into mysteries they cannot tear themselves away from, until it consumes them. Darkness consumes these ambitious scholars and their curiosity drives them to acts of depravity. Rumor travels through the learned circles of Timbuktu that a cult of alchemists has uncovered an ancient tome granting the ability to render arcane materials into tinctures and potions that give the drinker incredible power. When the studious folk who come to Timbuktu for learning and discourse drift down this left-hand path, the hunters of Timbuktu (including the Librarians) rally to stop them.

Great Mosque

One of the most famous religious constructions of its time, the Great Mosque at Timbuktu opens its doors to religious pilgrims from every corner of the Earth. The Great Mosque is a holy site visited by the city's faithful, and is well-trafficked by those who could not afford to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. The mosque serves as a place of worship, a community center, and as an institute of culture and learning. Those who want to study the Quran or engage in philosophical discourse will be welcomed within the halls of the Great Mosque, provided they show proper respect while visiting this sacred location.

Sankore Masjid

Unlike many contemporary universities in Europe, Sankore Masjid is not a secular organization. Though it





offers courses on dozens of different secular topics from mathematics to economics, the faculty and staff are members of the Islamic clergy. Its campus library hosts thousands of manuscripts that arrived in Timbuktu via the book trade, both by river and land, each available in a variety of languages. Scholars from around the globe travel to Timbuktu to lecture, share their knowledge, and learn in the masjid's halls. It is far from uncommon for a student at the university to encounter both teachers and students alike from as far away as India or China.

Hunters looking to join the Golden Library must attend a specific course hidden on the university's schedule. If they pass this course — a trial that involves essays, rigorous discourse, and a demonstration of knowledge and trustworthiness — they are accepted as a member. Following this, the hunter is expected to record their observations and report any sightings of occult artifacts or supernatural activities. Demons visiting Sankore Masjid seek out pact targets from the knowledge-thirsty; they are fully aware that hunters visit Sankore Masjid, but feel the benefits outweigh the risks. Professors and students alike hunger to know about the secrets of the universe, and demons are more than willing to share information for a price.

Great Library

A vast collection of tomes and scrolls, the Great Library at Timbuktu holds enough knowledge on its shelves to rival even the fabled Library of Alexandria. Musa I expanded the library's collection significantly during his reign, bringing in scholarly texts and literatures from every culture he encountered on his pilgrimage and many more. Anything characters could possibly wish to research —including subjects of the supernatural — can be found nestled away in the Great Library's voluminous archives. The more unusual and occult scrolls require certain clearances to access, and characters researching in the library may need to bribe or talk their way into reading the library's hidden lore.

Demons and hunters are equally invested in the library's archives. Hunters with access to the library's hidden archives gain a wealth of knowledge about the world, both mundane and supernatural. Any member of the Golden Library compact automatically has access to the Great Library's stores; an unaffiliated savvy hunter with the right contacts may also be able to gain access to certainbooks and scrolls. Demons suspect an angel may have meddled in the information stored in the library, bestowing knowledge beyond human understanding to the people in Timbuktu. Besides sensing the meddlesome hand of the God-Machine and Its agents, anyone seeking the library's hidden stacks desires uncommon knowledge — easy leverage for a demon.

Popular Jelimuso

People flock from all corners of the empire to hear Aya Jedou perform. She commands the attention of her audience with her powerful voice and lively storytelling style. Even foreigners just arriving in Timbuktu know within days to make time to see one of Aya's performances. She is gregarious and friendly, as big and bold in private as she is before a crowd. Even when not performing or speaking, Aya dresses in bright colors and the latest fashions. As a *jelimuso*, Aya has memorized dozens of stories about the history of the empire and is a wealth of information for anyone willing to strike up a conversation. **Academics 2, Empathy 2, Expression 3**

Pious Cleric

Hadi Osei knew from a young age that he wanted to serve Allah. When he came of age, he told his parents he would rather be a man of the cloth than join the family's gold-trading profession and traveled to Timbuktu to enter the clergy at the Great Mosque. Hadi is still in his youth, though laugh lines have begun to form at the corners of his eyes. He is a deeply devoted individual and his faith is unshakeable. The young man is a fixture of the community, well-liked by the regular attendees of the mosque. Characters may find him an invaluable resource for navigating the social circles of Timbuktu. **Academics 2, Empathy 3, Occult 1**

Devoted Student

The daughter of a wealthy merchant, Nadira Abdellahi traveled from outside the empire to pursue her studies at the Sankore Masjid. Her interests lie in economics, trade, and diplomacy and she could think of no better place to study than in the thriving Malian empire. Though she dutifully attends to her lessons during the day, Nadira is adventurous and flirtatious, with a taste for adventure and getting into trouble. If asked, she will readily share everything she's learned, but will also glom onto any whiff of danger, inviting herself along to any kind of hunter pursuit — especially ones far too dangerous for her. **Academics 3, Investigation 2, Politics 2**

What's Yet to Come

Instability creeps into the once-unshakeable empire of Mali. From within, ordinary mortals driven by ambition and greed threaten to tear the kingdom apart. Every noble family considers making a move for the throne while the royalty in power fight to retain their grasp on the empire. Rebels in Kawkaw threaten to break away from the cohesion of the empire again and speak in secret of sedition. Outside the empire, the nomadic Tuareg set their sights on the vulnerable mines and trade routes in the hopes that claiming them will bring some of the wealth the empire has claimed. They move in quick strikes, avoiding all-out war. Though Mali may be beginning to crumble, it still commands an impressive military and the Tuareg are not foolhardy.

Beyond mortal threats, darker, more powerful things arise to speed the collapse. Once, vampires ruled the desert nights. A thriving population and many bustling metropolises are ideal breeding grounds for the rulers of the night.

However, *something else* stronger and far more insidious appeared and drove them from their roosts. Vampires still haunt the night, feeding on the unwary who venture into their territory, but demons have made themselves known as the true threat to the realm, and the hunters of the era turn their sights towards studying and casting out these monsters.

The rapid rise of the Malian empire and its slow decline into instability has brought the attention of demons. Though hunters may be unaware, the God-Machine works here, Its infinite machinery turning beneath and around the palace, the Great Library, the Sankore Masjid. With infighting and corruption on the rise, demons find easy targets to seduce into their infernal pacts and then revel in the vices of the mortal world. They whisper in the ears of unsuspecting courtiers, bureaucrats, nobles, and merchants and drive them to satisfy their base desires, driving the empire ever onward to its collapse. What will happen if the demons get what they want?

Hunter: Hope and Darkness

Though it may not appear as such from the outside, the empire is in turmoil. Something crawls just beneath the surface, something terrible and insidious, and something that wishes to see the whole of society torn down. Like a hidden machine, it churns and grinds, moving inexorably towards an unknowable end. Each passing day ticks closer towards this outcome, influenced by human and monster alike. Hidden in the spaces between philosophical manuscripts, shipping manifests, and the accounting of gold, a powerful force vastly dangerous and otherworldly lingers. When other monsters fled this new presence, the hunters of Mali share information in hushed and fearful tones to figure out what transpired and what they could do about it.

What could they, mortals of flesh and blood, do against something so dangerous that the immortal undead, the vampires, would turn away in fear? Each agreed that they would turn their attentions to this new threat and proceed with the utmost caution. After the accord, hunters in the Malian empire have, through study, found and identified this threat. These *things* take human form, whisper corrupting lies and drive them to perform vile deeds. Unlike vampires or ghosts, hunters are warned not to approach this new threat unless they know what they're fighting. Demons must be studied and approached with caution, and only through ritual and exorcism, driven out.

The Enemy

Hunters of the era understand the threat they face is a cosmological terror but are unaware what that means to them. Though demons are not a new phenomenon, hunters interpret the invaders through the lens of their faith and experiences. They will not be aware of the types of different demons, nor will they clearly understand how the Unchained function in society. To many Malinese hunters, demons are the stuff of legend and myth: Islamic hunters recognize them as *shaitan*, but don't possess the knowledge to fight them effectively. Some demons may be treated as evil spirits while others are considered djinnis or angry ghosts. How can a hunter fight when they aren't sure who the enemy is? What does this mean for the future of their empire?

Once hunters realize a greater mystery is at work, the veil that separates the supernatural from the world of mortals will lift. At that moment, hunters will understand that some supernatural threats function beyond a typical human's comprehension and facing them is next to impossible without a plan in place. Even so, hunters have help. They can find hidden tomes in the Great Library that speak of these cosmic threats, they can ally with other hunters, and they can protect the people. Hunters may never know a demon has witnessed the divine machinery of the universe. What human can grasp such a concept? The God-Machine is a mystery that will fascinate them for some time, but most hunters are more pragmatic. They know to truly make a difference they must focus on protecting the people around them before launching a full-scale assault on an enemy they may never understand.

For the Player: Building a Hunter

Hunters of the era hail from all walks of life to face the dangers threatening the great West African empire. Sample concepts include suggested Merits and Skills found in the **Chronicles of Darkness** core rulebook. These recommended concepts would work well in any location within the Empire of Mali.

Deft Investigator

Your job was to pursue violators of the law for your governor, and you were counted among the best. Nothing escaped your keen eye, and suspects found it all but impossible to lie to you. One day, as you were pursuing a criminal through the back streets of Kawkaw, you witnessed something you couldn't fully comprehend, and your life has never been the same since. Now you don't just chase down petty thieves and murderers, but monsters that threaten the very structure of reality itself.

Suggested Skills: Academics, Empathy, Investigation, Occult, Persuasion, Science, Subterfuge.

Suggested Merits: Encyclopedic Knowledge, Eye for the Strange, Investigative Aide.

Auditor of Royal Funds

You kept the records for the royal coffers, tallying more gold than any one person would ever see in their lifetime. Your head for numbers put you ahead of your peers and



earned you the recognition of the royal family themselves. That's not all that didn't escape your notice. When one of the financial advisors to the mansa began to act strangely, you took it upon yourself to audit his behavior as you would any financial record, and what you found changed your world entirely. Now you fight alongside others to keep your homeland safe.

Suggested Skills: Academics, Crafts, Empathy, Investigation, Persuasion, Politics, Socialize.

Suggested Merits: Common Sense, Contacts (Imperial Bureaucrats), Good Time Management

Observant Palace Guard

Your duty was simple and straightforward: Stay alert and stop any threats. You swore an oath to do this to best of your ability, and even at the cost of your life. Most days, you simply stood alert and waited for nothing. Then, one night a *thing* breached the walls and came for your charge. You did your best to stop it, but it wasn't enough. Only you walked away, forever changed. Now you've sworn to never let that happen again.

Suggested Skills: Archery, Athletics, Brawl, Drive, Intimidation, Occult, Weaponry.

Suggested Merits: Armed Defense, Danger Sense, Relentless.

Watchful Caravan Merchant

Being mistrustful was always in your nature, and it served you well. While others fell prey to con artists and scams, you never lost a single coin to a grifter. Your caravan might not be the most profitable, but you know a liar and a cheat when you see one. When you met the strange man from another continent, everything about him screamed *lies*. You didn't listen to his offers and you kept on going, but the encounter left you shaken with the impression that you'd just met a monster. Now you use those instincts to keep others safe from the predators that lurk in the darkness.

Suggested Skills: Academics, Athletics, Drive, Occult, Survival, Weaponry.

Suggested Merits: Fast-Talking, Hardy, Iron Will

Savvy Courtier

You grew up around the court and know several members of the royal family. Your parents were courtiers and when you came of age you, too, joined the complex political machine. From a young age you learned to spot a lie, to maneuver with a smile, and how to get what you want without being overt. At a grand celebration you met a woman who lied and maneuvered a little *too* well and you caught glimpses that she was far more than what she appeared. Those images have never left you and haunt your dreams to this day. Now you use your influence and skill to thwart the infiltrating monsters at every turn.

Suggested Skills: Athletics, Brawl, Expression, Medicine, Persuasion, Politics, Stealth.

Suggested Merits: Barfly, Resources, Table Turner

For the Storyteller: Hunting by Tier

The Empire of Mali contains several locations that possess their own culture, social mores, and local politics. Tiered play in this era is dependent on the location the player-characters are hunting monsters in and what capabilities they have. Storytellers should mark threat levels by the number of antagonists in an area and which Dread Powers they possess, what Tilts and Conditions may be employed thematically, and whether or not the God-Machine's presence exposes hunters to a deep, dark mystery.

Tier One: Cells

Tier-one hunters focus on threats that plague individuals or small communities, such as their villages or their neighborhood within the greater city limits. While some hunters at this level may be individually wealthy — perhaps from success in the mines, as caravan laborers, or members of the military — they do not typically have access to resources beyond what they can attain personally. Financial challenges can daunt tier-one hunters as readily as supernatural creatures, and can potentially drive a desperate hunter to broker unsavory agreements to get what they need. Some hunters will even go so far as to work with demons — but do so at their own risk. Not only is this a violation of the Code, many hunters are devoted to their faith which clearly expresses that the forces of darkness are not to be trifled with. Hunters who push the boundaries of their morality will struggle with their conscience and their relationships with their Touchstones, which may lead to the suffering of a breaking point. In most cases, hunters would *not* treat a demon as an ally, even a temporary one, unless they were tricked or could not identify the enemy.

At this tier, a hunter can expect to tangle with an antagonist, never realizing the depth and breadth of the supernatural's activities, whereabouts, or potency: a vengeful ghost haunting the site of their murder, a spirit possessing a local official and driving them to erratic behavior, a single occult object dredged up from beneath the sands that alters the minds of anyone who touches it, a disease spirit plaguing a neighborhood, and so on. Hunters invested in the trade routes might deal with cryptids who hunt in the desert or the river threatening human and beast alike. The Sahara is filled with strange treasures, some of which have tangential connections to the much greater threat of angels and the God-Machine, though that level of threat would not be managed by tier-one hunters. Where tier-one hunters clash with the affairs of demons, they conflict with the rank and file of the demon's cult or their allies. They might struggle to prevent cultists from proselytizing or spreading literature

that supernaturally influences the reader, or to keep cult members from gathering publicly to increase membership.

Tier-one hunters are also subject to local politics. Cells will notice social anxiety, uncertainty, and political unrest before other hunters will; though tier-one hunters aren't opposed to accepting help, they tend to be wary of foreign visitors — especially now.

Tier Two: Compacts

At tier two, hunters face threats of increasing scale powerful enough to overcome an individual cell or village and may endanger whole cities or gubernatorial provinces. Compacts benefit from the Empire of Mali's storied legacy and wealth; the Golden Library, for example, is a notable compact that's based out of Timbuktu with headquarters in the Sankore Masjid. As the empire is vast and diverse, other compacts may also exist — many of them form and disband due to decreasing numbers in the monster-infested city of Kawkaw.

When tangling with demons, tier-two hunters either face a low-powered threat or must strategize how to deal with the demon's influence over a larger area. Tier-two hunters often deal with demonic cults as if they were a rival organization seeking to undermine the Vigil. At this tier, the leaders of demon cults become important figures as they meddle behind the scenes of local government and trade operations, doing their best to co-opt these social structures to the demon's purposes and their own greed. Cults left unchecked will continue to spread, snatching up real estate and converting as many locals to their cause as possible. As such, tier-two hunters are forced to become vested in regional interests to defend themselves, their cities, and their futures from demonic influences. This often causes rifts with other hunters, because compact members are ordered to abandon nightly patrols and focus solely on thwarting demons.

Followers of the Mansa

Keeping an ever-watchful eye on their home empire, the Followers of the Mansa formed in homage to Mansa Musa I, adopting his philosophy of knowledge, compassion, and generosity and applying it to the thankless (yet necessary) task of keeping the Vigil. Likewise, compact leaders choose new members by identifying hunters who opt for a thoughtful and peaceful path. To reconcile this pacifistic approach with the demands of the Vigil, the Followers teach their members to pass unseen as just another face in the background, and to strike subtly against their enemies by denying them access to their contacts and their resources. All members of the Followers of the Mansa know how to identify each other with the subtlest gesture and have dozens of hidden meeting places across the empire. Formally, however, their headquarters sits in Niani, within sight of the palace but unremarkable enough that daily passersby have no idea that it's there.

THE GOLDEN LIBRARY

Based in Timbuktu, the hunters of the Golden Library promote the study and exchange of occult-related written works and artifacts. The compacy was founded in 1320 during the reign of Musa I; its supernatural collection of scrolls and tablets were donated by a teacher at the Sankore Masjid who, after a brush the supernatural while traveling on a river boat, became obsessed with studying such creatures. As Timbuktu is a hub of the world's book trade, members scour shipments of literature, seeking texts that contain useful truths about combating the world's monsters.

The Golden Library has three known goals:

Exchange: News and information travel along trade routes and can be bought and sold as easily as any material good. The Golden Library believes that scrolls and tomes containing lore about monsters should continue to flow along these trade lines, and should be accessible to other hunters devoted to the Vigil. The librarians are dedicated to making sure this information gets into the right hands.

Archive: Some scrolls are too valuable to pass along like a common commodity, while relics may prove to be too dangerous for untrained use. The librarians collects occult artifacts along with folklore and traveller's tales, maintaining a well-curated collection of critical literature and dangerous relics. Hunters may, upon request, use compact funds to sell, trade, or purchase new items for the collection with permission.

Instruct: Along with their goal to exchange information andartifacts, the Golden Library considers it important to also teach other hunters what they've learned from the material they've found and studied. An ill-prepared hunter is as good as dead, so the librarians do their best to teach anyone who asks — provided they are an active and well-regarded member of hunter society. Despite its leanings, the Golden Library is acutely aware that some supernatural enemies can take human guises, and they are reluctant to share information with everyone and anyone who asks.

The Library understands how academics and economics draw people from around the world to Timbuktu and hopes that through exchange and instruction they can are hunters with knowledge. Despite its willingness to share information, its list of members is kept secret; even the librarians, who hold their jobs sacred, possess two or more aliases to hide their identities from supernatural enemies and rogue hunters.

The ascendancy of demons as the chief threat to the empire cemented the compact's policy of observing before using violence as a solution. They know demons act through intermediaries and alternate identities and have learned to cut the demons off from their allies before attacking. Other hunters have tried to convince the Followers to take more direct action, believing that this cautious approach fails to yield results. The compact's faithful members argue they have more experience dealing with powerful creatures, and that avoiding forthright, violent conflict with demons is the only way to win the war.

Tier Three: Conspiracies

Tier-three hunters face monsters and supernatural threats capable of endangering humanity on a nationwide to global level. In the Empire of Mali, conspiracies will primarily concern themselves with what's happening in Timbuktu and with the God-Machine. Though no hunter conspiracy is fully aware of what the God-Machine is or how It operates, hunters will notice Its machinations and seek to understand demonic behavior once they realize It exists. For tier-three hunters, the God-Machine represents a supernatural enigma that must be studied and tested.

Cells from active conspiracies enjoy the benefits of their legacy and their resources without being forced to solely rely on help from local sources; some conspiracies have existed since the Vigil began, changing only their name throughout the ages, while others come and go as time passes. Hunters in the Empire of Mali find allegiance with any of the conspiracies listed; unlike tier-one or tier-two hunters, conspiracy members may ally themselves with tourists, travellers, merchants, and scholars who are not from Mali. Tier-three hunters are subconsciously aware that what they're dealing with may eclipse their capabilities, and may push the boundaries of the Vigil by kidnapping, torturing, and interrogating demons and cultists to find answers. Tier-three hunters will also grapple with their role in their families and communities; eventually, the demands of the Vigil will threaten and strain their relationships if they're not careful.

At this tier, hunters are all but guaranteed to tangle with demons and become embroiled in their plots. Hunters clashing with demons at tier three reach the nadir of how deep the web of connections go as they discover that the evangelizing cultists on the street in their home neighborhoods are tied to the unfathomable being in human disguise who has an incomprehensible plan. When hunters realize that angels have meddled in the affairs of the empire, and that bigger, more bizarre things lurk just outside of mortal perception, this knowledge will trigger a conspiracy's involvement. Faced with the realization that the Divine exists, hunters do their best to prepare defenses against monsters capable of altering reality itself while their conspiracies form local headquarters to provide more guidance and oversight to their hunters.

The revelation of the God-Machine should be treated as an earth-shattering event that will force hunters to reexamine their commitment to the Vigil, their faith, and each other. Most hunters, even at tier three, will not believe the God-Machine exists, understand what It does, or think any hunter has a chance of deciphering Its machinations. Hunters might convince themselves that the God-Machine is a hallucination or a trick that demons are playing on them; they might even claim the God-Machine is a group of demons who are conspiring to end the Vigil once and for all.

Storytellers are encouraged to let the characters process the God-Machine according to their beliefs. Should they realize what the God-Machine is, that moment may incur a breaking point for the character depending upon the circumstances of that scene.

Aegis Kai Doru

Though the mansa has passed, his legacy lives on. The Empire of Mali continues to attract visitors, and its vast sums of treasure draw both curious and greedy hunters who seek the means to continue fighting. Most, if not all, Aegis Kai Doru hunters believe that the Empire of Mali is a hub where they can find rare relics and artifacts passed through secret exchanges in the hundreds of bazaars scattered across the face of the empire. Lore and secrets travel along the empire's robust trade routes, drawing foreign hunters to Niani and Timbuktu.

The conspiracy is mistaken in its assumption that the wonders of the ancient world are accessible to all hunters in Mali, however, and do not realize that rogue and rival hunters are also converging on Timbuktu. While the Aegis Kai Doru keeps agents at every port and every caravan stop, to keep a watchful eye on occult objects of interest and to keep

SOLDIERS OF JABREEL

Hunters are not the only force interested in stopping demons. An angel has formed a secret conspiracy of hunters by speaking to them via holy visions. In these visions, the angel reveals demons that must be eliminated, and promises wealth and reward in return for its demise. Those who believe in the word of its prophets commit to the belief their work is holy and divinely inspired. If asked, the conspiracy claims the angel is named "Jabreel." This ruse has been immensely successful in drawing believers to its cause.

The Soldiers of Jabreel direct their followers to face monsters head on and destroy them without reservation. Some members claim to have fought and defeated a demon in its true form, thanks to holy benefactions bestowed upon them by Jabreel himself. Whether or not this claim is true, it is undeniable the Soldiers can call upon some kind of supernatural power to fight demons.



an ear out for valuable information, they are unaware their hunters are perceived as a threat to the local community.

Claiming a loose power base in Timbuktu, the Aegis Kai Doru has built one of its labyrinths beneath the city and is actively recruiting members. The conspiracy has agents in the book trade and, where it can spare a hunter or two, seeks to gain access to the Sankore Masjid. Occasionally, entire cells of Aegis Kai Doru members visit the city to study the supernatural, with the understanding that their membership in the conspiracy eclipses their personal desire to hunt. duties are to fight the monsters who'd claim invaluable relics and claim them for the conspiracy's collection.

Ascending Ones

In the Empire of Mali, the Ascending Ones look to Muslim practices to guide them in their nightly Vigil. Elixirs, drugs, and potions exchange hands along the trading ports on the Niger River and are traded in secret bazaars accessible to a few. Their presence is marked by a seal that appears on certain crates offloaded from mysterious riverboats and transported to unlisted destinations. The goods they trade make their way to Malian markets via a third party in Egypt, as the alchemists do not wish to make their presence known. The Ascending Ones have a vested interest in discovering new potions to deal with the threat of demons and are experimenting with new and rare ingredients. When, and if, they discover new elixirs, then the alchemists will be ordered to assist other hunters in their efforts to overthrow the demonic taint that threatens all.

Of all the conspiracies, the Ascending Ones were the first to investigate this new threat. Their first attempt failed, and the hunters never returned. Weeks later, the Ascending Ones armed themselves with their elixirs, and managed to find a demon willing to talk — perhaps *too* willing. The exact details of what transpired are unknown to other members of the conspiracy. Rumor has it the record of their conversation had been written down on five separate scrolls, and copies can be found hidden somewhere in Niani.

The Lucifuge

Word spreads from the cities of Mali to Milan via trade routes that stretch across the Mediterranean. Members of the Lucifuge have better understanding than most about the true nature of demons and angels, but the Lady of Milan has refused to send any hunters to Mali thus far. In fact, she has issued a proclamation: Members of the Lucifuge who travel to Mali do so at their own peril.

Chronicles of Darkness in the Empire of Mali

The Empire of Mali is home to an array of supernatural creatures who are acutely aware that demons are flocking to the region. With the presence of hunters in the area, their activities will not go unnoticed and may expose them to risk or harm if they're not careful. **Vampires** who remain in Mali stick to populated areas but may also be encountered in trading centers; many Kindred are torn between leaving the empire, infiltrating the royal court to assume control, or picking the gold from its bones to ensure their coffers remain filled. Recognizing the empire's might, the **Forsaken** have traveled to the edges of Mali, only to be disturbed by darker forces threatening their doorstop. They will be the first to notice the uptick in hunter activity, but will ensure their tribes and hunting grounds are safe before pursing hunters or their prey. When they do, the Forsaken will need to decide whether they should leave Mali or become more active in its affairs — especially since the politics of the day is not their primary concern.

Few **Created** will visit Timbuktu; some mistakenly believe a piece of lore will help them reduce the effects of Disquiet. What they don't know, is that the Golden Library is setting a trap for them. Some will fall for the hunter's trap. Others will be caught between demons and hunters, unaware of the brewing war between them, unsure of their role in the fight. Arabic **mages**, who are commonly found in Timbuktu, will be curious to see what happens next. They will have their hands full securing trade routes and calming fears that the empire is in decline, but will seek out and strengthen their alliances with local hunters if possible. Some local Awakened are preparing to welcome mages from Europe and Asia; thanks to Mansa Musa's pilgrimage to Mecca, foreigners are curious to explore the area. This could spell an amicable exchange of knowledge, but it could also signal anxiety. If other mages head to Timbuktu, then their enemies are sure to follow.

Changelings have enjoyed the stability of the empire, and some have even followed Mansa Musa on his pilgrimage. After he dies, some become more anxious and decide to explore uncharted paths through the Hedge — just to be safe. Others, however, broker pacts with demons to varying ends. Some Changelings want their fae masters to suffer; others want to forget who they are, until eventually their enemies notice something odd is happening in Mali. The more obssessed Changelings become with what demons might offer them, the greater the chance their enemies will appear to take advantage of their misguided attempts.

Greed is rampant. With the mansa dead and the throne weakened, the wealth of the empire attracts opportunists and thieves alike. The **Begotten** are keenly aware of the hungry eyes that seek to control the trade of gold and salt. They can either succumb to base desires or rise above them and master their Hunger.

Some members of the Lucifuge have ignored this decree and plan to meet in Kawkaw. Their presence has not gone unnoticed by the demons who've gathered there; the Lucifuge is unaware that demons are aggressively targeting members of their conspiracy in an attempt to wipe them out and glean the location of the Lucifuge. Other Lucifuge hunters worry that the Lady of Milan is keeping secrets from them; should they compare notes with other hunters based in Timbuktu, they'll learn that some hunters fear the God-Machine is powerful enough to remove a mortal's free will. Once they realize the God-Machine is not just a myth, the Children of the Seventh Generation must decide whether to stay in Mali and risk being manipulated by It, or leave and take up the Vigil anywhere else.

Demon: Defend and Siege

Once, Niani was a stronghold for the Unchained, the prosperity of the empire at their disposal. The Seven Shadows founded a mighty Agency, growing complacent in luxury and personal intrigues. Now, their past returns to haunt them, their legacy crumbling as their Covers erode. Other demons abandon the city or forge new alliances. With their hold on power fading and hunters avidly driving them out, the Unchained become ever more reliant upon cults and stigmatic allies.

The Faithful, a growing Agency of Islamic Unchained dedicated to the principles of faith, wisdom, and compassion, graciously watch over Timbuktu's burgeoning demon population, offering aid to the Unchained mysteriously drawn to the city. Between the Faithful's unsettling hospitality and the apparent leniency the God-Machine affords the Unchained in this city, newly arrived demons suspect a trap. With no certain allies, tensions among the Unchained rise, threatening to break into open violence.

Throughout the empire, the Unchained scheme to seize the wealth and power of the empire to forge their personal Hells. Clashing with each other as much as the God-Machine, some seek to find an advantage among the hunters pursuing them, manipulating them into targeting their foes instead. Bold or desperate demons seek to strike pacts with the hunters, offering advantages in the Vigil in exchange for Cover, servants, or even a rare alliance.

Incarnations Manifesting in Mali

Demonic influences in Mali are visible in unique ways that befit the era. Incarnations will effect how, when, and where demons will be found.

Analysts

Silently watching, these angels observe everything in Timbuktu, studying gatherings of the Faithful, activities of angels, and construction of new Infrastructure with equal focus. As the God-Machine's enigmatic plans advance, new Analyst angels appear with alarming frequency. Demons noting their presence call them the Silent Messengers, as few show willingness to interact even when confronted.

Unchained Analysts collect and verify intelligence for dispersal to other demons. While active in Timbuktu, the Eyes also migrate through Mali's trade routes, scrutinizing travelers and God-Machine activity for harbingers of impending tribulations. Antinomians make themselves the center of attention, driving home the tendency to classify Analysts as Messengers. They act impulsively without consideration of the consequences, often sharing information without verification. Ironically, antinomian Analysts are the most likely to suspect their true nature, but they aren't telling.

Analysts often avoid notice of hunters entirely. While the Eyes may notice hunter cells at work, most are content to observe and report. When hunters do encounter Analysts, it is often by noting another demon acting on information they shouldn't have and tracing it back to the source by noting all present when such information could have been observed.

Destroyers

Mali's Destroyer angels eschew direct violence, specializing in arranging for accidents and seemingly natural disasters when removing the God-Machine's targets. When human targets must be eliminated, Destroyer angels frequently lure them away from civilization, allowing the desert to finish the job.

Despite rising instability, Destroyers have difficulty fulfilling their purpose in Mali, relying on subtle means to eliminate targets. Many focus on dealing with other supernatural beings, taking advantage of their secretive natures to avoid undue attention. Some Swords are drawn to the violence at the edges of the empire or the growing unrest in Kawkaw, while others wait in Niani or Timbuktu for opportunities to strike effectively. Antinomian Destroyers become artisans, seeking to compensate for destructive pasts by creating new things, doing their part to further the cause of beauty in the world.

When Destroyers turn to overt means to achieve their ends, conflict with hunters is almost inevitable. Even subtle ones sometimes draw scrutiny, as hunters delve into any strange circumstances. When they clash, violence is inevitable.

Guardians

Employed to protect not only Infrastructure but also important mundane resources and other angels on their missions, Guardian angels are the most abundant in the empire. More arrive from distant lands, disconcerting perceptive Unchained who ponder the reason for increasing security.

Across the empire, Fallen Shields wage a secret war with their angelic brethren for control of key locations. Antinomian Guardians are the most overt with this, seizing control of key Infrastructure and handing it over to other demons without looking back. In Timbuktu, Faithful Shields choose charges among the most vulnerable to watch over. Niani's Guardians struggle to protect the Unchained and their most useful mortal implements from the watchful eyes of hunters.

When hunters cross paths with Guardians, it is often because the Shield stands between hunter and quarry. While this can easily erupt into violence, most Guardians try to prevent such encounters from occurring at all. This requires them to monitor their fellow demons, protecting the more reckless ones by covering their tracks for them.

Messengers

Messenger angels are abundant in Mali. In major cities, they recruit fresh blood into God-Machine cults, bolstering the ranks of Its servants. They whisper ideas into the right ears to direct policies towards the God-Machine's advantage. Some communicate with known demons, seeking to entice them back into the fold.

Messengers are among the most overt demons operating in Mali, furthering their Agendas by forging and breaking alliances. While Messengers operate comparatively openly in Timbuktu, their talent for information dispersal puts Trumpets in high demand throughout the empire. They spread lies and truths throughout the court of Niani, and act as ambassadors and mediators wherever Unchained of different cultures meet. In Timbuktu, it isn't unusual to find Faithful Messengers arguing with their angelic counterparts. Antinomian Messengers sequester themselves from others, frequently disappearing into the wild for personal contemplation.

Hunters encounter Messengers more often than other Incarnations, as they tend to operate more openly. They're the most likely to attempt to parley or forge temporary alliances against mutual threats, but their openness also makes them the easiest targets.

Psychopomps

With the God-Machine's projects proceeding rapidly, the ranks of Psychopomp angels are on the rise, constructing Infrastructure and maneuvering both supplies and individuals into place. These angels have long managed the flow of materials along Mali's trade routes, ensuring transport of necessary supplies and maintaining the God-Machine's hidden circuits.

Psychopomps undertake much of the heavy lifting for the Unchained, quietly arranging resources and organizing disparate rings into functional units for important tasks. Many allow others to accept the praise for a mission well done, focusing instead on preparing for the next. Psychopomps provide for Timbuktu's burgeoning demon population, maintaining a supply of burner Covers for desperate Unchained. Faithful Wheels extend their charity to needy mortals. Antinomian Psychopomps often shun other Unchained, content to live the lives of their simple Covers.

While Psychopomps maintain low profiles, the actions of the Unchained draw scrutiny from hunters. Anticipating this threat, many Wheels take the effort to construct false trails for hunters to follow, leading them in circles or towards the demons' foes.

Agendas of the Unchained

What demons are doing in Mali is just as important as why they're flocking to the region.

Inquisitors

The temptation of Timbuktu's secrets is too great for the Inquisitors to resist, drawing a majority of Watchers. Many seek to uncover the cause of the mysterious lure drawing the Unchained to this city, or portents of its consequences. Others pry into the affairs of the Faithful, hoping to unearth any ulterior motives behind the Agency. Watchers among the Faithful focus on study and philosophical discussion, hoping to ascertain the true nature of Allah. Overwhelmed by the scope of its activities, Niani's Inquisitors struggle to track the progress of the God-Machine's projects. Watchers along the trade routes have discovered the Infrastructure Beneath the Sands, and currently scheme to get close enough to determine its purpose.

With both investigating the same mysteries, Inquisitors are among the most likely demons encountered by hunters. The Watchers sometimes infiltrate hunter groups to gather intelligence. Some even openly approach hunters as equals, offering fair exchange of information. These tense alliances seldom persist, but valuable insights to both are often uncovered while they last.

Integrators

The turmoil in Mali leaves the Integrators torn between trepidation and hope, the God-Machine's ascendancy and the future of the Unchained uncertain. Niani's paranoid Unchained quickly turn upon any Turncoats revealed, so Integrators operate with utmost discretion, seeking to conceal other Unchained and the God-Machine from the city's



numerous hunters. While Timbuktu's Faithful welcome Integrators with open arms, a schism grows among these Idealists, some insisting the God-Machine is a malfunctioning tool of Allah, while others embrace the belief that the two are the same entity. Other Integrators, drawn to Timbuktu with conviction that the God-Machine is calling them home, search for signs of a new mission,

Focused less on mortal affairs than other demons, the Turncoats seldom run afoul of hunters. When their paths do cross, the Idealists' apparent sorrow for past wrongs and determination to redeem themselves make these demons the most capable of appealing to a compassionate hunter's sense of pity.

Saboteurs

The wealth of Mali could fund the war against the God-Machine for generations, and many Saboteurs flock to the empire to seize some of it for their own. Soldiers drawn to Timbuktu don't trust the apparent leniency exhibited by the God-Machine's servants. Suspecting a trap, they work tirelessly to suborn or destroy as much Infrastructure as possible. Faithful Saboteurs undermine Timbuktu's angels, subjecting them to arguments and experiences intended to provoke a Fall. Niani's Saboteurs strike against renovated Infrastructure, seeking to reclaim the hold the Seven Shadows once held over the city, although the vigilance of hunters and mortal authorities prevents them from acting as overtly as they might like.

The extent of the God-Machine is unfathomable to hunters, but Saboteurs don't hesitate to put the two at odds. A Thug perceiving hunter pursuit arranges a trail leading directly toward Infrastructure. Whether the hunters interfere in the God-Machine's plans or angels crush the foolhardy mortals, the Saboteur has weakened an enemy.

Tempters

Tempters are widespread in Mali, establishing cults among both the local populace and waves of travelers flocking to the Empire. The remnants of the Seven Shadows in Niani cling to what influence they retain, attempting to navigate the turbulent political landscape while evading the ever-vigilant hunters. Throughout the empire, Decadents forge connections among scholars and merchants, gaining prosperity in knowledge and gold to fund their elaborate schemes. Among Timbuktu's Faithful, Builders focus on faith and charitable activities to the exclusion of expected intrigues and power plays, sparking rumors that the Unchained are witnessing the birth of an entirely new Agenda.

Cults provide valuable services to Tempters, but also prove a weak point, as cult activities draw attention from vigilant hunters. When hunters interfere in a Decadent's schemes, the demon attempts to gain leverage over them, hoping to force pacts, or at least direct them against the Tempter's foes.

Recommended Covers

Demons rely upon their Covers for security, both from the God-Machine and hunters. Most demons seek out Covers as freemen, generally favoring warriors, advisers, and artisans. While slave Covers are abundant, few demons maintain them permanently, due to the difficulty of operating without compromise. Merchants and travelers from foreign lands are prized, as odd behavior can sometimes be played off as cultural differences. While hunters could prove ideal as Covers, the caution exhibited by most provides a challenge to Unchained hoping to obtain one.

Patchwork Covers allow demons to custom build their identities but are limited by the aspects a pactbound is willing to offer. Many slaves offer up their servitude, for instance, but few demons wish to live as slaves, leading to a ready supply of slave burner Covers. Most demons relying on patchwork Covers settle for building weak Covers out of a few choice elements, then living them to strengthen and build them into desired shapes.

Souls remain the most effective way to gain established Covers, but in times of plenty, people are reluctant to part with them. Travelers drawn to Mali's legendary wealth sometimes pay the ultimate price to gain some of it for themselves, but others must be put into untenable situations before they consider such a sacrifice.

Compromise constantly threatens a demon's Covers. While the God-Machine seems strangely tolerant of the Unchained in Timbuktu, the rest of the empire offers no such reprieve. Stranger still, compromises sometimes draw attention from hunters, giving momentary glimpses of the monster beneath the mask.

Common Pacts

To the people of Mali, words hold great power, which the Unchained wield adeptly to obtain cults, influence, and souls. Growing instability in the empire proves a boon to demons seeking new pacts, avarice and turmoil driving mortals to desperate measures. Competition for pacts intensifies, the market for pact trading flourishes, and resourceful demons reap the benefits.

Striking pacts with hunters requires caution. The mere offer risks compromising their Cover or earning a new enemy. Incautious hunters may be tricked into pacts, but few hunters are so reckless. Demons hoping to gain pacts with cautious hunters rely on greed or desperation. While greed may be innate, desperation can be engineered by targeting a hunter's support system.

Sacrificial Pacts

Whether belonging to a hunter wary of the Unchained or to someone quite content with their life, some souls aren't for sale. Still, everything has its price. Demons wishing to obtain such souls must be creative, often resorting to the exploitation of a mortal's loved ones. A demon with



a soul pact may offer another the opportunity to take the pactbound's place.

System: A person wishing to supersede the pactbound in a soul pact must willingly sign their name in blood on the original pact document beneath the original pactbound. This requires an extreme act of will on behalf of the new pactbound, costing a dot of Willpower. The demon spends a point of Willpower to seal the pact. Other terms of the pact continue to affect the original pactbound, but their soul is safe unless they enter into a new pact. The demon may collect the soul of the new pactbound, but other terms of the pact don't benefit the new pactbound unless the demon spends an additional point of Willpower to extend them when the pact is sealed.

Memory Pacts

The Unchained often lament the shards of lives they collect carry none of the accompanying memories, leaving exploitable weaknesses in their Covers. Some demons circumvent this, striking pacts for mortal memories. Demon gaining memories in this way recall events as though having experienced them personally, leaving the pactbound with ragged holes in their memories. While this provides demons with useful information, the loss of undesirable memories is sometimes offered as a service. Desperate hunters, in particular, may take advantage of such offers to provide tangible benefits for loved ones while removing harmful memories of the supernatural. Despondent hunters wishing to abandon the Vigil may seek demons to forget the horrors witnessed.

System: In addition to a pact document, striking a memory pact requires the pactbound create an account of the memories surrendered. These accounts, called memoirs in later years, must be recorded by the pactbound, although the process relies upon intent rather than skill. Memories increase the demon's side of the pact as the fragments of life would if they were collected for a Cover, effectively doubling Willpower costs when collecting both aspect and memories. So long as the pact document and memoir remain intact and under the demon's control, the demon recalls events clearly, gaining the Informed Condition for any tasks actively benefited by the memories. A demon only receives a Beat from a given set of memories once per chapter but may renew the Condition once per scene by making physical contact with the memoir. Stealing a memoir causes memories to fade, removing the Informed Condition without resolution and requiring Intelligence rolls to recall details. Destroying the memoir or pact document instantly removes memories from the demon, returning them to the pactbound, although memoirs share pact documents' bolstered Durability. Memories vanish upon the pactbound's death, although memoirs retain the written accounts, in the initially recorded detail.

The pactbound recalls nothing of their sold memories, finding nothing but lost time during those periods. This is disturbing for the pactbound, who may not even recall they made a bargain. Investigating lost memories functions similarly to investigating a demon's Cover. Any time the pactbound uncovers new facts about the memories lost, it causes compromise as though learning a new fact about the demon.

Pactkeepers

In cultures like Mali's, where oral history told through song and story is the norm, some demons prefer to invest their pacts or memoirs into the memory of a living person rather than physical objects. Pactkeepers function as living records and hunting hounds for those who would deny a demon their due.

System: For a human to become a pactkeeper, they require a sufficiently keen memory, either the Eidetic Memory Merit or an Intelligence + Expression dice pool greater than the demon's side of the pact. Imposing the Pactkeeper Condition on a mortal requires one less Willpower point to seal, to a minimum of one. Soul pacts requires the pactbound anoint the pactkeeper with their blood. As this blood remains perpetually fresh, neither washing off or smearing, most pactkeepers prefer these marks be made in areas concealable by clothing. Pactkeepers become stigmatic, potentially causing compromise if the demon's nature was unknown before.

Entrusting pacts or memoirs to pactkeepers carries significant risk. Pactkeepers know the details of any pacts held, and may reveal them to others, causing compromises or inflicting the Betrayed Condition upon the Unchained. The death of a pactkeeper also counts as the destruction of any pacts or memoirs they held. Passing down pacts requires a new pactkeeper to possess a blood connection to the current pactkeeper, whether through family lines or simple blood rituals. Both the current pactkeeper and future pactkeeper spend a point of Willpower, and the current pactkeeper recites the information held to the new one. Pactkeepers cannot hold pacts affecting themselves.

BLOODY SOGOLON

"They robbed me of my life. I'll end theirs with a song."

Background: Sogolon was the best. Everybody knew it. The youngest daughter of a *jeli* family, Sogolon absorbed history and songs like a sponge, moving people to tears or laughter with her performances. The jelimuso claimed a repertoire of songs vaster than the night sky, and few disagreed. So great was her talent, she was unconcerned when invading forces came to annex her village, knowing talented *jeliw* were often added to the service of influential individuals. Her blatant displays of skill moved a member of the Seven Shadows operating within the invading army. Sogolon became the unfortunate soul chosen to act as pactkeeper for the Seven Shadows' collected soul pacts, a desperate effort to prevent intrigue from devolving into

enmity. Bitterly enduring slavery and confinement for years, Sogolon studied her captors, plotting for the day when she could avenge herself. Her opportunity came when hunters attacked the demons' hidden bolthole, slaying one of her captors and rescuing her in the process. While most hunters distrust her, none deny her information is useful, and she offers it willingly for her vengeance.

Description: Between her brilliant crystal eyes and the bloody hand print extending from her left cheek to the top of her neck, Bloody Sogolon is striking to behold. Her melodious voice sets people at ease but becomes harsh when speaking with anger. Despite the freedom of dress offered to women in Mali, she favors the garb of a Muslim woman, going veiled to conceal the bloody hand prints covering her torso and legs.

Storytelling Hints: Sogolon was wronged, and anyone who listens will hear about it. Despite her bitterness, Sogolon remains patient, carefully planning each move against the Unchained and wielding her allies as tools. Aware her pacts are her greatest protection against her former captors, she toys with the Seven Shadows, slowly unraveling their Covers and reveling in their fear and helplessness. She acts more decisively with other demons, directing hunter allies to observe hints of demonic activity and swiftly strike against them. The necessity of keeping to the shadows is a constant frustration for her, but Sogolon endures.

Stigmata: Sogolon's crystalline eyes glow like LED lights when reflecting moonlight.

Virtue: Calculating

Vice: Conceited

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4, Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Skills: Academics 1 (Mali History), Crafts 1 (Instruments), Investigation 1, Occult 3 (Demons), Politics 2, Athletics 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Animal Ken 1, Empathy 1, Expression 4 (Singing), Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Eidetic Memory, Inspiring, Numbing Touch 3, Pact Sense, Sympathetic, Unseen Sense (God-Machine)

Health: 7

Willpower: 7

Integrity: 5

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Defense: 3

Initiative: 5

Armor: 1/1

Pact Sense Merit (•••)

Prerequisite: Stigmatic

Effect: Your character senses the frayed aspects of reality stitched together by demonic pacts. When encountering something directly affected by a pact, they recognize it by sensations unique to the individual. Demons, pactbound, pactkeepers, pact documents, and even bargained away shards of a pactbound's life trigger this sensation. This provides no information about which aspect of a pact the character encounters but does detect the presence of demonic influence. Pactkeepers commonly develop this Merit.

Generational Pacts

The soul is the ultimate pact a demon can gain, but doing so requires the demon to offer something a person truly wants. The right pact ensures a person's descendants will have an abundance of wealth, talent, or influence. Few demons do this out of the goodness of their hearts. Demons entering into generational pacts play the long game, cultivating an influential family cult or ensuring future Covers to collect going forward. Some demons even create more lasting legacies, binding a portion of themselves into favored families.

System: Generational pacts affect the pactbound and any blood descendants. These require more effort from a demon to enact, requiring a dot of Willpower beyond any costs associated with the pact. Few demons strike such pacts lightly, as the terms bind all parties for as long as the pact document endures. In addition to creating documents for generational pacts, the mortal object of the pact gains an additional mark to show who's bound to it. Particularly trusted families may be entrusted with these items, passing them down as heirlooms. Pactkeepers may be used for generational pacts but must pass the pact down each generation to maintain it. Demons seek both cultists and souls from generational pacts, meticulously avoiding names when wording the pact to maximize their gains. A demon offering a deal in exchange for the soul of the firstborn child of the family, for example, would be able to collect on the firstborn of each generation. A demon collecting on a soul in a generational pact may choose to adopt the individual as their own child instead of taking them as a Cover, rendering them into Offspring. Members of pactbound families easily become stigmatic, frequently drawing the God-Machine's scrutiny.

When striking generational pacts, demons investing a dot of Primum render descendants of the pactbound into enhanced stigmatics called Embers. In addition to the usual stigmatic condition, Embers gain a single Embed at birth, often one of the demon's known Keys, and a connected Exploit, usually manifesting during puberty. These are common to the Ember bloodline, along with the stigmata manifested. Rumors persist of clever Embers reverse engineering their Exploit to learn additional connected Embeds with some difficulty. As Embers lack Aether pools, activating

their Exploit inflicts a level of aggravated damage for each point of Aether required.

Cults and Stigmatics

Demons hoping to preserve their Covers maintain low profiles, relying upon mortal allies to further their schemes. These allies offer many advantages, acting as security, servants, and informants. They also prove to be a demon's most vulnerable point.

Mali permits religious diversity, so the Unchained find fertile ground to nurture cults. Many Malian cults remain small, centering on individual families or loose associations of mortals practicing similar trades. Some operate almost openly, relying upon belief in myriad spiritual entities and expectations that artisans will intercede with them to discourage scrutiny. Other demons build cults among outsiders, hoping oddities of behavior may be dismissed as cultural differences. Hunters are not so easily fooled. Ever vigilant, they discern sinister patterns hidden within seemingly innocuous behavior. These hunters trace cult activities back to demonic masters, sometimes infiltrating these cults to get closer to their quarry.

Stigmatics find themselves torn between humanity and the machinations of the God-Machine. While stigmatics can operate on behalf of demons without fear of compromise, their stigmata and any strange behavior are certain to draw attention from hunters. Few hunters trust stigmatics, but those who take the risk find their unique senses provide an undeniable edge. Stigmatics may function as mediators between hunters and demons under a truce, although some take advantage of the situation to pursue their own aspirations, playing both sides off of each other.

Angels

While the God-Machine maintains cults and stigmatics of Its own, angels remain Its most useful servants. As It fortifies Its hold on Niani through means both subtle and overt, new angels arise nightly. In Timbuktu, angels are not only created but also imported from distant locations, a disturbing fact for vigilant demons. Timbuktu's angels displaying an unusual tolerance for the Unchained does little to ease their minds. Conversely, angels zealously protect Mali's trade routes, and attempts to interfere are harshly punished.

Hunters run afoul of angels less frequently than demons, but sometimes unwittingly interfere in angelic activities. The God-Machine recognizes the utility of hunters for undermining the schemes of the Unchained, frequently attempting to maneuver one against the other. Hunters recognizing angels at work usually can't distinguish them from demons, assuming they are rival demons. While seldom able to add them to the God-Machine's cults, directing hunters towards demons is a favored strategy, especially in places where angels seem reluctant to target demons personally.

Amal, the Holy Brand

"You must. It is Allah's will."

Mission: Amal is a Messenger sent to direct hunters against demons, acting as patron to the current incarnation of the Soldiers of Jabreel. Appearing mostly to devout Muslims in Timbuktu and those undertaking the hajj, he favors the recently converted, taking advantage of both their faith and their unfamiliarity with the finer points of their religion.

Description: Amal presents as a massive figure garbed in green, with six multicolored feathered wings extending from his radiant humanoid body. His face radiates serenity or fury depending on his mood, the halo surrounding his head soothing or blinding accordingly. When manifesting in human form, he takes the shape of a man clothed in green, often an imam or someone familiar to his audience.

Methods: Masquerading as the archangel Jabreel, Amal shrouds himself in contrived authority. Amal leverages people's faith, presenting whichever face will best influence a target to act on the God-Machine's wishes. He permanently binds golden jewelry to chosen hunters. This jewelry, enchanted to provide edges against demons, is so finely wrought it eerily resembles tattoos. He also sows seeds of a schism among the Integrators of the Faithful, offering to inform any demon of the will of Allah.

Virtue: Ardent
Vice: Prideful
Rank: 2
Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 6, Resistance 3
Influence: Faith 2
Corpus: 9
Willpower: 9
Size: 6
Speed: 16 (species factor 5)
Defense: 5
Initiative: 9
Armor: 0
Numina: Aggressive Meme, Awe, Hallucination, Implant Mission, Rapture
Manifestation: Image, Materialize, Twilight Form
Max Essence: 15
Ban: If commanded by an adherent, Amal must depart a place of faith until the next sunrise.
Bane: Desecrated holy symbols or texts



ZAIN, THE ANGEL OF GOLD AND SALT

"Are you certain such an expenditure is wise?"

Mission: Zain facilitates the proper movement of wealth in Niani and throughout the empire and beyond. He has lurked among the powerful for as long as the Empire has existed and considers the nation's wealth to be his personal achievement. While everything flowed smoothly under Mansa Musa, the empire now hemorrhages wealth, and the Angel of Gold and Salt intends to stanch the leak.

Description: Zain appears as Amjad Abdullah, a richly dressed adviser in the mansa's court. In his angelic form, Zain's gleaming golden skeleton is clearly visible through the translucent halite crystals composing his flesh. Wings forged of gold jut from his back, and golden spider legs make up his lower half.

Methods: Left to his own devices, Zain would micromanage every aspect of the empire's economy. For years, he surreptitiously transferred miniscule grains of gold dust from one pouch to another to tweak the weights, returning excess grains to the mansa's stores. Directly overseeing the flow of wealth and whispering the right words in the right ears ensured the growth of Mali's fortune.

Zain struggles to prevent the flow of gold from dropping to critical levels. Avoiding direct conflict whenever possible, the angel prefers to possess humans when his own Cover proves insufficient. While he has several subordinate angels and mortal agents available, he travels constantly between the capital and trading centers of the empire, preferring to oversee everything personally. If the troubles befalling the empire continue, it won't be long before Zain faces Abandonment, or a Fall.

Virtue: Frugal
Vice: Meticulous
Rank: 4
Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 12, Resistance 8
Influence: Greed 2, Wealth 3
Corpus: 13
Willpower: 10
Size: 5
Speed: 26 (species factor 5)
Defense: 9

Initiative: 20

Armor: 0

Numina: Blast, Drain, Essence Thief, Implant Mission, Innocuous, Pathfinder, Speed

Manifestation: Discorporate, Fetter, Materialize, Possess, Twilight Form, Unfetter

Max Essence: 25

Ban: Zain cannot allow wealth to go to waste. If he sees gold dust spilled into the sand, he's unable to depart the area without seeing to it the gold is gathered.

Bane: An object that caused financial ruin for its owner

For the Storyteller: Managing Mortals and the Divine

When running a chronicle that includes hunters and demons, keep in mind that the characters' perspectives frame the story. Hunters won't care that demons are fleeing, because they won't recognize or treat the God-Machine as real. Their concerns are usually pragmatic to keep their communities safe or learn more about the supernatural to apply that knowledge to a future hunt. A mythic story about a machine run amok will do little to force hunters to work with demons — especially if that hunter is religious or has clout in their community.

Hunter groups have the resources to investigate mysteries, but are aware time is short. The Golden Library may welcome information provided by a helpful Arabic scholar, unaware he's the angel known as Ink. The Unchained see an enemy providing intelligence and move to strike. Hunters who watch a pact being sealed see lies and deception, regardless of the pact's terms.

When confronted by a demon, hunters will want to kill, study, or capture their target unless they're given just cause to work with the enemy. In this era, a hunter's faith is crucial to how they approach the Vigil and the enemy. The only way a faithful hunter will betray the Code and work with a demon is if they're unaware of their ally's true nature. Demons can and do infiltrate hunter cells. The reverse is also true: hunters may infiltrate a demon's cult or network of informants, feeding information or rumors to track down their location and launch an attack.

Using Conditions

Demons influence mortals around them to obtain their desires, frequently imposing Conditions through pacts, powers, or manipulation, which hunters often recognize as signs of demonic influence. Common Conditions imposed include Amnesia, Apprehensive, Avarice, Blind, Deaf, Guilty, Leveraged, Madness, Mute, Notoriety, Obsession, Ominous, Pactkeeper, Shaken, Spooked, Swooning, and Wanton.

APPREHENSIVE

The loss of someone or something seems imminent, and your character is terrified. The character loses the 10-again effect on rolls unrelated to protecting the subject, and they suffer a −1 penalty to all actions when believing the subject is actively endangered. Anyone plausibly threatening to wrest the subject from the character may apply the Leveraged Condition.

Example Skills: Intimidation, Subterfuge

Resolution: Ensure the safety of the subject, by any means necessary.

AVARICE

Enough is never enough. Your character's lust for worldly power and material wealth knows no bounds. Composure rolls to resist temptation suffer a −2 penalty, and anyone offering opportunities for material advancement gains an exceptional success on three successes for Social rolls influencing the character.

Example Skills: Persuasion, Subterfuge

Resolution: Resist an opportunity for significant material gain or give generously to the needy, suffering large financial loss without hope of reward.

OMINOUS (PERSISTENT)

Bizarre phenomena and strange omens haunt your character's steps. Your character seems to be a harbinger of doom, drawing blame for the slightest misfortunes. Your character gains the 9-again effect on Intimidation rolls, but suffers a −2 penalty on other Social rolls.

Possible Sources: Supernatural curses

Resolution: Remove the curse or overcome its source.

Beat: The character is shunned, banished, or attacked because of this Condition.

PACTKEEPER (PERSISTENT)

A demonic pact or memoir is metaphysically bound into your memory. You gain a single point of Armor against all sources of injury, and supernatural attempts to alter or remove memories related to the pact are penalized by your Intelligence. Pactkeepers eternally sense their pactbound, effectively possessing the Direction Sense Merit related to them.

Resolution: Render all pacts or kept memories null, or pass them down to a new pactkeeper.

Beat: The pactkeeper's pacts or memories place the pactkeeper in immediate danger.

Tilts

The desert holds myriad dangers for travelers engaging in strenuous activity. Tilts of concern include Extreme Heat, Heavy Winds, and Shifting Sands.

SHIFTING SANDS (ENVIRONMENTAL)

Description: Loose sand or other unstable surfaces impedes the character's movement.

Effect: The character struggles to maintain balance, reducing Speed by 4 and suffering a −1 penalty to Physical actions. Attempts to climb loose sand suffer an additional −2 penalty. Dramatic failure on Physical actions inflict the Knocked Down Tilt.

Causing the Tilt: Loose sand is a frequent concern when moving through desert areas.

Ending the Tilt: Reaching stable footing ends the Tilt.

Unraveling the Unchained's Presence

Timbuktu beckons demons from beyond the ends of the empire. The burgeoning demon population draws attention from angel and hunter alike, but the reason for the influx is a mystery even to the Unchained. Here are some possibilities:

- **The Beacon:** At sunset, a mirage flickers to life over the Sankore Masjid, an iron lighthouse emanating golden light, visible only to those touched by the God-Machine. Blazing every night since the death of Mansa Musa, it beckons any demon who has encountered Malian gold dust, a siren song promising secrets beyond their wildest dreams. The God-Machine is concentrating demons in one place, but whether It collects them for some enigmatic purpose or distracts them from its plans elsewhere remains uncertain.
- **The Dreamer:** A demon-blooded hunter rests uneasy, haunted by visions of demonic entities and bizarre sigils. She wakes every morning with a sense of foreboding, certain the faces glimpsed in her dreams approach. As reports of demon sightings from other hunters surge, she fearfully questions whether her dreams are warning her or summoning them.
- **The Signal:** An Analyst discovered a major Command and Control center and a critical weakness within it. Certain a large demonic force could seize or destroy it, he puts out a call using suborned Infrastructure, bouncing the signal from other facilities to expand its range. Unchained perceive the signal as an impulse to journey to Timbuktu. The God-Machine notes the influx, opting for noninterference until it determines the demons' current agenda.
- **The Summoners:** Other hunters can't explain why a small cell of hunters suddenly began hoarding salt and gold dust, but suspect demonic influence. In truth, cursed gold ignites their natural greed, and a strange scroll provides the secret of drawing demons towards them. Soon, they will bind them to service, seizing supreme wealth and power through a thousand forced pacts.

Infrastructure Beneath the Desert

Sprawling Infrastructure lurks beneath the sands of the Sahara. Well-guarded by angels and fueled by the flow of materials through the trade routes, its purpose is unknown.

Here are two possibilities why the Infrastructure is present in this part of the world at this time:

- **Sands of the Hourglass:** The Infrastructure will allow the God-Machine to command the winds, moving sand grains back to previous locations, symbolically turning back time. If completed, the God-Machine would be able to turn back time on a large scale, reversing any defeat. While the Infrastructure isn't fully functional yet, It causes time ripples within the desert, leading to lost time for travelers and anomalous time storms drifting on wind-borne sands.
- **The Oasis Network:** Natural oases channel travelers through stable routes in the desert, but the God-Machine would find It convenient to extend this worldwide. This Infrastructure will allow the God-Machine to terraform the world into a network of inhospitable terrain broken by easy routes between habitable locales. Testing this Infrastructure produced bizarre veins of metal and plastic for angels to mine and a proliferation of desert cryptids, including horned devil vipers emitting staticky whispers in strange tongues as their scales slide along the sand and ghoststalker scorpions capable of shunting hapless mortals into Twilight with a single sting.



Story Hooks

Despite the beginnings of economic hardship and an uncertain future, Mali is still a relatively peaceful place that attracts tourists, travelers, and merchants from far-off lands. Many stories wait to be told, but each could vary greatly depending on the nature of the characters.

The story hooks below provide scenarios to leverage the information provided in this era and offers suggestions for adjustments depending upon which characters are involved. Storytellers should feel free to use whichever elements they like or create their own, nuanced hooks.

The Gilded Statue

Summary: Gold disappears from the coffers of Niani, leading to suspicion and accusations among the court. Meanwhile, Zain buries gold in strategic locations, desperately constructing emergency Infrastructure to replenish the wealth of the empire. To save his beloved empire, he will steal from death itself.

Setup: Niani's political scene is chaotic and is becoming unstable. When gold disappears, everyone — nobles, politicians, tourists, traders, and workers alike — is suspect. False leads are being introduced in greater frequencies as many court officials are taking advantage of the circumstances to undermine rivals or fill their own pouches. Evidence points to many court officials as thieves, but none recall the details of such events. Zain unhesitatingly accepts bribes or possesses court officials to gain the required gold. At the center of his makeshift Infrastructure, a golden statue of Mansa Musa stands ready to welcome the king back to the world.

Hunters: Tier-one hunters hear rumors of a strange being digging in the earth lead the characters to enough buried treasure to ensure their comfort for a long while. Who buried these urns of gold, and what are the strange cords connecting them together?

The Followers of the Mansa often receive information from Amjad Abdullah, but lately he has been distracted, hyperfocusing on the empire's gold. Coupled with recent demon sightings around town, tier-two hunters fear they have lost him to the enemy. Why does he focus so much on gold? Has Amjad been replaced with a demon?

The conspiracies watch for signs of supernatural influence among the mansa's court, but the discord caused by the vanishing gold complicates matters. Sightings of a demon burying gold confirms their fears of one in their midst. Which court official is the demon's puppet, and why does he focus on stealing gold instead of souls? Is he connected to the God-Machine? And, if so, why does The God-Machine care about gold?

The Unchained: Most demons carry out their personal agendas knowing a hunter may not be far behind. The Unchained is aware someone is stealing gold, but isn't sure if that enemy is a demon or something *else* masquerading as one of their kind. Increased scrutiny does nothing to help the demons' wavering Covers, so finding the one responsible becomes a priority. Sightings of Zain draw the Unchained towards the Infrastructure he constructs. Has Zain been Abandoned or Fallen? If he completes his ritual, what will truly rise in the body of the Golden Mansa? How does the statue factor into the God Machine's plans?

The Pride of Kawkaw

Note to Storytellers: This story hook involves human slavery and a violent uprising. If you are planning to run a chronicle inspired by this hook, talk to your players ahead of time and ensure they're comfortable with the scenario. Though slavery was prominent during this era, players may not want to engage in a chronicle that touches on this topic.

Summary: Workers and slaves vanish nightly from the market in Kawkaw. They reappearwithin two days's time bearing fresh scars and eerily calm attitudes. The afflicted accepts punishments without complaint and stares at their oppressors with ravenous eyes. Soon, the lions will strike.

Setup: The player-characters investigate the slaves' unusual behavior, but by the time they discover the lions they're protecting, it's too late to stop the violence. The night of their attack, the slaves rise as one, ripping and feasting upon the flesh of all they encounter. As the slaves feed, three cryptid lions appear. The lions are supernaturally causing the afflicted to act, think, and feel in concert: to free their victims, the player-characters must determine how to deal with the lions without causing further harm to the slaves.

Hunters: Most hunters are conflicted by this scenario. As a citizen of Mali, they have witnessed (or participated in) uprisings before. What a hunter needs to see, however, is how the supernatural is playing a role in this event. Tier-one hunters will step in as their consciences' demand, but will refocus their efforts when they realize the supernatural is at work.

Tier-two hunters will start by searching for demonic influence, and may suspect the slaves' minds have been stolen by fiendish bargains that result in their freedom. While questions remain, tier-two hunters will recognize that the linked minds' won't stop attacking and innocent people's lives are at risk. Compact leaders will want the violence to end without anyone else — including the victims — getting hurt. Tier-three hunters will take a different approach, and will broaden their search to include vampires, sorcerers, and other enemies capable of hypnotizing minds.

When the uprising begins, hunters will coordinate to contain the violence, ensure the victims are safe, and deal with the cause. Can they be cured of the lions' influence, or is destruction their only hope?

The Unchained: A ring of foreign demons has suborned the Infrastructure containing the lions and witnessed their escape. Now they're recruiting any demons willing to help their cause. Some demons hope to stop the lions before they

cause trouble, while others wait to see what chaos they'll cause. Most demons are surprised by the slaves' attack and are confused by the lions' behavior. Was the God-Machine's intent to save the slaves with the lions' help? By hunting them, will demons hinder Its plans or fulfill them? What should the Unchained do once hunters are involved?

The Rendering Chamber

Summary: A cult of alchemists has established a laboratory in Timbuktu, and they hunt anyone exhibiting aberrant behavior, rendering them down into whatever supernatural resources they can gain for their strange concoctions. Imbibing these potions twists them into stigmatic nightmares.

Setup: The first hint of something odd is likely the disappearance of someone known to either the characters or their contacts. Investigation reveals other disappearances, eventually leading to the discovery of the cult. Its laboratory is set up in a small home on the outskirts of the city, but the facility is far larger on the inside. A biomechanical horror is bound into a tube at the center of their equipment, a pair of terrified human eyes staring from its impassive metal face.

Hunters: Tier-one hunters will think either a sorcerer or demon is to blame and will target the cult as an enemy. Tier-two hunters might suspect demonic activity, but will be careful not to jump to assumptions. Some hunters will take a careful approach to spy on the alchemists and may even require proof that they are, in fact, demons. Tier-three hunters will be the first to suspect a rogue hunter is behind the alchemists' unholy activities, and will approach the Ascending Ones in the area for answers. The more questions hunters ask, the more they'll realize not everything is as it seems. While some ingredients had been stolen, all hunters have been accounted for. Who stole from the Ascending Ones and why? Who has access to such formulae? What purpose does this cult serve? Whom do they answer to?

The Unchained: The Unchained are forced to assume The God-Machine is plotting against them when bizarre stigmatics — the cult of alchemists — begin hunting them down. When the demons discover the Infrastructure responsible, they'll learn the cult is firmly in control. Is the bound Destroyer angel a prisoner or fulfilling its purpose? How are these potions granting alchemists demonic abilities? Why? Should they ally with the alchemists? Or fight with hunters to eliminate them?

Sources and Inspiration

The jeliw of Mali, most commonly known as *griots* in the modern day, carry the legends and history of their people through their songs, which they believe to be passed down through the blood. In fact, the term jeli actually translates to "blood." The tradition stretches back to before Sundiata's jeli, Balla Fasséké, and continues to persist to this day. Documentaries and beautiful performances by modern griots may be found through Internet research.

The Epic of Sundiata: Available in numerous translations, this epic poem details the life of Sundiata Keita, from the time he was born, weak and disabled, to his conquest of the sorcerer king Sumanguru Kanté and the rise of the Empire of Mali.

The Travels of Ibn Battuta, by Ibn Battuta, translated by Samuel Lee (1829). Ibn Battuta was an Islamic scholar and explorer who visited the Empire of Mali in the early 1350s. While colored by his prejudices and greed, it provides a good look at the empire immediately following the years covered by this era. Other translations are also available.

Empires of Medieval West Africa: Ghana, Mali, and Songhay, by David C. Conrad (2005). This book provides a simple introductory look at the history of the Mali Empire and the culture and society of the Mande people.

The Royal Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay: Life in Medieval Africa, by Patricia and Frederick McKissack (1994). This book also gives a look at the society and culture of the era.



Followers of the Mansa

Protectors of Life

"We will protect everything that is good."

When monsters crept in over the borders and sprung up in the shadowy places where the fearful refuse to look, a few brave men and women faced the darkness and bound themselves in agreement to fight what others would not. The founders of the compact were deeply devoted in their service to Mansa Musa I and out of that love for king and country swore never to allow harm to come to the mansa or his great empire. Though Musa has passed, the Followers of the Mansa remain loyal to the throne, adhering to the compact's principles to defend the kingdom and its rulers.

The Followers of the Mansa recruit members from the critical but unsung members of society. Scribes, auditors, investigators, and palace guards who have had the scales fall away from their eyes and take up the Vigil are welcomed into the ranks of the Followers. While the seat of the compact resides in Niani, any hunter willing to make the journey to the capital and be formally accepted into the ranks is welcome to join, as long as their loyalty belongs to the empire and the empire alone.

Choosing membership from the empire's most innocuous places allows the Followers of the Mansa to move unseen through society. No one looks twice at the sweaty-faced dock laborer as he unloads his wares (though he is listening to and watching everyone around him), or gives a moment's consideration to the hurried, overworked scribe and she travels down the masjid's halls (she has uncovered an arcane secret in her translations, and it must be revealed to her cell, post-haste). Their eyes and ears are everywhere within the empire, and they will give the enemy no quarter and no reprieve.

Where the military handles mundane threats to the empire, the Followers shoulder the burden of pursuing and destroying supernatural threats. Certainly, they often employ bows and lances, but it is the strength of knowledge and economic savvy that give the Followers their advantage over the monsters that creep in the night. They are everywhere, and they have the resources of a vastly wealthy, powerful kingdom behind them. A word in the right ear and the river port closes, preventing a vampire from making its escape that night. Another nudge in the right direction and all inventory manifests from incoming caravans are audited, revealing dozens of smuggled, cursed objects. The Followers will not let monsters prey on those they protect.

The Enemy

The Followers of the Mansa, in their pursuit of demons, have found that they crop up most often around societal centers: important buildings, institutions, social constructs. If they are to hunt down and drive out these monsters, they must trace them to their hunting grounds. This means using the trade network to pass along critical information and artifacts or to block the corrupting actions of a demon trying to stir unrest or spread lies.

As their primary quarry is something immense and uncertain, the Followers of the Mansa avoid reckless conflict with monsters. Rather than shooting first and asking questions later, the Followers choose thorough investigations and strategic strikes. Demons are unparalleled liars, and one false lead could result in the death of an innocent, or the dismantling of an entire organization — perhaps exactly what a demon wants.

The Response

Though the Followers adhere to a practice of general caution, when they know they are facing a demon, they do everything in their power to avoid a direct conflict with the monster. After losing a number of members to a conflict with a demon that turned violent, the compact forbids overt combat with the Fallen. In place of violence, the Followers instead encourage their hunters to subvert and undo a demon's plans, to try to reveal its true nature, and to drive it out with their own supernatural abilities. All of this is, perhaps, easier said than done, and sometimes a hunter may find that violence is the best answer.

Upon learning that demons exist, the Followers made an agreement to avoid direct, violent conflict with these incomprehensible beings. Instead they chose to accumulate knowledge and archive every advantage they can muster to turn away the Fallen's corrupting influence. The Followers have made a strategy out of rigorous observation. Hunters are directed to watch, learn, listen, and act indirectly — striking at supply lines, misleading informants, ad cutting off the monster's access to vulnerable people. They encourage doing anything to weaken the corruption without facing the demon directly. If direct conflict becomes the only option, the Followers urge their members to fight as prepared as possible and be ready to exploit their target's every weakness.

Hunters

You work as a scribe in one of the many prominent masjids in Niani. Though your name does not appear on any prestigious placard, all the employees and attendees of the masjid know your name. You spearhead the recruitment for the Followers of the Mansa, and ensure each member will add value to the group. You are opposed to the use of violence and are willing to sanction members if you've discovered they are ignoring the rules.

Though few people know your full name, you served as the quartermaster stationed in Niani for years. Your connections in the military are valuable, and your dedication and hard work have earned you a favorable reputation. You often find yourself at odds with other, less experienced hunters who don't understand that violence is sometimes a necessary solution when dealing with the supernatural.

You are a new member who was chosen because you served in the royal palace. You have access to sensitive information that you share to gain favor with your fellow hunters. Because of this, you've been granted status in your compact that other hunters feel you don't deserve. You want the opportunity to prove yourself, and are and excellent scout with an outstanding memory. One day, you know your observations will save lives. One day.



Factions

Three groups of hunters take different approaches to the hunt. Of the three groups, the Scribes are the largest, and the Students are the smallest. This may change over time as the compact acquires more knowledge of the supernatural.

Scribes believe that the Vigil can only be upheld if knowledge is carefully amassed, recorded, and taught to other hunters. Scribes abhor violence and will only fight as a last resort.

Soldiers are convinced that military tactics and battle plans are effective tools to deal with the enemy. They are insistent that violence is necessary. Many soldiers want to train other Followers in the art of self-defense.

Students are hunters who study and use recorded knowledge to fight. While they can and do attack monsters, they prefer to seek nonviolent solutions to avoid a confrontation that will result in harm.

Status

Status among the Followers of the Mansa is closely tied to a hunter's reputation.

• You've just been inducted into the ranks of the Followers of the Mansa. If you weren't already, you've been promoted to a person of minor standing, but not *too* important. Gain a Skill specialty in Politics or Expression relevant to your position.

••• Your fellow hunters are impressed and speak highly of you. Gain two dots of Allies (Followers of the Mansa).

••••• You don't seek fame or wealth, and your fellow hunters know you are an example to be followed. Gain three dots of Resources to aid you in your hunt.



Accorso,

If you will not heed my warnings to turn from your studies on grounds of our friendship and trust, let me tell you fully of the Soncino matter, in hope this might penetrate your prideful stubbornness and return you to humility.

Filippo Mantovani died before my companions and I arrived at his crumbling villa at the edge of Soncino. He was struck down by a wasting disease. Some farmers had already taken the shriveled corpse on a crude bier to a hilltop near the town, its crown bare but for the jagged shape of an old monolith. We resolved to challenge this superstitious nonsense after questioning Rigarda, Filippo's wife.

Amid the meager furnishings and empty shadows of her home, Rigarda told us her husband had spent his riches on telescopes and prohibited texts. She showed us copies of *De revolutionibus*, *Siderius Nuncius*, and others besides, and admitted that she too had read and studied these books.

Further, she said that she and her husband had witnessed strange lights in the night sky, that there were pearls of silver that did not match the charts of any philosopher or mathematician and certainly not holy scripture. They had spent months tracing the arc of these lights and learned a certain flashing rhythm from them which they believed to be a language of the firmament.

Filippo had fallen in with certain men from the local farms, men of whom Rigarda was fearful, and regardless of their difference in status the merchant had employed these peasants because of their belief that the monolith on the hill had been built by the ancients, and that witches used it as a beacon to speak with spirits of the sky.

As she explained this story to us, and we questioned her closely as to how they had acquired these books prohibited by the Sacred Congregation of the Index, evening fell. Rigarda offered us hospitality but, as we sat to eat, a terrible sound of buzzing and clicking came from that distant hilltop and shook our bones so intensely that it brought us to senselessness.

When we came to, Rigarda was gone along with the books. The distant hilltop was limned with white light, and the monolith burned there like an ivory brand. We could see the shapes of figures dancing around it. A light answered in the night sky above and fell on a trail of fire to consume that hilltop in a thunderous conflagration.

In that fire, Accorso, I saw wings unfolding.

You know I am not superstitious, Accorso, but I have no explanation in scripture or reason for what I witnessed. I urge you to set aside your fanciful obsession with the philosophy and mathematics of the heavens. The mysteries of the firmament should not be explored.

Some truths come at a price too high for simple mortals such as we. Leave these secrets to God, my friend. Please.

— Guglelini, in service to the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition

Light of the Sun
1630-1640 CE



"But that which will excite the greatest astonishment by far, and which indeed especially moved me to call the attention of all astronomers and philosophers, is this: namely, that I have observed four planets, neither known nor observed by any one of the astronomers before my time, which have their orbits round a certain bright star, one of those previously known, like Venus or Mercury round the sun, and are sometimes in front of it, sometimes behind it, though they never depart from it beyond certain limits. All of which facts were discovered and observed a few days ago by the help of a telescope devised by me, through God's grace first enlightening my mind."

– Galileo Galilei,
"*The Sidereal Messenger*" Pamphlet, 1610

Europe is in turmoil. The Holy Roman Empire and its enemies lurch through the relentless carnage of the Thirty Years' War. Millions die to fire and sword and pox and hunger. Rising powers and crumbling lineages choke and throttle one another over entanglements of authority and faith. Christianity, sundered between Catholic and Protestant, turns on itself like a rabid animal; divisions fuel frenzied feuds and are used to justify new ambitions.

In the shadow of the Holy Roman Empire, Italy's growth slumps, its myriad of squabbling dominions eclipsed by greater powers. Plague scours the land, its rancid grasp leaving so deep a suppurating wound in society that even decades later there will still be deserted homes and desolate farmsteads. After the scintillating brilliance of the Italian Renaissance, the peninsula now seems tarnished.

This is not simply a decline, though, not a dark age stark against prior light. This, too, is a time of illumination, where the grandeur of the Renaissance is set aside in favor of sharper tools of rationality and inquisition. Flourishing science brings inconvenient truths to bear against the foundations of power; men and women of influence and intelligence must balance the rival demands of veracity, piety, and loyalty.

Some, like Galileo Galilei, are unable to maintain such a balancing act.

Strange powers grapple with the tumult spilling through Italy. Awakened magicians struggle for influence within the corridors of authority, dealing in the carmine cloth of Cardinals and the schemes of nobility. They watch as Sleepers lurch forward in their understanding of the world and wonder what the huddled masses might do once armed with new revelations. Conspiracies of occultists transgress across boundaries of sanity and morality, defying stifling edicts to push new science and old mysticism too far. Deviants serve them in bloody, secret wars, the manifested proof of seemingly ridiculous theories.

And behind it all, demons and angels clash in fire and shadow as humanity's progress threatens to reveal the grinding guts of the God-Machine. The flickering intellectual light of brilliant souls throws strange phenomena into stark and sudden relief. Such discoveries could bring the Unchained salvation — or usher in catastrophe.

The divine engine of God will not go down without a fight.

Theme: The Price of Truth

Revelations on the nature of the world, long incubated through lineages of thinkers and philosophers, now emerge into full bloom. This crop of truth threatens established power, its harvest of discoveries a danger to the status quo. The orbiting place of the world in the vast dance of sun and stars challenges embedded geocentric beliefs, and therefore also challenges the institutions that derive their authority from those beliefs — chiefly the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. Promoting truth is not a question of delving into the unknown, but of fighting for the acceptance of the *known*.

For thinkers and theologians, this thorny issue can alter the course of careers and end lives. Speaking truth to power leads to ostracism, condemnation, and execution. Galilei is lucky; he is punished for his heresy with lenient arrest.

Giordano Bruno, a contemporary, dies amid flames with his screams choked by a gag. Promoting truth is a dangerous game, a dance of influence and friendships and favors by which the messenger protects themselves from retaliation. Even an unpalatable truth *can* be made heard, if one has the protection of popes and princes.

Sorcerers and the Unchained face terrible choices as the skin of the world peels back before the light of humanity's investigations. When mortals stumble upon the truth of the God-Machine, should their efforts be strangled in the crib or fostered and aided? What plan does the great and awful engine of reality attempt to engineer in this time of revelation?

Mood: Hubris and Rot

The struggle between truth and power reveals rot has set in across Europe, corruption in institutions of power and the decay that now seizes the arteries of Italy's economy. Bloated merchants squander wealth on luxuries, and nepotism runs rampant among arrogant clergy, even as common folk slave through fields of thin soil or are trampled under the Thirty Years' War. Spiritual rot finds a reflection in the scourge of the plague that reaps a monstrous, reeking harvest. Societal decay, injustice, and disease are evident wherever one looks.

The struggles of the era are defined by the arrogance and hubris of those caught up in them. Emboldened by the Counter-Reformation, Emperor Ferdinand II of the Holy Roman Empire grinds down his Protestant subjects until they lash out in vengeance. Pope Urban VIII reaches for the glittering apogee of the Papacy's power but leaves it laden with terrible debts. Galilei, so confident and blinded by his conviction in his discoveries, so eager to receive accolades for his intellect, drives allies away through his arrogance. When the jaws of the Catholic Church close in, almost no one is left to stand at his side.

How many of the disasters that are to come could have been avoided with humility and empathy?

What Has Come Before

Faith has power. It can drive humans toward incredible achievements or monstrous atrocities. The Awakened, both religious and secular, seek to understand the rules governing the universe alongside their Sleeper counterparts, a path by which humanity might be inspired — or chained. Demons experience the power of faith so personally and painfully in the moment it is *gone* — when unthinking faith in the God-Machine is no longer enough in the face of terrible questions. Hooded Broken whisper Pater Nosters in monasteries or kneel in the darkened corners of cathedrals, begging God to make them clean again, but to no avail.

It is the clash of faiths that places Galilei under the spotlight — a chain of events born long before, in the conflict between Catholicism and the Protestant Reformation.

The Counter-Reformation, born from the Council of Trent in 1545, sets the stage. Facing the challenge of Protestantism, the Papacy ignites a new cultural and theological movement. The Counter-Reformation is to inspire and to unify the Catholic Church. It burns out spiritual rot. Far-flung missions tighten the Church's grip on the sprawling spread of colonies. Clever tongues proselytize to those split from the congregation in Protestant lands. It is the Catholic counterattack, a rigorous reinforcement of the ideological and intellectual tenets that serve as the faith's foundations.

By the 17th century, Europe is viciously divided on lines of piety, lineage, and authority. This is no longer a clear-cut, simple conflict between Protestantism and Catholicism. It is a messy, complex network of alliances broken, promises betrayed, and faith compromised. Two branches of the Habsburgs are split between Spain and the Holy Roman Empire — a provisionally Catholic alliance that contains multitudes within its borders, including a large number of Protestant subjects. France, the other great Catholic power of the day, vies with the Habsburgs for influence, while the Protestant nations squabble and clamor in the north.

Italy has been a patchwork for centuries, carved up among city-states and duchies — but now, allegiances to far masters further scar the country. The Spanish hold the leash of much of the south. The north sees the French and the Holy Roman Empire squabbling over dominance. The Papal States squat in the midst, a teetering edifice of religious authority born on the back of real secular power. The Holy See grapples with base, material appetites — the pecuniary hungers that suckle at its coffers of coin, and the arrogant ambitions of the men who slouch upon the papal throne.

The Seers of the Throne well understand the politics of the age and can maneuver better than most. Up until the mid-15th century, the Seers of the Throne were not a unified sect, but a tenuous and shifting alliance of Exarch-oriented Nameless Orders. The early years of the Italian Renaissance and the birth of city-states like Milan and Venice gave rise to the nationalistic Hegemony, who worship the Unity, Iron Seal of Mind and Exarch of control through xenophobia. As the first Ministry, they organized the other proto-Seer cults into similar Ministries, forming a bloc that could more meaningfully oppose the Diamond and enact the Exarchs' will. This included Paternoster — cult of the Father, Iron Seal of Prime and Exarch of control through dogma — though it was a hard sell. Paternoster has been the largest and most cohesive Exarchal Nameless Order since the 13th century and would have stayed independent if the other cults hadn't fallen in line with Hegemony's plan. As it is, while Paternoster Seers remain powerful and numerous, and retain their own hierarchical structures, they too are now considered a Ministry of the Iron Pyramid.

Still, in this era, the alliance is fractious: The Hegemony supports a Christian Reformation that will fracture Christendom into rival factions, while Paternoster supports the Counter-Reformation to keep papal power consolidated, acutely aware that the Reformation is giving the nobility unprecedented sway over the Church. To the Father's



devout, this assault on their authority is unacceptable. The pressures between Reformation and Counter-Reformation seethe and suppurate among Seers and Sleepers alike. In 1618, the flesh splits and the pus boils out. Emperor Ferdinand II demands uniformity of faith, uncaring of his subjects' disparate forms of fervor. He crumples and casts aside old agreements that protect Protestants' rights, drives them out, and stamps down on those with the temerity to defy him. In Prague, the Bohemians throw the emperor's representatives out of a window to the cruel ground below and elect a Calvinist as their king. They gather their allies to the banner of war. The Catholic League does the same.

Thus begins the Thirty Years' War. This nightmare burns for three horrific decades. It reaps untold millions of lives. In the first, heady, outrageous days, the belligerents have yet to appreciate the terrible slaughter that will follow. Blood soaks the fields. Soldiers and mercenaries meet in battle after battle until the dead lie in great piles of rotting meat. Civilians are butchered, settlements incinerated. No one is spared; entire principalities are depopulated, and not just through sword and fire. War's eternal companions ride wild and free, disease running rampant and famine birthed through ashen fields emptied of workers.

The emperor's plans grind forward mercilessly, without regard for such consequences. He executes swathes of Bohemian ringleaders, drives nobles into exile, and treats Protestant denominations with scornful expulsions and bans. In 1629, he passes an edict of restitution, restoring to the Catholic Church lands that it lost during the Reformation — lands that must now be snatched from the hands of Protestants, many of whom are nobles and magnates hitherto holding back from the fray. Gouged of their property, they retaliate with fury and dissent. In 1630, a scant few years before Galilei faces his trial at the hands of the Inquisition, the Swedish king Gustav Adolphus enters the war — and he does not come alone. Barriers of faith are broken in the face of expediency. Louis XIII of France, a Catholic, throws his support behind the Swedes, stoking the war into a bonfire of carnage and chaos.

Nightmares and occult puppeteers slither through the shadows. They walk a world turned to madness. Where the ground is soaked in gore, where once-fertile fields turn to choking dust, spirits of the courts of death and hunger and fear come together to caper and cavort and glut themselves. Those Awakened to the world's Mysteries find entire villages caught under the rapturous influence of spiritual invaders, their flesh twisted into horrors that stir terrified Sleepers into manias of witchcraft and devilry. Possessed corpses rise again on battlefields to reenact the cruelty of their last moments over and over again, trapped in their torment. Priests spew heresies vomited into their minds by gibbering phantasms. Blood-hungry things prowl in the armies' wake, feasting on the wounded, spreading sickness and pox among the weak. Strange beings are driven from their ancient lairs by the ruination wrought through feuding faiths and warring princes.

Those who cannot conceal their connection to the supernatural world face the Inquisition to be tried as witches. Some escape this fate by seeking service to wealthy patrons — whether as bodyguards, assassins, or stranger professionals — who can put their occult talents at the disposal of their masters out of sight of the public. Others join mercenary companies, which assign them to special squads of scouts, shock troops, or engineers, depending on their particular abilities.

At first, Italy seems spared from the excesses of the war playing out across northern Europe. That will change — but for now the conflict's impact on the peninsula is economic, intellectual, and theological. Shifting alliances among the great patron powers of France, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire pressure their nominal Italian subjects, and loot the coffers of Italy to pay for their excesses. The threads that link the Papacy and the states around it are pulled taut or twisted, and so too does the Church's relationship with science and truth change — all bent before the altar of political necessity.

Galileo Galilei

In the 14th century, the Italian Renaissance was the spark that lit a wider cultural revival across Europe. Italy now sits at the tail end of that great movement, but it is much diminished. The Italian states once saw a flowering of art, literature, science, and philosophical thought driven through wealth and patronage that cascaded down from affluent and ambitious urban magnates. The University of Padua, where Galilei would one day teach, hosted the first and most widely known anatomical theater beginning in 1594, where professors lectured on physiology and provided practical demonstrations of dissection to an audience of students and scholars.

Much of that dynamism has been leeched away by the 17th century, the prestige and wealth of the great city-states foundering, and their power shackled by the Habsburgs.

It is not eradicated, though. Thinkers and scientists of the years that lead to Galileo Galilei's trial stand upon the accomplishments of those who have come before. Universities flourish, a valuable asset of the mind that duchies and principalities leash for their own aggrandizement. The Counter-Reformation has not strangled intellectualism, but instead lashed it to a framework of encouragement and patronage dependent on the oversight and approval of the Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire. The Papacy and the Habsburgs compete for preeminence over thought and spirit.

It is against this backdrop of feuding powers that Galilei and his contemporaries publish their discoveries. The Church is a potent friend to those scientists and scholars who respect its authorities, and who have connections and allies among the courts of Italy. This includes those whose studies require a supply of cadavers for dissections, as evidenced by the fact that Italy, along with France, earns a reputation for the quality of its anatomy books.

Political protection allows a thinker to explore ideas with relative impunity. At first, Galilei is supported by the Jesuits, the Medici rulers of Tuscany, and Cardinal Barberini — the future Pope Urban VIII. He is almost coddled in how these friends and supporters allow him to pursue his studies.

Giordano Bruno, who follows a close path to that of Galilei — even competing with him for a position at the University of Padua — does not have such friends, nor does he play the political games of the church. He is sentenced to death in 1600 for his heresies, and his works banned.

Both Galilei and Bruno explore the idea of heliocentrism, the idea that the Earth orbits the sun. The Church's position is derived from scripture, a belief that the Earth is the center of all things and never to be moved. This seems self-evident — the sun and moon can be seen to move through the sky, where those upon the Earth have no sense the ground is moving anywhere. If the world spun, they ask, then why do things that are dropped fall straight down? In all things, the earth beneath one's feet seems stable and firm compared to the whirling firmament above. The Bible's focus upon humanity and its planet confers comforting assurance that this world is the focus of divine attention.

Yet such seemingly obvious doctrine grates sharply against discrepancies and phenomena revealed by the light of inquiry — inquiry of which the Catholic faithful are at the forefront, including some astronomers among the Jesuits. The notion that the planets orbit the sun is hardly new — Copernicus espouses it in the 1500s, and others long before him — but Galilei makes bold new claims in his *Siderius Nuncius* of 1610, and later the *Dialogue* that will prove his downfall. His words — now scathing, as he felt he was not being heard — offer a platter of fresh evidence. The telescope has burst onto the stage and Galilei and his peers not only turn it to the skies, they refine and hone it until hitherto-unknown secrets of the heavens are revealed. Galilei sketches details of the moon. The gears of the God-Machine twist to frantic overdrive as the keen sight of humanity pierces into a domain that, until now, served as a bleak but safe depository for the insensate divinity's churning engines.

Galilei garners attention for the *Siderius Nuncius*, little of it good. The Jesuits laud his work — but the scholar shows his signature lack of judgment and ignores his allies' work delving into the mysteries of sunspots. When he publishes his *Letters on Sunspots*, his arrogance on the topic and hunger for acclaim riles those who should be his friends. Even as angels hurriedly stamp down on occult pattern generators in the sun's outer reaches, agitated by the impending observation of their efforts, Galilei's smug self-assurance cracks the rift with the Church wider.

For now, though, Galilei takes a step to secure his future for the short term. He spies moons around Jupiter — and an angel in Rome, tasked with interpreting blinking flashes of light from those distant satellites, weeps tears of blood from its seven faces and Falls as the Jovian signal suddenly silences — and names them the Medician Stars. Such blatant flattery and oozing obsequiousness earn him the patronage of the Florentine Medici, the rulers of Tuscany. He is awarded a sinecure at the university of Pisa. When castigation finally arrives in 1616 for his transgression against Church dogma, the Medici connection ensures it is incredibly mild. He is rebuked to neither hold nor defend the Copernican approach, and that is all. It is a far cry from the incendiary fate suffered by Bruno.

But the gears of the God-Machine are already turning; meanwhile, the jealous attention of the Awakened falls upon the progress of human understanding. The Pentacle wonders if this might be the seed from which Truth will spring — and the Iron Pyramid readies itself to crush the light of revelation.

Not all of Galilei's innovations are so controversial. His standardization of measurements and use of repeated experiments to identify patterns that lead to broader theories make peer review possible and come to be embraced by other scholars. Rigorous and repeated experiments yield greater understanding of the mechanics and potential practical applications of occult topics, too. As the era opens,

Language and Terminology in 17th-century Italy

Language usage in Italy is *complicated* and its evolution is part of a centuries-long discourse that involved Dante Alighieri, Niccolò Machiavelli, and many others. During this era, Italian city-states use regional dialects tied to that location. When a citizen travels from Venice to Milan, a Milanese will instantly be able to tell where the speaker hails from. Unfortunately, many citizens are illiterate and rely on their internalized knowledge to understand one another; sometimes, they are unable to communicate unless they have a translator versed in both dialects.

In academic, political, and religious circles, a great discussion called the *questione della lingua* seeks to answer what the proper or standard form of Italian is, a conversation that includes four different factions active in this era: the purists who draw from classical texts, the Florentines who weight common usage, courtiers who insist local vernacular must be incorporated, and a papal faction who believes the Church's version is the correct one. The question of language will remain unresolved until the Napoleonic era when Italy is unified in the 19th century; even so, it will take years before a standard language is implemented, and dialects are still in use to this day.

During this era, terms provided in this chapter either use terminology sourced from 20th-century Italian or from Latin. To simplify this for your chronicle, treat Latin as the "language of scholars" and Italian as a common language.



universities serve as another potential place of refuge for Remade, albeit one where Devoted can expect to be the subjects of often invasive experiments.

Where We Are

"The darkest places in hell are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in times of moral crisis."
— Dante Alighieri

It is 1630, and the chaos and tumult of the Habsburgs' wars have finally reached down into Italy. The impact is calamitous. French and Imperial foreign soldiers march to battle over the fate of Italian city-states. The pope treads a treacherous path, attempting to balance the conflicting demands of France and the Holy Roman Empire. A monstrous killer stalks the land, for the bubonic plague has come and it will slake its thirst for suffering with a million Italian lives.

Amid the madness, Awakened magicians battle for influence. Seer Ministries struggle to assert their vision for the future of the Papacy and the aristocracy; the Diamond Orders pry at the Iron Pyramid's grasp on the reins of authority in both arenas. Clandestine rings of Unchained work frenetically as meddlesome human scholars illuminate the God-Machine's workings; provoked by the threat to Its secrecy, the divine engine catches mortal lives in Its grinding gears and tears stars from the firmament. Thinkers and scientists for whom no law of church or nature is sacrosanct practice illicit experiments that produce Deviants in ever-greater numbers.

Sorcerers, demons, and the Remade alike watch Galilei's trajectory with bated breath. His fate will demonstrate which vision of the future burns brightest amid the machinations and entanglements of nations, faith, and shadow.

States of Chaos

Italy is a patchwork of states, each with a city at its beating heart. For centuries, Italy has lounged upon its throne at the nexus of mercantile and maritime trade routes, clawing grotesque wealth into the coffers of its merchants and nobles. The fires of the Italian Renaissance were lit with such glittering riches, but now they have lost their luster. As the world looks to far-off colonies, the Mediterranean loses its dominance over trade.

Italy remains broken and fragmented, but its place in the world is changing. Genoa, Venice, Milan, and Naples no longer possess the grandeur or independence of the past. They are leashed to the will of greater entities, dependent

on the patronage of rulers abroad — the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II, the French King Louis XIII, and Philip IV of Spain. These lieges squeeze the Italian states for money and for support, using them as proxies and pawns.

During these cruel years, the plague carves a brutal gouge through the ranks of the workforce and guts the productivity of the cities' industries. Merchants and nobility turn to investments they desperately hope will restore their squandered riches — oil, wine, and silk. The soil of the countryside, abused through over-farming until it is exhausted, turns thin and lifeless, a weak foundation that chokes off agriculture. Debts and decadent excess drive a surge in poverty. Roving armies of mercenaries, hungry for both food and plunder, only deepen the desperation of every city, village, and farm in their paths.

This era sees strictures of class and hierarchy growing more rigid. Social mobility slips out of the hands of those grasping at elevation. The burgeoning middle classes, coddled by the Italian Renaissance, are now ground back down by the few families to have reached the heady heights of power. A fresh divide yawns between rich and poor. Urban communities remain the heart of Italian influence and industry but are throttled by the claustrophobic influence of the guilds and growing economic crisis; the Seers work to keep this grasp as tight as they can. The countryside remains as snared in stasis as ever; sharecroppers and peasant farmers are still mired in superstition, still given little influence over the states of which they are nominally citizens. For those already at the bottom of the social pecking order — and especially the disabled and the chronically ill — the daily struggle to survive by begging or stealing grows more frantic.

Ties of family and patronage, duty and honor, are the sinews that hold society together despite the tumult. Wealthy and influential patrons offer their support to thinkers and artists who catch their interest or flatter their pride, and so intellectuals have a route from modest beginnings to success — like Galilei himself, whose friendship with Ferdinando of the Medici brings the aid of Tuscany's ruling family. Nepotism runs rampant, especially in the Church; indeed, Awakened among the clergy take full advantage of the opportunities of such corruption to protect and enrich themselves within the Holy See's influence, and the faith becomes perhaps the greatest bastion of mage activity within Italy. The friendships and feuds between rival aristocratic families can define the politics of entire principalities. For many, it is who they know, rather than what they know, that dictates success or failure.

Still, the plague's passage through Italy forces change. Each laborer's value rises. Traditions creak and break under the weight of new necessities. Fear accompanies the uncertainty and upheaval — those who have little fear they will be crushed underfoot, while those who have much fear they will lose it all. For the Unchained, this is fertile ground filled with mortals ripe for exploitation through pacts.

The place of women within society changes. Literacy spreads, especially among the upper classes, and an increasing number of women takes part in the intellectual and philosophical circles through which Galilei moves. Some women succeed as political leaders, whether in their own right or as regents — such as the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, Christina of Lorraine, to whom Galilei pens an extensive letter on his heliocentric model to sate her astronomical curiosity.

Yet while Italian society begins to embrace women for their learning and their art, tradition remains a significant barrier. With diminished wealth, many mercantile and aristocratic families struggle to afford dowries for the marriage of their daughters. Some become mired in debt, but others circumvent the problem by sending young women to become nuns. Large numbers of daughters with little religious inclination are consigned to the cloisters.

The institution of slavery within Italy is in decline, even with the loss of so many laborers. Most such slaves are from eastern Europe or the Ottoman domains; few here come from Africa. Genoa and Naples are the remaining centers of slavery on the peninsula, and even there they are rare enough. Still, slaves of this era suffer from more than just the crushing weight of work; they are easy victims for Makers seeking to create new Deviants.

During the Renaissance, Italy's courts expressed their splendor and wealth through elaborate dishes and creative cooks, but now the rigors of the plague and a shift in culture mean that, even among the powerful, a growing trend emerges of pride in regional cuisine. While the rich still hold banquets to build their status, even as their coffers dwindle, the common folk make do with two meals a day with a preponderance of vegetables, fruits, and grains; millet and rice are staples. Pasta grows in popularity as new machines for its production come into use. Cheeses and other dairy products are more commonly eaten than meat, but it's hardly a rarity; in theory, religious dictates enforce a preponderance of fasting days where meat cannot be eaten apart from fish, but in practice myriad loopholes pepper such doctrine.

Blisters and Buboes

In 1629, the shadow of death falls over northern Italy. The bubonic plague scours the peninsula over two years in outbreak after outbreak, a merciless assault of sickness that claims hundreds of thousands of lives. Perhaps a quarter of Italy's entire population perishes, ripping a hole through society's already-frayed fabric. Where the plague's ravenous hunger is at its most cruel, entire regions are almost entirely depopulated. It does not confine itself to turning cities into charnel houses; its sickly influence penetrates far and wide, bringing ruin not just to cramped streets but to villages and fields in a grim harvest of peasants.

The plague is another of the vicious consequences unleashed by the war engulfing Europe. It comes to Italy in the meat and guts of soldiers from France and the Holy Roman Empire. It spreads like wildfire. Milan is hit first, then Venice, then Florence. The carnage does nothing to stop the fighting and the feuding. Not even such an unthinkable death toll can quench the fires of ambition and hatred.



People come to fear the smallest sign of illness in those around them, for any bout of headaches, dizziness, fever, vomiting, or swollen lymph nodes might degenerate into gangrene and vomiting blood as victims' flesh decomposes while they still live. The disease soon spreads to every house. Local officials impose quarantines on the neighborhood to prevent the spread of the disease into the city at large. Then the plague doctors and the Order of the White Lily venture among the sick and count the dead.

In the plague's wake, a yawning absence. Everyone has lost someone. *Everyone*. Families are shattered. Friends are gone. The grotesque transfiguration of the bubonic plague consumes them all, a cruel and rapacious thief tearing loved ones away in an agonizing desecration of the flesh. The Italian economy, already limping, is dragged down by the suppurating talons of sickness as workers die in droves and farmers fall in their fields. And it *does not stop*. The nightmare returns again and again, emerging each spring to scour the survivors and demand even more from them.

The few who persist live in a world emptied of faces and presences. Some pray to God, seeking mercy or absolution. Some find it hard to look to the heavens for salvation anymore. They can see no signs of divine love in the pestilent, rotting world around them.

The Awakened struggle with despair in this apocalyptic landscape. For all their arrogance and all their power, they cannot stop the plague. Some try nonetheless, running themselves ragged and scouring themselves with Paradox as they fight the advance of the disease again and again, but it's never enough. Some seek explanations for their apparent powerlessness in the face of the plague, wondering if it is the work of the Exarchs, or the influence of the Abyss — anything to help them make sense of the carnage. Most mages are more than capable of keeping *themselves* alive in the face of the plague and can ward their friends and loved ones to protect them from disease. Unfortunately, mages cannot save everyone or stop an entire plague from spreading — and even if they could, the curse of Quiescence makes it impossible to help on too large a scale. For many, the weight of survivor's guilt becomes too much to bear, aggravated by the belief that they *should* have had the power to stop this.

The Struggle for Mantua

Inevitably, war itself reaches Italian land. The great Catholic powers of the era throw themselves into conflict — a struggle with more significant consequences than the immediate bartering of lives and influence on the butcher's block of battle. This conflict will gravely affect the Papacy's position, and thus twist its attitude to those who challenge its power and orthodoxy — including Galilei himself.

In 1627, the Gonzaga dynasty dies with Vincenzo, Duke of Mantua and last of his line. A succession crisis erupts. Several claimants vie for the inheritance of Mantua — Charles de Nevers, married to the duke's niece; the Duke of Savoy, whose daughter married Vincenzo's brother; and the Duke of Guastalla, a distant cousin. The legalities of their claims are not important. All that matters is the pride of their backers and patrons.

The French support de Nevers, the emperor supports Guastalla. If Mantua falls to French influence, the Spanish-Austrian Habsburg union faces a breach in its continuity — a wound between its southwestern and northern expanses cut like a dagger into its midriff. French troops march through the Alps to support de Nevers, and imperial forces move to counter them. Each side drags the bubonic plague in its wake.

The rival powers strike at each other's holdings in the north of Italy. By 1630, an army of over 30,000 imperial Landsknechts besieges Mantua itself. The city is hollowed out by the plague and by fire as it is brutally sacked. Yet the emperor cannot press his advantage, as the gleaming blade of Gustav Adolphus now threatens his northernmost holdings.

A peace is negotiated — Charles de Nevers becomes Duke of Mantua, but the French will withhold from meddling in Emperor Ferdinand's affairs in the north. Once the imperial forces withdraw, the French promptly renege on the deal. A year later, another treaty of more lasting nature is signed.

Mantua might appear as a sideline to these greater clashes between kings and emperors, but it flings the Papacy into precarious plight. The Habsburgs expect Pope Urban VIII to roll over like a dog and support their claim, but he does no such thing. Indeed, the pope has been anything but cooperative for some time, resisting Habsburg demands for military support, for the excommunication and interdiction of their enemies, and for rallying lesser Catholic powers to Ferdinand's cause. His reticence riles those who feel the Papacy should dance to their tune.

Urban has ambitions of rising papal power, and a dangerous love of France. The influence of King Louis serves him as a counterbalance against the Habsburgs within the faith. In Mantua, Urban *must* make a choice that will anger one or both of these great, bloated powers — and he throws his lot in with de Nevers, the French candidate.

Actions have consequences. The Habsburgs lash out, their ecclesiastic allies within the Church surging hard against Urban. Cardinals and priests and princes alike question his authority and weaken his position. The Holy Roman Emperor is, after all, the foremost Catholic power in the world — and a man who has restored lands to the Church once lost to Protestantism. The pope's feeble paucity of aid to the emperor's war effort — driven in part by the parlous state of the Papacy's own finances — throws his piety into doubt. A rift breaks open with the Dukes of Tuscany, Galilei's patrons, due to their Habsburg allegiances.

Urban is walking a perilous path. He has angered the emperor, and so seeks to regain his footing as preeminent authority of the faith in a way that will not give the Habsburgs more kindling for a fire to burn him upon. He can no longer afford to coddle and encourage such precocious

thinkers as Galilei. Now, the pope must show his strength as defender of Christendom's tenets — and the trial and cruel condemnation of rogue scientists and philosophers who throw doubt upon scriptural dogma is an easy, direct way to do so.

Every heresy Urban roots out, every question he crushes under the weight of the papal throne's disdain, is more proof of his devotion to the faith, a shield against the Habsburgs' pretensions, and a lever with which to influence his victims' aristocratic patrons.

Truth becomes dangerous not because it challenges faith, but because it challenges *power*.

Superstition and Inquisition

The Church digs into every aspect of life in the city-states. It is an omnipresent moral authority figure that offers judgment and salvation. It is fattened on swathes of land, its coffers drinking down wealth to hold back the Papacy's colossal debts. It is a vocation not just of the spiritual but of the political. In the Papal States themselves, the pope serves as prince over a domain with its own administration and its own military forces.

The Roman Inquisition serves as one of the Papacy's arms of control. The Supreme Sacred Congregation looms over the investigation of superstition, heresy, and defiance against the Church. This is a bureaucratic juggernaut that grinds to pulp the lives of those caught beneath its bulk. Inquisitors seek to demystify the folklore of the countryside, replacing it with rationality and adherence to scripture — although such efforts fall into disarray as astronomers and philosophers tear a rift between their truths and the beliefs that Urban's power relies upon defending.

Until now, the Catholic Church has been key in the progress of scientific advances. Holy orders such as the Jesuits produce many astronomers — Niccolò Zucchi first identifies the belts of Jupiter, and Christoph Scheiner first observes sunspots in 1611. Now, though, its relationship with those who investigate the world's nature takes a more adversarial stance, fueled by pope Urban's need to appear powerful and uncontested in authority and piety.

It becomes more necessary than ever to rely on the protection of patrons and allies. Scholars must ask for a religious license, the *imprimatur*, to print their works. The scrutiny of Church censors brings the risk of falling onto the list of prohibited works, administered to by the Sacred Congregation of the Index.

Despite the Inquisition's efforts, superstition remains rampant throughout Italy. The mass hysteria of witch hunting has fallen from its previous intensity, but not yet been quenched entirely. Terrible outbreaks of persecution still erupt, and belief in witches is widespread. Those who would shine the light of truth risk not just the attention of the strict enforcers of Church doctrine, but also riling the anger of the superstitious. More than one scholar has met their death at the hands of an angry village mob.

Locations

The lines dividing regional-and-city states continue to shift following the end of the Italian Wars and once great centers of power, like Venice, are beginning to decline. Marked differences can be found in each village, town, and city due to the spread of plague, disruption of trade, and presence of the supernatural.

Rome

Despite the malaise of flesh and commerce that afflicts Italy, Rome is a city of dynamism. The Counter-Reformation's drive for art that inspires faith has remade Rome into a shrine of the baroque, an edifice raised up to God's glory. Sorcerers scheme and demons bargain in the shadows of such grandeur. Following the 16th-century plans of Pope Sixtus V, avenues and processions are seared through the city's substance to form a vast, star-shaped array — a new pattern of arteries through which pilgrims, priests, and produce can flow. Those who pry into the occult cannot help but look upon this vast impression of a celestial symbol and think it to be the work of a greater hand than any mere mortal pope.

Excessive papal spending transforms the city; Urban VIII will leave the Papacy burdened under colossal debts, but there is no doubt of Rome's splendor. Building sites and construction sculpts the chaos of old streets into the beauty of new palaces, new churches, new baroque accomplishments. Rome has a dark side, though. The renovations reveal things beneath the city's skin that are bricked up once more, subterranean spaces and sights that are studiously forgotten. The old bones of the city, crumbling remains of ancient glory, predict the inevitable fate of the prideful papal vanity on display. Architects and artists are themselves hardly paragons of virtue; taverns, prostitution, and violence fill the seedier regions of the city with vice.

The Architect

Giacomo drinks to quell his misgivings and drown the memories of the things he has seen in the shadowy interstitial spaces of Rome. He came to the city, fresh-faced and idealistic, to work alongside Francesco Borromini on Pope Urban's own Palazzo Barberini, but his youthful rowdiness and indiscretions had him banished from the project in disgrace. Desperate for work and a patron, he accepted the first offer that came along — but now regrets it.

A group of Vatican priests has Giacomo designing and overseeing the construction of a series of chapels across the city. Strange geometries scratch at his eyes, and he has walked streets that he swears are on no plans and cannot be seen from atop Rome's hills. If he were not at the heart of the Catholic faith, the architect would wonder if witchcraft were involved. Instead, he drinks, and lashes out, finding solace in the pain of fists and feet and inebriated anger. **Crafts (Architecture) 4, Brawl 2 (Street fighting), Streetwise 2 (Rome)**



The Inquisitor

Tommaso is a bitter man. His true belief in Christ has been ground down by the corruption he witnesses and the political games the Papacy must play just to survive. He's an expert in canon law and theology, and a far more adept mind than many of his peers. In some ways, he's a natural fit for the Inquisition, able to match the intellects of arrogant scholars and keen to dispel the ignorance of the masses. Still, it never seems to end — the stupidity, the venality, the nepotism.

Now, Tommaso has stumbled upon evidence of the God-Machine's existence — and he has no idea what to do about it. He hides the clicking egg of lighting and gears in his office, knowing he can't simply reveal it to his fellows in the Inquisition. He tries to fight the urge to press its cool metal shell against his ear and listen to its tick-tock cadence. His will is slowly slipping. **Academics (Religion) 4, Empathy 3, Occult 2**

The Artist

The arts always called to Anna. She was inspired by the likes of Fede Galizia and Artemisia Gentileschi to become an excellent portraitist. Her works gained some small fame among the circle of the noble and influential and so, after her husband died in a bizarre accident, she accepted a patron's invitation to move from Milan to Rome.

Anna doesn't know that her patron is a Seer of the Throne, or that he murdered her husband with cruel magic. Her paintings and portraits — so brilliantly depicting the emotions and expressions of those they portray — are used by the Iron Pyramid for occult purposes, serving as Yantras and sympathetic anchors for the Seers of the Hegemonic Ministry. Soon, though, the artist will accidentally test her gilded cage — she desires to return to Milan, and her family there. The Seers will not let her out of their grasp. **Academics 2, Expression (Painting) 4, Socialize 2**

Florence

Florence is a far cry from its former Republican glories. Memories of its fall still rankle among the families shoved aside by the accession of the Medici. It is the Medici who have ruled as hereditary overlords of Florence for almost a century now, elevated by papal patronage that later added all of Tuscany to their dominion. The family's famous bank has long been in decline, the city's industrial strength wanes, and the influence of the grand dukes diminishes.

Nevertheless, Florence remains a beacon of art and scholarship as the Medici continue to pour wealth into demonstrations of their grandeur. Duke Ferdinando II enthusiastically indulges his hungers for discovery and technology, an inventor in his own right, and he greedily gathers intellectuals and mathematicians at his court. Both Ferdinando and his grandmother, the Grand Duchess Christina, follow Galilei's studies with interest. When the plague comes to Florence, Ferdinando does not flee and, miraculously, the disease takes only a light toll on the city's population.

The Patron

Isabella is a powerful woman in Florence, her wealth and reputation buttressed by patronage of artists and thinkers. She's long been a collector of the curious and strange, her agents furnishing the family's grand *palazzo* with wondrous treasures new and old — particularly oddments from far colonies, or relics of the ancient Romans — and she loves to indulge those who can offer insight or theory about their history and nature.

Something is different about her latest search for new talent. Her rapacious intellect has met its match in a bizarre structure excavated in the nearby countryside — a Roman ruin inscribed with strange astronomical markings and interwoven with metal threads. Isabella hunts for anyone who can cast light upon this eerie remain, inviting intellectuals from Italy and further afield; France, Germany, even the Ottoman Empire. **Academics 3, Occult 2, Socialize 3**

The Scholar

Giuseppe is terrified. Peering through his telescope, he traces an unexpected phenomenon in the sky — a twinkling string of little shapes like a necklace around the world. No other astronomer has recorded such a sight, and Giuseppe is at a loss to explain them, and how they shine with a different luminescence from that of the moon. Other academics mock his claims or assume his mimicry of Galilei's telescopic assembly is faulty in some way.

Giuseppe goes ahead and tries to publish his findings anyway but is denied the imprimatur by the Florentine censors of the Sacred Congregation of the Index. The next night, he witnesses those gleaming pearls plummet out of orbit, one by one, on glimmering ribbons of fire. His frantic calculations show one must have fallen near Florence. He has become a man torn between the arrogance and pride of his intellect that demands he investigate and glean proof that will show them all he was right, and an abject fear of the Inquisition and the gnawing sense that whatever fell to Earth somehow knows he witnessed its descent. Worse still, he doesn't know that several mage cabals have been watching him and warring over his potential future. **Academics 3, Crafts 2, Science 3**

The Good Walker

Lisabetta is a *benandanti*, a "good walker," in a little Tuscan village near Florence. Her community credits her with the good health of their crops while all around them other fields are lifeless and desolate, and for more reasons than just her physical labor. When she falls into fits that fill her mind with visions, Lisabetta believes her spirit flies from her body to fight the malign magic of witches and sorcerers who seek to curse the land, her struggle blessed by God.

Out here, far from the hustle and bustle of Florence, the superstitions and traditions of the countryside are easily overlooked by the Church. Still, one day a priest of the Inquisition comes. He asks Lisabetta questions she does not understand — of demons and angels, of Sleepwalkers and stigmata. He seems disappointed when he departs but, since that day, the

nightly journeys of her spirit have grown ever-more exhausting, her visions of battling twisted witch-horrors growing all the more intense. **Athletics 3, Occult 2, Survival 3**

Milan

Milan is a seat of Habsburg influence in northern Italy. Lombardy, the state that Milan serves as capital to, is a possession of the Spanish crown now ruled and administered by foreigners, its past independence strangled. It is a bastion for its liege's power, but only at Milan's own expense; the city slumps into depression, stripped of its pride and ruthlessly exploited. Wealth drains out into Spanish coffers, balanced by investments into military strength rather than into art or scholarship or prosperity. When the plague comes to Milan, it is hell upon Earth. Half the population dies. Swathes of the city are filled with nothing but ghosts and memories.

Like a tree's rings, the walls of Milan mark its growth over the ages. Each fortified boundary tumbles into disrepair as a new one springs up. Now, Milan is encircled by a huge defensive array of walls built by the Spanish in the 16th century, a symbol of strength encompassing the entire city along with stretches of farmland within. The walls do little to halt the plague, merely defining the edges of this crucible of human suffering and misery. If anything, they are more akin to a cage.

The Dealer

Verragio can get whatever an ambitious scholar wants — a body fresh from the gallows, a fragment of Roman pottery with licentious art upon it, a book banned by the Sacred Congregation. Nothing's a problem for the grinning priest, as long as his palm is crossed with enough silver. He's a talented canon lawyer, protected by the right friends in the right places, seemingly untouchable despite his gaudy demonstrations of wealth.

An incredible flow of proscribed and illegal goods passes through Verragio's hands, from stolen spoils to occult oddities. Along with the charlatanry of innumerable saints' finger bones and the macabre harvests of corpses that have died in manners of occult significance, he has a metal scale supposedly from the *Gargouille* slain by Saint Romanus, and the inhuman alabaster mask of an angel of death. Verragio's smug smile has started to falter at the edges, though. He's in an excellent position to note the rising tide of the weird that simmers and seethes beneath Milan's surface, and he fears the consequences. **Occult 3, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 3**

The Envoy

Luis, loyal servant to King Philip IV and assistant to Cardinal Gaspar de Borja y Velasco, the Spanish ambassador to Rome, deeply resents his posting to Milan. He is tasked with supporting his superior in pressuring the Papacy for support and compliance, and he is sourly mocking of the pope and the Italian clergy who support Urban's defiance of Habsburg authority. He hates the Italians. He hates Milan. He hates the heretics and dissidents he is convinced inhabit every shadow of the city.

One conspiracy in particular has snared his attention — figures spotted flickering along the walls, oddly contorted shapes digging at their base, and midnight meetings of architects and masons. Luis is now convinced that these renegades plan to undermine the walls and leave the city vulnerable to attack. His intense suspicions are pushing into irrationality; Milanese priests and magnates openly criticize the envoy, which only serves to fan the flames of his paranoia further. **Investigation 3, Politics 3, Empathy 2**

The Worker

Milan's position as a subject of Spain is not entirely to the detriment of Lombardy. While much of Italy languishes in an industrial slump, Lombardy sees new growth through the manufacture of materials, where women like Maddalena find new and prosperous employment in their own homes — especially after the plague rips a void through the male labor force and diminishes the power of the guilds.

Yet despite her new wealth and toil, turning materials into goods in return for rising recompense from merchants, Maddalena is a quiet, haunted woman. Most of her family perished at the hands of the plague and, even now, she sees their ghosts in the spaces they once inhabited, the quietness of the streets, and the shared pain of the survivors. Sometimes, the ghosts she witnesses are more than just the pangs of her lingering sorrow. **Athletics 1, Crafts 3 (Textiles), Streetwise 2**

Sappada

This remote mountain village seldom sees visitors other than the occasional Venetian tax collector. Even wealthy families regard Sappada as too remote, too dull, and too backwards to vacation in. The villagers prefer it that way.

The holy water in the parish church comes from a spring-fed pool hidden in the coniferous forest just outside of town. Nearly all outsiders who touch this water suffer a painful and spectacular death. It does not harm Sappadans baptized with it in their infancy, however. Each year, a few villagers exhibit marvelous supernatural abilities as they reach adulthood. These become the Gift-Given, blessed by the Holy Spirit with gifts of impossible physical abilities, prophecy, keen senses, or healing. The Gift-Given have been a fixture of the community for centuries.

The Physician

Alceo Calabresi's elder sister and youngest daughter are Gift-Given, so he understands these extraordinary people better than most. Father Gino has entrusted him with helping newly arrived Gift-Given adjust to their lives as the holy servants of Sappada. Alceo does what he's told, for despite his reservations about Father Gino's violation of centuries of tradition, the physician's desire to care for the Gift-Given outweighs his distrust of outsiders. **Academics 1, Crafts 2, Empathy (Deviants) 3, Medicine (Surgery) 2**



The Young Priest

Under the careful management of Father Damiono Palermo, Sappada enjoyed a long peace and prosperity even as wars ravaged much of Europe. After Damiono's death, Father Gino Schiavone succeeded him. Although Gino is a native Sappadan, he spent several years studying in Rome among Jesuit occultists and scientists, and it has changed his views of the Gift-Given.

In poring over parish records, Gino notes a steady decline in the number of new Gift-Given — from a dozen per year a century ago to only one or two annually during the last 20 years. Instead of blaming insufficient faith as his predecessors might have done, Gino sets out to find some rational explanation for these dwindling numbers and to seek a way to reverse this trend.

He briefly considers encouraging outsiders to come to Sappada. After seeing the grisly fate of a Venetian merchant family who came into contact with the holy waters, however, Gino decides he doesn't have the stomach to repeat that particular experiment. Instead, he sends Good Shepherds to other communities in search of other Gift-Given who might be convinced, tricked, coerced, or abducted into service to Sappada. **Academics 2, Occult (Remade) 3, Persuasion 2, Science 3**

What Is Yet to Come

For the acolytes of truth, the immediate future offers grim prospects. Plague ravages Italy, culling a quarter of its populace. War stretches on for three full decades, bringing ruin to those regions caught in its madness and wracking Italy with the consequences. The Church swings away from liberal encouragement of innovation and progress, too intent on firming up its own foundations at the expense of those who would question its power.

The fate of Galilei, great scion of science and admired by many fellow thinkers, provides a stark warning to those who might think to tread in his footsteps. He publishes his *Dialogues*, a new text laying out his Copernican model of the heavens and the new discoveries he has gleaned with telescope and mathematics. For it, Galilei is met with rebuke and sharp sanction. Summoned to Rome for inquisition, he is condemned to heresy, forced to recant, and punished with house arrest.

He lives out the remainder of his life in Tuscany, falling into ill health and perishing in 1642.

Galilei's hubris drives his fate. In the *Dialogues*, he places the words of his erstwhile friend and ally, Pope Urban VIII, in the mouth of Simplicio — the Aristotelian philosopher figure portrayed as being on the wrong side of the argument. In his career he has driven the Jesuits away through his pride and scorn and winnowed out what allies he has had in the Church. For Urban, caught precariously in his struggle with the Holy Roman Empire, Galilei presents an excellent opportunity — a chance to express his authority and show his strength as pope. Galilei's insults scour away whatever misgivings Urban might have had in persecuting his old friend. Medici influence can only do so much to shield against the crushing heel of the Papacy's boot as it is brought down on the scholar for the last time.

The God-Machine's protocols and parameters grind brutally through the threats that challenge Its integrity and secrecy. Infrastructure is disassembled — often including its screaming human components — and rebuilt again in far more secure, concealed forms that will be proof against human perception even with centuries of further development. The firmament of the night sky is rearranged to cover up the gleaming eyes of God that once watched from the heavens, imperceptible to the human eye until the telescope pierced the veil. Outbreaks of mass realization of the God-Machine's presence are cracked from the timeline entirely and bottled up, entire pocket realities hidden within the tangled, folded streets of Italy's great cities. This jury-rigging of divine engines, this profane self-mutilation, seals the God-Machine's truth away once more. For now, at least, the idiot leviathan of gears and immanence collapses back into somnolent lassitude. Its tools of ultimate sanction are put back to sleep — Mediterranean society saved from a scourging of reality-quakes, soul-eating machinery, and angelic, nuclear fire.

Or perhaps *almost* all Its tools are put back to sleep. Protecting Itself requires that the God-Machine do more than just pull back further beyond the veil; It actively crushes those who seek to push that veil aside. Its agents and angels murder thinkers, stir unrest, and spin misdirection that will derail the pursuit of truth and science for decades, if not centuries. If these are Its scalpels then the plague may be Its hammer — a tool of widespread death and misery that drags humanity back from the precipice of discovery and mires it in the nightmarish fundamentals of the world within which they dwell. The Unchained are never quite certain whether the outbreaks are the divine engine's work, or the efforts of their own kind to mask the God-Machine and sedate It once more.

The light of truth, though, is not so easily quelled, nor the human spirit cowed. Some say that even as he recanted his supposed heresy and affirmed that the Earth stands firm, never to be moved, Galilei spoke quietly and with conviction: "And yet it moves."

The Supernatural

The truth is in question. Fields of scientific study — astronomy, biology, botany — are emerging in a world fraught with superstitious and theocratic beliefs. The denizens in the Chronicles of Darkness are caught between worlds and must decide whether to hide, prey, hunt, or survive in a turbulent political landscape.

Demon: A Convulsing God

Those who bear the torch of truth aloft look to illuminate the shadows of ignorance — but all-too often, what they find in the dark spaces beneath the world's skin are the gears and machinations of the God-Machine. The sheer scope of intrusion into the divine engine's domain has overwhelmed Its usual defenses; humans suddenly peer far further into the shadows than any element of the blind behemoth had prepared for. This is not the first time humanity has threatened the divine machine's secrecy upon such a scale — but that makes the situation no less dangerous.

Philosophers peer at the heavens, spying stars that should not be. Mathematicians and architects, laying out maps, spy the calculated angles that weave between ancient monuments. The claims of stigmatics among the intellectual community are taken much more seriously by their peers, who are eager to delve into the world's mysteries — and to proudly claim credit for whatever they might discover. Concealment Infrastructure begins to fail left, right, and center.

The God-Machine is in overdrive, stung into rampage by the burning ambitions of humanity. It reworks failing Infrastructure overnight into new configurations of occult madness; angels are reprogrammed with new missions on the fly; and even the fabric of reality is torn apart and stitched back together in radical new ways as the gears of divinity grind into action. For the Unchained, this is a time of terror and opportunity.

Falling from Grace

Old Infrastructure groans into life, turned to purposes it was never intended for. New Infrastructure is raised up with haste, corners cut, a sacred rush job erratically leaking divine energies. Angels flood into Italy in larger numbers than ever before on increasingly extreme tasks. Is it any wonder the ranks of the Unchained grow as well? Flaws and glitches in the divine work give birth to a new generation of demons.

The God-Machine dispatches **Destroyers** to execute astronomers who have seen too much, to hunt and kill both witches and the Inquisitors who root them out, and to do whatever is necessary to suppress knowledge relating to occult matrices. In 1626, a Destroyer in Naples triggers an earthquake that kills thousands as a side effect. Plague angels in the north spread disease to specific communities in a patchwork of death that is a new Concealment Infrastructure.

Many of the new Destroyers Fall precisely because the enormity of the suffering they inflict is simply too much. Others, as they loom over tremulous victims to deliver the ultimate sanction, face final questions upon the lips of the dying that they simply cannot answer. When they are witnessed, the Destroyers face pleas for salvation from the suffering who fervently believe these angels to be something good and pure, and find they cannot cope with the burden of such broken expectations repeated over and over again. This fresh generation of Destroyer demons is among the most aggressive in fighting back against the God-Machine, laboring under heavy guilt for the damage they have done.

The **Guardians** who now Fall are often older angels suddenly buried in frantic orders flooding through the machine's connections. All of a sudden, as humans lurch close to perceiving the totality of the God-Machine, defensive steps need to be taken *immediately* — and with little scope for preparation or care. Shields are torn from long vigils around the Papacy's lands that they have been overseeing for decades without incident.

Some are tasked with the destruction of the very things they have been guarding all this time — priests or witches, hidden chambers in grand Renaissance palazzos, the particular patterns formed by monks attending their morning prayers. Others face overwhelming threats to their wards, unable to save a city from the very plague unleashed by another angel or given no back-up to deal with an entire army of foreign mercenaries descending upon the valley they guard. Those who Fall are left adrift, confused and uncertain in this strange new world.

Messengers flood forth. Lacking time, the God-Machine relies on quantity rather than quality to make sure a message reaches its target; one Messenger might fail, so three or four are sent to issue the same instructions to a cult secreted among the engineers of Milan, or to bestow an ecstatic vision of demonic figures to a nun, or to place false inspiration in the mind of a scholar.

The hastiness of the instructions means some are simply erroneous. For other Messengers, there is a sense of redundancy when they arrive last and find their task already done — or, worse, that the target's mind has collapsed due to having already received five visitations from roaring spheres of fire and eyes this week. In some cases, Messengers find their recipients before a mob or Inquisitorial tribunal, decried as witches because of the strange lights and weird phenomena that have been manifesting around them. Great numbers Fall, but the God-Machine does not care one whit.

Psychopomps are brutally overworked as logistics networks labor under many times the load they were designed to sustain. Demands come through in a constant, conflicting stream — these bell towers must be built in Florence to warp space-time, no, wait, five wains of granite must fill a smoking crater in Lombardy, no, 1,000 more rats must be shuffled into the sewers of Rome. A legion of hastily assembled angels is sent to metaphysically staple new patterns of constellations into the darkest recesses of the sky, and they are given only half the Essence needed to perform the job properly.

Often, the very Infrastructure on which the Wheels rely is being broken apart by other angels to hide the God-Machine's presence. Orbital platforms are dropped from the sky in screaming trails of fire before some human with a telescope can spot them. A series of trees made of bone in the countryside around Pisa are cut down to terminate the leaning tower's gravity-warping field because suddenly





scholars are dropping things off the top of it to test the laws of physics. Frustrated or faced with impossible choices, Psychopomps Fall into the relief of sudden freedom.

Grit in the Gears

A new Unchained has little time to get their bearings. Too many angels are on the hunt; fresh Infrastructure emerges in unexpected places. Italy has more than its fair share of frantic demons desperate to make deals and assemble Covers before they are rooted out and purged. The populace is primed to believe that demons exist and will tempt pious men and women. Trying to make a pact runs the risk that the Unchained's activities will be reported to the Inquisition, and thence draw not just the eyes of mortal authorities, but the relentless divine overlord against which they have rebelled.

Strong divides run through society, and it's easy to risk compromising Cover by transgressing against the strictures that *should* be binding the identity a demon is wearing — the ties of loyalty, family, class, and faith.

The common classes are neither mobile nor given to a surfeit of free time. The peasants of the countryside are sharecroppers or shepherds; the people of the city work for guilds and mercantile concerns in what remains of Italy's industrial economy. Professions include vintners, butchers, tanners, working in textiles — particularly wool, with various specialist roles for the different stages of production — construction, or ship building, and many more besides. To hide among the mass of humanity, the demon needs to attend to the demands on their Cover of work and family and all the complex social ties that bind the city together. One demon finds himself dragged into a feud by his supposed blood connections or his allegiance to a Venetian merchant patron, which turns so ugly as to become murderous; cities like Venice pass ordinances to restrict grudges and rivalries to duels and other limited forms, but no law can quell passions once they've risen. Another demon's Cover frays as friends and family perish to the plague but she survives despite her apparent frailty. Shedding ties and becoming a loner or traveler brings the heavy weight of suspicion upon the outsider Cover for everything that goes wrong wherever they pass. Little time is left over to simply *be* a demon.

Above the common mass, better prospects for Covers might tempt a demon to enter pacts with merchants, nobles, and priests. The middle and upper classes have more time for leisure, and more freedom and resources to indulge their desires, but they are just as beholden to the expectations and demands of status and their place within society. The ecclesiastic life can be a good Cover for laying low; as long as the demon adheres to the explicit strictures of an order or vow, they can potentially hide for long periods in a monastery or nunnery without drawing attention. That said, the God-Machine's agents and Infrastructure are particularly active within the Church; it's easy for a demon wearing a priest's life to accidentally stumble upon a conspiracy of monks feeding the bones of saints into whirling gears beneath the Vatican, or to come face to face with an angel masquerading as an actual inquisitor.

One of the primary tools the God-Machine's agents have in rooting out rogue Unchained is faith and superstition. This doesn't necessarily mean the attention of the Inquisition — although that is a problem — but rather that the ubiquity of Catholicism in the area makes anything aberrant stick out.

Systems

Compromise rolls caused due to a demon acting out of character for a Cover in a way that *also* violates adherence to the dominant Catholic faith suffer an additional −2 modifier to the dice pool, and whenever a demon weakens their Cover due to any failed compromise, the Inquisition and Witch Panic Conditions are added to the list of Conditions by which they may be affected **(see p. 216)**.

The guilds of the cities, however, offer a web of connections that thread as deeply through city life as the Catholic faith does — and one that can be subtly manipulated by a demon to protect herself. Guilds offer welfare, support, and something of a replacement for family ties — membership is designed in a way that makes it easy for one of the Unchained to exploit and slip right into. Pacts made for Cover experiences that relate to elements of guild life grant one bonus Cover experience, and the demon can add any dots in Status (Guilds) they possess to spoofing and legend rolls.

The symbolism of clothing is potent in Italy. Styles are often divided by city and region as well as by social status. Clothes are made from velvet, silk, wool, and linen; color matters, and a common fashion has the lining a different hue from the rest of the fabric. Wearing the wrong clothes for one's Cover is, of course, a significant risk but the midst of the great gatherings and festivals is a great place to hide; blending in with the right clothing during a major festivity grants a +2 dice bonus to compromise rolls. Something of deeper meaning runs through Venice's great carnival, the masks and garments letting the Unchained smooth the frayed edges of their deceptions; a demon who spends all of the carnival under a mask, moving through the celebrations and absorbing their opulence, gains a single Cover experience when the event concludes. Many demons travel to the city for this grand event.

As the plague scours Italy, the groaning masses thus afflicted cry out for succor — and a demon can provide it. Granting relief from the bubonic plague's suffering is a lesser (1) benefit in a pact. Such a pact does not cure the plague, merely alleviates the pain and delirium so that the victim can think clearly and act without impediment in their final days. Demons willing to brave sickness-struck streets find no shortage of those willing to do something, anything, for relief.

Cults and Stigmatics

Knowing that their Covers are so vulnerable to discovery, some Unchained use the Cultists Merit to build powerbases that are independent of their false identities. It's easy for a demon to build a cult upon a heresy or outright devil worship, especially among the common laborers or peasant farmers;



the minds of the people are primed for such superstitious belief, and the ravages of the plague leave so many questioning the God who could let this atrocity occur. Unfortunately, this kind of religious deviancy is precisely the sort of thing the Inquisition is set to root out; they're just as easily rooted out as they are created in the first place. As a result, many Unchained turn to a subtler form of cult, building fellowships among the guilds or the scholars of Italy. Rather than fanning the flames of full-blown heresy, these conspiracies are built on the backs of already-extant interconnections and relationships, buttressed by mutual suspicion or fear of those outside the circle. Many intellectuals already fear the Church's heavy hand; it's easy to build a cult by gently pushing them towards new revelations and hinting at greater mysteries.

Unsurprisingly, a large number of stigmatics emerge during this era. The Unchained Agendas particularly prize philosophers who push too hard against the God-Machine's veils, but they're a dangerous treasure to reach for. These intellectuals draw the attention of angels seeking to crush their discoveries, and they can end up under Inquisition scrutiny for their strange claims and beliefs. It's a matter of risk versus reward for a demon; helping a stigmatic stay one step ahead of the forces at play costs resources and risks compromise, and some are promptly suborned to the God-Machine's purposes anyway. Those stigmatics emerging among the lower classes often end up in unknowing service to the blind engine, whipping up apocalyptic fervor or leading regressive sects who vigorously oppose the orthodoxy-challenging search for truth by Galilei and his peers.

Gods and Monsters

The Unchained often avoid the Church; more demons slither through the ranks of the guilds than the religious orders. Some do deal with Catholic Awakened from the Diamond Orders, though, seeking to protect themselves in ways ranging from the immediate benefits of getting an Awakened priest to turn the eyes of a local mob toward another victim, to the grander scale of strengthening the power of a city's guilds against that of the Church. A demon would be just as willing to deal with Paternoster's Seers, but the same isn't true the other way around; after one or two of the Exarchs' faithful tried it, they learned the hard way that neither their Supernal deities nor the God-Machine's angels would stand for such an alliance.

Demons see Deviants as problem and opportunity, all rolled into one. Some demons are the sponsors of the very *Factores* who create such Remade, the subtle influence of a cult pushing an inspired scholar toward the act of *Malevolentia*, but more



commonly the Unchained come across Renegades who have already fled their masters. They're driven to act without regard for the social mores and ties of obligation that ensnare so many people of this era, but they often lack the power to go toe to toe with the sorts of enemies that Unchained must contend with. Yet each is, in his or her own way, a symbol of defiance against the God-Machine's efforts to stymie human progress for Its own protection — an example that can be shown to cultists and intellectuals to push them onwards.

Seeking Hell

Every demon wants something. Service to an Agenda offers overarching structure and purpose, but few Unchained are so empty of personal drive as to give their all to such institutions.

Many demons desire safety from the God-Machine's presence. If the divine overseer no longer watches over them, they will be able to shed their paranoia and live in peace as they wish. For some, this takes the form of hunting for a location to which the God-Machine is blind — but they find vanishingly few such places in Italy. Rings of demons ascend into the mountains or lurk in shadowed woodlands, only to find ancient menhirs pulsing with the machine's commands, and cults capering in remote villages.

Others take a more direct approach. These Unchained actively go after vulnerable angels that are influencing the congregations and the courts, and hunt for Infrastructure in the dusty villages and crowded city streets in order to sabotage and ruin it. The risk of drawing too much attention, though, is great. The populace is too sensitive to the weird and the dark, too tense and flammable when it comes to the spark of hysteria and panic.

Faith drives some demons, strange as it may seem. Oh, the Integrators seek reunion with their God-Machine, yes, but there are also those Unchained who find hope in the belief in an even higher power — a true God, one who surely the Christian faith is wrought in some reflection of. These demons turn to scouring the halls of religion of the God-Machine's influence, seeing It as a sick cancer, a desecration of the truly holy. They don the Covers of priests and zealots and hunt for angels amid cloisters; they eagerly take the torch of the Inquisition and burn cultists and stigmatics they manage to root out; they visit the minds of the desperate and the pliable with visions of holy madness.

Tearing away the God-Machine's influence is a secondary concern — or not one at all — for plenty of demons, though, especially the surfeit of new Unchained born in the current tumult. Freed from the shackles of their divine programming, these demons prefer to immerse themselves in humanity — not necessarily the indulgences of the Tempters, but they seek to define themselves in ways other than in relationship to the God-Machine. They find themselves in the laughter and closeness of the simple, close homes of the common folk, or in the cut-and-thrust debate of keen-minded academics, or in the fading grandeur of the great courts of Florence and Rome.

A few acquire odd peccadilloes and tastes. Art is a common one. Many an Unchained starts to collect the handiwork of talented human sculptors and painters, fascinated in the ingenuity and passion of these flawed creatures — their work imperfect next to the occult science of the God-Machine, yet with so much more meaning. Plenty of Italian artists find themselves briefly beholden to strange, awkward patrons who want a lasting reminder of the face of a Cover they plan to soon shed, or the immortalized depiction of a beloved human who walks a dangerous path speaking truth to power.

The Chronicles of Darkness in Light of the Sun

Italy is a small country and any emerging threat will quickly be revealed to other denizens of the supernatural. Many **Kindred** have already infiltrated the church to prevent changes that would negatively impact their domains, but are also concerned that a feud is brewing between the Invictus and the Lancea et Sanctum.Two tier-three **hunter** groups are active during this era: the Lucifuge in Milan, and the Malleus Maleficarum in Rome; other hunters struggle to maintain the Vigil, as they do not have the ability to halt the spread of plague. Any tier two compact that's specifically formed or created to deal with the supernatural this time will be short-lived.

Changelings are avoiding the Church's long reach and enjoy the company of nobles in Venice and Florence. They will seek allies where they can find them, as the threat of plague, political instability, and supernatural activity threatens their comfort and stability. Many worry that any instability in Italian society will encourage Privateers to take advantage of any unrest. Some **Geists** are gathering in northern Italy and are investigating whether or not the plague is supernaturally caused, but are careful to avoid local politics when possible.

The **Forsaken** is staying out of the cities and hunt prey in northern alpine regions and fishing villages along the coasts; they steer clear from Rome and are preparing to secure new hunting grounds in Sicily, Calabria, or Sardinia if the plague causes widespread panic. A few of the **Created** gather to witness Galilei unlock the mysteries of the universe and wonder if the Church's scholars hold more answers for them. Those who are desperate to connect with the living seek out plague victims, because the Disquiet is less noticeable to them. Created who encounter Renegades for the first time become obsessed with them; they wonder if the Remade are like them, or if they hold the key to attaining mortality. Lastly, the **Begotten** are concerned the plague affects them differently than other supernatural creatures, but are unsure where to seek answers or from whom.

KOKABIEL

Mission: One of the God-Machine's orbital overseers, Kokabiel is tasked with shepherding occult resources in the cold grasp of the void. Now, looking down at the gleaming world beneath, Kokabiel is bombarded with urgent demands from command-and-control Infrastructure. The eyes of humanity suddenly pierce far more keenly into the heavens, revealing new details in the firmament — details that reveal the God-Machine's existence. Astronomers become stigmatics at an unprecedented rate. Kokabiel is now tasked with decommissioning his beloved, drifting flock, and cleaning up the rest of the mess too.

Description: Kokabiel is huge — a gleaming array of wings, eyes, and coils of plasma that writhe and dance through the gaps in the roughly humanoid silver-shod armor he wears. His voice is the hissing roar of a furnace, and he shines with blue-white light. Kokabiel's face is an eyeless mask of alabaster and gold, locked into an expression of serenity that is wildly at odds with his now-furious temperament. The angel's shape twitches and stutters as if slightly out of sync with the world; his new commandments clash with the old, and it is driving him to raging madness.

Methods: Kokabiel is decommissioning orbital Infrastructure — strange, tangled knots of bone, gleaming orreries, and other, stranger satellites, some in Twilight — by hurling them down to the world below to be destroyed upon reentry or impact. Alerted to a meddling astronomer sighting something they should not, he hurries to his precious child and rides it down like an apocalyptic steed, ideally crashing somewhere near his target, then emerges from the conflagration to hunt down the human who has condemned his beautiful ward to destruction through their gaze. Kokabiel doesn't always kill his targets; he likes to burn their eyes out and leave them to suffer.

Virtue: Practical

Vice: Cruel

Rank: 4

Attributes: Power 12, Finesse 10, Resistance 12

Influence: Gravity 4

Corpus: 27

Willpower: 10

Size: 15

Speed: 22 (flight 32)

Defense: 12

Initiative: 22

Numina: Awe, Blast, Drain, Ironclad, Mortal Mask, Regenerate, Speed, Stalwart

Manifestation: Twilight Form, Discorporate, Shadow Gateway, Image, Materialize, Fetter

Essence: 25

Ban: Kokabiel can only remain within Earth's atmosphere for four hours at a time, after which he must return to orbit.

Bane: Kokabiel is repelled by accurate illustrations or charts of the stars in the sky.

NEW NUMEN — IRONCLAD

This angel's form has been buttressed with heavy armor — not necessarily thick plates of defensive material, but possibly such exotic protections as warped layers of space-time, gravity anomalies that drain the force out of attacks, or force fields. The angel gains armor equal to its Rank.

MINERVA

Mission: Minerva was deployed a century ago to stir the minds of mortals with inspiration and ideas, creating Infrastructure and cults by shepherding academics and intellectuals towards new discoveries. At some point, she became an exile — seemingly forgotten by the God-Machine, receiving no new instructions, and left to follow her existing parameters. She has spent decades idly stirring philosophers to new, often deviant lines of inquiry, or driving them mad by putting ideas in their heads that they simply lack the knowledge or technology to realize. Now, of course, the God-Machine has entirely turned against the very mission It once set her upon — but still offers her no recognition, not even as a threat.

Description: Minerva has a half-dozen shapes in her metaphysical wardrobe, mostly feminine and mostly whole of body in appearance. She's been various muses and patrons to struggling intellectuals, and usually dresses as an upper-class woman to cement the impression. Over time, though, her forms seem to be breaking down; they're increasingly scarred and pockmarked.

Methods: Minerva is going mad with bitterness and spite and loneliness. At last, she sees a way back. She knows she is still loyally following her programming, bringing inspiration to the minds of mortals; therefore, if she steps it up even further, and her proteges are thrust into revelations that threaten the God-Machine's secrecy even more, It will *have* to take notice of her — and she assumes It will then give her new, non-conflicting orders, and will stop crushing the bizarre intellectual traditions she has spent decades coaxing into being. She has a number of cults and stigmatics to use as tools in her new game. Where Minerva passes, scholars peddle ever more extreme notions of the heavens and the earth, priests spout heretical truths, and concealment Infrastructure is broken and torn away.

Virtue: Hopeful

Vice: Callous



Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 9, Resistance 5

Influence: Inspiration 3

Corpus: 10

Willpower: 10

Size: 5

Speed: 19

Defense: 5

Initiative: 14

Numina: Aggressive Meme, Awe, Dement, Hallucination, Implant Mission, Mortal Mask

Manifestation: Twilight Form, Discorporate, Materialize, Image

Essence: 20

Ban: Minerva must use her Inspiration Influence on any mortal human who spends a scene propounding on their intellectual ambitions while in her presence.

Bane: The bones of a human executed for heresy.

FOSCARI THE WAKENER

Background: Alberto Foscari is a stigmatic bent on freeing God. He has seen angelic creatures swimming through the canals of Venice, bearing gleaming orbs and skulls; he has witnessed priests performing masses to quench divine will; he has laid his hands upon spinning gears that, he is sure, are part of a great, Satanic machine that works to shackle God beneath its monstrous weight. Foscari threads his way through Italian courts, seeking knowledge of the demonic artifice that chains the divine. He murders priests, and defiles Infrastructure with their blood. He's a Saboteur's dream, a self-guided and misguided stigmatic weapon that believes God can be woken from His nightmare and bring salvation to the world once more.

Description: Foscari is a startlingly good-looking man, fair of limb and complexion and with an easy, ready smile that disarms and engenders trust. He wears fine Italian tailoring; the Foscari family may have fallen far from the days when the Doge of Venice was among their number, but they remain wealthy and have an image to uphold. Alberto's appearance matters to him, even when the serial killer is up to his elbows in blood.

Storytelling Hints: Foscari believes God needs his help, and he's willing to do anything to break the Devil's chains. He can be charming and sweet if he thinks he can get what he wants from someone that way, flipping to brutal, calculated violence in the blink of an eye and without any regret. He hates the Catholic Church and the Papacy, because they must be in on the conspiracy to keep God chained. Foscari has a relentless hunger for matters academic, drinking down every theory and observation in the hunt for traces of Infrastructure he can ruin or cultist collaborators he can kill.

Stigmata: Foscari's blood has flecks of copper in it, little fragments of metal that glint brightly in the light.

Virtue: Devoted

Vice: Envious

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Enigmas 2, Investigation 3, Occult 4, Politics 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Ride 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 3, Streetwise 1

Merits: Allies (Foscari Family) 2, Contacts (Merchants, Philosophers, Venice), Fast Reflexes 2, Psychokinesis (Fire) 3, Resources 3, Status (Venice) 2, Striking Looks 2, Sympathetic, Tolerance for Biology, Unseen Sense (God-Machine)

Health: 8

Willpower: 6

Integrity: 4

Size: 5

Speed: 11

Defense: 5

Initiative: 7

Deviant: Vendetta or Service

Malevolence is not a new phenomenon. Humans have stumbled upon life-altering manifestations of the occult for as long as there have been people. They have eaten the sacred plant that grew on the holy mountain. They have received the blessing or curse of an angel, demon, jinni, or witch. A soldier donned the torque he looted from the crypt beneath the city his army just conquered, only to find that it would not release him. As always, most did not survive these encounters, or else the arcane powers disfigured them in mind and body, driving them to the fringes of society.

In some parts of the world, these occult-touched figures are respected — even revered. They possess secret wisdom and otherworldly talents. They are warriors who traveled to the sacred mountain to eat the mystical fruit that grew there. They are soldiers placed beneath the sacrificial knife and reborn into members of their lord's elite company. They are acolytes into whose ears the village priest

TRANSLATION OF DEVIANT TERMS

Deviant: The Renegades introduces some terms that are anachronistic for this time period or inappropriate for the era's context. When introducing them in a chronicle, you can choose to use the following terms instead to retain an era-appropriate feel. The first term is the modern word, the second is its substitution, and the third is a Latin translation.

Acclimation: Disgrace, *Dedecus*

Baseline: Common, *Communis*

Clade: Circle, *Orbis*

Cohort: group, *globus*

Cyborg: Monstrosity, *Monstrum*

Divergence: Malevolence, *Malevolentia*

Infused: Mystic, *Mysticus*

Instability: Penance, *Supplicium*

Origin: Transgression, *Peccatum*

Progenitor: Maker, *Factor*

Psychic: Mindful, *Memor*

Stability: Piety, *Pietas*

Variation: Blasphemy, *Maledicta*

whispered dark secrets of the Universe — knowledge that gifts a handful with superhuman powers, while driving the rest into madness and death. These Deviants cannot pretend to have normal lives, but most serve important roles in their communities. Renegades in such societies are comparatively rare.

In the Holy Roman Empire and most other parts of Europe, however, Deviants face all the stigmas of bodily deformity, disease, and witchcraft. The Church regards Scars as marks of God's disfavor — proof of secret sins terrible enough to mark the Remade in body and soul. The Church considers Blasphemies a form of witchcraft, and many Deviants face execution for trafficking with demonic forces. Those who survive the scrutiny of their neighbors do not receive high positions in society. He is the beggar at whom children throw stones, the mad hermit eking out a solitary existence in the wilderness. If she is very lucky, she might find a life as the kindly local priest's assistant. The life of an Italian Deviant is nearly always solitary, violent, brief, and very few Remade ever meet anyone like themselves.

As scholars in Italy take a greater interest in human anatomy and embrace the scientific method, they become at once the Deviant's greatest potential allies and his worst nightmares. Submitting himself as a specimen can preserve the Remade from the tender mercies of the mob, but oftentimes it is only a different sort of terrible fate.

First, many of those who study Deviants regard Blasphemies as curiosities, but still carry the inherent assumption that Scars are evidence of sin. They might seek to cure the Malevolence using any number of increasingly invasive medical procedures or religious rituals, all of which are doomed to fail. Others wish only to understand and catalogue, but they do so without regard for their subject's desires nor acknowledgment of his shared humanity. If he refuses to cooperate, they will cage or even torture him to force his participation.

Second, although the scientists who study Malevolence almost always begin by examining existing Remade, they discover how rare Deviants are the first time a test subject escapes or dies on an operating table. Coupled with the discovery that it is possible — even easy — to produce new Remade artificially, some scholars turn their inquiries in that direction. Alas, the curiosity of these luminaries carries a heavy price in human lives. Renegades are the norm among these test subjects, not the exception.

Finally, the emergence of scholars who seek out Deviants to study means the Remade are much more likely to meet others of their kind — and to band together with them to escape or overthrow their captors. Groups of Renegades are possible for the first time in the region's history. In the same vein, although some who study Malevolence come into conflict with one another — competing as they do for access to the limited pool of viable test subjects — many others form alliances with each other, and these organizations form the seeds of the first conspiracies.

The Old Testament and the New

Most Remade in this era cannot blame shadowy conspiracies for their Malevolence. However, they are still dependent on some combination of the righteous anger of Conviction and the perfect devotion of Loyalty. Without enemies to destroy or allies to serve, a Deviant swiftly succumbs to instability and death. What's more, each one instinctively recognizes this and moves to forge Touchstones. Most Remade do not sort themselves into Renegades and Devoted, but they still rely on these patterns of behavior to survive.

Renegades are the embodiment of wrath, falling upon the enemies of the righteous like a sword and sweeping them away like an inescapable flood. The drives of Conviction do not permit much nuance or sympathy for these enemies. Nor are all Deviants theologically equipped to distinguish the worthy from the unworthy, and so Conviction Touchstones are more likely to be those who have angered the Remade than ones who have committed some grave sin in the eyes of the Church or other legal or religious code. Personal vendettas or family feuds make for common Conviction Touchstones in the immediate aftermath of Malevolence, but most Renegades soon run out of Common enemies to destroy.

In the hollowness that follows, some become vigilantes or launch one-person crusades against perceived heretics or



other religious or political foes. A number of these even find themselves attached to larger movements led by Common humans who name the Renegade among their champions. It is in the pursuit of these causes that Renegades are most likely to encounter conspiracies for the first time — sometimes as wicked men to be punished, and sometimes as silver-tongued whisperers seeking to tempt the Deviant away from her true purpose.

Many Renegades find themselves in common cause with the Unchained. The God-Machine's machinations involve far more Common servants than angels, after all. Some of the God-Machine's cultists go on to found conspiracies, and when they do, the new organizations tend to share Its unconcern for the suffering of individuals as long as that pain serves the conspiracy's larger cause.

Renegades tend to view mages with some degree of skepticism. The obsessive curiosity of even one Awakened can be every bit as dangerous to the Remade as an entire conspiracy. Sometimes, in order to remain free of one mage's clutches, a Deviant must forge alliances with the willworker's enemies among the Wise, and this can entangle the Remade in the mages' schemes and adventures.

Devoted are more likely to embrace the New Testament call to service and charity. They bind themselves to a parish priest, local prince, the leader of a mercenary company, or some other figure of authority they deem worthy of their loyalty. They forge connections with those who show them kindness — the family that took him in, the tavern patrons who invite her to join their games, or the soldiers who fight at his side. Devoted often find themselves in caretaker or caregiver roles — whether it means distributing food to the poor, serving as a bodyguard, or keeping the candles lit in the church sconces. Deviants guard these tasks zealously and become agitated if anything threatens their ability to continue performing them.

Some Devoted look for comfort in the tales of miraculous healing in the New Testament. Despite their outward insistence that they serve faithfully out of devotion to God and without expectation of a worldly reward, these Deviants pray for healing. Many earnestly believe they have offended God in some way and that Malevolence is their punishment. By dutiful service and an ascetic lifestyle they hope to gain God's forgiveness and so become clean once more.

It is in the service of others that Devoted typically encounter a conspiracy for the first time. Common-led organizations aren't the only ones eager to make use of the talents of the Remade. The God-Machine often seeks to bring these useful tools into Its cults, as do the Seers of the Throne. In



such occult hands, the Devoted are usually unwitting pawns in larger games. They are often pathetic players who believe even their darkest deeds serve something great and noble that will preserve, or even elevate, humankind.

Deviants of Other Faiths

The majority of Remade in the Holy Roman Empire are at least nominally Catholic. Most do not receive enough formal education to appreciate — much less participate in — theological debates or comparative studies of other religions. The Church is all they know, and everything they know about any other faith is at least colored by Catholic portrayals of those religions. Moreover, the Church's representatives — although not absolute arbiters of truth and the law as they were in recent centuries — still wield considerable influence over the lives of most people.

That being said, not everyone in the Holy Roman Empire owes loyalty to the Church. Jewish, Muslim, and pagan enclaves exist, as do any number of heresies and Protestant sects. Some practice quite openly — whether because they live in areas with a more diverse or tolerant population or because they are part of a community that shares their creed. Others must keep their beliefs secret.

Although Deviants of other faiths are often used to being outsiders in their own homes, Malevolence greatly intensifies these feelings of alienation.

Makers

Although Remade are not a new phenomenon, few people in the Holy Roman Empire have learned how to intentionally trigger Malevolence. Certainly, the process of systematically creating Remade is generations away. For this reason, few Makers of this era are members of a conspiracy. In most cases, Malevolence is the result of a chance encounter with the occult or an accident of birth. Deviants are more common near long-lasting sites of supernatural power, where a critical mass of potential victims of Malevolence can come into proximity with the forces that trigger it.

Sappada

In this remote mountain village in Northern Italy, the populace hails the Remade as recipients of unique gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Gift-Given are ultimately servants of the village and are never given leadership roles. They are always the assistant to the village midwife, the advisor to its leaders. Partially, this is due to centuries of tradition, but it is rooted in long experience with Remade psychology. Deviants who do not serve are driven to destroy. Those who can do neither become unstable in mind and body, their divine gifts festering like untended wounds until they ultimately kill the Remade.

Remade who chafe at this expectation of servitude or grow curious about the world beyond the village sometimes seek their fortunes elsewhere. These Prodigals rarely find better lives beyond the village's boundaries. The same gifts that elevated them in their birthplace make them objects of suspicion elsewhere, and the physical deformities and mental and social quirks that their families and neighbors accepted as a part of God's plan are instead proof of divine disfavor. To address this, Sappada has its Good Shepherds — Devoted who venture into the wider world to bring these Prodigals back into the fold. It is not the Good Shepherds' way to drag their brothers and sisters back in chains. Rather, they pick (or, more often, arrange) a moment when the Prodigal most longs for home — when she is starving and friendless — and offer the Renegade a way back into God's service.

Under the reforms of Father Gino, the Good Shepherds have begun to use these same tactics on Remade who have never set foot in Sappada.

Forest of Beasts

The people of Barga speak softly when they mention the nearby forest, for all that it is a common destination. Woodcutters have little other choice in where to ply their trade, and poor families often venture into the woods to forage food and hunt small game. No one willingly stays outside the town's walls on cloudy or moonless nights, however. Not that everyone has a choice.

Nearly everyone who has ventured within the forest has encountered the strange animals that live there. These are hybrids of two different species, such as deer with the ears of a rabbit or ravens with the red wings of rosefinches. Fewer claim to have spotted the animal people — wolves, deer, birds, and more with the stature and gait of humans. Especially skeptical outsiders who visit can expect to be shown one of the many squares the prince has chosen to display his personal kills. During the summer season of communal, open-air meals known as *sagras*, the prince trots out select animal people from his menageries to exert his dominance over the local folk and to impress visitors.

The Trial Pit

The town of Bomarzo, which was founded by monks in the fifth century, rests on millennia-old ruins. The previous occupants left behind vast piles of buried scrap metal — copper and tin, bronze and iron — that the Bomarzans still have not completely excavated. Near the center of the settlement is a 10-foot-wide, 100-foot-deep pit that resembles a well — constructed from a gray metal that has thus far thwarted all attempts to scavenge it. This Trial Pit, as the locals call it, generates a terrible racket like the sound of a thousand-wheeled wagon rolling across a cobblestone road at a full gallop, and it occasionally belches out foul-smelling smoke. This has prevented all but the most desperate squatters from reoccupying any of the abandoned buildings within half a mile of it.

The Trial Pit serves as Bomarzo's execution grounds. Those credibly accused of crimes that carry the penalty of



death face justice in the Trial Pit. The city watch lowers these criminals into the pit with a rope and leaves them there. The pit's sheer walls make climbing out impossible, leaving the condemned no choice but to either die of thirst or pass into the metal tunnel that leads out of the pit and into the Infrastructure beyond.

Whatever its original purpose, the Infrastructure beneath Bomarzo has not performed it properly in centuries. Its infinitesimal metal spiders disassemble and rebuild any living thing they encounter. They do so without any clear guiding intelligence, and the process is far more likely to kill the subject than to transform him. Those who fall through trapdoors into vats of noxious-smelling liquids drown more often than not, with dissolution in strong acid being the next most common fate. Fewer than three people of 20 who face the pit's trials emerge from the tunnel beyond, and barely a tenth of those last a fortnight after the ordeal ends.

Those who survive the Trial Pit are considered innocent of the crime of which they are accused — no matter how heinous or how many witnesses were present. Although Deviants who become disruptive might yet face banishment (or a second journey through the Trial Pit), most return, in some fashion, to their original lives — although their deformities serve as grave reminders of the terrible power that lurks beneath Bomarzo.

New Conspiracy: The White Lily

The care of the poor and sick is among the foundational concerns of Franciscan orders. The Franciscan Order of Saint Anthony of Padua has long ministered to the disabled and the mentally ill — particularly those abandoned to die by their neighbors and families. Some members of that order were not satisfied with merely ministering to these lost souls. Rather, they hoped to learn how to reliably cure the sick and to preserve the healthy from disease — and most especially the Black Death. A century ago, several priests of the order formed the White Lily, named for the flower associated with both funerals and Saint Anthony himself.

In the course of pursuing their lofty goal, the White Lily have discovered that some of the broken wretches under their care possessed miraculous abilities. While flying women and soldiers with impenetrable skin are objects of curiosity to a few of their members, the White Lily is particularly interested in identifying Deviants with healing or disease-fighting abilities.

Standing: 2 (Dysplasia)
First Principle: Care for the sick
Second Principle: An end to disease
Third Principle: God's will be done
Virtue: Charitable
Vice: Unorthodox

Nodes and Linchpins

Custodes: Hierarchal Node. The leaders of the conspiracy reside in Padua and are predominantly priests, monks, and nuns attached to the Basilica of Saint Anthony of Padua. This Node directs the White Lily's members in accordance with the conspiracy's Principles. It strongly urges its members in other Nodes to care for the sick above all else, but it also recognizes that the Black Death is a kind of wildfire. Sometimes extinguishing a single spark is not enough to stop its spread. It must be contained through firebreaks or by organizing bucket brigades or constructing canals and aqueducts to ensure that a ready supply of water is available should a fire break out. The Custodes accept that its supporting Nodes might need to resort to unorthodox methods of fighting the Black Death. Its Linchpin is the Custos of the Franciscan Order of Saint Anthony of Padua within the city.

Almoners: Exploitative Node. This Node reports directly to the Custodes but is based in Rome. Its members wield influence among those among the Franciscan Order of Saint Anthony of Padua who take in alms for the poor and sick. The White Lily's parent order has secured several wealthy patrons, including the Papacy itself, which sees the order as a way of undermining Venetian control of Padua. The Almoners direct some of these resources to the Conspiracy to fund the White Lily's aims. Its Linchpin is a well-connected priest in Rome who also uses his control over the order's purse to fund his personal crusade against the God-Machine he served before his Fall.

Heralds: Structural Node. This Node reports directly to the Custodes and is based in Padua. They maintain a network of spies and informants that in some cases stretches 400 miles or more beyond Padua — from Vienna and Stuttgart to Marseille and Naples. Their primary purpose is to listen for news of outbreaks of plague (or other diseases), but they also watch for Deviants the Conspiracy might recruit. Its Linchpin is a Paduan merchant's wife who keeps the Node's records of known Remade and plague outbreaks. Whenever the White Lily encounters a Deviant whose Blasphemies are of little use to them, or who refuses the conspiracy's entreaties, she passes on the information to her brother, who uses it to find Deviants to press into his mercenary army.

Censors: Hierarchal Node. Although the Custodes are the chief strategic directors of the White Lily, the Censors handle the Conspiracy's day-to-day operations. They have a much better idea of the specific functions of the other Nodes than do the Custodes — in part because they afford the Conspiracy's leadership a measure of plausible deniability regarding its Nodes' less-savory methods. If the Custodes were forced to liquidate this Node due to external political or religious pressure, it would reconstitute the Censors in some other form as soon as the scrutiny had passed. The Node's leadership resides in Milan, which further aids the Custodes in keeping its activities at arm's length. Its Linchpin is a Franciscan nun whose father is a general in the Milanese army, and it is from him that she learned the importance of strategy when fighting any foe — including the Black Death.

Plague Doctors: Exploitative Node. This Node, which reports to the Censors, has infiltrated the ranks of the plague doctors who operate within the reach of the White Lily's Heralds. Primarily charged with the care of plague victims in areas affected by epidemics, plague doctors also count and identify plague victims for public records. They are permitted to perform autopsies on plague victims, which the White Lily has used as cover to dissect Deviants whose recruitment or capture could not be accomplished. Its Linchpin is a physician and anatomist who isn't afraid to get his hands dirty.

Harvesters: Structural Node. This small and highly mobile Node works closely with the Plague Doctors and reports to the Censors. It recruits potentially valuable Deviants by picking through the survivors of towns and cities ravaged by plague. Its members have access to an Icon that renders them immune to most natural diseases, including all strains of the Black Death. The Linchpin of this Node is a mage of a Nameless Order who lost her entire family to plague before she Awakened.

Flagellants: Temporal Node. The bloody whips of the Censors, this Node consists of fanatical cultists who have become convinced that the end of the world is upon them. In response, they engage in self-mortification and press everyone they meet to do the same. If they decide that a person is in league with the Devil or that a town is beyond saving, the Flagellants will often resort to violence — lynching undesirables or razing entire communities. Although the Censors sometimes deploy them to eliminate the conspiracy's enemies, they also serve as a last resort when they only way to prevent the Black Death from spreading beyond a town's walls is to kill everyone living in it. Flagellants do not fear death and are willing to kill themselves to complete the Node's grim quarantine procedure. Its Linchpin is a Devoted who recovers from virtually any illness or injury in a matter of hours, which she also uses to convincingly "play dead" when the time comes to escape enemies or leave behind hapless allies.

Power: 4
Finesse: 6
Resistance: 5
Conspiracy Actions: 1
Icons: 1
Nodes: 7

SISTER MARIA HADDAD

"Pray for God's mercy, that He might, through me, forgive your sins and wash away this disease."

Background: Sister Maria Haddad was born in Ethiopia as Wadha Haddad. During the reign of Susenyos I, she converted to Catholicism and fled to a convent not far from her home — partially out of sincere faith and a friendship with many of the nuns, but mostly to escape the advances of a suitor in whom she had no interest. Her would-be husband and his family refused to be dissuaded by this, frequently attempting to visit her despite being continually refused by her superiors, who well knew her wishes.

She befriended and often worked alongside Father Lucio Li Fonti — a missionary of the Franciscan Order of Saint Anthony of Padua. Sympathetic to Maria Haddad's frustration at her suitor's continued unwelcome pursuit, he suggested she travel to Padua to seek reassignment to a different mission. Carrying the priest's letter of introduction, she began the long journey through the Ottoman Empire and across the Mediterranean Sea. She arrived in Venice during the height of the Italian Plague of 1629–1631.

Travel out of the city was all but impossible, and so Maria Haddad decided to make herself of service as best she could. She approached the local Franciscan orders and soon found herself ministering to victims of the plague. In the course of this work, she became infected herself and was placed under quarantine. As she lay in her cell, fully prepared to die, a visiting priest named Father Francesco came to Maria Haddad to administer last rites. In making her final confession, Maria Haddad learned that the priest belonged to the same order as did Father Lucio. When Francesco learned of the letter of introduction, his demeanor changed significantly.

Father Francesco explained that he and some of his brethren had developed a more effective treatment for the Black Death. Although it sometimes hastened death, anyone it successfully cured would never be touched by the plague again. He offered her this elixir, dissolved in a chalice of wine, and Maria Haddad took it willingly.

The effect was almost immediate, and its intensity clearly took the priest by surprise. That the elixir wiped away Sister Maria Haddad's symptoms would have been miraculous enough, but it also granted her divine gifts of healing far beyond anything Father Francesco had anticipated. She soon became a devoted member of the White Lily, serving among its Harvesters.

Description: Sister Maria Haddad is a woman in her late 30s with dark skin and eyes. She is seldom seen in public without her habit, but she keeps her head clean-shaven. Her mysticism often masks her Remade nature, with Scars manifesting as well-known marks of holy men and women.

Storytelling Hints: Maria Haddad is a true believer in the cause of the White Lily and regards her service to it as a sacred duty to God. Because she regards her healing gifts as miraculous, she only imparts them on those who beg her for healing.

Transgression: Volunteer

Circle: Grotesque

Forms: Transmittable

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3; Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5 (6); Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Skills: Academics 1 (Catholic Doctrine), Animal Ken 1, Athletics 1, Brawl 3 (Biting), Crafts 1, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Investigation 2, Medicine (Plague) 3, Occult 1, Persuasion 3, Science 1, Socialize 2, Stealth 1, Streetwise 1



Merits: Allies (White Lily) 2, Good Samaritan, Language (High Italian), Language (Venetian Italian), Multilingual (Arabic and Latin), Persuasive, Status (Harvesters) 2, Tolerance for Biology

Willpower: 6

Piety: 8

Disgrace: 3

Initiative: 6

Defense: 4

Armor: 2/0

Speed: 9

Health: 10 (11)

Blasphemies: Carapace 2, Healing Touch 3, Immunity (Disease) 2, Natural Weapon (Bite; +0L, inflicts grave Sick Tilt on a successful attack) 1, Superhuman Stamina 2.

Scars: Hallucinations 2 (Superhuman Stamina), Hemophilia 3 (Carapace, Immunity), Perilous Variation (Healing Touch) 3

Conviction Touchstones: 1 (a friend or ally of the players' characters)

Loyalty Touchstones: 4 (Father Francesco, three fellow Harvesters)

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Initiative	Dice Pool	Special
Bite	0L	−0	6	Successful attack that inflicts at least one point of lethal damage exposes the target to possible Malevolence; *see below*

Notes: Maria Haddad's Malevolence can be transmitted in one of two ways — by smearing or injecting her saliva into a patient's open wound or whenever she cures someone of the plague using Healing Touch. In the former case, Malevolence occurs almost immediately and initially mimics the symptoms of bubonic plague. Resisting the infection when it is passed by this means requires a successful Stamina roll. In the latter case, Malevolence is considerably less likely, permitting a Stamina + Stamina roll with an interval of one day and a target number of 3. As with all methods of Malevolence, infection is more likely to be fatal to the patient than to Remake him.

Maria Haddad's Healing Touch can heal the plague as though it were aggravated damage (at the risk of infection per the prior note) and most serious but non-life-threatening diseases as though they were lethal damage.

Mage: Awakening to Truth

The truth of the Supernal does not bother to differentiate between the learned and the ignorant. The human soul, in breaking through the Lie and reaching across the Abyss, brings equality in revelation. A scholar or a deacon or a wealthy merchant has no special privilege here. The burning fire of Awakening has no need for social status or patronage.

This means that a bishop and a bandit are both as worthy as one another in the strange world of the newly Awakened. Suddenly blessed with world-shaping power, a new mage has the ability to indulge their every whim — but it can take time to break free from the ingrained habits of a life lived under restrictive social order. A common Venetian laborer can suddenly see into the souls of those around him after experiencing strange visions when he nearly drowns in a canal — but he does not necessarily believe himself to be *better* than the Sleeping masses, at least at first. He is still firmly anchored by his duty to his family, his enmity with a rival who has insulted his pride, and his loyalty to Venice itself. A noblewoman of Naples who carves her name, bloody and raw, into the Watchtower of the Primal Wild needs to take this incredible change to her world and process it, make sense of it through the lens of her beliefs. She cannot easily walk away from her family and status to indulge her newfound Obsessions.

Cloaks & Masques

Clothing is a vital part of this society — a clear statement of whatever social status, wealth, and refinement an individual may possess. During the Renaissance, Italy stood at the forefront of European fashion; now it has fallen behind Spain and France, but textiles remain a key industry and Italians still pay great heed to the signs of power and influence that are found in the warp and weft of garments. The resurgence of the Venetian masqued carnival is an attempt to reclaim some of that old glory and grandeur.

The Awakened of Italy commonly use garments as Yantras within their magic, providing a one-die bonus if the clothing is appropriate to the spell — particularly magic of veiling and of connections to members of the local community. By combining garment Yantras with a festivity or celebration important to the city and its communities, this bonus rises to two dice; wearing a mask and partaking in the great *Carnivale di Venezia* is a powerful three-die Yantra for spells of trickery, emotions, and that target the population of Venice.

Iron and Diamond

For most mages, the Orders remain the heart of Awakened society, a network spread through the peninsula that offers companionship and understanding in a wider world that seems, by the measure of Awakening's revelations, to be painfully mired in ignorance. The aid of an Order, combined with the power of the Arcana, can catapult a once-lowly peasant into prominence, or open up new vistas to someone trapped in the higher echelons of society. Some magicians use the influence of their Order to embroil themselves in worldly matters — including the subject of faith, as the church is a very real power and can exert a great deal of influence.

Nepotism and corruption allow a magician to trivially gain influence within the church, as Awakened fellows offer a helping hand up the hierarchy even without magic. Many willworkers become priests, accepting the restrictions of holy vows and duties in return for power within this international organization.

Other mages embed themselves in secular power. An Awakened can gain wealth and fortune with ease through Fate magic or the transmutations of Matter or gather valuable social connections through the Arcanum of Mind. Where others face hardship and dwindling riches, mages flourish.

Without the travails that burden most Sleepers, a mage is far freer to spend her time as she wishes and can travel much more easily within society. The Arcana can let her appear as who she wants, travel unseen, bind ephemeral beings to perform labor for her, and break many of the shackles that would bind a Sleeper in an equivalent position. Most Awakened use this freedom to pursue their Obsessions, but many newly enriched magicians infiltrated into the middle and upper classes spend their money on luxuries, art, and patronage as they see fit.

Unsurprisingly, many Awakened turn their attention upon the science and philosophy that shines through this period. Some see a strong resonance between the revelations of Awakening and the fervent hunt for truth that grips scholars and intellectuals. A number of Diamond mages, particularly the Silver Ladder and Mysterium, give patronage to thinkers and universities, hoping to gently encourage them towards interesting discoveries, Mysteries, and, perhaps, Awakening. They see Galilei and his peers as fellow travelers; Sleepers, yes, and mired in the Lie, but endeavoring for the Truth nonetheless.

Then there are the Seers of the Throne. As eager as ever to crush humanity beneath the boot of the Exarchs, they are nonetheless divided. A great rift runs between the servants of the Unity and the Father.

Church and State

Awakened who plunge themselves into the murky world of Church politics often gain significant dots in the Status (Catholic Church) Merit, climbing the ranks to become figures of power pulling at the strings of the more public-facing clergy. Yantras are concealed among the pomp and ceremony of Catholic rites. The international nature of the Church gives mages ample opportunity to garner the Contacts Merit, and the sorts of sympathetic links that will allow them to magically meddle with events elsewhere in Europe.

Most mages build a large number of dots in the Resources Merit, and often surround themselves with Staff and Retainers — all as expected of someone of note in 17th-century Italian society. Many build their occult Obsessions into the works of art or science or architecture that they have built with their wealth. Less constrained by the Church's strictures than those who actually dwell within it, merchant and noble Awakened can get away with the pursuit of odd pastimes more easily, especially where it matches the expertise of a scientist or philosopher in their employ.

The Nameless must live cautiously. Unlike Sleepers, they have little to fear directly from the Inquisition's investigations into witchcraft — but drawing attention from the eye of the Seer Ministries means considerably more fearsome foes. Many foster strong links with their local agricultural communities through kindness or intimidation, garnering Allies and Contacts within the area, and shroud themselves through extensive Occultation. Unlike urban Awakened, they rarely have much in the way of Resources, but often take the Familiar Merit.

The Struggle for Power

The Church is already a fractious web of Sleeper alliances based on nationality and loyalty to particular philosophies and kings, and it is further divided by the Awakened scrambling for control over its levers of influence. The Diamond Orders form one loose faction, and Paternoster Seers form another. Finally, a few independent Nameless fight their corner with determination, outmatched but dangerously unpredictable.

The Seers of other Ministries, especially the Hegemony, exploit the Church from the outside to sway or reduce its influence over secular powers. These mages see the era as an opportunity to permanently redefine the relationship between the Papacy and the nations upon the European stage. The Hegemony works to turn the Church into an extension of the political theater in which monarchs and ministers play their puppeteer games; it suits these Seers to see the Papacy weakened and subjugated. The very struggles between France, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire to gain that influence are themselves an excellent reinforcement of the Lie, the strife and struggle helping keep humanity down. While these Seers fear science and rationality might threaten the Lie in time, it suits the Hegemony to foster thinkers such as Galilei for now, because it challenges the central authority of the pope — and thus weakens the Church's power. While a few members might get involved



with religion or maintain an appearance of Christian piety, the Hegemonic Seers are patricians and aristocrats.

Conversely, the Seers of Paternoster seek to protect the tradition of the Church, as it perfectly reinforces their central philosophy of chaining the masses through dogma. Christianity, they say, is a Fallen approximation of the Father's holy will, like any other Sleeper religion — the only way Sleepers can understand true faith is to devote themselves slavishly to its pale reflection while the Awakened hand of the Father guides them. They hide within the heart of Rome, stretching their influence to the highest levels. Paternoster is hungry to stamp the Holy See's power upon Europe, to reinforce its authority once again and to force the huddled masses of humanity to bend knee and bow head not to a worldly crown but to the all-knowing, all-judging moral authority of their God. Anyone who challenges the Church is an enemy to be crushed, regardless of faith or truth. The mages of Paternoster and their militant arm, the Order of the Temple of Sophia, support Urban's military expansion of papal lands, and push the authority of the Sacred Congregation and the Inquisition to increasingly oppressive lengths. As they see it, the pontiff is their pawn, to be moved wherever they see fit to move him.

In truth, the Seers of Paternoster fear they are losing this war. Their influence in the Church is strong and they still outnumber any other individual Ministry, but they have a lot to lose and face the combined power of the rest of the Iron Pyramid, as well as the Diamond Orders on a separate front. The Holy Roman Emperor usurps more of the Church's authority, and the Vatican sits upon crumbling financial foundations. The very symbolic basis of Paternoster's success has been undermined, and the Apotheosian is not pleased.

The Diamond Orders fight their corner as best they can. Those of the Adamantine Arrow often align themselves closely to Urban VIII's efforts at expanding papal power through military might, using the conquests of war as a cover to seize Hallows and Mysteries. The Mysterium draws on the collected knowledge of the Church as an incredible resource for tracing and investigating magic. They pluck the jewels of truth from amid archives of Sleeper superstition, and yank humans with occult talent out of the grasp of the Inquisition's tribunals.

The Silver Ladder plays its part in the Counter-Reformation push towards rationality and science, hoping to encourage humanity forward with the combination of spiritual faith and intellectual rigor. Many théarchs are avidly supportive of the efforts of Galilei and his peers, hoping that these minds might light the way for the greater masses to follow.

The Guardians of the Veil, for their part, stalk the ranks of the Sacred Congregation and the Inquisition. They hunt for signs of magic abused and secrets that should remain hidden. The Guardians are not, however, humorless villains determined to ban every book and crush every discovery. They are wary of the works of thinkers like Galilei, but recognize it is not desirable to simply stamp down on humanity's attempts at progress — that would leave them little better than the Seers. They may hunt rogue magicians who turn to dark practices in the countryside — but it is the Guardians who forge peace with several covens of Benandanti Proximi, where the Adamantine Arrow threatened to simply destroy them.

Amid the shifting, byzantine alliances of Sleeper politics in the Papacy, it can be hard to identify which machinations belong to which faction. When an envoy from France falls sick with a fatal illness, has a priest of Paternoster undermined the power of the Unity, has a Guardian of the Veil acted to keep French agents out of hidden schemes, or is it simply poor fortune on the hapless Sleeper's part?

As the years pass, the rivalry among the factions grows ever fiercer. Scheming and manipulation of Sleepers flares into outright murder. Mages bend the will of their rivals' favored pawns and force the Sleepers into suicide or break them under the pretense of demonic visitation. Ghastly supernatural diseases are unleashed in cloisters, leaving entire monasteries dead from sicknesses far crueler than the plague; key Sleeper allies are coddled and protected when the true plague does indeed arrive, wild and untamed beyond the easy ability of the Awakened to control. Transmutation, illusions, and mundane accounting fraud pour resources into one mage's favored Church projects and deny them to those of the enemy.

Yet still, Seers and Diamond mages alike struggle to truly control the Catholic Church. It is too large and unwieldy to be easily leashed. The clashing machinations of Awakened and other, stranger entities often spoil against each other, and Sleepers are too willful and independent to adhere to a magician's schemes for long.

God and the Machine

The Awakened are aware of some of the workings of the God-Machine, though few grasp the greater picture. They know that the divine engine is not the Christian God, and nor is It a tool of the Exarchs, but they are often at a loss to explain Its nature further. Mages catch glimpses of its presence — strange, angelic entities, grinding masonry and gears in interstitial spaces that fold themselves away when approached, and ancient menhirs in the countryside that ring with bizarre chords or spit crackling static out in frequencies that only those who have dabbled in Forces can hear. The impression the Wise have is that It is something akin to an underlying layer of existence, an occult system devoted to maintaining reality in accordance with an inscrutable plan — or possibly a mechanical parasite, an invader that has stretched Itself underneath the world's skin to hide.

The God-Machine's machinations sometimes impinge on the schemes of the Italian Diamond, but such interactions have, in the past, been simple ones for the Wise.



Although some of the divine engine's servants are powerful and Its Infrastructure dangerous, cabals could deal with a problem without much fear of retaliation. Collapse a blood-filled well that spews strange, mutated vermin with glass eyes, or discorporate a howling wheel of fire and eyes that guards a tower whose higher geometries pierce into other realities and times, and the God-Machine would respond by shutting down Its presence and withdrawing. Now, though, that has changed.

Awakened tampering with the God-Machine, facilitated directly by a combination of Prime and Fate or indirectly through all kinds of meddling, are met with more robust response. There's an impossible building wedged between two textile factories in Florence, within which racks of doppelganger mannequins are assembled and set loose upon the city; when the Adamantine Arrow burn it out, a crack in Twilight spills out a seemingly endless tide of hunter-killer angels seeking the perpetrators, and the grinding occult gears of the machine spin up two new infiltrator manufactories elsewhere in the city. The Guardians of the Veil pounce upon an angel inflicting rapturous visions on pilgrims in Rome, only to then be politically assailed by conspiracies of monks and cultists. A Mystagogue tries to tap into esoteric energies that form a symbolic pattern between ancient megalith sites, trying to feel out where the threads of power go when the stone circles transmit weird emanations into the sky; something streaks out of the firmament, all fire and metal, and obliterates the magician, his home, and his entire household.

The Seers of the Throne, while likewise keen to quell any discoveries of supernatural truths, dislikes and mistrusts the God-Machine's servants. Nonetheless, their Exarchal patrons occasionally order them to work alongside these biomechanical horrors and their Sleeper cults. Whatever drives the divine engine, there seems to be some sort of recognition of mutual cause; the Exarchs prefer to subvert and use the God-Machine's efforts rather than combat It anyway, regardless of human cost. For the Diamond, though, the threat of the God-Machine is growing with every passing year, as if It fears discovery, Its danger is matched only by Its plethora of Mysteries. Facing such a rising tide, some Awakened have met with — and made pacts with — another mysterious force, one that might help them fight or study the machine.

Mysteries

Every Awakened must decide to what purpose to devote themselves, and for those to whom the God-Machine's



blind fury is just something to survive, Italy possesses many other strange secrets to be pried forth into the light.

Something is gathering the dead. In 1631, the pope's brother, Cardinal Antonio Barberini, has the bones of thousands of friars of the Capuchin Order transferred to a crypt purpose-built in Rome; their remains are turned into a macabre work of art, decorating the walls and ceilings with their skulls. A cryptic, undecipherable series of symbols is carved into the ossuary. Those same symbols begin to appear in graveyards across the country, literally scored into stone as if by talons of incredible strength. In each event, every ghost for miles around shrieks in terror, wailing through Twilight before vanishing. Those Moros who investigate in the following hours have their souls boil away out of their bodies. Whatever is causing this, it isn't the Underworld; any Avernian gateways in the graveyards are obliterated in the process. Instead, the Awakened find the architecture of the nearest churches twisted into strange, impossible angles and spaces — but only to them. Sleepers notice nothing different at all and continue to congregate and pray in their churches as if nothing has changed. This is a Mystery of Opacity 6.

The Villa di Pratolino in Tuscany was a favored retreat for the Grand Duke Francesco I, but after his death it has fallen into lonely disuse. A skeleton staff still maintains the villa, but the current duke, Ferdinando the technophile, never visits. At the heart of its grand gardens lies a bizarre sight — the Apennine Colossus, a stooped but massive sculpture of a bearded man so large it has rooms within it. A cabal of Diamond mages considers the Villa part of its territory — and guards it jealously for its power to generate tass without a Hallow, in the form of crystals that pulse with a sickly light. Mages who use its Mana find that their spells are more powerful, but at the cost of weakening their bodies and ruining their health; still, they cling to the advantages it gives them, using magic to stave off the worst of its effects and determined to figure out where it came from. This is a Mystery of Opacity 4.

The Benedetto

Faith alone isn't always enough. Everyone knows witches stalk the countryside, casting their evil eye upon the common people and their honest toil. They summon evil spirits or demons and are the cause of the earth growing thin or sour, of miscarriages and sickness, of ill fate and nightmares. Despite the Inquisition's best efforts, traditions of folk superstition thrive in the form of charms and wards. Most folk witches and suppliers of trinkets are just Sleepers with no actual power, or Sleepwalkers plagued by a sensitivity to the strange, but the Proximi of the *benedetto* are authentic — a loose network of minor practitioners, priests, and occultists who oppose the depredations of spirits, mages, and other supernatural beings.

The power of the benedetto comes from an unknown but common source; they are not found beyond the borders of Italy, but no family nor bloodline seems to bond them together. Rather, when one of these Proximi is born, a powerful sympathetic link briefly forms with… something else, something deep in the soil. Mages debate the source of this link. Some believe it may be the land itself.

Nickname: The Blessed

Appearance: Benedetto are mostly born among the peasantry of the Italian countryside, and they look the part of their lowly social class. As agricultural workers, these Blessed are heavily built from a life of hard labor, and they prefer simple clothes. Many take on the trappings of the Sleeper *benandanti* traditions, but others hew more closely to the Church and serve village communities as proper priests. Proximi of this dynasty often look weary or sleep-deprived from their nightly battles.

Parent Path: Mastigos

Blessings (Mind, Space, Spirit): Mind – Know Nature •, Mental Scan •, Dream Reaching ••, Incognito Presence ••, Mental Shield ••, Sleep of the Just •••; Space — Correspondence •, Groundeater •, The Outward and Inward Eye •, Scrying ••, Ward ••, Ban •••; Spirit – Coaxing the Spirit •, Exorcist's Eye •, Invoke Bane •, Command Spirit ••, Ephemeral Shield ••, Shadow Walk ••

Curse: The Blessed are duty-bound to protect their communities and their land from supernatural influence. Each night, their minds are taken on strange voyages, witnessing omens and visions of supernatural threats they must do battle with.

Persistent: A benedetto Proximus only regains Willpower from a night's rest if she has used her powers to protect a Sleeper from supernatural forces within the past three days.

Beat: Whenever a benedetto is investigated or persecuted by the authorities, take a Beat.

Severe: If a benedetto is prevented from gaining a full and restful sleep, her visions spill out from her dreams into the nightmares of the Sleepers around her. When her curse worsens, each additional night during which she replenishes no Willpower inflicts the Spooked Condition on every Sleeper within a five-mile radius, and the portents they feel compelled to act on in resolving it point to the Proximus as the source or cause of their night terrors.

Oblations: Bargain with or dance with a spirit; calm the fears of another or provide them with moral guidance; walk from one settlement to another to bring good news; take part in the harvest.

Character Concepts: Provincial priest, peasant sorcerer, shaman of an old god, countryside vigilante, witch hunter.

Playing the Game

In Light of the Sun, characters face the conflicting demands of truth and survival, the clash between power and faith. Driven by obsessions, opportunism, or simply the desire to see another day, the protagonists of chronicles set in this era struggle to have their voices heard and to deal with a world caught in social, spiritual, and supernatural tumult.

Creating Characters

Characters in Light of the Sun are very likely to be Italians, natives to the patchwork of city-states sprawling across the peninsula. Despite the relatively cosmopolitan nature of Italy over the past centuries, most Italians will not have ventured beyond the borders of their country or, indeed, far beyond their city-state; merchants, sailors, and magnates may have traveled farther afield, but the world is still a small place with close horizons for many of the urban working classes and the peasants of the countryside. High ratings in Academics and Science are the preserve of priests, thinkers, and intellectuals, and are rare among the rest of the populace, whereas practical necessities such as Crafts, Survival, and Streetwise are common.

Characters — and Covers — drawn from farther afield are quite possible, however. Travelers from Spain, France, the Holy Roman Empire, and lands farther east and north come to Italy for trade and piety, although the stream of foreigners seeking the great banks of the likes of the Medici has largely withered away by this era. Ottoman and African characters can easily reach Italy via the Mediterranean and may be drawn there by academic pursuits or mercantile concerns.

Origins can shape the connections and contacts that the wider group of characters can access and help forge links between characters that give justification for their actions together as a group. For example, a Spanish character or Cover might provide a cabal or ring with political links that they need, represented through dots in the Allies Merit; a group entirely made up of Florentines is bound together by the characters' shared pride and honor of their city and the patronage of the Medici, and may also possess higher Resources dots to represent the material benefits of such allegiance.

Social class and position are vital elements to consider during character creation. The Status Merit is vitally important; noble titles, guild rank, and ecclesiastical positions should be represented through Status dots. Characters with Status above 1 or 2 should also look at assigning Skill dots to Politics and Socialize to express the talents needed to acquire such significance. Philosophers and thinkers are likely to have few dots in Status but be reliant on Mentors and Allies who possess such for their protection.

Pride, honor, and duty are all key parts of the social interplay between the people of this era and should be reflected in the nature of the characters and their standing. Pride in a character's city-state might drive them to favor their home in matters of politics and influence. The Allies and Contacts Merits are strong candidates for bringing out a character's loyalties in this way, showing the people and groups to whom they hew most closely.

Light of the Sun is a time of revelation and truth. The emphasis on intellectualism and the exploration of the God-Machine's mad paroxysms lend themselves strongly to characters who are monied, who possess significant connections, or are part of the Church, bringing them centrally into such conflicts. For this sort of focus, characters are best served with multiple dots in the Contacts, Resources, or Status Merits at the very least. The more interwoven with the influential strata of society that is closest to the tangle of patronage, politics, and piety through which Galilei moves, the deeper they can delve into this exploration of faith and power.

The Unchained

Initial Cover choice is important for an Unchained character, and attention should be given to the relationships, responsibilities, and loyalties the Cover possesses. Since many Unchained embed themselves among the secular structures of the guilds—and many Fall from the God-Machine's need to rapidly destroy and rebuild its Infrastructure—a strong rating in the Crafts and Athletics Skills are common, as are Embeds and Exploits such as Raw Materials and Like I Built It.

The Awakened

For Awakened characters, their original social standing and their post-Awakening status may be wildly different — how does the man who was once a laborer but is now a courtier through magic and Order connections deal with that elevation? How does wider society look at his sudden transgression across strict lines, or is it all covered up, a dirty secret that rivals might pry out to use against him? Dots in the Status Merit and Academics are often appropriate for both sorcerers who hew to the Church and those who come from patrician upbringings or maneuver themselves into the nobility after Awakening. Mages often pick Shadow Names that are Biblical references and take the Shadow Name Merit to strengthen the symbolism thereof.

The Remade

Deviants are often dredged from the most victimized of society. Not for the Renegades are luxuries or lofty status; instead, Deviants often rely on dots in Contacts and Allies among the lower tiers of the community for their continued survival. Renegades who stay alive for long tend to acquire dots in Stealth, Survival, Streetwise, and Subterfuge.

Group Effort

No one is an island — not even the Awakened and the Unchained, and certainly not the Renegades. Most chronicles set in Light of the Sun will feature a group of players and their characters, including mixed bands of demons, mages, and Deviants all working together, and it's important to keep a character's place in that group in mind. How do they connect to the other characters? Do they have drives or motivations that link into those of their fellows, or are these sources of friction and trouble?

A group may choose to build their characters around a central, complementary theme — a shared understanding



between the characters that ensures everyone is on the same page. Perhaps the entire cabal is clergy, fighting a shadow war in the ranks of the Church against meddling Seers, demonic forces, and mad angels; in this case, binding everyone together through shared faith, or perhaps cynical lack thereof. Another group might create a ring of Unchained who share the desire to protect Milan from the dark machinations of the God-Machine; they may be disparate in the social status of their Covers and in their Agenda, but when the chips are down and angels are trying to use the city's walls as an occult cage to tear the whole thing out of the timeline, they will come together to protect their turf.

This kind of binding thread can be key to a group of characters in this era, because of the nature of the society through which they are moving. A linking concept is the glue that can stick an otherwise-disparate band together, where the usual strictures of social status might otherwise divide them up. Look at the role each player wants their character to have within the group and the story and seek out the common thread that might tie the whole thing into a greater picture.

Goals and Knives

When building a group of characters, consider both the characters' goals and the players' goals. A character might want to get rich, find God, have the truth publicized, or just survive, but it's not always the most interesting story if the player just goes along with that. The fun of a chronicle often comes where the character faces obstacles to what they desire or has to adapt in the face of such challenges. One of the Unchained could want the revelation of the God-Machine's orbital presence made known to humanity — but the *player* wants her demon to grapple with the arrogance and ego of the human intellectuals she is trying to shepherd toward the truth, to clash with the grinding bureaucracy of the Catholic Church, and to face the increasingly frantic opposition of the God-Machine's angelic legions. Aspirations are an excellent way to make these desires clear, and working with the Storyteller to explore some of the aspects of 17th-century Italian society will make interesting obstructions for the characters to overcome.

Individual and group goals can clash in the same way. A band of demons and mages all driven by wildly different goals can be briefly exciting, but risks shattering the group quickly and leaving the Storyteller grasping for straws as to why they would all continue to work together.

It can help for the players to decide ahead of time whether they want to pursue a "knives-in" or "knives-out" approach to the group. A knives-out group assumes that the players can ultimately all rely on each other's characters to stand together; they will struggle against the wider world, struggling to reveal or suppress truth in the face of human efforts. Individual goals may clash with the group's overall aims, but they are moderated so that they raise questions that need answering, rather than clashes where someone will "win." The Saboteurs may not agree on the *specific* way to undermine the God-Machine's plague bearers in Rome, but they will all agree that something must be done; the cabal of mages might argue over whether they should influence the Sacred Congregation to let Galilei's work be published, but they are all concerned with foiling the Seers' efforts to twist the situation into service of the Exarchs.

Conversely, a knives-in approach draws conflict and story from the direct struggles between the characters within the group. In this setup, the wider world is just a backdrop for the clashes between the characters; the story is a vehicle to explore how they interact with one another. In a knives-in group, the fundamental expectation is that individual goals and group goals will clash, and hard, and it's therefore very important to consider strong binding elements to stop the characters from promptly disbanding — or to plan a short-term chronicle that is not intended to last. Perhaps the band's members are mages and demons forced together to deal with a terrible catastrophe that the God-Machine threatens to bring about on the place they live — but they are all eyeing the inevitable aftermath, and want their personal, Order, or Agenda goals to be the ones that are at the top of the heap when the dust settles. A cabal, split between rich merchants and influential priests, finds itself leaned on by national and ecclesiastic patrons and individual members bound by fierce rival loyalties — and the story becomes how far they can go before duty and honor tears them apart. Fellow philosophers tear at each other's theories and ideals, sabotaging their progress and denouncing them before the Church; a cutthroat game of academic betrayal that leaves only one to claim the glory and renown of success.

Storytelling the Radiant Sun

Running a game in the Light of the Sun era may present a challenge for Storytellers. The character and culture of 17th-century Italy comes through in the grim, slumping collapse of this once-thriving peninsula, in the fierce feuds and political schemes that beset the patchwork of states and their foreign lieges, in the interplay between faith and science, and the connections that tie the men and women of Italy together through blood and pride. All these come bundled together with the considerable supernatural powers of the players' characters — beings who possess incredible abilities to move society and seize the opportunities revealed by the tumult that grips Italy at this time.

Styles of Play

Every chronicle, or chapter thereof, is likely to have a dominant style of play — whether mental, social, or physical. This style defines much of the tone and theme of the game

for its duration, dictating whether it will be a tale of clashing wills and devious politics or fiery passions and sharp blades. No chronicle needs to adhere to a particular style for its duration, or even for a whole chapter; it is likely to change scene by scene. However, having a particular style in mind can help the Storyteller plan out certain story beats and give a useful lever to rely on whenever the action seems to be dying down.

It's a good idea to communicate any plans for an overarching style to the players before character creation, but the three types of characters in focus here are particularly well suited to a chronicle where the style regularly changes — Blasphemies (Variations), the Arcana, and Covers let them adapt swiftly when the intellectual schemes of the University of Padua are flung into religious and social maneuvering against the Inquisition's piercing gaze, or when the gathering of occult secrets in Mantua is brought to ruinous end by the arrival of would-be conquerors and the tides of battle.

Mental arcs and stories focus on the intellectual butting of heads between arrogant academics, their attempts to draw back the veil on human understanding, and the puzzling-out of occult secrets. The mental style of play might see demons consorting with philosophers while trying to put together the hints at the God-Machine's plan in their observations of the stars, Renegades studying sacred tomes and heretical rituals in an attempt to find a cure for Malevolence or give their Makers a taste of their own medicine, or mages assembling theological arguments based on canon law and scripture that will protect them from religious accusations. Whenever play seems to stumble during mental arcs, have a character ask a difficult question that challenges existing beliefs, or have a rival make an accusation that must be answered.

Physical arcs and stories focus upon survival in the tumultuous landscape of 17th-century Italy, and battle against rivals. During the physical style of play, the characters might face off against Seers and their God-Machine cult allies who are trying to wake slumbering Infrastructure with calamitous results, or a character might find herself beset by conspiracy thugs with knives and clubs eager to dole out pious justice to a witch in a grimy Roman back alley. A group might hunt for sanctuary in plague-riddled streets, or sneak past guards to a secure papal archive wherein dark secrets are kept under warded lock and key. If a physical arc is grinding to a halt, reveal an unexpected strength or capability on the part of an antagonist — or reveal a way out of the scene and immediate danger, but one that comes at a cost.

Social arcs and stories deal with some of the most important elements of the era: the interconnections between people and places, the rivalries of great powers, and the clash between faith and rationality. Social play could see a mage carefully navigating the court of the Medici to secure support for a rejection of the Church's policy, a Remade infiltrating and manipulating a university to tear down its brightest minds, or a demon pulling at the emotional threads of two Venetian families set against one another in rivalry. Characters caught in social arcs may wield impassioned speeches to stir priests and commoners to their cause, or use lies and poison to solve their problems rather than legal wrangling or brute force. When social arcs stumble, have a Storyteller character react with greater passion than the situation might usually call for, forging new bonds of love or rivalry in the heat of the moment.

Pacing

The tricks above can help maintain a level of pace through a given chapter's play. Light of the Sun comes with certain inherent tensions that need to be addressed, however, in order to keep the overall flow of the chronicle moving.

Light of the Sun is about arrogance and truth, about the dangers of revealing that truth and the consequences of challenging power. The protagonists are, however, not likely to be the individuals standing at the forefront of those struggles. How, then, to tie characters to these themes, and keep the pacing of the chronicle flowing? One part of the answer might be found in Storyteller characters. By building strong links between the players' characters and particular academics, patrons, and priests of the time, they can be drawn into the travails and struggles of these Sleepers, Commons, and mortals who look to them for support, help, and advice. The clash between Church and science is direct and real for these characters, so put them under pressure in order to stir the characters into action. This doesn't have to be in the form of direct threat; when the game's pace might slacken, set Storyteller characters against each other in rivalries over matters of theory and science, or have a priest begin to question his faith on matters to which the characters *could* provide answers, should they choose — but possibly at risk of their own secrecy and raising further questions.

Another method of pacing is to raise and lower the stakes at play in a given arc. The story of Light of the Sun does not need to be a constant escalation of Inquisitions and defiant intellectuals that ends with everyone imprisoned or in anarchy. Rather, like a guttering candle, take a specific truth or revelation that the characters wish to shepherd through to acceptance, and offer challenges to that little light in waves. A theory first must be tested in the rigorous, feuding corridors of the university, building up to a mental showdown between a character and his rivals where his discovery will either be torn apart and discredited, stolen by another, or come through intact due to his brilliant work. After that, though, offer some respite and perhaps turn the chronicle to a different issue — a piece of local Infrastructure falling into aberrant and destructive malfunction, maybe — before returning to the troubles the character now faces in getting his work printed and spread, facing the influence of supernatural creatures who want it stifled, the struggle for the imprimatur from the Sacred Congregation of the Index, and the eventual escalation towards the halls of papal power where Seers and monsters conspire to foil the truth.



Truth and Power

The great clash of this era is between those who believe they have truths that must be heard, and those in power whose authority rests on assumptions that are now challenged. Storyteller characters with Status and other forms of influence have little patience for such challenges, and often seek to stamp out inconvenient discoveries that undermine their position. One way to represent this air of intolerance and the anxieties of the powerful is through the following optional rule for Social Maneuvering.

Optional Rule: Dangerous Truths

Speaking truth to power is a risky proposition. Like sharks circling in the water, others wait for a chance to seize upon any flaws or vulnerabilities expressed through words and ideals.

When a powerful individual or institution that controls the immediate scene is faced with another character making claims that challenge their authority or influence, such as an Inquisition tribunal or the court of a grand duke, and the scene goes to Social Maneuvering, the Storyteller chooses a specific type of Status. For the rest of the scene, whenever a character attempts a Social Maneuver against someone who has more dots in that Status, and the maneuver challenges the Aspirations, Obsessions, Vice, or Virtue of the target in some way, the difference between the two characters' dots in Status is added to the defender's Doors. Furthermore, should the character fail on any such roll, it becomes a dramatic failure; they invite immediate sanction or retaliation due to poorly chosen words, incautious approach, or a lack of appropriately soothing flattery.

This situation can sometimes be assuaged sooner by changing the underlying terms of the scene — a showdown with priests and their Status (Catholic Church) could be brought to an end by successfully appealing to the grand duke in whose court the scene is taking place, whose Status (Florence) is both more immediately significant and higher than the priests'.

Honor & Pride

Feuds and rivalries stab through the tight-knit fabric of Italian society in this era. Proud philosophers slander one another before the Church, the supporters of noble families kill one another over grudges, and loyalties to France, emperor, or pope carve brutal dividing lines that flare into fierce conflict. Where a character is caught in such a rivalry, the Storyteller can use the Vendetta Condition to represent the drama of their feud.

Vendetta (Persistent Condition)

Your character has fallen into a feud or intense rivalry with another. Whether due to wounded pride, political antagonism, or matters of the heart, your foe is set on vengeance. You suffer a −2 penalty on all Social Merit-based dice pools due to the rival's interference, and whenever you or your rival use Willpower to enhance a dice pool that harms or attacks the other — politically, physically, or otherwise — it adds five dice to the pool rather than three.

Resolution: The rival perishes, is satisfied they have avenged the wrong, or is content that you have made amends.

Beat: The character suffers a significant setback due to the machinations of the rival.

Unchained Compromise Conditions

Conditions employed are inspired by the religious threats prominent in Italy during this time.

Inquisition

You've drawn the attention of the religious authorities; Agents of the Roman Inquisition are investigating reports of your demonic activities or seeking to question you personally due to rumors of heresy. Such investigation threatens your Cover further, inflicting a −2 penalty on future compromise rolls.

Resolution: Face the Inquisition's tribunal directly, or kill, bribe, or otherwise compromise an inquisitor.

Witch Panic

Your supernatural powers or glitches in your Cover have stirred up a panic in the local populace. They vigilantly watch for the slightest signs of witchcraft and devilry, which makes assembling new Covers difficult. Whenever you would gain Cover Experiences through a pact or other supernatural ability, reduce the amount of Experiences gained by one, to a minimum of one.

Resolution: Locals sate their paranoia by condemning and killing another character for witchcraft, you change to a new Cover, or you leave the region.

The Plague

The plague has the potential to add a grim and gory element to the historical backdrop of a chronicle. However, most people playing a Chronicles of Darkness game neither expect nor want to tell a story in which their characters die of the plague. That said, there are many ways to use the plague in a chronicle:

- **As a source of horror:** Unchecked by modern medicine, the bubonic plague cuts like a scythe through populations. This gives it considerable potential as an element of a character's background. Players' characters quite often possess the means to protect themselves from the plague. Although the plague is



a wholly natural phenomenon, it sometimes triggers Malevolence in those who are predisposed to such transformation. Many mages can shield themselves with magic. Demons are not bound to a single body and so can cheat death by adopting a new Cover.

The same cannot always be said for their friends and family — much less the population of an entire city. Even a Master of Life cannot provide reliable protection from the plague to all of Venice or Mantua — although some might fall to hubris in the effort. Moreover, a neighborhood conspicuously immune to the plague is likely to attract unwanted attention — and suspicion — from others. A Deviant who fearlessly walks streets strewn with the plague's victims might convince witnesses that she derives her protection from God, for example, but accusations of witchcraft against her are just as likely.

- **As a force of nature:** The plague can behave as an indifferent actor within the chronicle. It can complicate travel plans in the form of quarantines, remove a desperately needed ally (within the usual limits of the Sanctity of Merits), or turned an otherwise-stable political situation into a chaotic free for all as factions vie to fill a power vacuum. As an antagonist, it cannot be reasoned with or defeated on the battlefield.

- **As an Influence on a Human Organizations:** Finally, humans respond to the arrival of plague in many different ways. For most, it is an object of fear and dread, but a minority instead see in it a fountain of opportunity. The earliest recorded form of biological warfare involved launching the corpses of plague victims into besieged cities by catapult, and more than one cadre of conspirators was executed under suspicion of intentionally spreading the plague in a community. A group of saboteurs might ply the same tactic in an enemy military camp.

In other cases, an existent contagion might provide cover for Left-Handed mages in need of human sacrifices. Or a conspiracy could dangle promises of a plague cure in order to recruit subjects for experiments in intentional Malevolence. Or the God-Machine might take advantage of the fear of a plague outbreak to encourage people to build Infrastructure whose purpose is wholly unrelated to the pestilence at hand. At the very least, an outbreak of the plague is likely to shape the efforts of altruistic organizations and to drive pragmatic



scientific minds in the direction of seeking real cures for this terrible disease.

Exposure to the Plague

Exposure to the plague can occur through a variety of vectors. Any character exposed to plague-carrying fleas or persons risks infection. If a character is exposed to the plague, their player rolls Stamina + Resolve to resist infection. Due to the virulent nature of the plague, human characters suffer a −2 penalty to this roll. The Storyteller may impose penalties or bonuses based on the duration and severity of exposure at their discretion. The player should only roll once per every 24 hours of non-supernatural plague exposure. This once-daily limitation explicitly does not include supernatural exposure.

Roll Results

Success: The character successfully resists infection for this round of exposure.

Exceptional Success: The characters successfully resists all attempts of infection for the next month.

Failure: The character contracts the bubonic plague. For three to five days, they exhibit no symptoms. Six hours after symptoms start, the player must roll Stamina + Resolve (again at the −2 penalty) or the character takes 2L damage. After four or five days of symptoms, the disease has run its course, and no more damage is taken. If the character survives, they are inoculated against the plague and will not contract it again for a number of years equal to their Stamina unless infected by supernatural means.

Dramatic Failure: The character contracts the septicemic plague. This manifests as headache, fever, and coma. If the victim survives for more than twelve hours, they develop a bloody cough and bleed from bodily orifices. Take 4L damage every six hours until dead.

In action scenes, characters with any symptomatic form of the plague are considered to have the grave version of the Sick Tilt (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 286 or **Mage**, p. 323).

Story Hooks

The scope of chronicles set in this era is shaped by the mysteries and intrigue surrounding The God Machine. A tier one chronicle will not involve the The God Machine as much as a tier three might. Balance the chronicles' scale against the capability and interest of the players; the presence of demons, deviants, and mages can quickly overwhelm any group when introduced along with a life-threatening plague, political machinations, and cultural differences prominent in this era.

The Pocket Plague

Summary: A plague panic strikes a neighborhood in Rome. Not everything adds up, however. First, no one has seen the plague doctors without their characteristic cloaks and masks. Second, the soldiers maintaining the quarantine report that bodies left out in the street overnight are not there when the sun rises — seemingly carried off in the middle of the night. Third, rumors persist of plague doctors escorting wagons of people into the neighborhood. Finally, local mystics and others attuned to occult currents sense a strong otherworldly influence over the neighborhood and its inhabitants.

The cause of this mystery lies in the crypt of one of the neighborhood's churches, where an object of supernatural power generates a highly localized and non-contagious form of bubonic plague. The White Lily's Harvesters are using the plague outbreak to identify and recruit possible Deviants. In this they have fierce competition from elements of the Inquisition that are using it to identify witches and other diabolic influences in Rome. Unnatural servants of the God-Machine collect the dead to construct an ossuary of bone as part of a substantial Infrastructure project. Awakened Reapers likewise pad their collections of souls by deploying their grisly praxes among the condemned Sleepers of the neighborhood.

Setup: The plague doctors could be angels, Reapers, or servants of the White Lily — or any combination of the three. The wagons of abductees could as easily be directed by servants of the God-Machine or rogue elements of the White Lily. Some of the victims could be Loyalty Touchstones, and mages and demons alike should be easy to lure into the Mysteries surrounding the neighborhood's strange plague.

Questions: What purpose will this macabre project achieve for the God-Machine? What is the object's origin, and how does this Mystery interact with Awakened magic? What should be done about the White Lily's involvement in a clear attempt to create, rather than merely collect, Remade? Can the relic be destroyed or disabled? If not, can it be moved to a remote area where it won't cause further harm, or is it immobile? Who or what are the plague doctors who never reveal their faces?

Gaze of the Heavens

Summary: Across Italy, innumerable human eyes are now raised to the firmament through the medium of the telescope, and they see such terrible things. The sky is writ with sinister signs, the traces of a mad god at work in the heavens. Those who spot the Infrastructure of the God-Machine often become stigmatics and find even darker revelations of gear and gristle in the earth and stone of the world around them.

While many astronomers initially see nothing of the occult detritus in orbit — including Galilei himself, who remains oblivious — angels like Kokabiel (see p. 201) scramble to clear away all traces of the great machine's work. Gleaming pinpricks in the sky staple new shrouds of reality against the dark void, and defiled angels fall to the bleak world below. All evidence of the God-Machine is swept away — but is the damage already done?

Setup: The characters in this story face an outbreak of stigmatics who have witnessed the heavenly secrets,

leading to a surge of heretical theories, madness, and the discovery of further Infrastructure. This is a tale of mind and society, and characters best suited to it are those with an investment into the clash between truth and faith. For those wanting to glean the secrets of the skies, it is also a race against time as the God-Machine's agents rush to hide the signs of Its presence.

Questions: Do Unchained seek to suppress this outbreak of revelation, fearing the damage that overly inquisitive stigmatics might inflict on their own secrecy? Do the Awakened attempt to gather all the brief glimpses of insight and revelation the stigmatics gleaned from the heavens, putting together a bigger picture of what the God-Machine had assembled before it was forced to hide away once more? Do the Remade see the many stigmatics created as fellow victims to be helped, or do they see these keen minds that have been broken by the divine engine as new threats?

The Cage of Milan

Summary: The God-Machine is turning Milan into an occult oubliette, its walls the symbolic boundary of a pocket dimension into which It will cast the threats to Its secrecy. Cults dig twisting tunnels that create occult matrices of earth and buried bones. Angels stir up unrest against the Habsburgs and anoint confluences of certain streets with spilled blood. Agents bring objects that represent the threats the God-Machine will unmake — a lens from Galilei's telescope, a length of thread from Barberini's robes, the skull of Vincenzo of Mantua, plague-infected flesh from a dozen cities.

If allowed to be completed, the oubliette will tear the fabric of time and spin away the threats, tranquilizing Italy with the removal of traumatic and destabilizing events. Sensing the effort of the divine engine, Minerva has arrived **(see p. 201)**. She starts causing havoc, hoping to force her god to finally take notice of the angel once again.

Setup: The characters are either based in Milan or have noticed the agents of the God-Machine focusing upon the city. This is a story of chaos and action, as the authorities struggle with unrest in the streets, Minerva's stigmatic cultists cause havoc, and the plague tears through the ranks of the conflicting factions. If the God-Machine is successful, Milan becomes the repository for a pocket dimension woven into its backstreets, deleted people and events safely bottled away — including Galilei's insights. It's all still bound by the great walls, though — if the characters sunder the fortifications, the stolen time will spill back again. They should face many dangerous angels guarding the perimeter of Milan if it comes to that.

Questions: Do demons attempt to foil the God-Machine's plans entirely, or let It go ahead and seal away some of the events that will otherwise cause suffering and chaos? Do the Awakened thieve away the focus objects that will let It retcon out Galilei's discovery, and replace it with an object representing something else they want redacted from history? What consequences may ripple out from such a brutal violation of causality? This occult matrix is a Mystery of Opacity 8, although individual pieces of its Infrastructure may have lower Opacity if Scrutinized separately.

Sources and Inspiration

Galilei's letter to Grand Duchess Christina of Tuscany offers interesting insight into his scientific approach and ideas, his pride, and the pursuit of noble patronage by philosophers and academics. Galilei comes out swinging at those he feels criticize or oppose him, but he also writes of the situation and his beliefs in a manner that would have been more accessible for layfolk such as the duchess.

"The Thirty Years War and the Galilei Affair," by David Marshall Miller, is an interesting paper that offers some insight into the clash between Galilei and the Church based on the Papacy's wider conflicts — particularly those with the Holy Roman Emperor and the Habsburgs. It challenges common beliefs that Galilei's fate was sealed due to the Church simply being regressive or opposed to any sort of progress, instead placing the situation into the context of Pope Urban VIII finding himself in a weak situation where he had to reaffirm his authority as defender of Catholicism — a need so strong that it overrode his former friendship with Galilei, especially when he felt insulted by the latter's *Dialogues*.

For a peek into Italian culture during this time period, *Tale of Tales* (2015) is a collection of fairy tales that touch upon myths and folklore against the lush backdrop of different city-states. To get a feel for the politics of the Holy Roman Empire, *Luther* (2005) offers a view of the power structures present within the Church. Lastly, there are two biopics of Galileo produced in 1968 and 1975, respectively.





Wei dabbed the sweat on his brow, took a relaxing breath, and returned to his position. Maintaining unused imperial caravans might generate great income for the village, but dealing with palace officials was always a headache. Still, guarding an empty cluster of wagons at night was easier than—

"Keep your eyes on the ground, soldier!" a foreign voice snarled behind him. Wei reflexively turned towards the speaker just before a large fist slammed him to the dirt.

"Eyes down! Mouth shut!" Wei tried to place the stranger's accent but couldn't. Ignoring the assailant, the guard glanced up. Whoever they were, they weren't from China. They wore strange black robes adorned with symbols he'd never seen before. "We're not here to hurt you."

"Who—" Wei started. Before he could utter another word, the guard was plunged into an unnatural darkness. Wei clutched his throat and gently knocked his ears. Why couldn't he hear anything? Or speak? Thankfully, the strange feeling faded quickly. As soon as his head cleared, Wei heard the familiar clashes and clanks of metal hitting metal surrounded Wei, spurring him into action. Someone was trying to break into the empty wagons! But why?

First, Wei placed his hand on his hip to draw his own sword — but found the scabbard was empty. With no time to figure out how his blade had been stolen, the guard scrambled toward the nearest wagon, but was blocked by a threatening black-clad figure. Wei slid to the ground, closed his eyes, and curled into a ball. Seconds later, when he felt no pain, the guard realized the bandit was not targeting *him*. Curious, Wei rolled over onto his side just as metallic thunder rang in his ears; one of the caravan's wagons crashed a mere arms' length from his body. The wagon was filled with small shiny objects, like bells or beads.

Before Wei could react, another bandit oozed from the shadows onto the fallen wagon and stabbed its side with a long spear. Wei stared at the bandit blankly as the bandits attacked its side. The caravan had been decommissioned from service months ago, but the local officials had demanded it remain guarded. Now, Wei was beginning to understand why. Feeling betrayed, the guard took a step back and let the bandit work; the figure stuck the spear into a crack, then hurled their body off the wagon. When the bandit landed on the spear's end, the weapon bowed, sending a ripple of force that instantly shattered the wagon's side, exposing thousands of taels of silver. The currency was more than Wei had ever seen, and more than he'd see again.

"Wait," Wei said aloud to no one in particular. "Why not steal a wagon full of silver? Is there something else inside?"

On instinct, Wei knelt in front of the silver coins and pushed them out of the wagon as best he could. When he was almost finished, one of the bandits shoved the guard aside and rifled around the interior. Seconds later, Wei heard a loud *thump!* followed by laughter.

"What is it?" Wei asked the bandit. "What could be more important than silver?"

The bandit clutched his find — a wrapped jar — leapt onto the wagon and pointed at it. "Life." Then, the shadow-clad stranger leapt over Wei and casually kicked him to the ground.

"But I'm the only guard! I'll be blamed for this!" Furious, Wei jumped to his feet. A volley of arrows flew just over the guard's head, followed by dozens of similarly clothed bandits fleeing into the dead of night. Soon, Wei was left alone with naught but a ruined wagon, and a fortune in silver.

Eyeing the treasure, Wei sighed and removed his armor. Then, he pocketed several bags of coins. He was a poor excuse for a guard, but maybe he could buy — or earn — his freedom. After taking one last look at the smashed caravans, the former guard weighed his options and set off to pick up the bandits' trail.

Rise of the Last Imperials
1644-1661 CE



"Thus, the Master is available to all people and doesn't reject anyone. He is ready to use all situations and doesn't waste anything. This is called embodying the light."

– Lao-Tzu, Tao Te Ching, Verse 27

The birth of the Ming Dynasty was a time of hope for the Han people. For the first time in nearly 100 years, they were in control of their own kingdom, instead of the Mongol tribes of Central Asia, which ruled China during the Yuan Dynasty. In 1368, the Han reestablished themselves as a cultural and diplomatic powerhouse. To this day, the distinctive blue-and-white designs of Ming vases are seen as priceless treasures.

Almost as soon as it was founded, the Ming Dynasty fundamentally changed the course of history. The Yongle Emperor, fourth son of the founder of the Ming dynasty, moved the capital of China to Beijing (then Beiping) and created the Forbidden City, the famed fortress and seat of power within the capital city. He also brutally eliminated his rivals and shifted the bureaucracy towards a meritocracy by implementing a rigorous examination process, curbing nepotism.

But, perhaps most importantly, he launched an age of exploration in Ming China. Between 1405 and 1433, China sent seven voyages into Southwest Asia, the Middle East, and East Africa, exchanging tribute and establishing diplomatic relations with dozens of nations. Records suggest the largest of the 317 ships dwarfed all other wooden ships, more than twice as large as any European ships constructed during the Age of Sail, 100 years later.

Unfortunately for the Chinese people and historians, the next emperor, the Zhengtong Emperor, was a chaos magnet. In 1449, he rode out to the northwestern borders to deal with a band of marauding Oirot Mongols. They destroyed his army and kidnapped him, intending to ransom him back to Beijing. Instead, his brother ascended the throne as the Jingtai Emperor, leaving the Oirots with a significantly less-valuable prize. They eventually let him go, and he made his way home, where he spent years under house arrest, until 1457, when the Jingtai Emperor's son died mysteriously. Zhengtong reclaimed his throne shortly thereafter, now calling himself the Tianshun Emperor. Almost as astounding as a two-time emperor, the emperor's vice minister of war purged the Royal Archives of most of the records of the Treasure Fleet, claiming they were "deceitful exaggerations of bizarre things far removed from the testimony of people's eyes and ears."

In 1572, a nine-year old became the Wanli Emperor. Astoundingly, his regent, Zhang Juzheng, proved significantly less corrupt than one might expect from a bureaucrat who was given the keys to the largest kingdom in the world. Not only that, but Zhang was one of the most competent political figures of his time, navigating the existing political structure to revitalize the Ming Empire. In just 10 years, the Ming had begun a renaissance, prospering economically and militarily. Among the advancements were the construction of 1,000 watchtowers along the Great Wall and repairs to the vital Shanhai Pass. With these advantages to the north, the Ming were able to defend against Mongols more effectively, greatly reducing the cost of national defense, in spite of the construction costs.

Unfortunately, at the end of those 10 years, Zhang died, leaving the 19-year-old emperor alone. Thankfully, Wanli had learned much from his deceased advisor and the Ming's economic and military prosperity continued. The Wanli Emperor diligently attended morning meetings, taking an active role in the governance of China, soundly defeating three separate military threats:

The Rise and Fall of the Ming Dynasty

1368: The Hongwu Emperor forces the Mongol tribes out of Baidu (now Beijing), back to Mongolia

1380: An assassination plot against the Hongwu Emperor fails. He executes the suspects and everyone remotely connected to them, some 30,000 people in total

1399: A squabble between the Jianwen Emperor and his uncles turns into a civil war

1401: The Jianwen Emperor disappears, and his uncle Zhu Di is crowned the Yongle Emperor

1405: The first of the Treasure Fleet expeditions sets sail

1449: The Zhengtong Emperor leads an army to confront marauding Oirot Mongols. They destroy his army and kidnap him. His brother takes the throne as the Jingtai Emperor

1457: A military coup reinstates the Zhengtong Emperor, now referred to as the Tianshun Emperor; his brother dies mysteriously

1552: St. Francis Xavier leads the first Jesuit mission to China, dying before reaching mainland

1554: The Portuguese are granted control of Macau

1556: 830,000 people die during the Shaanxi earthquake

1567: The Jiajing Emperor drinks a potion of immortality, stops outward signs of life, and is entombed

1573: China begins to trade with Spain

1576: China begins to trade with America

1583: Jesuits Matteo Ricci and Michele Ruggieri move to Zhaoqing at the request of the governor

1592: Japanese forces invade China's ally, the Joseon Empire (now Korea) and Admiral Yi Sunsin routes Japan's navy

1597: A Japanese spy destroys Admiral Yi's reputation, resulting in the admiral's torture

1598: Daimyo Toyotomi Hideyoshi dies of illness; Ming and Joseon forces sinks half of Japan's navy and Japan retreats

1616: Nurhaci declares himself Khan of the Jin Dynasty and invades northeast China

1621: The She-An rebellion begins in Sichuan

1622: Dutch warships attack Portuguese-occupied Macau and turn to piracy

1626: Nurhaci dies from cannon fire

1629: The She-An rebellion is finally quelled

1635: Li Zichen leads a rebellion in Shaanxi

1636: Nurhaci's son declares himself the Hongli Emperor of the Qing Dynasty

1641: Li Zichen attacks the Southern Shaolin Temple and scatters the monks

1644: Li Zichen captures Beijing and declares himself Emperor of the Shun Dynasty; The Chongzhen Emperor kills himself and most of the Imperial family; Ming survivors establish the Southern Ming Empire in Nanjing; Qing forces defeat Shun forces at the Battle of Shanhai Pass; Qing captures Beijing

1645: Qing capture Nanjing and kill the Longwu Emperor

the Mongols to the north; the Japanese, led by Toyotomi Hideyoshi to the east; and the Yang Yinglong rebellion to the southwest. Almost immediately after the wars, Wanli stopped attending morning meetings or doing much of anything aside from enjoying the excesses that wealth afforded him. While Wanli may have had the longest reign of the Ming Dynasty, the last 20 years of it squandered all of the progress he had built.

Although his eldest son had been alive to witness the glory days of Wanli's reign, he learned none of the lessons of



them. Instead, he was inaugurated as the Taichang Emperor and reigned for just one month before partying to death. Taichang's son reigned longer but had also learned bad lessons from Wanli's final years. Rising to the throne at 15, the Tianqi Emperor let his favorite eunuch advisor, Wei Zhongxian, and his nanny, Madam Ke, rule the country while he spent his days crafting wooden art. Wei has been immortalized as China's worst advisor of its 3,000-year history, installing secret police, spies, and completely failing to prevent the Dutch annexation of Taiwan and the Manchu invasion of Liao.

The Beginning of the End

The death of the ineffectual Tianqi Emperor was a mixed blessing for the Ming Empire. On one hand, it handed the throne over to his brother, the Chongzhen Emperor, who ousted Wei and Ke. On the other hand, it also led to the rise of Li Zicheng, a peasant leader. While the Chongzhen Emperor was busy righting the wrongs of his brother's advisories, Li was rallying an army in central China. Before long, rebellion had spread across the provinces. Li solidified his power by killing Ming officials and putting the wealth into the hands of the people. In 1644, Li occupied the Ming capital of Beijing and lay siege to the Forbidden City. When surrender talks broke down, the Chongzhen Emperor ordered his entire family to commit suicide and attacked those who refused with his sword. Princess Changping, left for dead by her father after he hacked off her arm, was the lone survivor of the massacre.

Once Li Zicheng held Beijing, he declared himself the Yongchang Emperor of the Shun Dynasty. Before he had a chance to sit on his new throne, he received word of the growing Qing army to the north and led his army to the Great Wall. Thanks to the Wanle Emperor, the wall was well prepared to defend against the Qing invaders.

Wu Sangui led the Ming forces in charge of defending Shanhai Pass, the eastern edge of the Great Wall. For the past two years, he had been fighting a losing battle against the Qing. While his army could hold the pass, the same could not be said for the border cities that lay outside the gates. One by one, they fell to the Qing. When word of the Chongzhen Emperor's death reached Wu, he realized that he was caught between the Qing and the Shun armies. For two weeks, both armies entreated the final northern Ming army, each trying to win Wu's support. After the two weeks, he had decided to surrender to Li's forces and called for Li's envoy.

Meanwhile, without Li to control his southern generals, they brutally suppressed Ming loyalists. One such commander, Zhang Xianzhong, committed genocide in Sichuan, killing millions of Han Chinese. With such men associated with Li, distrust and hatred of the new Shun Dynasty exploded across the Middle Kingdom. Before Li's envoy reached Wu's tent, word of the Shun's evil deeds reached Wu, changing the course of history; the Ming general abandoned his plans to throw in with Li and murdered the envoy, throwing the Shanhai Gate open to the Qing forces.

Banner Armies

In from the north flowed the Banner Armies, so named because of the banners used to organize them: yellow, red, white, and blue. Originally comprising only four banners, the Banner Army doubled in organizational units by sewing a white border on each of the banners (except the white banners, which bore a red border). Based on mission needs, casualties, and new recruits, any unit within one of the Banner Armies could be moved under another banner, giving the Banner Armies great flexibility. This tightly integrated newly recruited units into the army, spreading them throughout each of the banners, ensuring that the recruits were surrounded by their new allies, thus preventing desertion.

While known as the Banner Armies, the Eight Banners were more than just a military structure; the entire Manchu civilization fell under the purview of the banners. Individual soldiers were not assigned to banners. Instead, entire households were assigned to banners, ensuring that loyalty to one's banner was felt at a very personal level. Bannermen fought fiercely for their banner, as the banner, in a real sense, represented their families.

The army was originally composed of battle-hardened Jurchen tribes, which had harried the Joseon Empire of the Korean Peninsula for decades. Once united under the warlord Nurhaci, the Jurchen became nearly unstoppable. Nurhaci himself had survived repeated attempts to kill him, only to turn around and conquer his attackers, earning him the title of Khan by the Mongols. Then, he set his sights even higher, declaring himself emperor of the Jin Dynasty, a callback to the Jurchens who ruled China for over a century, starting in the fourth century.

Although Nurhaci eventually died to a Ming cannon, his dynasty lived on, with his son Hong Taiji taking the reins. Hong Taiji continued his father's work of harassing the Ming and Joseon Empires and winning more people to serve in the Banner Armies.

As the date of the Battle of Shanhai Pass grew closer, Hong Taiji adopted a new name for his people, the Manchu, and more importantly, a new name for his empire, the Qing Dynasty. While the Banner Armies were chiefly composed of Manchu at this time, Hong Taiji made sure to recruit Mongol soldiers and Han bureaucrats, reasoning that he would need Han officials in order to effectively rule China.

The fate of the Qing Dynasty fell into uncertainty when Hong Taiji died in 1643, less than a year before the fateful battle at the Great Wall. His brother Dorgon and cousin Jirgalang both had their eyes on the throne, and neither man would see the other ascend. In the end, they both backed down, in order for Hong Taiji's five-year-old son to take the throne instead. Dorgon pledged to serve the young Shunzhi Emperor as prince regent and led the Qing forces to Shanhai Pass.

Shanhai Pass

Once Wu Sangui's Ming forces joined with the Qing, Li Zicheng's army was outnumbered two to one. The Ming soldiers attached white cloths to their armor to make sure that they would not be confused for Shun, and took the field, holding back the Shun army. With the former bandits engaged, Dorgon led the famous Manchu cavalry onto the field in a wide charge, shattering the Shun flank and sending his enemies fleeing.

Li Zicheng's army fled, looting what they could on their way back to Beijing and burning what they could not. By the time they made it to Beijing, the people of the capital were done with the charismatic Li. He ordered his men to burn as much of the city as they could while he fled. Much of the city was destroyed, but the citizens of Beijing took to the streets. By morning, there were no living Shun soldiers in the capital. Li himself escaped to his home province of Shaanxi and was never seen again, although dozens of people claimed to have slain him.

Where We Are

"The flags of the Eight Banners darken the frosty sky;
Ten thousand horses gallop, reveling in the adverse wind.
Startled ranks of geese break high above;
Thunder filling the sky arises from carved bows' release."
— "Hunting Song" by Chen Zhilin, 17th century

Now in control of the capital city, the Qing are making substantial changes to China. Diehard Ming loyalists have fled to the southern quarter of China, establishing the Southern Ming Dynasty in Jiangning. It will not last. Nor will their fallback capital of Guangzhou. But, for long as the Southern Ming stands, Ming loyalists have at least one home they can seek out.

Confusing the issue, these years will see the rise and fall of six different claimants to the throne of China:

- The Shunzhi Emperor, the Qing child emperor who dies of smallpox in 1661
- The Hongguang Emperor, who is captured in the Battle of Jiangning in 1645, executed in 1646
- The Longwu Emperor, who is executed after the Battle of Fuzhou in 1646
- The Shaowu Emperor, who commits suicide during the Battle of Guangzhou in 1647
- The Genyi Emperor, who flees to Taiwan in 1651 and is believed dead
- The Yongli Emperor, who repeatedly flees until strangled by Wu Sangui in 1662

With the five-year-old Shunzhi Emperor on the Dragon Throne at Beijing, Dorgon and Jirgalang are not done vying for rank. Though both are prince regents and advisors to the emperor, Jirgalang is continuously losing power to his cousin, and will eventually be stripped of his titles. Despite the political backbiting, Jirgalang continues to serve as a military commander and will break the back of the Southern Ming Dynasty in 1649, brutally massacring many of the last Ming loyalists.

The six claimants to the throne know the precariousness of their positions. More than a few of them turn to unconventional help to ensure their survival. Hunters of all allegiances are called by imperial agents. Some hunters are cajoled into spying on their enemies under the pretext that their rivals are being influenced by two types of ghosts: the gui or yaoguai. Others are hired to defend against suspected attacks by the supernatural. Whether any of these threats are actually real is as hard to sort out for hunters as it is for the imperials to find real hunters whom they can trust. In the end, hunters see their country in chaos and everyone asking for help.

Meanwhile, the constant wars have created vast amounts of restless dead, from simple spirits like gui to more violent creatures, like the jiangshi. Some areas have become new battlegrounds, as hunters are forced to band together to put down undead threats. Some of these bands last only as long as the mission ahead of them. Others retain the bonds they forge in blood.

Despite the Shunzhi Emperor and his late father's attempts to create harmony between the various peoples of China, people still take notice of differences. Former soldiers of the short-lived Shun Dynasty find themselves hated everywhere in China. Their battles against the Qing and Ming have made them unpopular on both sides of the Yangtze, especially in the Jiangsu Province, where people still remember the massacres Li Zicheng's unattended generals committed.

Seeking any escape, many former Shun turn to newly sprung religions that they believe are new forms of ancestor worship. And so, the Undyings' cults fill with desperate people, the easiest converts to radicalize. With unfamiliar northern culture flooding into the heart of China, the cultists manage to blend in and flourish, their leaders exploiting Han confusion to hide in plain sight. Only those who grew up in a mixed religious environment have a chance to notice that the "ancestors" being revered are not what they seem. For this exact reason, cults are unknown in the western and northern provinces of China. Unfortunately for China, the coastal provinces of the south and east are by far the most populous. Each day, the secret influence of the mummies and Shuankhsen grows.

Even ignoring wars and the supernatural, early Qing China is far from peaceful. Though Ming loyalists have fled to the southeast, many rankle under Manchu rule. The Shunzhi Emperor decrees that men must style their hair in



the Manchu style, long in the back and shaved everywhere else. Fines and forced haircuts become commonplace. Even more galling, the Qing declare themselves owners of all of the land, charging farmers and former landowners rent, turning the holdings of many upside down.

This isn't to say that the Han and Manchu don't get along anywhere. Indeed, the Qing have been working to bridge the gap between Manchu and Han ever since Hong Taiji recruited 1,000 Han bureaucrats and personally married them to Manchu women in 1632, over a decade before the Qing seized control of the Middle Kingdom. In fact, in many ways, the Qing embraced the existing bureaucracy, though this did not necessarily ingratiate the literati to the common people.

With so many scrambling for power in the Middle Kingdom, there is a constant resettling of people. Some have even exploited this, slipping in unnoticed among the refugees, particularly the Deathless, the Soldiers of the Forbidden Sun, and organized crime. Refugee shanty towns become notorious among hunters as hotbeds of spies and are largely shunned by smaller cells, as the cultists and the Soldiers infiltrate each other.

With war, refugees, and displacement comes a whole host of other problems. Anyone not growing their own food is a few missed shipments from starvation. For those living in rural areas, this isn't a problem, but cities, especially ones besieged by refugees, are at serious risk of going hungry. Which is to say nothing of disease; where there are large numbers of people mixing, there's sickness. Healthy people might not fear influenza, but the stress of fleeing home and missing meals can easily turn a flu lethal. Those who encounter the flu might well consider themselves the lucky ones when compared to the people who run afoul of smallpox.

And then, there are the cities.

Locations

In the 17th century, China's cities sprawl. The capital city (north of the Yangtze River, at least) of Beijing is home to over one million people, making it the most populous city in the world. Beijing may be the largest, but it is only one of hundreds of large cities dotting the country, something that takes outsiders time to wrap their hands around.

Beijing

Beijing makes it clear to all who are the "haves" and who are the "have-nots." Those without means live outside the moat and the stone walls of the city. Those inside the 20-foot walls are further separated into the Outer and Inner Cities, which are not only walled from the outside, but walled from each other, ensuring that the sprawling city is well-defended from invaders. Thanks to the fires set by the fleeing Shun Dynasty, much of Beijing requires repair. Some areas, such as the Forbidden City, see more attention than, for instance, the Outer City, but scars from the fires are everywhere.

This makes the perpetually busy city even more frenetic, as laborers and architects inspect and work at repairing, replacing, or rebuilding as necessary. Security, especially at all of the gates, is high, and almost exclusively Manchu or Mongol in the Inner City, making it difficult for Han visitors to gain access to sensitive areas and virtually impossible for Europeans, who are not allowed in the city without an Imperial invitation.

In fact, most of the Inner City is Manchu or Mongol, with 130,000 bannermen and their families making their homes inside its walls. Each of the Eight Banners occupies a specific district of the Inner City. Those districts are further subdivided into Manchu, Mongol, and Han sections, with the Han sections of each banner typically towards the outer walls, the Manchu by the Imperial City walls, and the Mongols in between. By dividing the Inner City along banner and racial lines, outsiders are easily recognized, a fact not lost on visitors.

The Inner City is, however, the administrative hub of the Qing Empire, making visitors a regular sight. Thanks to Hong Taiji, Han bureaucrats with multiracial families are common in the Inner City. Indeed, the censor-in-chief, the highest ranking civil servant, is just one of many Han civil servants who frequent the Inner City.

Nestled within the Inner City is the Imperial City, home to royalty, officials, and high-ranking members of the Banner Army. Thanks to the large size of the emperor's clan, dozens of princes live in the Imperial City, maintaining the tradition of the emperor being the only fertile man allowed to live in the heart of Beijing, the Forbidden City, to ensure that any pregnancies within the Forbidden City are unquestionably the emperor's offspring. Furthering this idea, the imperial staff is made up entirely of women and eunuchs. And while it would be easy to assume that the Forbidden City is small since it is only home to one family, the truth is that it is composed of nearly 1,000 buildings, including over 90 palaces.

The Forbidden City is itself separated into the Front Court and the Back Palace, with numerous other walls and even an artificial river further dividing the city, making getting from one end of the Forbidden City to the other a much longer distance than the size of the city (72 hectares) would suggest. In fact, it takes a full hour for the emperor's palanquin to be carried from the residential palaces to the Front Court.

Beihai Park

One of the largest gardens of China, Beihai Park boasts a staggering 69-hectare size, roughly half of which is a sprawling lake. Dedicated over 600 years ago, the park is in a constant state of renewal, with new additions and installations being created every few decades. For example, a 40-meter-tall pagoda is under construction, in honor of the upcoming Dalai Lama's visit in 1651. The park itself

takes up almost the entire western half of the Imperial City, making access to it restricted, though not quite as restricted as Jingshan Park in the Forbidden City.

More than a few deals among the aristocracy and literati have been hatched in Beihai Park, as the beautiful and exclusive setting makes meetings private. Few turn down an offer after they've been granted a rare invitation to the gardens. Which is not to say that business is the only thing the park has to offer; there are several Buddhist temples in the park, allowing visitors to meditate and reflect on the serene setting.

Niujie Mosque

Home to Beijing's Muslim population, members of Niujie Mosque will come under scrutiny as other members of their faith proclaim themselves to be Ming loyalists. The Hui, as the Han and mixed-race Muslims of Beijing are called, have no interest in being massacred and have decided to swear fealty to the Qing Dynasty. This puts them at odds with Muslims outside the capital, who are initially skeptical of the Qing government, especially given the existence of the Southern Ming.

The mosque itself is in the Xuanwu District, located in the Outer City, at the westernmost gate between the Inner and Outer Cities. As a part of the Outer City, Niujie Mosque is primarily visited by members of the lower class, making it relatively removed from the eyes of the Manchus. Thanks to laws mandating that the Hui people marry Han Chinese (if they are not already Han), the Hui people are a heterogenous people that includes people of virtually every race in China, such as Uyghurs and Kazakhs from the western Chinese provinces. Hunters and their adversaries would do well to check in with the worshippers here, as they frequently have their eyes trained for things that other Beijing inhabitants might miss.

The Temple of Heaven

Located in the center of the Outer City, the Temple of Heaven was constructed for emperors to petition the Heavens on the behalf of the country. One of the few constants between the Ming and Qing dynasties, the bi-annual ceremony draws the emperor out of the Forbidden City to the Circular Mound Altar, an open amphitheater constructed to amplify and redirect sound to the sky. Along with the emperor asking the Heavens for a good harvest, a bull is sacrificed and burned.

During the rest of the year, the temple is a massive complex of religious buildings spread out over two square kilometers. While chiefly maintained by Taoists, the temple is specifically for the worship of the Heavens, a part of Chinese culture that goes far beyond religious boundaries. Thanks to the temple's location in the Outer City, it is one of the few places that has the attention of the emperor, but is accessible to commoners, at least on the days that the emperor isn't there.

Jiangning

Before the Yongle Emperor transformed Beiping, "Northern Peace," into Beijing, "Nothern Capital," Jiangning was the capital of China. Unlike its northern sister, whose walls were designed for both security and aesthetics, the Southern Capital's were constructed for defense, with beauty almost as an afterthought. The current residents are glad to be behind the thickest city walls in China after the death of the Chongzhen Emperor. It is inevitable that the Qing will ride south to assault Jiangning but, in the meantime, the city stands as a shining beacon of Ming loyalism, the first home of the Southern Ming Dynasty.

After the arrival of the Qing, the bustling city will transform nearly overnight, with large swaths of the city taken over as an encampment of the Eight Banners. Though the civilian population will be spared any atrocities, they're still subject to the same fealty requirements the Manchu imposed on the rest of China, the most obvious being the mandated queue haircut for the men of the city. It will become the home of the Viceroy of Liangjiang, the official in charge of Jiangning's province and two of its neighbors.

Yangshan Quarry

One of the largest limestone quarries in China, Yangshan Quarry is responsible for most of the stone and cement used in the construction of Jiangning. The quarry is the site of the unfinished memorial statue of the Hongwu Emperor and the notoriety of the laborers' village. The statue of Ming Dynasty's founder would have stood 75 meters tall, making it five times larger than the next largest stele. Unfortunately, no one has figured out how to move the 30,000-metric-ton structure out of the quarry yet.

Of more immediate concern, the laborers' village has been nicknamed "The Grave Mound" for as long as anyone can remember. Since the limestone is essential to the defense of the Southern Capital, workers used to face summary execution for failing to meet their quota. With the eyes of the Qing Dynasty turning to Jiangning, the Southern Ming has resurrected the policy, making the workforce desperate for any sort of relief.

Imperial Ming Palace

Constructed nearly 100 years before the Forbidden City, the Ming Palace has waited for the return of the Ming royal family for over 200 years. Thanks to the aristocracy of Jiangning maintaining a reserve court at the Ming Palace, when the Hongguang Emperor arrived in 1644, he was able to get to work almost immediately. Now, the palace is a little worse for wear, having lost several buildings to fires last century, and everyone knows it's just a matter of time until a Qing army arrives on the doorstep.

Until that happens in 1645, the palace is a bustling madhouse, paradoxically focused on putting on the façade



of calm, divine grace as well as desperately effecting repairs and preparing for the inevitable battle. Which is to say that this is an opportunity of a lifetime for anyone looking in the right place. With hundreds of workers swarming the palace and its grounds, it's almost trivial to slip into or out of the palace. Anyone who can sell the promise of hope to the Imperial Court stands to gain a great deal of money and influence.

Shortly before the arrival of the Qing, the Hongguang Emperor and his retinue flee to Guangzhou and the civilians left in the lurch loot the palace before following suit. After the Qing invade, the palace will become little more than an opulent barracks for their army to take up residence in. Not meant to house thousands of soldiers, the palace will fall apart, even before the Qing decide to dismantle it for building materials, which have become scarce after the laborers of Yangshan Quarry fled.

Tomb of the King of Boni

One of the few tombs built for foreign dignitaries in China, the Tomb of the King of Boni is the result of a friendship between the Yongle Emperor and the eponymous king over 100 years ago. After a fruitful series of diplomatic missions, the two became fast friends. Sadly, the king fell ill during one of his visits to the Southern Capital and died, leaving the emperor to follow his friend's wishes and construct a tomb in the forest outside of the city. Far off the beaten path, the tomb has become overgrown, the forest striving to reclaim the stone.

Lately, the area around the tomb has seen a decrease in wildlife, causing no small confusion among the local residents, as they're mostly Buddhist and Taoist vegetarians, so it's unlikely that one of them is hunting the animals. Some think one of the local Hui is responsible, but the Muslims seem just as confused as everyone else. Some younger residents are sure that there's a Qing scouting party in the woods, while the older generation thinks a yaoguai must be responsible; no one is sure which would be worse.

Guangzhou

Home to the Southern Ming Empire, Guangzhou is the last redoubt of the Ming. While the fall of the Southern Ming is all but assured, the city of Guangzhou proudly plays host to a wide variety of peoples. Foreigners are restricted to only a few locations within the city walls, but the Portuguese colony of Macau is not far off. Virtually anything goes there.

The city itself is a prominent port on the southern coast of China. As such, it has seen travelers from every seafaring people within a thousand miles, some of whom found a way to stay. As such, the temples and shrines in Guangzhou are a veritable who's who of Eastern religion. All sects of Buddhism are well represented in Guangzhou, from the Temple of the Six Banyans, originally constructed to hold Cambodian relics, to the Hoi Tong Monastery, which is so well-regarded that even after the Southern Ming falls, it will still flourish under Qing rule. Taoists also have a great many temples and shrines. While Christianity and Islam are not openly practiced, they were once welcomed in the city.

Homegrown legends, such as the Brothers of the Three Kingdoms, are also welcome here, with Guan Yu receiving special attention. While he might not command a full temple dedicated to him, it's hard to travel very far in the city without noticing a small carving or painting of the red-bearded giant.

Hoi Tong Monastery

Established in the South Han province of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (10th century CE), the Hoi Tong Monastery has stood for the better part of a millennium. The Sea-Banner Temple has served many dynasties and will continue to do so well into the foreseeable future. The sprawling monastery serves as a beacon to all who would explore the Buddha's teachings. As such, it is one of the few places in Guangzhou which admits foreigners. All those who strive for inner peace are welcome here.

Scattered throughout the grounds are the temple's famous pig sties, where monks practice the Buddha's tenet of serving life, instead of destroying it. Here, the pigs live a life of luxury, being well-fed and receiving funerary rites when they meet their natural ends. Which is not to say that all of the monks at the temple are pacifists; Guangzhou is the future city of the Ten Tigers of Canton, and the monastery is home to some of greatest practitioners of kung fu of the Qing Dynasty, particularly after the destruction of the Southern Shaolin Monastery.

While the hustle and bustle of the surrounding city can be deafening, the temple is surrounded by banyan trees, which do much to quiet the din. Many visitors to the temple are stunned by the silence of the place.

Pearl River

At 2,400 kilometers long, the Pearl River and its tributaries connect Guangzhou harbor with virtually all of southern China, as well as parts of Vietnam. While most people prefer solid ground under their feet, thousands of people have opted for a life on the water. Sometimes referred to as Tankas, or "boat people," the people of the Pearl River live a life where they literally go with the flow, living aboard junks of wildly varying sizes, from single-masted ships just large enough for a small fishing family to ones with crews of 100 people. While those who prefer living on land might not understand their aquatic cousins, they concede that without the residents of the Pearl River, life in Guangzhou would be much harder. Thanks to the Tankas, trade with Macau and areas upriver is easy and swift.

Of course, while the Tankas make up the majority of the traffic on the Pearl River, they're far from the only ones. More formal shipping vessels crowd the harbor of



Guangzhou, as well as the occasional trade mission from Vietnam. For anyone with the coin to pay for goods, the Pearl River is an incredible bazaar, especially when a group of boats are lashed together, creating a temporary, floating village. With boats constantly coming and going, virtually anything is obtainable, from gongshi scholar stones to rumors about monster sightings.

Abbey of the Five Immortals

The largest Taoist temple in Guangzhou, the abbey pays tribute to five of the god-like Immortals of the Taoist faith, with resident monks studying each of the Immortals' chosen craft: divination, kung fu, neidan (inner alchemy), herbal medicine, and music. Although they have much in common with their Buddhist neighbors in Hoi Tang, Taoists seek the Way, the perfection of skill, technique, and self. By dedicating themselves to the crafts, the Taoists become closer to the Immortals, striving for divine perfection.

Practical exercises and classes in all five of the crafts are held throughout each day. Although the monastery is open to all, the resident monks generally practice at a high level, making it difficult for beginners to join in. That said, it's hard to find a better place to study in Guangzhou. Anyone looking for training or an expert would do well to seek out the temple.

Local Contacts

Storyteller characters in Rise of the Imperials are a mixture of nobles, palace officials, trade professionals, and entertainers, alongside peasants, stonecutters, and monks.

Boat Shaman

Like most of the river dwellers, Chen Hui-Yi is superstitious, with good reason. When the slightest change in wind's smell can signal a favorable wind or a typhoon, you'd have to be a fool to not be interested in signs and portents. Unlike many of her neighbors, she has yet to be wrong about any of her predictions. Although she frequently insists that she's not a fortune teller, that has yet to stop anyone from asking the middle-aged woman what she thinks about the future.

Officially, her boat belongs to her father, but he has been deferring to Hui-Yi for guidance on business and direction for two decades at this point, making her the de facto matriarch of the family. Technically, she and her parents are fishermen, but they receive enough "gifts" from people who "casually" mention interest in the future that the family could probably hang their poles up at this point. Hui-Yi trusts her instincts, making her an unlikely ally for anyone with direct connections to the supernatural, but an excellent person to ask for anyone looking for something or someone out of the ordinary. **Occult (Taoism) 3, Ride 3, Streetwise 2**



Buddhist Pilgrim

Returning from a pilgrimage to the Four Sacred Mountains in north and central China, Hu Keung has returned to Guangzhou to find the mood completely changed. Like most of the residents of the city, he smells the danger in the air. Still, he stays in the city for now, spending most of his time in the Hoi Tong Monastery, not out of any sense of homesickness, but because he knows there will be a time when people of the city need to escape, and who better to show them the way than someone who's spent the last few years traveling the country by foot?

Partly as practice and partly out of endless wanderlust, Keung travels the city's boundaries, learning all the paths in and out of the region. Until the Qing come, and perhaps even afterwards, Keung is an eager guide for anyone interested in learning about the local mountains or who needs to search the nearby Baiyun mountain range. **Survival 3, Medicine 2, Expression 2**

Farmer

Thanks to the tropical climate of Jiangning, Fung Feng's job is never done. Even in the winter, it's still prime time to grow radishes. Fortunately, that also means his income is far more stable than farmers in the north and that he doesn't need to hoard food to make it through a harsh winter, which is just as well, since he's pretty sure that at least some food would spoil if he tried to stockpile enough to get his family through an off season.

In the meantime, he has a fresh crop to harvest every few weeks, as well as more to plant. He's glad for the work, especially since the more time he spends in the house, the more his mother reminds him that she does not yet have grandchildren. His father understands that Feng is unlikely to ever find the right woman to marry, especially since Feng's boyfriend would probably feel slighted by the nuptials.

Thanks to periodic trips to the city to sell radishes, Feng knows virtually all the other farmers in the area, as well as most of the restauranteurs. Although he mostly uses his connections to arrange nice meals for his family or boyfriend, there is a complicated network of favors at play. **Persuasion 2, Streetwise 2, Crafts (Farming)**

Merchant

Abdulmutallip (Mutallip to his friends) runs the finest halal market in Beijing, or at least according to him. Originally from Xinjiang province in the northwesternmost corner of China, Mutallip had a briefly successful caravan route from Xinjiang to Beijing before friction between Mongol tribes turned his home province into a war zone that was inhospitable to the Uyghur trader.

Although that conflict was settled years ago, Mutallip has found a new home in Beijing, establishing his connections throughout the Xuanwu District, as well as much of the rest of the western portion of the Outer City. Although he's not a smuggler per se, he's more than willing to bend the rules a little for a friend. **Streetwise (Beijing) 3, Persuasion 3, Politics 2**

Minister

Li Lei has had the year of his life. One day, he was just a "reserve" minister at the Jiangning court, a mere figurehead of a bureaucrat. The next, the Chongzhen Emperor was hanging from a tree in the Forbidden City, and Lei was one of the ministers responsible for determining which of the surviving Ming royalty should succeed and rule China, or at least the lands that the Qing and Shun didn't currently hold.

Since he helped install the Hongguang Emperor on the Southern Ming throne, Lei has the ear of the emperor, as well as actual day-to-day responsibilities for processing paperwork and turning edicts into laws. News of the battles to the north fuels his daily life with energy and terror. Now that Ming royalty and silver reside in the palace once more, long-needed repairs can finally be made, and Minister Li doesn't have a moment to spare. For anyone capable of getting him to believe they're capable of improving the defense of the city, Lei stands with ears ready and palms full of silver. Those who can't convince him have wasted the time of a man who has none to spare and an armed guard at his beck and call. **Politics (Jiangning) 3, Politics (China) 2, Persuasion 2**

Nanny/Spymaster

"Old" Lady Wang Jin is only 25 but is "Auntie" to most of the Han children in the White Banner camp of the Inner City. After her husband died in battle, she dedicated most of her time to looking after children, regardless of who they belonged to. At first it was a coping mechanism, but now she wields more power among the next generation of White Banner Han than their parents do. She didn't set out to become a spymaster, but children are natural gossips, and now she's keenly aware of virtually everything that happens in the west half of the Inner City. At first, the other parents of the camp were a little annoyed at her being seemingly everywhere, but soon came to see it as a boon after her teas brought an outbreak of influenza to heel. **Occult (Taoism) 3, Socialize 3, Crafts 2**

Noble

Duke of the Second Class is the lowest Manchu title that is awarded any stipends by the royal family, and one with which Nikan would be satisfied. Unfortunately for him, he's not the duke; his father is. After a disastrous showing at the civil-servant examinations, he's had to fend for himself. Although he's been spotted sleeping in an alleyway more than once, Nikan has managed to scrape by with an increasingly suspicious series of art sales. While many have their theories as to how he acquires the paintings, no one is willing to ask questions of the budding art dealer, certainly not when the more elite members of the royal family are willing to pay significantly more than Nikan is charging. **Academics (Painting) 3, Crafts (Forgery) 2, Larceny 2**

Stonecutter

Tong Jian is a third-generation quarry worker and aspiring musician. Although his days are dedicated to measuring, cutting, and moving giant slabs of limestone, he dedicates his meager earnings to continuously improving his homemade erhu, a two-stringed musical instrument. As a child, he had favored percussion instruments, banging sticks on virtually anything that could make a sound. When a python slithered the wrong way under a moving cart, he took the dead snake as a sign that he had a different path to pursue and used its skin to construct his erhu.

Jian doesn't get out much, but that suits him just fine. Interesting people tend to go to him, anyways, especially now that he's gotten passable with his instrument. Weary miners who can join in do so, and those too tired to play along just enjoy the music. Though the miner's village has an ominous name and might be mildly haunted, the after-shift parties tend to be relaxing affairs with occasional strangers joining in and sharing stories. Thanks to being at the center of the parties, surrounded by exhausted people, Jian hears things from all over. He has no idea which rumors are true, but he knows a good story when he hears one. **Craft (Stoneworking) 3, Expression (Erhu) 2, Politics 1**

Taoist Monk

A longtime resident of the Abbey of the Five Immortals, Liang Jun follows the path of Iron-Crutch Li, the Immortal famed for his medical skill and care for the beggars. She set out on Li's path by taking care of Guangzhou's homeless population with the goal of mastering medicine and transcending death herself. Over the years, she has stopped caring as much whether she personally transcends death and becomes an immortal, instead striving for perfection as an intermediate step to providing the best care she can for those less fortunate.

She runs a small apothecary shop within the abbey, which is surprisingly well stocked, mostly thanks to her being owed favors from a wide selection of people who visit the bustling port city. Once the Qing take the city, she will stay behind to look after those injured in the battle and those too ill to flee to safer lands. Thanks to her prowess and generosity, she's a frequent stop for visiting hunters, especially Ascending Ones who are more than a little curious about her potions. **Medicine 3, Crafts (Potions) 2, Academics 2**

What's Yet to Come

In the coming years, the Qing will complete their conquest of China, toppling the Southern Ming Dynasty, the last Han rulers the Middle Kingdom will see for the next 300 years. From 1661 to 1669, China will technically be under the rule of the Kangxi Emperor. In reality, the child Kangxi Emperor will be a puppet of his regents, particularly Oboi, a ruthless general who was instrumental in purging the Qing court of those who believed in Dorgon's ideas about integrating the different races of China. For nine years, the Oboi regency will continue Jirgalang's quest to discard customs and rule the Han people the Manchu way.

Once the Kangxi Emperor takes full control of the government, his reign will be the longest of any Chinese emperor and will be marked by an increasing amount of collaboration between Han and Manchu. Though trust between the Qing ruler and his Han subjects is essential to effectively ruling the country, it is also rife with intrigue. Wu Sangui will lead a revolt, cementing his place in history as the man who betrayed both the Ming and Qing Dynasties.

This political struggle will be nothing new to hunters of the era, especially not the Soldiers of the Forbidden Sun. Nevertheless, Wu Sangui's revolt will happen years before anyone thought it would, leading the Soldiers to speculate the handiwork of yet another Undying, bringing the suspected total of mummies up to at least three. What the purpose of such an insurrection could be is anyone's guess.

Meanwhile, over 100,000 Ming loyalists will flee to Taiwan and force the Dutch to surrender the island, seizing all of the Dutch East India Trading Company's goods. While the Ming enclave expands and grows, the rest of the East India Trading Company won't take the loss of income well. Coupled with the Qing's Canton Policy, which restricts trade to Guangzhou (also known as Canton), westerners will grow increasingly dissatisfied with their lot.

This resentment will explode across China once the Portuguese discover that Indian opium is far more potent than Chinese opium, especially when combined with tobacco. Despite imperial decrees banning the substance, European trading companies will be all-too willing to supply the Chinese people. Once addiction takes hold of China, millions of people will become slaves to the East India Company's plot, leading to rampant smuggling, trade wars, and, eventually, the infamous Opium Wars of the 19th century.

No strangers to exploiting human weakness, vampires will follow the opium to mainland China, creating a new front in the hunters' battles for the safety of their country. While the Soldiers will still need most of their forces to defend against the Undying, descendants of the He Family and the Vanguard will have formed their own compact, known as the People Under Heaven. The People will be more than eager to stand up against the Kindred.



Hunters: Determined and Restless

Chinese hunters possess a rich history of tracking, studying, and capturing monsters. Knowledge of these creatures is woven into myth and folklore; everyone in 17th-century China knows stories of yaoguai (monsters) and has at least one relative who swears they saw one — regardless if they're a hunter or not. Whether or not anyone *believes* their family member is another matter entirely, but most people know that *something* lurks just beyond their reach.

Despite this social anxiety, few people believe that yaoguai are widespread enough to be a real problem. China's population swells with each passing year, and its size, growth, and imperial politics are taking its toll on the country's many citizens. Thus, monster hunting isn't considered a real career choice by most, but that doesn't stop the grief-stricken, the restless, and the curious from leaving the safety of their homes and venturing out into the night, often without knowing why.

Creating a Qing-Era Hunter

Consider where your character is from. While the war over the fate of Beijing has been settled, the quarter of the country that lies south of the Yangtze River is mostly in the hands of the Southern Ming loyalists. While current and former members of the Qing Banner Armies can be found throughout China, they're unlikely to be found in the Yunnan Province until 1659, especially if they're of Mongol or Manchu descent.

Also, for male characters, consider whether or not your hair has been cut into a Manchu queue, as ordered. The hairstyle has been mandated by the Shunzhi Emperor, visibly marking people subject to Qing rule. Characters with queues will face hardships in the quarter of China under Southern Ming control, while characters without them in Qing territory face punishment by authorities. Additionally, people from different ethnic groups have varied responses to the queue. Uyghur men of this time typically shave their entire heads. Hui men typically maintain queues but will often shave themselves bald for special occasions and pilgrimages. For travelers moving between spaces, going bald and keeping an artificial queue handy is not unheard of.

What ethnic group or groups does your character belong to?

Europeans: Officially restricted to Guangzhou, few Europeans can be found in China. Those present are largely merchants and Jesuits from Portugal, Holland, and Spain.

Han: Making up the majority of China, the Han people can be found virtually anywhere in China, from the peasantry to the top ranks of the Qing bureaucracy to the entirety of the Southern Ming Court. As the majority ethnic group of China, many Han simply refer to themselves as Chinese. Ancestor and folk-hero worship are common.

Hui: A unique blend of Han and Persian culture, the Hui are almost exclusively Muslim. Thanks to unique marriage and social laws, Hui can be found anywhere in the country, from a variety of other ethnic backgrounds. Hui typically live near Han settlements, most famously in the Xuanwu District of Beijing.

Kazakhs: One of the smallest ethnic minorities of China, the Kazakhs are a Turkic people who are at home in the steppes of northwestern China. They have been neighbors to the Mongols and Uyghurs for hundreds of years. Although the Kazakhs also have a heritage as cavalry, they have largely kept to themselves during these strange times.

Manchu: Originally nomads from the northeast, the Manchu people find themselves trying to reconcile their former lives as hunters and warriors with ruling the largest country on Earth. The Manchu can be found wherever the Qing have a presence.

Mongols: Tracing their lineage to Genghis Khan, the Mongols have been enjoying their part of the spoils of conquest of the Middle Kingdom, but are not used to massive cities like Beijing, finding rubbing elbows with a million neighbors uncomfortable.

Tankas: The boat people of the Pearl River can be found in the waterways of southern China and Vietnam. Although their culture is difficult for landlubbers to wrap their minds around, that doesn't stop the Tankas (and their trade routes) from being an essential part of China

Uyghur: A cultural blend of Turkish and Han culture, the Uyghur occupy a unique place in Chinese society. Although they have commonalities with the Kazakhs, the Uyghur are most at home in hot, dry climates of the western provinces. Also, unlike most of China's ethnic minorities, they are the majority population in their home province, Xinjiang.

Think of your player-character's faith and beliefs. While ancestor and folk-hero worship are widespread, they're far from the only spiritual influences on the Chinese people. Temples, shrines, and monasteries dedicated to all sorts of

FOR THE PLAYER: YOUR HUNTER'S CULTURE

Even in a setting as specific as 1640s China, the wealth of cultural influences, faiths, and ethnicities could (and does) fill several books. The suggestions in this section are not meant to encompass all possible people in China at this time, nor are they meant to provide a complete picture of the cultures mentioned. Players are encouraged to use these suggestions as jumping-off points to learn more about their characters' cultures to better represent them.

religions are spread throughout China. Most Chinese people belong to more than one category.

Ancestral Worship: Praying to and giving offerings to ancestors is so common in China that most people don't even think of it as a religion. Most people don't expect overt help from their ancestors, instead requesting help with better fortune.

Catholicism: Largely unknown outside of Jesuit-educated Han scholars and a handful of Mongols, Qing-era Catholics have a unique merging of cultures, often viewing folk heroes as patron saints.

Confucianism: The oldest religion in China, the teachings of the philosopher Confucius largely focus on filial piety, that is, a natural order to the flow of power within society. Thanks to the sudden unpopularity of Taoism, Confucianism is on the rise.

Folk-Hero Worship: Many revere powerful figures from folklore and history, such as Guan Yu and Hua Mulan, as the epitomes of various qualities and pray to the heroes to intercede on their behalf.

Han Buddhism: Primarily drawing upon the Mahayana school of Buddhism, this is the most popular form of Buddhism in China. Adherents see the Buddha's struggle for enlightenment as a road map on which they can base their own path.

Heaven Worship: Common across China in a variety of forms, this family of religions believes in the existence of one or more heavenly realms, from which much of the power on Earth derives, especially the emperor's.

Islam: Nearly ubiquitous among the Hui and Uyghur people, Islam teaches its adherents of a series of divine prophets, including Mohammed and Jesus. These prophets spoke of one true god and Five Pillars of faith that represent the virtues of the religion.

Manchu Shamanism: The likely origin of the word "shaman," the tribes of the Manchu often revere protective spirits and a heavenly realm. Tribal shamans perform rituals invoking both human-like and animal spirits. The influx of Manchu culture through the Qing has spread this religion.

Mongolian Shamanism: With a large pantheon of spirits to invoke, worshippers are supported by shamans, who belong to either the "white" or "black" orders and are forbidden to interact with spirits from the opposite group. Ancestor worship and invocation of clan leaders (including Genghis Khan) are common to both orders.

Taoism: One of the oldest religions of China, the teachings of Lao Tzu urge people to strive towards perfection of skills. Folk heroes are often revered as exemplars. Taoism has recently lost much favor, as people blame the Taoist literati for the fall of the Ming Dynasty.

Tibetan Buddhism: Mainly based in the Vajrayana teachings of Buddhism, this tantric school of Buddhism sees the perfection of the world and oneself as mirrors of each other. Tibetan Buddhism is now the official form of Buddhism in Qing lands.

FOR THE STORYTELLER: BUILDING ERA-APPROPRIATE MONSTERS

Monters in Hunter employ the use of Dread Powers and are further characterized by their physical descriptions and surroundings. Ghosts will employ the Numina rules found beginning on p. 136 of the Chronicles of Darkness core rulebook. While there's no mechanical distinction between a Chinese gui and a woman in white, there are many cultural differences that mark where the ghost appears or who they were in life. These distinctions occur due to a variety of factors that include deeply held religious or philosophical beliefs about death entwined with cultural mores. When introducing an era-appropriate monster, choose Dread Powers and Numina that fit the theme. Then, let the player-characters draw from their beliefs and experiences; their reactions will guide the monster's weight and cultural meaning in your chronicle.

The Enemy

Hunters during this era have their work cut out for them. The native monsters of China seem unaffected by the recent wars, and cultists clear a safe path to welcome the mummies they serve. In this chaotic time, hunters must not only balance their role in life against the hunt for the supernatural, they must also prioritize which monsters to hunt. Nevertheless, the common quarries of hunters mostly fit into three broad groups: gui, jiangshi, and yaoguai.

Gui make up a broad category of Chinese ghosts, from minor spirits who have lost their way to self-styled kings of ghosts. Ghost who are merely hungry (egui) are not generally viewed as dangerous in China. Indeed, the annual Ghost Festival held in the middle of the seventh month of the lunar calendar is dedicated to helping them. That said, egui can become problems in great numbers, especially among people who cannot afford to provide offerings to placate them. Thanks to the surge in recent burials, wangliang (ghosts who feed on the brains of the interred) can be found in abundance.

Jiangshi are formed from corpses with wildly imbalanced qi, causing them to seek out the lifeforce of the living to feast upon. Although their spiritual nature ensures that they will eventually die, jiangshi can remain dangerous for decades before their qi is balanced and they stop moving.

Yaoguai, technically a subcategory of gui, are wildly dangerous spirits. Although some yaoguai are peaceful or even beneficent, every single one of them is more than capable of deadly acts. Hulijing, fox spirits, are a particularly well-known example. Their shapeshifting and magical abilities make them dangerous, regardless of their individual disposition.



Mummies and **Shuankhsen** are largely unknown in China, although highly organized groups of hunters are becoming aware that there's *something* ancient manipulating current events. These groups may even be aware that there is at least one of each currently active, although they're unlikely to know the difference between the two, let alone be able to physically stop the Undying. The mortal cultists are another matter entirely, especially with the Soldiers of the Forbidden Sun specifically hunting them.

Hunters know that **hedge wizards** of all types call China home. From Taoist alchemists to elders calling on ancestors to the recent influx of Manchu and Mongol shamans, there's no end to those who practice arcane skills. Given that the faiths of China are deeply interwoven into the people's cultures, hunters are grateful that mages with reality-altering powers are as rare here as they are everywhere else — or so they think. Despite their assumptions, there's always someone who's trying to use their skills for their own benefit or who has gotten in over their head.

Western trade brings western monsters to Chinese outposts, villages, and cities. Though the total number of vampires, werewolves, and the like is negligible, it's an indisputable fact that the Dutch in Taiwan and the Portuguese in Macau have supernatural creatures mixed in with foreign traders, diplomats, sailors, and scholars.. Whether these creatures can be contained to the islands is a question that Chinese hunters will have to answer.

Centuries of trade between other Asian nations, particularly Joseon (Korea), Japan, and the Ryukyu Kingdom, have also introduced beings such as the oni and tengu. While not present in any great numbers in China, Qing-era hunters are certainly more likely to encounter them than western cryptids.

Hunter Society

During the start of the Qing Dynasty, the Soldiers of the Forbidden Sun are the only known compact, as the recent spate of wars have scattered or outright killed what few compacts there were before. But hunters are nothing if not survivors. Although most hunters work alone, cells do exist and new compacts are beginning to form. Two notable cells of the era are beginning the slow transition to form tier-two compacts. These groups may be treated as tier-one cells that can, with time, resources, personnel, and luck, emerge as a more formidable fixture.

He Family

Forty years ago, He Yue-Ying's sister Yue-You was killed by a hulijing, a fox spirit. Since then, she's been on a hunt for both vengeance and to save others from the same fate. Now, Yue-Ying's surrounded by two generations of her family, who have been born into the Vigil. Specializing in dealing with shapeshifters, the Hes sail their boat across the Pearl River. The family of boat people are unfazed by the current state of politics, although the men did balk at having to shave their heads and weave their own wigs in order to blend in on both sides of the Qing versus Southern Ming conflict.

Now, the He family members are so numerous, they cannot fit on a single boat, especially given He Yue-Ying's predilection for adopting survivors of shapeshifter attacks. They've recently acquired a second junk to expand their operations.. Though the He family is not a single cell of hunters, they're not much of a compact either. Still, the family's ability to handle two crises at once, thanks to the two ships they own, is a great boon.

Other hunters believe that by the time the Southern Ming Dynasty finally falls, the Hes will have over a dozen boats. Thanks to the rapid flow of people along rivers and information along the Tanka people, they predict the Hes will be able to summon an army within a few days.

The Vanguard

After the fall of Beijing, 12 Mongol riders were dispatched to round up a group of fleeing Shun soldiers. To their surprise, when they caught up with the Shun, they were in fierce battle with Buddhist monks. Confused, they surrounded the fray and resolved to interrogate the survivors. When the monks seemed to shrug off direct blows with spears, the Mongols began questioning their decision. After two of the monks began eating one of the fallen Shun soldiers, there was no longer any question, and the Mongols rode in to defend their former foes.

The Vanguard may have been formed from a few soldiers on opposite sides of battle lines, but their travels have cemented them as a cohesive unit. Their pursuit of the truth of the missing 10 monks of the Fenghuangshan Temple will earn them significant notoriety, with soldiers from all armies willing to join, especially former Shun soldiers, desperate for a chance at redemption.

The People Under Heaven

Player-characters who begin their Vigils within either proto-compact will have the fortune of getting to shape the futures of these two organizations. Additionally, they'll get to shape how the local groups learn of each other, tentatively work together, and eventually join forces to become the People Under Heaven, a new compact that deals with threats the Soldiers of the Forbidden Sun let slip.

The time it takes for this (or any) new compact to form could be as short as several weeks or as long as a few years. Much of what happens within Chinese hunter society depends on how local hunters deal with the incursion of mummies and their cultists. Should the player-characters focus on other threats, they'll have less influence on what happens to the supernatural community once mummies settle in.

Other Allies

Hunters are far from the only people roaming China these days. For a hunter on the road, a traveling community

could be a welcome sight, a group to infiltrate for information, or people in need of guarding.

The **Tax Collectors** are a small group, composed of Subdistrict Tax Collector Li and his bodyguards. Li's extensive knowledge of and contacts within the Tangshan Subdistrict has proven invaluable in ensuring that the town of Tangshan and its nearby quarries remain profitable to the emperor. However, recent strangeness at the Yangshan Quarry has disrupted the last collection.

The **Pilgrims** are traveling to the Five Great Mountains, in the creation order of elements: Mt. Tai in Shandong (Wood), Mt. Heng in Hunan (Fire), Mt. Song in Henan (Earth), Mt. Hua in Shaanxi (Metal), and Mt. Heng in Shanxi (Water). Made up of a mixed group of Taoists and Confucians, these pilgrims share companionship and supplies as they make their way to the Five Great Mountains. Although they don't foresee any major problems, they're well aware that they're traveling a great distance, along dangerous terrain.



Tier 1: Cells

Most hunters in China are on their own. Some take up the Vigil because they're chasing shadows because of loss and tragedy. Others do so out of habit. Someone in their village has always defended its borders from an oni who hides in the mountains. Someone must always fight back the darkness.

Many hunters in China consider themselves lucky. They've heard rumors of other hunters to the west and east, and do not understand why the supernatural needs to be kept a secret. To them, the supernatural will always be real — even when it truly isn't — because myths and legends are embedded in their culture alongside stories of great Qing generals and fallen emperors. Thanks to China's size, hunters may even form cells from existing family members, military units, or allied villages and hunt openly without fear of backlash.

Chinese cells often hunt in smaller areas where they're the most effective. It is unlikely that a cell's members would abandon their homes and responsibilities to travel hundreds of miles for a hunt, investigation, or meeting with another cell. Often, Chinese hunters must deal with logistics to ensure they possess the means to travel and the resources to hunt. When combined with the threat of political backlash due to the new imperial regime, hunters will concentrate on what they can do instead of what they *might* be able to do. Thus, if a mummy's cultists make an appearance in Beijing, a cell in a southern village won't get involved unless they start recruiting or kidnapping their neighbors and loved ones.

Tier 2: Compacts

In this era, there are two proto-compacts and one compact that can be treated as tier-two groups. They patrol a larger area and can coordinate several cells of hunters when needed.



Led by their matriarch, Yue-Ying, three generations of the **He family** (plus a few adoptees) live and work on their junk on the Yellow River. For over 40 years, the Hes have been following rumors of shapeshifting gui and yaoguai, especially fox spirits, like the hulijing that killed Yue-Ying's sister. What they lack in martial training, the Tanka hunters make up for with patience and a deep understanding of guile.

Recently formed, the **Vanguard** patrols the northeastern provinces, seeking the missing monks of the Fenghuangshan Temple. Formed of former soldiers from three opposed armies, they are well-trained, although understandably wary of each other. The uneasy alliance of the Ming, Qing, and Shun survivors of the Battle of Shanhai has proven itself more than capable of dealing with the first four monks (who are rumored to be jiangshi).

The **Soldiers of the Forbidden Sun** was formed hundreds of years ago, making them the only compact to have records detailed enough to know of the Deathless threat, as well as the resources to have a chance at stopping the mummies. They see themselves as defenders of China, unburdened by loyalty to any specific emperor. Of the three existing groups, the Soldiers will be most effective to deal with foreign antagonists.

Tier 3: Conspiracies

Tier three hunters must choose between dealing with the threat of mummies or using the resources at their disposal to target a larger variety of monsters per the demands of their chosen conspiracy. Unlike tiers one and two, tier three hunters benefit from the wealth of their conspiracy and have greater access to funds that can secure multiple forms of travel. This gives tier three hunters an edge to track supernatural creatures who are on the move.

The **Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild**, this era's incarnation of The Cheiron Group, has been stymied by longstanding resistance to western trade, but has finally secured a base of operations in Macau. Able to operate almost openly in the Portuguese port, Acheron wasted no time in expanding their recruiting operations to include the boat people of the Pearl River. While most Tanka people remain independent operators, Acheron has enough captains on their payroll to reach into the heart of China.

Although the European members of Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild are not permitted outside of Guangzhou and Macau, they have rapidly been making Southern Ming allies, giving them access to information throughout much of southern China. Soon, the guild will have enough Han members to mount an expedition to capture and study some of the supernatural creatures and cryptids indigenous to China.

Thanks to the fragmented nature of life on the Silk Road, Acheron hunters face extreme difficulties recruiting traders on the route. That the Europeans had great difficulty recognizing the disparate cultures of the Silk Road earned them no favors, either. After a series of cross-cultural communication blunders, the guild's members have resigned themselves to not having a presence in the central and northern provinces. Some hunters believe travelling into these areas is worth the risk just to retrieve new monsters and please the guild.

The **Aegis Kai Doru** has been present in China ever since the Yongle Emperor sent his Treasure Fleet out to explore the world and gather tribute in the early 15th century. Though many records of the Treasure Fleet were destroyed, the Aegis believes that an Undying made its way to China aboard one of the vessels. Thanks to their initiates from southern and southeast Asia, the Aegis was able to send in a sizeable presence, though many would be lost during the search for more information on the suspected mummy. Taking these casualties as confirmation of the existence of a mummy, the Aegis stepped up its efforts, only to be stymied by the meddling of the Yongle Emperor's descendants, culminating in the destruction of numerous artifacts and records at the hands of his great-grandson.

The loss of the artifacts and weakened relations between were a massive setback for the Aegis, but they wouldn't be deterred. Instead, they focused on new plans, using the Pearl River to ferry initiates in from Vietnam, establishing a series of outposts from Nanning to Guangzhou. After the fall of Beijing, they found themselves in a unique position to help the Southern Ming Dynasty, in exchange for access to any information that might help them find their ancient quarry.

Although foiling the mummy and recovering the artifacts are major goals for the Aegis, its outposts in Southern China haven't stood idly by. Regular Aegis patrols have kept the local monster population down, although the Aegis' skepticism of the viability of the Southern Ming Dynasty has kept it from expanding further.

The **Ascending Ones** found more success in China than any of the other conspiracies, largely thanks to Taoist mystics being just as curious as they were about foreign medicinal practices. Similarly, the alchemists found little resistance to the idea of using qi to transmute poisons into potions. Indeed, the Middle Eastern members learned just as much as their Chinese counterparts. Likewise, few of the new members had any problems accepting the existence of supernatural threats.

The only real problem the Ascending Ones encountered was convincing their newest members to go out and fight the monsters. While it's easy for Europeans to think of China as a single culture, getting Southern Ming people to defend the Qing is an entirely different story. Middle Eastern hunters are having better luck with local recruits due to their prior experiences with mummies and their cultists. Many alchemists are teaching new members how to recognize cultists to prevent the enemy from recruiting new, local citizens.

The **Lucifuge** has had a devil of a time tracking down Lucifer's Chinese children. The secretive nature of their mission has meant that the Silk Road's relay traders could not be trusted to pass any names along the trade route. Limited

European access to Chinese ports has similarly stymied the group's genealogists searching for the Children of the Seventh Generation. Additionally, there are some cultural barriers the Lucifuge must overcome to find their wayward kin. What a Lucifuge hunter might recognize as demonic, a Chinese hunter might think is an oni or even guai.

Despite these challenges, the Lucifuge has been able to identify two possible relatives: a pirate captain operating near Formosa and a caravanner working the Beijing-Suzhou route. The nomadic lives of these known descendants have a complicated genealogical history, which is why the Lady in Milan has ordered an investigation.

The **Malleus Maleficarum** has a sizeable, and poorly organized, presence in China. Prior to the founding of the Society of Dovesin Macau, the conspiracy's only agents in China were Han Chinese who had been educated in Jesuit missions in Goa, India. Unfortunately for the order, those agents had little to no contact with the rest of their peers for nearly 100 years. As a result, Portuguese Jesuit hunters arrived in China to find a wholly independent arm of the Malleus acting in total secrecy.

The European witch hunters, who were used to following the Church's orders without question, attempted to whip their Chinese peers in line; the mostly Han sect had no interest in ceding any power to their European brethren, especially not after seeing most of China fall into the hands of Manchu and Mongol "barbarians." Now, the two orders of the Malleus Maleficarum face a difficult road ahead, as they attempt to find ways to work together, or at least steer clear of one another.

Both groups have conflicting, if not varied goals, however that can eclipse the needs of the hunt if they're not careful. Some members of the Society of Doves worry the foreigners are too trusting of the Church's edicts. Despite this, many of the conspiracy's Chinese hunters still believe they are part of the Malleus Maleficarum, and only consider themselves to be part of the Society of Doves for pragmatic purposes. European conspiracy members, on the other hand, are far from Rome; some struggle with their faith, while others regard their duties as a test.

MUMMIES: SHIFTING SANDS AND DYNASTIES

No creature in the world understands the monumental undertaking of the establishment of dynasties like a mummy. No other people possesses the knowledge or ancient memory of the endless laws, codes, and administrative and bureaucratic complexity that goes into forging an empire that the descendants of Irem hold in their dusty minds. In that spirit, the Deathless find much to respect in the highly organized Chinese culture. Trade had flourished in the past between the peoples of the far east and the Nameless Empire. The exotic goods that one can procure: the finest silks, exotic spices and finely crafted, elaborate artistry adorned the halls and courtiers of many of the Deathless in life.

After the crumbling of the empire, the successor states who claimed the lands of Irem made far more foolish trades. Great relics of ancient kings and priests were frittered away for mere trinkets, precious stones and coin. Priceless artifacts were given value by lesser beings who could not even begin to fathom with what they bargained.

The scrolls of the Judges of Duat long held the lists of every item stolen from their sacred vaults and burial sites. Now, the time has come to take back that which is theirs.

The might of the Qing Dynasty in this timeline could not be eclipsed by even the power of the mummies. However, the ancient ones understand the ins and outs of court intrigue far better than any of these young upstarts could even dream. To ease their infiltration of the Qing court, a ritual is prepared. Many of the Han Chinese strain under the Shunzhi Emperor's decrees, which seem to favor his Manchu and Mongol subjects. Many influential families are prepared to do what it takes to ensure their honor and status is restored. If it means bringing new masters to the table, so be it. Ming loyalists, in their desperation, are prepared to do whatever it takes to ensure the survival of their line. In between, ordinary people are caught in the middle of the opposing forces, looking for any way to survive.

From such beginnings, the roots of the Iremites grow and the gates to China are open.

SORCERER RITUALS

Ab's Sacred Host: To move the Deathless into China requires subtlety. Not all can be brought in whole. Certainly not the first among them. Sorcerer cultists may practice a ritual whereby the withered heart of the chosen Deathless is placed inside a willing vessel, allowing the mummy to take her body for their own and walk in their flesh as they will. In such dire need, many are willing to give their lives to further their causes. This ritual differs from the Arisen method of Pillar preservation and resurrection, as Ab's Sacred Host is practiced by sorcerers and requires immediate sacrifice.

To perform the ritual, a cultist must remove the heart of a mummy and store it in a canopic jar. The cultist performing the excision loses one dot of Stamina each day following this ritual, as the raw Sekhem poisons their body. Unlike similar rites, before it is removed, the assembled sorcerers, of which there must be at least three, must recite a litany of services performed to the mummy's Judge, which channels all Pillars into that single organ. This requires a roll of Intelligence + Performance from the lead sorcerer requiring five successes. The number of successes is reduced (to a minimum of two) for each additional sorcerer in attendance. Performing the rite destroys the rest of the mummy's corpse, though it can be regrown from the heart if required.

Once the concentration is complete, the priest repeatedly chants words of binding to the unbeating organ as it emerges from the dusty husk it once called home, placing it

in the canopic jar for transport. The lead sorcerer must remain within 500 yards of the jar at all times during transport.

A willing mortal's heart must be removed still beating and an effigy of the mummy used to collect her cries of pain, to bring the mummy into life within themselves. The heart is placed within the supplicant and sealed with a golden marker upon their chest. While the mummy, once transposed, will retain the appearance of the mortal they have possessed, they will retain little of their memory, save language and rudimentary knowledges like the location of their home. Those with the wit to communicate with ghosts may speak with the remnant inhabiting the effigy to glean knowledge.

If the vessel is unwilling, the ritual may not be performed, even if they are controlled to obey. The Judges require this pact be entered into freely.

EXAMPLE CULTS: THE WANG

"Civilization is in danger, father. We must restore it, whatever the cost. If I thought else, would I be your daughter?"
— Wang Ming-Yue

A family, the Wang, close to the Imperial Court in Beijing is contacted by sympathetic traders on the Silk Road. They have sacrificed much to maintain a position as a power behind the throne while the Ming were in control. Now they have been forced to sacrifice even more to appease the new emperor's courtiers and to sop to his oafish, childish decrees. The promise of a new dawn and a new seat of power calls to them while the offer of aid from a family who are near to enjoying the Eight Privileges of the Imperial Court, such is their station, provides the perfect platform for the first of the Deathless to move.

Wang Ming-Yue is the only daughter of Wang Qiang, Prince of the Imperial Court and one of the chief defectors from the Ming to the Shunzhi Emperor. She has enjoyed a full education in the Three Obediences and the Four Virtues as befits a noble lady of her rank. She has been taught to read and write, as well as to ride. In her upbringing, where she held her father in great esteem, she also learned his nous for politics and statecraft. To preserve their family's station, Qiang agrees for her to be married to a Banner Lord named Guroro, an uncouth, soldierly general who is impressed by her beauty and refinement, though she is less impressed by his rudeness and brutish ways.

Though this match is by no means perfect for her, she takes full advantage of it. Her place as first wife gives her great influence over the household of a man close to the emperor and he is more than happy for her to, very discreetly, manage his political and domestic affairs. She further impresses him by practicing archery with him.

With her father, she joins the cult of Rahush, the mummy that has been transposed into Qiang's chief advisor. They have brought many of the household into the fold and scour the records of imperial trades for any record of the talismans their benefactor seeks. The house guards and some of the more loyal servants have all been inducted into the cult. Though their position permits them a certain luxury, it is also one of some danger.

If the emperor or Qiang's political rivals became aware that they are practicing weird rituals in secret, it could expose the entire family. This is made all the more of a threat with the priest Herakon, who transported the heart of Rahush to China, living among them. His strange ways may be entertaining for a while but keeping him around the estate for extended periods of time is highly suspicious.

EXAMPLE CULTS: THE WAVE DRAGON

"Hang loyalty, I'd sell my mother for freedom and chest of gold to enjoy it!"
— Shang Mo Cho

Travel by boat, they said. It's far safer than the road, they said.

The voyage through the East China Sea was the surefire way to avoid any bandits or clashes on the roads. Though it took longer and cost more, it was the best way to transport the sarcophagus of Khama'at into Guangzhou. Or so Amaunet thought, but she hadn't accounted for Shang Mo Chou, the self-proclaimed Queen of Guangzhou Bay, and the crew of the *Wave Dragon*.

A ship laden with golden effigies, amulets, and other trappings of royalty is too tempting a prize for the scurvy-ridden crew of miscreants to pass up. Of course, such people have a knack for falling foul of the rites protecting a Deathless in her tomb.

Bent to the will of Khama'at by promises of riches to sate a career's worth of piracy, the crew of the *Wave Dragon* is invited to join the mummy's quest to liberate a lost treasure from the Shuankhsen traitor known as Shal'tec and his followers. Can it be that the ancient Iremite will find resurgence in the company of this motley band, to whom freedom and the call to adventure matter more than duty, honor, and loyalty?

Shang Mo Chou and her crew may be lowly in status, but they know every criminal within 100 miles of Guangzhou and the bolt holes they hide in. Just the sort you need for a job like this when hands need to be gotten dirty.

EXAMPLE CULTS: HOUSE OF THE FRAGRANT BLOSSOM

"Travelers, come in and warm yourself by our fire! And maybe we can help you be warmer still!"
— Kang Xinyue, Proprietor of the House of the Fragrant Blossom

By the banks of the Yangtze in the city of Wuhan, stands a large, well-lit building. Colorful lanterns hang in

its windows and the buzz of laughter and bawdy conversation emanate from within. Those who enjoy the delights of this house of plenty come from all walks of life. Here you can buy yourself a night's distraction from daily labors, the horrors of battle, or the burdens of state. Here all men are created equal and the peasant sits with those lords willing to lower themselves.

Wuhan is an important center of trade and is a hub for travelers heading for the coastal ports or the Silk Road routes. It is a perfect place to come if you want to hear the news traveling from place to place as riders on their way to convey messages to the Imperial Court and spies secreting coded messages to Ming bastions in the south all halt at this important waystation.

Many a rumor can be heard to those who listen closely in the House of the Fragrant Blossom. It boasts faces of many hues, each with a story behind it. The one they don't speak of so often is the reason the apartments in the basement are no longer available to those seeking cost-efficient lodgings for a time.

Kang Xinyue, the owner of the establishment, keeps his head shaven in the Manchu fashion and his eyes sharp. Those in the city, even the magistrates, know the Fragrant Blossom is not a place for warring. It is unofficially neutral ground. Quite how this agreement came into being is not widely known, and yet it is accepted among all who travel there.

Madame Yu sits by the door to the lower floors. She keeps her sanxian tuned to entertain the guests. Her wits cut deep at any who attempt to besmirch her good name and she often boasts of her impeccable breeding and that she was once betrothed to a respectable man before her father was taken by the wars. She watches the younger girls of the establishment keenly, not just for protection but to ensure they do nothing to endanger the establishment.

The riders that come and go from the House of the Fragrant Blossom of an evening are searching. Word coming to the town of grave robbers turning over ancient burial mounds and brigands ransacking the storerooms of respectable traders in the surrounding city could find its way back to the house. What, or who is causing this spate of crime is a source of great debate among the patrons. Foreigners? Ming loyalists looking for loot to hire mercenaries? Youngsters looking to assuage the boredom of another day in the opium fields? Nobody is certain but the occupants of the basement lodgings.

TALISMANS

The ancient relics of Irem and modern masterpieces by contemporary artisans are both equally prized by the Arisen. They offer them anchors to the past and hope for the future. They are a reminder of what they have lost but also of what could yet be restored.

Those among the Deathless who have attained rank and position among their Guild have turned their undying minds to preserving such artifacts and imbuing them with a fraction of their great power. Through the sacrifice of their Sekhem to the object, the relics become talismans, objects of power that can be used to enhance the puissance of a mummy or to reward the most loyal allies with abilities.

While the origin of this knowledge is subject of much rumor and debate among the Arisen, what all sides can agree is that these objects should not be allowed to fall into the hands of usurpers such as the Shuankhsen, who seek only to use these great works as appetizers to sate their eternal hunger. The wisest mummies guard their talismans jealously.

CREATION RITE: SOULCRAFT

To attempt to create a talisman, a mummy must have at least Sekhem 7 or higher with three dots in Crafts. Such an Arisen has the required occult connection to her guild's lore and relics to permit the transfer of her life-giving energies. The mystical link between the Arisen, the guild, and the object being imbued is the key to a successful ritual. If a mummy ever forces a member of their same guild to lose Sekhem or Memory, she can no longer create talismans and may struggle to invoke the powers of those she created in the past.

A mummy may only create one talisman at any time. If she wishes to create another, she must withdraw her Sekhem from the first, thus draining it of its properties. This requires the mummy to be in physical contact with the talisman and spend one permanent Willpower point. This can only be regained at the cost of eight Experiences per dot. The talisman then reverts to its previous status as a relic.

The rite itself requires three tasks to be completed by the Arisen.

STEP 1: ACQUIRE A GUILD RELIC

This is far more difficult than it may seem, especially with other Arisen of great status and esteem often hoarding the relics in their own tombs with loyal cultists to guard them. However, those of the proper status should possess the knowledge of location at least, and perhaps even the clout to obtain one of the sacred relics of her guild. It is a matter of taste for most Deathless, particularly those of the Mesen-Nebu and Tef-Aabhi to select a relic that most adequately symbolizes the intent with which they wish to wield it.

Naturally, more powerful relics add to the power of the talisman they create. Each level of power held in the relic allows a manifestation to be imbued. Though it is possible for a mummy to create a talisman weaker than she, she cannot modify it without first draining the relic of her Sekhem in order to start again. This process is time consuming and often seen as a sign of impatience or laziness on the part of the Deathless who created a talisman that did not represent the full scope of their power.



STEP 2: ATTUNEMENT AND SACRIFICE

The mystic rites of creation require the proper respects to be paid to the relic which is being imbued. First, the mummy may only create a talisman while in the tomb, either theirs or that of a close ally. Allowing the use of their tomb for such a ritual is often carried out as a diplomatic act between guilds looking to cooperate in an area or to build a relationship between two Arisen. Some, who have obtained their relics through theft, fear to perform the ritual anywhere but in their own tomb. After all, the best secrets are those kept to oneself.

By holding the relic aloft in her ashen hand, the mummy establishes the physical connection needed to enhance the mystical one. During the ceremony, the Deathless drops into a meditative trance in which she can recite the lore binding this relic to her guild, showing due deference and respect to the object that will be her talisman. This process takes two hours per relic dot to complete and may not be interrupted or it must be begun again. Once the connection to the relic is established, the Arisen breathes a golden mist of pure Sekhem upon the relic, bathing it in her power. This requires a dot of Sekhem to be spent, which now resides within the talisman.

As long as the Arisen who created it wields the talisman or has it safely stored within her tomb, she retains that dot of Sekhem which is not subject to Descent. Only a single dot of Sekhem can be used to create a talisman and the talismans of other Deathless cannot be altered using their own Sekhem.

STEP THREE: MOLDING THE POWER

Talismans may possess as many manifestations as the relics has levels. These manifestations consist of Utterance tiers and special conditions called Keywords, which modify Utterances to make them more powerful or specialized. The binding of such power is an act of will on the part of the Arisen and no further pomp is required for it to be performed. Wise mummies take care not to be too flippant in the selection of their talisman's manifestations as, once rendered, they may not be altered without beginning the process anew.

Binding a manifestation to a relic requires three points of banked experience to be spent each time. The talisman must be imbued with the full number of manifestations allowed at the time of creation — a two-dot relic cannot be imbued with only one manifestation, for example.

With the powers of the talisman successfully crafted to suit the needs of its maker, the ceremony is complete and the talisman ready.

TALISMANIC PROPERTIES

A talisman is as much a part of a mummy as a part of their body. It is connected to their very soul. For this reason, talismans contain certain innate abilities beyond their manifestations.

Relic Source

Talismans retain all of the powers and curses of the relic used to create it. However, as the curses are tied to the powers imbued into the relic and not the talisman, any curses are only triggered if the relic power is used and not when the powers of the talisman are used.

Sekhem Store

Though the mummy has spent part of their Sekhem to create the talisman, it remains within the object. While this is useful to the Deathless, it is also a tempting target for thieves and Shuankhsen.

While carrying the talisman or with it stored in her tomb, an Arisen adds the dot invested in the talisman to her Sekhem in most cases. The Sekhem of the bearer still reduces to zero even if the talisman would increase it to 1 and, for the purpose of Descent rolls, the talismanic Sekhem is not counted as it is not subject to Descent. In all other cases, the mummy is treated as having that dot of Sekhem.

Within their tombs, mummies do not require to be in physical contact with the talisman to call upon its Sekhem due to the connection of their soul flowing freely within the sacred Geography of that space.

While a mummy may only create one talisman at a time, she may possess multiple talismans crafted by different users. However, such talismans must be relics crafted by mummies of their own guild.

Regardless of the number of talismans in their possession, a mummy's Sekhem rating may not increase above 10.

Sympathetic Resonance

While it does not have Pillars, a talisman resonates with a fraction of the essence of the mummy that created it. When spending from the Pillar defined by its maker's decree, a mummy wielding a talisman regains one point spent at the end of the scene. The maker can also feel the humming of their talisman as long as they remain within five miles of its location. While they cannot see, hear, or sense the precise location of the object, they do feel the resonance increase as they get closer to it and dim as they grow more distant. In this way, makers can often track down talismans taken from them.

Fount of Sahu

While not truly an organ of the mummy, the talisman is a part of their soul and can be used to resurrect them. The sahu of the Arisen bursts forth from the talisman like a liquid fire and enfolds it in an unbreakable death grip. Any attempt to remove the talisman from the grasp of a rising mummy is futile and they will wrench it free from a thief's hands with a defiant roar and a thunderclap of force. Talismans enclosed or buried will simply burst forth from the earth or even phase through objects to return to their maker's hands.

Talismanic Memory

Even while its maker sleeps, the talisman silently imprints itself with the Memory of passing events. The Deathless must be holding the talisman to access the Memory stored within and the maker cannot choose what it wants the talisman to recall. Events of greatest mystical or supernatural import will be those most likely to have imprinted upon it. This will be presented to the Arisen in the form of flashes of imagery, sounds, smells. While this does not act as a verbatim record of things that have occurred, it will give a mummy a sense of place and import and even a little information as to what took place there, at the Storyteller's discretion.

Eternal Binding

Any attempt to destroy the talisman will result in it returning to the maker's person upon their next resurrection.

SHUANKHSEN OF THE EAST

While the hunters operating in the country fear the arrival of the Arisn to their lands, they may baulk at the thought of the Shuankhsen who have been here for far longer, lingering within their midst. The dual coming of the Deathless and the Qing has led them to seek sanctuary within the Imperial Court, promising officials and Princes alike great power in return for their safety.

This is a tactic that Arisen arriving in Beijing have also adopted, the Shuankhsen have been there for longer and some of the earliest expeditions have found themselves betrayed to the dark cults who have been awaiting them.

Arisen may find those hunters willing to hear them out to be interesting allies of convenience in combatting the far darker and recognizably evil Shuankhsen. However, they must beware the ending of such a pact. Those that cannot be convinced to come over to the mummy's point of view could well become liabilities to their safety later.

KHIMPEC THE HOLLOW

"My, how wonderful to see. You have brought me more. More to fill the emptiness inside. Let me show you how black it is."

Background: Khimpec, in any other setting, could be a minor annoyance. However, he was one of the first Shuankhsen to realize the wealth traveling along the Silk Road was more than trinkets and textiles. Following caravans east and feasting upon relics taken from the tombs of Iremites, he grew strong in his isolation, with little to challenge his growth.

When the relics ran out, he felt the pangs of hunger and grew physically gaunt. His eyes darkened and wept black blood and he took on the aspect of a foul-tempered prune.





Burning with desire to fill the emptiness that consumed his soul, he headed north into the steppes to gather strength to him, a band of men willing to raid and ransack the caravans and pillage the estates where the nourishment he sought could be found.

His choice of friends has become fortuitous as the Mongols are valued allies of the new Qing overlords and Khimpec's followers are well regarded among the highest soldiery of the Eight Banners. His hunger drives him to ever more heinous acts of savagery in his quest to conceal the singularity that swirls within his wizened form. He views each as a necessary evil to maintain his peace, a physical representation of the great balance of yin and yang. He must be a monster to prevent himself falling to even greater evil. He must show others the emptiness so that they join him in his quest to sate it.

China is both his prison and his kingdom. He has hunted many of the talismans and canopic jars that had found their way into the country, so much so that he has struggled to find enough, he welcomes the Arisen to his home with open arms and open jaws. Finally, he can feast and rule as he should: a just lord who culls the wicked and thins the herd as needed.

Khimpec can be found within a large, wealthy complex guarded by Mongol warriors wielding bows and spears. His personal cult is well established and he holds great influence over the Banner Lords who benefit from his guidance and power. Rumors abound in the area around his home of people going missing, of shipments entering the compound and the merchants never reemerging. Khimpec's whimsical nature has seen many of them consumed wholesale in a cannibalistic orgy or left moaning and weeping in his dungeon, a sweet chorus to echo in the empty space of his soul.

Description: Khimpec moves through the bodies of well-built, powerful men. He then eats at them from the inside and the rot that festers within soon shows its face upon his visage. His eyes are sunken and weep black liquid that wreathes his eyes like soot. His skin is lined and creased like he possesses too much flesh for his needs. He hunts Deathless and Lifeless alike with his small horde of Mongols, and his name is whispered in the dark corners of any city where he has been resident for even a short time.

When speaking, Khimpec's voice is a sibilant hiss. Soft and almost inviting. His tone is mocking and turns quickly to anger and impetuousness when those he talks to are evasive or, in his opinion, disrespectful of him. The hiss quickly turns to a croak of rage and causes him to flash his long fangs, fit to guzzle the flesh of anyone who crosses him.

Khimpec keeps a silken napkin constantly tucked into the front of his robe. Replacing it with a fresh one after each new atrocity. Where he has been, protagonists may find a discarded slip of silk, slick with gore or befouled with all sorts of corruption. It will likely be near the scene of grisly death with gnawed bones discarded, boasting the ragged, half-chewed flesh of their former owners upon their surface.

His symbol adorns this foul keepsake, two Chinese characters spelling out *shengyan* or "feast." This token keeps his name on the lips of the peasantry in hushed tones and feeds the legend of his cruelty. Often, villages receiving demands from his forces tribute to him rather than endure his presence for any length of time.

Concept: Monstrous General

Remnant: Ren

Judge: Ammut, the Devourer

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4; Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Presence 7, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Skills: Academics 4, Crafts (Fletching)3, Investigation 3, Athletics 3, Brawl (Biting) 3, Larceny 3, Ride 3, Stealth 3, Weaponry (Bows) 4, Empathy 2, Intimidation 4, Occult (Talismans)4, Politics 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies • • • (Banner Lords), Contacts • • • (Imperial Qing Court), Cult • • • • • • • • • (Reach 4, Grasp 4), Retainers • • • • • , Resources • • • • , Status • • • (Mongol Tribal Lords), Tomb • • • • • • (Geometry 2, Peril 4)

Willpower: 7

Burden: Gluttony (Khimpex never knows when to stop when hunting talismans, gorging himself on the glow of Sekhem)

Initiative: 6

Defense: 6

Size: 5

Speed: 13

Health: 7

Morality: 2

Sekhem: 6

Pillars/Turn: 2/1

Bane Rites: Rite of Charon, Rite of Eternal Chains, Rite of the Lost Cause

Bane Affinities: Body-snatcher, Jaws of the Devourer, Schism of Flesh

Pillars: Ab 3, Ba 2, Ka 1, Ren 5, Sheut 3

Lord of the Steppe: Khimpec has been riding with steppe warriors for long enough to have gained great proficiency in horse archery. While riding, Khimpec fires a bow as though standing still and may reload his bow with no complications. Any attempt to knock him from his horse is made with a one-die penalty due to his many years in the saddle.

For the Storyteller: Hunters and Mummies

Perspective is of the utmost importance when running your chronicle in this setting. Who are the protagonists? What is their goal? How do they intend to achieve it? What are their biases or prejudices? In short, who are their characters? It is worth establishing this pre-game with the players, not in detail, but what are the strengths of their characters and how would they go about solving problems? What are their weaknesses and how might they be challenged to grow?

For mummies, this is especially important. Their role is that of a benign monster, after all. However, perhaps your players have a mind to seek to rule or gain power over areas of the country. This is not an impossible feat for the Arisen and their followers but may draw the ire of hunters. Consider that for each action there will be a reaction from the world and while they may seek a course of action that meets the approval of one group, it will likely draw the anger of another. These perspectives will inform who your antagonist groups will be and what sort of characters you need to create.

With China torn apart with civil conflict, it may also be worth preparing a random encounter chart for when the protagonists travel. Do they meet bandits on the road, or are they presented with the chance to put an influential nobleman in their debt? These should include moral conundrums where they may have the opportunity to save someone's life at a cost or let them die or be taken for execution. In this way, you can really bring the setting to life and emphasize a sense that life for others is going on around their core path through the chronicle.

In utilizing mummies as antagonists in a hunter chronicle, it may be useful to substitute their more complicated series of powers for customized Dread Powers such as those provided in **Chronicles of Darkness**. Examples of these are provided on **p. 244** for your convenience, but Storytellers can add spice to their chronicle and flex their creative muscles by conjuring their own to suit the individual villains of their stories.

Remember that mummies have many mortal servants

Chronicles of Darkness in Rise of the Imperials

The supernatural community in this era is affected by local, national, and global politics. Denizens of the supernatural who are not native to China are largely unaware that the Deathless are moving eastward unless they travel in the same circles. As most creatures treat hunters as a global threat that reacts to the presence of the supernatural, it is unlikely any one faction will enter China to target them. What's of greater concern is the forces of colonization that are sweeping out of Europe. Supernatural creatures who've enjoyed the stability of the age must decide if they'll follow their allies to countries they've never visited before. European **Kindred**, **Sin-Eaters**, and the **Unchained**, for example, are most likely to follow colonial forces leaving Europe for the Americas. (See **Dark Eras: Doubting Souls** and the **Dark Eras Companion: Foreboding Lands** to built connective tissue between the eras.) Others, namely the **Created**, **Remade**, and **Primordials**, feel pressured to leave Europe, and are traveling east to find areas where the push for expansion and exploration won't threaten them.

Meanwhile, Chinese **Changelings** are keeping close watch on hunter activity and will avoid dealing with the Deathless for as long as they can. Many Changelings are traveling by Hedge just to remain hidden from the Undying's notice; though they don't know what a mummy is, the fae are becoming increasing restless. That alone worries many Changelings who wish to remain free from fae influence, and may influence their decisions on how they interact with hunters. Some Changelings will seek new Pledges, knowing many hunters might mistaken them for a different supernatural creature such as a mummy, the Unchained, or even one of their masters, the True Fae. What hunters don't know is dangerous to Changelings in this era, but many are loathe to seek allies with zealots or religious hunters who abhor the supernatural. Changelings are much more likely to work with specific, reputable families who not only accept them for who they are, but also welcome their presence.

Many **Unchained** present in China will also be slow to react, because they fear what power mummies hold over the hearts and minds of Chinese citizens. Though mummies are not agents of the God-Machine, some demons will wonder if this new, powerful force was sent to threaten them. Should the Unchained start to panic, their actions will be erratic. Some will infiltrate hunter society to spy on mummies and cultists with their known enemy; others will migrate to European-held colonies and infiltrate churches to hide until the threat has passed. If the Unchained become truly desperate, however, they may wage war with the Deathless — but only if they can summon a capable army that can defeat them. Should the Unchained decide that army is necessary, demons will seek allies wherever they can find them—including hunters—to wage all-out war.



and cultists, some of whom may be powerful and influential in their own right. A mortal crime boss, a governess of the Imperial Household or a famous pirate captain could be a chief cultist of the Arisen..

Armor and weaponry are bound to play an important part in your chronicle, and you would be wise to familiarize yourself with the "Weapons and Armor" section in **Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 94.

When dealing with mummies in a hunter chronicle, remember that hunters don't have insight or knowledge into the world of the supernatural. They are outsiders who recognize mummies don't belong and seek ways to oust them from China. At first, hunters may not be aware that mummies are called such and will likely misidentify them through their cultural lens and experiences as a hunter.

The Deathless may offer a pact to hunters who seem worthy, particularly if they feel they can be brought to serve them. They too have supernatural enemies they could assist the hunters in defeating with their vast power. While such temptation may seem like a useful temporary arrangement, the Deathless should always seek to corrupt and control their erstwhile allies by minor degrees over time. Indebting them to their cause and bringing them subtly to their way of thinking. Access to the resources of their cult can seem a far way away from living in perpetual squalor, travelling from town to town chasing rumors and possibilities. Not to mention the knowledge and lore of the Arisen could be the key to unraveling mysteries yet unsolved in the group's past.

This arrangement might affect their relationship with the rest of their cell or outright violate the Code. Will the protagonists keep it a secret or will they end up as the hunted, pursued by characters who had been their blood brothers in the opening scenes?

Flip that scenario on its head and you have the mummy and her minions, working to delay, distract, and direct those who would have done them harm toward foes of their own. A team of trained hunters could be just the ally an Arisen needs to assault the lair of Khimpec the Hollow One and rescue her Guild relics and talismans from his grasping jaws. What will the price be for such assistance however? Can the Protagonists convince the hunters round to their way of thinking? This is an excellent way to allow more social and less combat-focused characters to play an active role in what might otherwise be a battle-heavy adventure set in the far east. The success or failure of the minor chamberlain in persuading the leader of the hunter group could be the key to success in the overarching plot. Use this to stress the important of each character and the varied skill sets they bring to the table.

Suggested Dread Powers

Here is a list of some Dread Powers which would be appropriate to mummies in a hunter chronicle:

Beastmaster: The mummy has mastery over creatures of the wilds. By spending a Willpower point, it can conjure up a swarm of vermin, small animals, fish or birds or a single larger animal as it wishes. These animals will obey its commands and it can communicate with them clearly.

Discorporate: If the mummy suffers damage that would kill it (or even if it merely wants to escape the scene), it may discorporate its body into a swarm of scarab beetles or flesh-boring worms, running in all directions. If even one escapes capture, the creature's spirit survives and it may be able to reform in time, giving the opportunity for it to return in a later chronicle or scene.

Home Ground: The mummy gains supernatural bonuses when inside its tomb. While there, it adds three dice to all its physical dice pools and influence rolls, reduces all damage suffered by three, and gains a three-die bonus to its rolls to resist supernatural effects.

Hypnotic Gaze: The mummy's gaze can charm and beguile a target. When meeting the target's gaze, it can spend a Willpower point and roll Presence + Persuasion, contested by the target's Composure. If successful, the mummy counts as having a perfect impression against the target for Social Maneuvers until the end of the scene.

Immortal: The mummy can only truly be destroyed by a Bane, for example, the blade of a sacred warrior or by an arrow with a solid silver head. If it is killed in any other way, it will always return. Even so, for a sequel chronicle, an accursed ritual or freak occurrence can always cause it to be revived.

Madness and Terror: The mummy's gaze, voice, or touch induces madness and terror in its victims. By spending 1 Willpower and making a roll of an appropriate dice pool of the Storyteller's choice, contested by the target's Composure, the mummy may inflict the Guilty, Shaken, or Spooked Condition on the victim. For 3 Willpower, it may inflict Broken, Fugue, or Madness.

Miracle Pact: The mummy is capable of performing miraculous feats at its whim. Miracles could include removing or applying conditions or tilts, granting a merit, skill or attribute, causing someone to die or suffer pain, fulfilling a deeply held aspiration of the victim. The mummy cannot perform any of these tasks unless specifically requested to do so by a protagonist, however, there is a price for such interaction. The character in the mummy's debt may be forced to give up an aspiration, a loved one, or a precious artefact to buy off the debt owed — or even commit some unholy act of service for the monster.

Skin-Taker: The mummy can take on the appearance of any person she has killed by spending 2 Willpower.

Story Hooks

Perspective is key to introducing the supernatural elements of this era. Hunters and mummies are two sides of the same coin and are often working in opposition to one another. For hunters, a mummy represents the heart of

a deeper mystery. For mummies, hunters are the enemy because they stand in the way of their plans.

Mummy: Halls of the Hollow

Setup: Several talismans of the Tef-Aabhi have been tracked to a compound near the Forbidden Palace. Word reaches the Wang family of Beijing that a terrifying banner lord who feasts on human flesh resides within. Upon awakening, the Deathless master of the Wang calls upon them to investigate. Ming-Yue's husband may be just the man to infiltrate the halls of his ally but great danger lies within, for rumor has it that many who enter the halls of the evil Mongol's estate do not return. People who pass by on the street have reported strange moans and eerie screams.

Storyteller hints: Refer to Khimpec the Hollow One as the antagonist. One of the mummy protagonist's guildmates has contacted her after he felt the resonance of his talismans within the compound; without them, he lacks the strength to enter and face whatever is inside. After turning to his close friend for assistance, he promises to elevate the Wang in the Imperial Court upon their success.

The first problem player-characters must overcome is to gain an invite into the compound. While they can break into the compound, the fight may quickly overwhelm them if they're not careful. Relying on stealth and guile is a better option. To infiltrate the compound, the player-characters are encouraged to investigate what Khimpec wants.

Getting into the compound is one thing; getting out is another — especially if the player-characters recover the stolen talismans. It should be established that fighting their way in and killing Khimpec, given his political position, is pure folly because Khimpec has too many powerful allies. The player-characters must figure out how to discredit Khimpec first if they plan to mount an assault.

To increase the tension, keep the villain hidden behind retainers; add tales of his vileness before presenting him to increase player-character motivation. To increase the threat level, add a cell of hunters who either want to capture the player-characters or eliminate their allies.

Hunter: Guangzhou, Port of Death

Setup: Pirates have sailed the waters off the coast of Guangzhou for many years. Since the coming of the Qing, they have kept an unofficial embargo on shipping in and out of the beleaguered city. Making sure any Ming loyalists or even simple traders wishing to come and go by sea pay a heavy toll for their pains. Rumors swirl the fleet is commanded by a never-before-seen creature who has convinced the black-hearted pirates to join its cause. Hunters fear





the fleet may be preparing to attack Guangzhou and move further inland to spread the taint of its new leader.

Storyteller hints: Despite rumors to the contrary, the antagonist is the mummy cult of the Wave Dragons. Their lair is set on a several sailing vessels that are always on the move.

Tier One: Villagers whisper a vessel docks offshore every night and empties its crew into their midst. The pirates, led by a leader named Fang, have decimated the small farms' stores and starvation will surely claim lives if they are not stopped. After investigating, the cell will discover Fang has been asking bizarre questions about golden figurines depicting foreign gods. The villagers assume Fang will return for more rice and grain. The cell may choose between capturing Fang for interrogation, joining the pirate crew, or following Fang back to the lead ship. Once on board, the cell will face the Wave Dragons.

Fang does not possess Dread Powers and should be treated as mortal. Fang's scimitar is a Bygone, however, and is imbued with power that adds a one-die bonus when used in combat; the wielder suffers from the Obsessed Condition and is consumed with the need to find, cook, and eat food. The Condition is resolved when the wielder performs a ritual to release the scimitar to a new owner.

Tier Two: The city's magistrate hopes to negotiate safe passage for friends who are fleeing the advancing Qing army. The Wave Dragons have demanded a ransom for their safe conduct: the magistrate's twin sons and safe conduct for nine, notorious pirates. After investigating, the hunters learn only one of the prisoners is important to the Dragons, the former captain of the Yellow Sea fleet reputed to have stashed treasure in several locations along the coastline.

Once the hunters learn what the Wave Dragons want, they have several options. They might pool their resources to ally with the He family and sail for buried treasure, they might rescue the magistrate's twins to earn political favor, or they might pose as notorious pirates to infiltrate the Wave Dragons. The cult is after mummy-related artifacts; if the hunters are savvy enough to figure out where they are, they'll have leverage to negotiate the city's safety.

Tier Three: The pirate fleet leaves their ships in the harbor and commandeers trading vessels to assault Guangzhou in the dead of night. While they attack the ports, skirmishes break out inside the city. Cult members have infiltrated trade caravans from Wuhan, searching for their idols. The hunters now have two problems to deal with: the city's safety and the persistent cult.

Unfortunately, the Wave Dragons cult is being undermined by a mysterious force—a third player in the battle for the heart of Guangzhou. The Storyteller is encouraged to weigh the efficacy of the players when introducing this new antagonist. If mortal, a rival cult or a group of rogue hunters (Aegis Kai Doru) are perfect to drop into this tense scene to save Guangzhou. If supernatural, drop in the Lifeless to give both hunters and cultists a challenging, but not impossible, threat.

Sources and Inspiration

To narrate era-appropriate chronicles, several books and movies can serve as inspiration. Their soundtracks and visuals could prove useful in setting tone and atmosphere. "*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*" (2000) is a sweeping epic that covers multiple parts of China and touches on different aspects of Chinese culture including folklore, religion, and martial arts; "*Hero*" (2002), starring Jet Li, draws from historical events and has an action-centric plot; "*Once Upon a Time in China*" (1991) uses Cantonese folk hero Wong Fei-Hung as inspiration. "*The Last Emperor*" (1987) and "*God of War*" (2017), on the other hand, both lean on political and military influences.

To add flavorful descriptions of the day-to-day administration and the humdrum of court life in this era, check out the book as *1587: A Year of No Consequence*, "*The Manchu Way*" by Mark C. Elliott, "*The Forbidden City*" by Charles River, and "*China's Last Empire*" by William T. Rowe. For more fact-based history, Teacup Media's "China History Podcast" is an excellent source, too.

Soldiers of the Forbidden Sun

Eternally Bound Defenders

"You should not be here, and you know it, too. Leave!"

Allegedly founded by Emperor Liu Bei in 222, the Soldiers of the Forbidden Sun have seen the political landscape of China shift over the course of over a dozen dynasties. They've watched as people of all China's many races seized control of the Middle Kingdom, then lost the throne. The current political upheaval is nothing new to them, and is not worrisome. They believe their mission is the result of an ancient pact their ancestors once made long ago when China was first unified: Protect China from the Underworld.

A thousand years ago, this mission seemed simple. All members had to do was seek out and destroy yaoguai and the occasional jiangshi. Over the centuries, the compact's soldiers learned more about the nature of the supernatural world and added unquiet spirits and shapechangers to their list of enemies. A military-minded group of protectors, the Soldiers of the Forbidden Sun cares less about awarding titles and gold than other hunters do. To them, the Vigil comes first, even at the expense of personal relationships, status, and wealth. Often, their new hunters are tasked with selling all their worldly possessions to donate profits back to the compact for distribution.

Their all-encompassing approach to the Vigil doesn't always sit well with hunters who desire fame for their efforts, but the Soldiers have their reasons. In prior regimes, compact leaders, drawn from retired military forces, saw how brave hunters got distracted by fame and put themselves and their unit at risk. Now, leaders enourage camaraderie by battling the supernatural, but prefer to give a random villager the credit — and create a potential target should another monster lurk nearby.

The Enemy

Thanks to their a vast network of monasteries and temples, the Soldiers have analyzed signs to learn that something ancient, something they've never encountered before, has come to China.

Although the Soldiers still battle the old dangers like yaoguai and jiangshi these days, the search for cultists and the Deathless has taken top priority. Soldiers from across the country are being called to major cities to lend their expertise and skills, especially those from the smaller communities of China. Uyghur and Hui Soldiers in particular have been in high demand, thanks to their wider base of religious lore.

To many Han eyes, most shamanic and Abrahamic religions look the same, but the details are readily apparent to those raised in the largely Muslim communities of the Uyghur and Hui, as well as the shamanic communities of the Mongol, Manchu, and Kazakhs. Now, ethnic minority Soldiers are of the greatest importance because diverse cultural knowledge is key to spotting the signs of the cults of the Deathless. Unfortunately, this knowledge does not allow them to differentiate between mummies and Shuankhsen, and there is at least one of each present in China.

Mummies are the greatest threat most hunters anywhere will face. It is unlikely that any of the Soldiers will personally clash with one of the Undying, but that won't stop them from trying.

The Response

The Soldiers of the Forbidden Sun employs military tactics and possess the organizational structures of a Chinese battalion. Each new recruit, regardless of experience, is sent out on a mission to test their skills in battle. Following the results of this mission, hunters are assigned by compact leaders to their cells. Many Soldiers of the Forbidden Sun can and do fight near their homes; others are sent to cities and ports where the compact's reach is weakest. The "top down" structure of the compact frustrates its newest members, because they often don't know who they're taking orders from or why. Once hunters have earned the compact's trust, however, their training accelerates to include the uneven history of the compact and tools to recognize human-seeming monsters.

Like any long-standing hunter organization, the Soldiers of the Forbidden Sun has experienced great losses due to enemy infiltration. Though its current leaders are not paranoid, the compact is careful not to recruit every grieving villager who begs to join them. When a threat is near, leaders rely on local cells to deal with threats in their own community. Following small skirmishes, cells are expected to report back to their area's commander and await further orders. Most cells are filled with foot soldiers who do not possess knowledge of supernatural activities; military strategists hold higher positions and spend their time mapping patterns of behavior — which is how the compact discovered the Deathless before other groups.

The Soldiers take a pragmatic view of the Vigil and constantly monitor, train, and test their hunters lest the

enemy get the upper hand. Their vigilance and discipline have paid off thus far, earning the compact a stellar reputation amongst other Chinese hunters. This, unfortunately, works to the compact's detriment as other hunters will step aside and let them deal with threats, even when they're fully capable of handling them on their own.

Hunters

You brought your Mongolian ancestors with you to help hunt cultists. Raised as a "black" shaman, you have a deep knowledge of the rites and rituals of the smaller "black" spirits. You are not sure if you possess magical abilities, but you do take your role as shaman seriously. You come from a long line of Soldiers, and most of your family members are either Sages or Falconers. You volunteered to hunt the new threat that is invading your home.

You followed the gui that took your hand for nearly three years before recovering it in front of a stunned group of Scouts. Now, you find yourself in the heart of China, far from your home of Jiuquan. Nevertheless, you see your chance encounter with the Scouts as an omen that this is where you belong.

You were a prince and falconer of the House of Zhu, but now that title comes with a bounty, dead or alive, so you gave up your life and took to the road. After surviving a jiangshi attack thanks to a hunter's dying acts, you were rudely awoken to a hidden world of supernatural creatures who prey on the innocent. You took the fallen hunter's belongings and pledged to honor him by hunting the monsters who killed him.

Factions

While the Soldiers welcome people of all faiths, the majority of their temples are Taoist, mainly due to the widespread popularity of Lao Tzu's teachings. The Soldiers are divided into three factions: Sages, Scouts, and Falconers.

Scouts gather intelligence and are the eyes and ears of the compact. Most hunters who join the compact start as a scout.

Sages are the smallest of the three groups; they review information, gossip, and rumors to determine what threats are worth investigating, which rumors can be ignored, and when an area needs to be evacuated for public safety.

Falconers are the military-minded members of the compact who are sent to destroy or contain threats. Occasionally, the distinction between Scouts and Falconers is unclear as either group can be charged with reconnaissance or raids. While both groups of hunters claim to be the best at both tasks, the internal rivalry is mostly benign.



Status

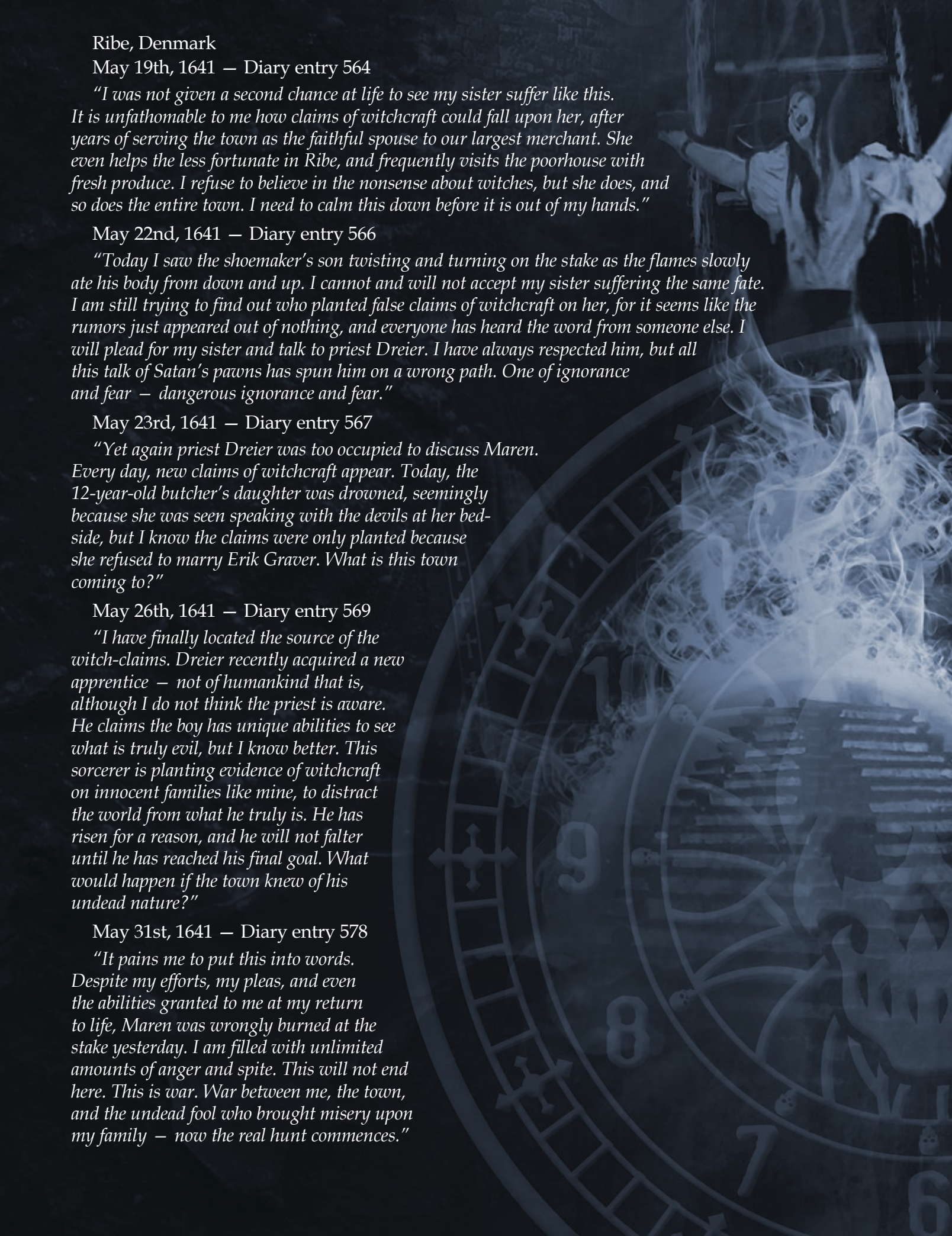
Status in the Soldiers of the Forbidden Sun is earned similarly to how military personnel is treated. Hunters who follow orders rise through the ranks, while those who disobey their superiors fall.

• Whether you joined to save your family or if the Soldiers are the only family you have now, you've taken up the Vigil until the bitter end. Gain one dot in Occult.

••• You've gone toe to toe with the inhuman things and are still alive. Your success hasn't gone unnoticed. Gain two dots in Resources you may use to help you hunt monsters.

••••• You still haven't found the ancient evils, but you've dealt with a few of their minions. Gain three dots in Allies (Soldiers of the Forbidden Sun) you can call on whenever you need a helping hand.





Ribe, Denmark

May 19th, 1641 — Diary entry 564

"I was not given a second chance at life to see my sister suffer like this. It is unfathomable to me how claims of witchcraft could fall upon her, after years of serving the town as the faithful spouse to our largest merchant. She even helps the less fortunate in Ribe, and frequently visits the poorhouse with fresh produce. I refuse to believe in the nonsense about witches, but she does, and so does the entire town. I need to calm this down before it is out of my hands."

May 22nd, 1641 — Diary entry 566

"Today I saw the shoemaker's son twisting and turning on the stake as the flames slowly ate his body from down and up. I cannot and will not accept my sister suffering the same fate. I am still trying to find out who planted false claims of witchcraft on her, for it seems like the rumors just appeared out of nothing, and everyone has heard the word from someone else. I will plead for my sister and talk to priest Dreier. I have always respected him, but all this talk of Satan's pawns has spun him on a wrong path. One of ignorance and fear — dangerous ignorance and fear."

May 23rd, 1641 — Diary entry 567

"Yet again priest Dreier was too occupied to discuss Maren. Every day, new claims of witchcraft appear. Today, the 12-year-old butcher's daughter was drowned, seemingly because she was seen speaking with the devils at her bed-side, but I know the claims were only planted because she refused to marry Erik Graver. What is this town coming to?"

May 26th, 1641 — Diary entry 569

"I have finally located the source of the witch-claims. Dreier recently acquired a new apprentice — not of humankind that is, although I do not think the priest is aware. He claims the boy has unique abilities to see what is truly evil, but I know better. This sorcerer is planting evidence of witchcraft on innocent families like mine, to distract the world from what he truly is. He has risen for a reason, and he will not falter until he has reached his final goal. What would happen if the town knew of his undead nature?"

May 31st, 1641 — Diary entry 578

"It pains me to put this into words. Despite my efforts, my pleas, and even the abilities granted to me at my return to life, Maren was wrongly burned at the stake yesterday. I am filled with unlimited amounts of anger and spite. This will not end here. This is war. War between me, the town, and the undead fool who brought misery upon my family — now the real hunt commences."

The Scandinavian Witch Trials

1608-1698 CE



"The Devil liveth, yea and reigneth throughout the whole world."
– Martin Luther

It is no wonder Scandinavia is seen as home of the witches and the gateway to hell by the remaining world. When the age of discovery urged travelers and explorers to traverse the world in search of new lands, they eventually stumbled upon the north. Many left remembering the icy climate covering entire areas with winter and cold, making crops impossible to grow. The horrifying snowstorms bearing shrieking sounds reminiscent of those from hell. Darkness dominates the north, and in some places the sun will even disappear for months, leaving the lands to live without its life-giving rays. The further north one lived, the closer he was to Satan.

Scandinavian countries quickly adopted the witch trials from Germany after the Reformation, and were even more cautious about magic and witches, as they knew they lived closer to hell than most other countries. Perhaps this is the reason the largest and most devastating trials took place in the north. Magic was no longer seen as a tool to alter fates or change the course of lives, and it was no longer directly linked to communication with gods. Those wielding magic were no longer respected and sacred, but were hunted and condemned by society, friends, and family as witchcraft became directly linked with the workings of hell. A constant paranoia dominates the Nordic countries. No one knows when it might be their turn to burn for heresy.

The witch hunt is also affecting immortals in Scandinavia. With several Bound violently ripped from their hosts, ghosts see the opportunity to make deals with distraught and dying bodies. Many accused witches die with anger and a sense of unfairness, and many are still young and not yet done living. Geists use this will to live and need for revenge to form strong bonds with mortals, giving them a body and a second chance at life. Krewes form based on different religions, some based on paganism, trying to convince the world of the good in magic, others following Catholic or Lutheran beliefs and condemning the use of witchcraft. The world lives to see priests turn abmortal, and Sin-Eater witches crawl from the banks of rivers or rise with nooses around their necks, using Plasm to gain their revenge.

The Arisen awake to see a world in complete chaos, many being hunted as soon as they exit their tombs. The frigid and blistering north may seem an odd place for any Arisen to exist, but through cults of human devotees and their diaspora to the far perimeters of the north, some mummies awake in Scandinavia. Arisen live to see themselves become leaders of the hunt on witches, while some become the hunted, and are forced to wander a world where they are seen as less than animals.

A world already threatened by war, hunger, illness, and natural disasters now faces yet another enemy: itself.

Themes and Moods

"We decree and enjoin that the aforesaid Inquisitors be empowered to proceed to the just correction, imprisonment, and punishment of any persons of witchcraft, without let or hindrance, in every way as if the provinces, townships, dioceses, districts, territories, yea, even the persons and their crimes in this kind were named and particularly designated in Our letters."

— Bishop Innocent VIII

Persecution

An overwhelming fear of anticipation and uncertainty dominates the era. Townspeople become isolated, as they see family and friends pointing fingers at one another, just to be drowned, burned, or tortured the following week. Some misuse the power of being able to determine friends' and foes' fates and keep a close eye on enemies' actions to catch them in suspicious activity. Some even turn to lies to see them burn on the stake. Women and men are falsely accused of causing illness, suffering, famine, and failed harvests, and have little to no defense against an entire town and its priest. Children are being used as eyewitnesses, and either manipulated or tortured by town officials to make up stories about witches, while some are even being tried and executed for witchcraft.

Manipulation

Manipulation was commonly used in witch trials. Mental and physical torture and abuse were common, and was mostly committed by priests, mayors, town officials, or prosecutors. Town leaders or parish priests manipulated others to accuse a citizen of following witchcraft, if they disagreed with their way of living or the accused was somehow not abiding by the rules of society. Young women and children were often threatened with an eternity in hell if they did not comply as witnesses in witch trials. Finally, witches were manipulated and tortured into blaming other people for witchcraft, making their punishment milder if they succeeded.

Panic

As neighbors, friends, and family are slowly blamed for using dark magic and accused of being in cahoots with Satan, who is there to trust? Can you even tell a secret at the dinner table or to your dearest friends? People are terrified of being at the wrong place at the wrong time, or perhaps saying the wrong word and triggering someone's suspicion. Although they are aware of their innocence, they know it will not matter when facing the town priest or judge. In one desperate attempt not to be seen as a witch, a woman from Sweden stopped talking entirely and only used her hands for communication. This resulted in her being drowned, as it was believed Satan took her ability to speak.

Paranoia

People are aware they cannot put their trust in anyone, and that it's better to stay on good footing with town officials and exceed exemplary behavior. As a result, many turn to isolation and antisocial activities. They would rather live a lonesome life, or a life with the few people they trust, than make new associations and risk their existence. The social inadequacy was clearly visible, when looking at the decline in newborn babies in times where trials were frequent — people simply only had minor social interactions. No one could be trusted when even children blamed their mothers for lying in bed with devils or Satan himself.

Blood In the Ice

"There feeds he full on the flesh of the dead, and the home of the gods he reddens with gore; Dark grows the sun, and in summer soon. Come mighty storms: Would you know yet more?"

— Völvuspa, The Poetic Edda

Magic is no new phenomenon and has been a large part of every human society in the world for thousands of years. There is no culture on Earth that does not contain some form of occultism. In prehistoric and ancient times, shamans, witch doctors, and völver wielded everything from beneficial magic, used for blessing fields for a good harvest or to encourage a woman's body to bear children, to malevolent magic and horrific curses. In ancient Egypt, *Heka* was performed by priests to ensure the smooth running of a society, and in ancient China books were written about cleromancy to foretell the future. In ancient Rome, cursed tablets called *defixions* were used to bind victims to a certain area, and Greece held secrets of immortal lives through magic in Mithras Liturgy. Magic was a way to explain the inexplicable or a method used to change the fates gods threw upon humans, to warp reality in past, present, and future.

The Magic and Witchcraft of the Viking Age

In Norse culture, magic held extreme importance in everything from day-to-day life to large celebrations of the changing seasons. Tightly entwined with the belief in Nordic gods (Asatru), magic allowed every person to communicate with higher powers. The *völver* could be seen as Viking-age witches, who regarded themselves as the servants of Freya. They wielded three different kinds of magical abilities: Seiðr, which was associated with the god Odin and shamanic in nature; Galdr, which was tightly connected to runes; and trolldómr, closely related to what would later be seen as witchcraft. With these, völver acted as a valuable resource to any village and would often travel to towns nearby, if the villagers needed blessings for a raid or diseases struck. They simultaneously held the roles of doctor, priest, counselor, and spiritual guide.

Witchcraft and magic were closely related to religion and one could not exist without the other. In Norse mythology, several magical items are mentioned, the most popular being Thor's magical hammer Mjölnir, Odin's spear, and the self-replicating ring Draupnir. Although such treasures were reserved for the gods, runes were commonly engraved on swords to aid in battle, marked on fields to help the harvest, and even embellished on clothes or jewels as protection.



The Division of Magic and Religion

However, the harmonic relationship between religions quickly splintered when the christening of the north occurred in the 11th and 12th centuries. Instead of respecting magic as a powerful resource for good and evil, the use of magic increasingly became associated with paganism and therefore satanic influences. Magic and witchcraft became feared, as concerns about heresy increased. Thomas Aquinas, theologian and philosopher, claimed demons existed among humans, and could be summoned to perform magical deeds and foretell the future.

In the early Middle Ages, high magic and heresy were punishable by death while folk magic went by unnoticed. The Church struggled with defining what was and was not an acceptable practice of magic. This all changes when *Malleus Maleficarum*, "The Hammer of Witches," was published in 1486 by Catholic clergyman Heinrich Kramer. The book was a best-seller in Europe for almost 200 years after its release, right under the Bible, and justified why witches were enemies of all good Christians and how to punish them accordingly. The book had major influence over the upcoming witch hunts in Europe and was used to set examples in courtrooms globally.

Although magic was now looked upon with worry and disgust, Nicolas Flamel, a manuscript dealer from Paris was known for the magical arts of alchemy. In the book ascribed to the supposedly long-dead alchemist, *Le Livre des figures hiéroglyphiques*, he claimed to have created both the Philosopher's Stone and a sacred liquid that brought immortality to him and his wife. Legends of his immortality were exacerbated by reported sightings of him in the 17th century.

Hunt the Witch, Burn the Witch

With the *Malleus Maleficarum* and papal bull from Pope Innocent VIII condemning all witches to death, from the Reformation on, the malice of witches and their devious pacts were no longer doubted by the general population. Witches were thought to be in direct contact with Satan and their dark sorcery could only be destroyed through torture or death. Both works also made a direct connection between women and witchcraft, although men were also killed as witches. It was widely believed women held evil inside them from birth, and this attracted hell spawn, but women had to refuse the devil's temptations.

Sexism and literature were not the only reasons behind the witch purge of Scandinavia. Years of war, famine, and failed crops because of endless winters, as well as rampant illness and disease, left society desperate to find the reason behind God's wrath. The trials began in Germany and soon made their way through Europe, eventually ending in Scandinavia and the Americas.

During the witch trials, there was a constant sense of paranoia, as no one could feel entirely safe. Anyone could at any time call you a witch, and although mostly lower-class individuals ended up on the stake, even nobility and priests were prosecuted for witchcraft. The fear of hell and its beings was strong, and many misused their newfound power to get rid of people they disliked or saw as competition. A letter written by the sister of an alleged witch said, "*…she is my sister, and I know she is a good Christian woman. She is true to her husband and her work. I do not believe she is a witch and has participated in the Sabbath. They only think badly of her, because she is the most successful shoemaker in town, and she is a woman.*"

How Quick the Flesh Burns

"You tax me for a wizard, you may as well tax me for a buzzard. I have done no harm."

— George Jacobs, Sr., alleged witch

Scandinavia's renaissance is an era of progression, transition, wars of land and religion, and revival. Land constantly changes nationality as one kingdom rises and another falls. Catholicism is exchanged with the vastly different Lutheran Church, and practices once seen as heretical sprout with renewed energy.

Leaving behind what is referred to as one of the grimmest historical periods, the Middle Ages, the world stands on the brink of transition into the time of rebirth: the Renaissance. The rediscovery of art, medicine, astronomy, and everything withheld by the limiting bonds of strict religious belief, famine, and illness arises. Instead of using landmass as a medium of exchange, money is now the most valuable and easily available item of trade, fueling the free market and entrepreneurship. The feudalistic shackles of the Roman Catholic Church deteriorate, making way for previously unknown or forgotten philosophical and secular beliefs. In Scandinavia, humanism secures the foundation of previously banned expressions of art and literature, and the increasing demand of such leads to the invention of the printing press. This also paves way for scientific reports and research, as well as their availability to larger amounts of people. The world is enthralled with itself, once again falling in love with the exploration of new knowledge.

Religion

Despite approaching times of enlightenment and discovery, Scandinavians still strongly hold on to and live by rigid religious beliefs, transitioning from Catholicism to Protestantism. In Sweden, reformation takes place in 1527 with King Gustav I at the forefront, and in



Denmark-Norway Holstein (Norway and northern parts of Germany were under the Danish crown until 1816 and 1864, respectively), the Reformation spreads rapidly with the help of the Lutheran monk Hans Tausen and King Christian III. Although this happens in the middle of the 16th century, Protestantism was not fully embedded into Scandinavia before the beginning of the 17th century. Only a small group of Catholics remains in Denmark, after the majority of priests, nuns, and monks are prosecuted or banned from practicing their religion.

The Thorsen Household — Vardø, Norway 1634

As the local preacher, who spent most of his life as a man of the church, Ulf Thorsen takes pride in his way of living and his family, which consists of his two children and wife. To Ulf, it is not only his job to preach the word of God and the Lutheran belief to the citizens of Vardø, but also make sure his own family stays within the Christian faith. His eldest son, Sigurd, now has a private tutor who teaches him mathematics, biology, and Danish, as the language is now mandatory for any tutored child to master — much to Ulf's dismay. Most importantly, Ulf takes charge of raising his son in the Christian faith, preparing him to one day become a priest, or perhaps even a pastor, when he is of age.

Cecilia, his two-year-old daughter, is being raised primarily by his wife. She is too young to take part in any important household activities but is already showing an interest in cookery. When she comes of age, she will marry the neighboring Leifsson family's youngest and with him inherit the largest farm in the Vardø. Ulf knows he's both wealthy and lucky compared to other inhabitants of the town, who live in tiny houses or even share bed space with cattle. When the plague struck last year, he even had the means to isolate himself and his family for the duration of God's wrath. Every Wednesday and Saturday, he can enjoy spiced meats instead of the common porridge or watered stew. He truly feels blessed, and he knows God is thanking him for his years of honest and consistent service to the community and heaven.

Wars

The Reformation also fuels the Thirty Years' War, in which both Denmark and Sweden take part during the first years of the decade. All countries fight against Catholic advances and, despite losses, ultimately secure Protestantism within their borders.

Throughout the 17th century, the superpowers of Scandinavia do not see eye to eye, and numerous wars are fought among them. Areas in southern Sweden, in particular, switch ownership throughout the 1600s, making what land belongs to whom difficult to determine with certainty. This specific period of time is widely known as Sweden's rise to power, ultimately regaining parts of its land from



Denmark and almost succeeding in ruling Scandinavia altogether. However, despite losing land, Denmark withstands Sweden's invasion, and is allowed to keep Norway and parts of Germany — but not any territory in Sweden. Denmark declines from being the third-largest kingdom in the world, with riches from the taxation of Øresund and merchants traveling its lands, to a country surpassed by Sweden in both landmass and riches.

The Caroleans — Halmstad, Sweden 1676

Most of the troops do not think much of the young Swedish king Charles XI, who with his 20 years of age, is planning to take back Swedish land from the Danish-Norwegian powerhouse. Even Karl, who spends his life dedicated to king and country, and takes pride in reforming Sweden, doubtfully watches as his comrades rush the Danish frontlines in the small town of Halmstad. Pressed against the ground, he feels the soft caress of grass tickling his ears. Boots stomps by in a rush, and their vibrations almost lift him off the ground. He still has his pike in hand, he just needs to stand up and face the aggressors, but it is as if his legs are glued to the ground. An iron taste of warm blood fills his mouth and nose, and an odd feeling of weightlessness overtakes his entire body. Slowly, darkness consumes him.

Life on the frontlines is brutally barbaric, and though prepared and trained for war, no one at the time is aware of the trauma and PTSD war can cause to human psychology. Additionally, Caroleans were deeply religious, and constant high morale was expected from troops. Disturbing prayer and acting with defeat was punishable by death, which only added to the stress of the soldiers. Karl Engtvet and 4,000 other troops leave their lives behind in Halmstad that day, adding to the increasing number of fallen in the Scandinavian war fought between Denmark-Norway and Sweden. He was like many of Caroleans, a force of specialized soldiers bred by the current monarch of Sweden in his pursuit to not only take back lost land but overtake new. Many young men are recruited for both sides of the war, only to meet their demise in their late teens or early 20s. The constant fear of war over either land or religion following the Reformation takes a toll on both Swedish and Danish society. People are growing tired of sending their sons to war, many valuable resources are needed to fuel the fire, and after no winner is declared form the Scandia war, the two fronts agree upon a treaty, and peace reigns until 1700.

Witches

In Scandinavia, witches were seen as anything but harmful to society and individuals during the Viking Age and early Middle Ages. Every free woman was expected to be versed in beneficial magic, and many sought out their services when trying to conceive, see the future, or bless the harvest. Völver were considered to be in direct contact with the goddesses of faith, and thus wielded immense powers. When carrying the "witches' stick," they were not to be harmed, and could visit anyone at any given time, even lords, ladies, and chieftains. As the faith in Nordic gods reformed into the belief in one omnipresent deity, and the Bible condemned magic of both good and ill nature, the attitude toward magicians changed. Witches are now enemies to society and wrongfully blamed for everything from failing crops and dying cattle to disease and famine.

With a transformed and vastly different religious belief comes new ways of living, and a new outlook on heaven and hell. Contrary to popular belief, the Middle Ages are not the height of witch hunting, although this is where prosecution of witches began. Martin Luther stands in the forefront of many witch trials sweeping Northern Europe, although he fears the fight against evil magic. With his demand of translated Bibles, a vast majority of people are now able to read and understand the words of God and his condemnation of witchcraft, mediums, and spiritualists. The 16th century holds extreme climate changes with "the small ice age" challenging an agricultural society and plague once again wiping out a large part of Scandinavia's population. The world needs scapegoats, someone to blame for the misery — and for this, witches are perfect.

The Witch of Nordvang — Roskilde, Denmark 1617

Helge Kjelsen never cared much for marriage or children. Growing up, he saw how his mother struggled to get food on the table after his father passed away from alcohol dementia. He simply drank himself to death after returning from the Northern Seven Years' War with Sweden. He worked his entire life as Roskilde's most valuable midwife and, by his own account, he helped half of Roskilde into this world. Unfortunately, the people he dedicated his life to aid and advise are turning their backs. It began when he assisted in delivering a stillborn child for the mayor's wife two years ago. In anger, the mayor blamed Helge for casting a curse upon the unborn child because his small house was torn down in order to make room for the new jail, and he forbade him from ever practicing midwifery again. To Helge, this came as a shock, as he had helped stillborn infants into the world before without any trouble besides the grieving parents.

Two years after, and the town now calls him "The Witch of Nordvang." After rumors about him cursing the mayor's child spread, he did not only lose his title, but the baker refused to sell him bread, the farm refused to sell him eggs, and he could not show himself on the market or at the well. He is forced into a life of exclusion on the outskirts of Roskilde. He lives off what he can find in the nearby woods, gathering the scarce roots and berries Danish nature has to offer. The only source of human contact Helge has is with the local hunter who occasionally drops by with a rabbit or birds, showing gratitude for the set of twins he assisted the

hunter's wife to deliver last summer. Yesterday, he brought worrying news about alleged hangings of men and women thought to wield magic in Germany, and how the mayor welcomes the idea. Helge sips his tea as he looks through his window toward moonlit Roskilde. Should he stay and fear facing an unyielding court and his possible death? Or should he flee, and if so, to where?

Locations

Several cities are affected by the witch trials, impacting farmers, merchants, and innocent victims.

Ribe

Ribe no longer holds religious importance following the Reformation. Years of prosperity did however leave Ribe as the trading capital of Denmark, as merchants keep the city afloat upholding trade routes with Germany, Italy, and France. A strong sense of change is present in the town, and most of the 3,500 citizens are aware of its upcoming identity change. What will happen now they are stripped of their title?

The swift change of power and purpose is obvious, affecting Ribe's society and everyone living within it. No one is sure where to stand and merchants are afraid to invest in a town with a questionable future. This results in a migration away from the town, for those who can afford the costs, leaving behind the poorer parts of Ribe to ensure the town's continued relevancy. Many Ripensere see the downfall of their city as a punishment cast upon them by God, which might be the catalyst behind the persecution of witches. The city is desperate to point a finger.

Ribe Cathedral

The Lutheran belief that people need no medium between them and God is visible in the decline of churchgoers, and Ribe Cathedral runs into disasters ranging from flooding and theft to the church tower falling apart throughout the 17th century. However, this does not lessen the importance of the church in the city, especially not when going to church becomes mandatory by law at the end of the 17th century.

Aside from the marketplace and various taverns in, the cathedral is where many of Ribe's citizens gather for their daily gossip and to socialize with each other. The richest families can afford to send their children to school and choir with the local priest, so children playing outside in the churchyard is a common sight. The church is at its busiest on Sundays, when worship is led by the priest and a large part of the town shows up. Most participants will head to the market afterward, and some to the taverns scattered around the town.

The young priest Nicolai Dreier of Ribe cathedral, who leads most worships since the death of his father last





winter, has an innate interest in — and unyielding hatred toward — witches. He often uses Bible verses about malicious magic and its sacrilegious nature in his speeches and does not hesitate to point out potential witches in the town. Despite the town hall and the high court being the decisive factors in the witch hunts, they hold Nicolai's opinions in high regard, providing him with additional power over the masses.

The Town Market

Still upholding the status of one of Scandinavia's largest trading grounds, the town market in Ribe buzzes with activity from early morning to late evening. Booths with baked goods, mostly dense rye breads and the occasional honey cake, fill the street with alluring scents. Shoemakers compete to come up with newer designs, following the highest fashion from Italy and France, and yell prices left and right to attract customers. Spices like cumin and ginger, historically used mostly by people who live in the climate in which they grow, are finding their way onto high-society and nobility's tables in Ribe. A majority of people still stick to smoked salts and Nordic herbs from local herbalists. Farm hands travel several miles from nearby farms with fresh eggs, milk, cream, and salted meats.

When dusk falls and most merchants close down for the day, the market is overtaken by hushed voices from behind red lips, pale bosoms, and the sound of male laughter. For years, sex work was legal in Denmark as long as sex workers stuck to certain parts of towns and wore different items in order to distinguish themselves from the crowds. After the Reformation and with the new fear of syphilis, sex work is made illegal. Although punishable by death, sex workers are in high demand, and people from all layers of society wallow in the joys of flesh.

Ribe Courthouse

Being one the three largest courts in Denmark, Ribe Court is notorious for its brutal punishments, especially toward witches. King Christian III often acted as judge, letting out his hatred for witches and magic in brutal and inhuman ways. On the scaffold behind the courthouse, merciless torture took place at least twice a day against prosecuted people. Burn marks with scalding-hot iron rods, beatings with whips and chains, and restriction from food and water for days are some of the common torture methods. Screams and agonizing moans can be heard by neighbors in the area, and the courthouse is rightfully nicknamed "The House of Screams" in common speech. Apart from excessive amounts of torture, the courthouse is one of few to punish witchery with death, whereas performing magic in other parts of the country often merely gets the accused witch jailtime.

The court is also the deciding factor behind the burning of Maren Spliid, the formerly respected wife of the town tailor, who is accused of making her husband's biggest competitor sick. He claims Maren snuck into his room and blew into his mouth, resulting in him vomiting an unnatural fluid. The vomit is shown in court before priests and Christian III, and they agree on her alliance with the devil. She is burned at Ribe's gallows the following week with the entire town watching in awe.

Many men and women meet their demise as a result of the strict and ruthless judgments of the courthouse — most of them falsely accused of performing witchcraft. When a potential witch is interrogated, they have to point out other witches in the area, as there is a common understanding that witches are aware of other witches' existence. Thus, many are accused merely because someone else is forced to spread blame after weeks of torture and starvation.

The Tailor's Daughter

Karen is an average 15-year-old girl, who just wishes to live a simple live with her cats, her mother, and her two brothers. The dream is crushed when her mother is accused and killed for the use of foul magic. Karen never returns to the innocence of childhood, and is forced to grow up quicker than she imagined.

After her mother's death, fearing she'll be called a witch herself, Karen flees Ribe. The night of the burning, she packed her few belongings and left a note on her father's worktable saying it was for the best that she left his life. On the second day of her refuge from the town, she was stopped by guards from the royal army on their way to Ribe. One of the soldiers took pity on the girl, and took her with him to stay at his secluded farmhouse on the outskirts of the town. Karen knows she will not stay, and Karen knows of her mother's innocence. She knows her mother was killed out of jealousy, and upon seeing her mother's screaming body bound to the ladder and pushed inside the fire, she swore to avenge her family. None of her friends or relatives will die an innocent death again. **Empathy 4, Investigation 3, Stealth (Evasion) 4, Survival 3**

Vardø

Engulfed in the harsh Nordic climate, located on the Norwegian tundra, Vardø has been inhabited for years, even before adopting its name. People in the area have always been challenged by the frigid earth, which doesn't allow plants to grow for either household animals to consume or humans to harvest. Instead, they utilized the sea and over time became great fishermen.

Compared to other Scandinavian towns and cities, Vardø and its citizens do not care much for following the waves of time and the rapid cultural, political, and religious development of the world. Some even take pride in their isolation and independence. However, what makes Vardø one of the most relevant towns in its time is the community's intense and continuous witch trials, which murdered more than 91 people — over 20% of their own population. The north is considered the gate to hell by many European countries, and Vardø takes the title seriously.



Because of the constant fear of being pointed out as a witch by neighbors or even family members, isolation intensifies, driving most citizens to spend their time hiding in their homes. The town center lies barren, and from the outside, it looks as if Vardø was abandoned years ago.

Mountain Domen

Mountain Domen is without question seen as the most dangerous place in Vardø, both because of its steep mountainside and its omnipresent appearance as it looms over the small town, but also because of its unholy witch activity. Domen is widely believed to be the actual entrance to hell, and during Sabbaths witches flock to the area. Several accused women and men speak of a long, dark valley inside the mountain's heart, which leads to a deep lake. Here, the dark waters boil as Satan spews fire from an iron pipe and living bodies float to the surface of the lake, making noises like dying cats. Witches arrive in the shapes of dogs and cats, and sightings of them dancing with devils atop the mountain are not uncommon among townspeople.

Many know to stay far away from the mountain, mostly out of pure fear of the gate to hell, but also in order not to be associated with any unholy activity. The Domen area acts as a constant reminder for the people of Vardø, that hell looms at their doorstep and one false move will leave their souls to burn in its pits.

The Harbor

As a town completely dependent on what it can harvest from the nearby sea and lakes, the harbor holds great importance for its citizens. It acts as a workplace, where tons of fish are transferred to land by the local fishermen. Some of the catch stays within the town borders to provide nutrients for its inhabitants and some are exported to nearby towns further away from the sea. On the harbor, large fish markets take place every other day, providing families with enough income to maintain housing and boats.

The smell of fish, wet wood, saltwater, and pipe smoke draws people to the harbor, and it acts as the warm beating heart of an area that without it would lie barren. The people of Vardø have great respect for the sea, and with that comes a certain amount of fear. Some fishermen are even accused of sailing to hell and making deals with whatever inhabits it if they are away for long periods of time, sometimes by their own wives.

Despite Vardø's residents taking pride in their solitude, new ships hoisting foreign flags are docking now. Some bring exotic fabric and spices in exchange for the "Nordic gold," amber, and some are explorers and adventurers wanting to test how far north they can venture. The arrival of new faces is not welcomed by most of the town's inhabitants, but they cannot help but curiously watch as the strangers appear from their ships.



Vardøya Island

The island is primarily famous for being of great importance to the discovery of the Northeast Passage (a shipping route that would later be essential for trade in the north), as both a Russian and English voyager sought refuge on the island after encountering large whirlwinds. To the many accused witches of Vardø, the small island holds much greater importance. On the southern side of the island, a woman going by the name of "the Dark Winged" or "the One Who Saves" has taken it upon herself to house individuals seeking refuge from a town growing suspicious of them. Nobody knows from where the Dark Winged originates or even who she is, as she does not speak. In her small hut atop the southern cliff, she will give her visitor new, simple clothes made from linen bags, cut their hair short, and feed them. As payment for seeking her aid and protection, visitors will fish and hunt, maintain her house, and even sing and dance for her. Authorities from Vardø have sought to remove her from the island countless times, but every time disaster struck, preventing their attempts. Either someone falls on the steep and rocky hills and slopes, breaking limbs or dying from the fall, or the weather is so terrible they can no longer continue. To accused witches, she is heaven sent, but most of Vardø's citizens are sure she descended from Domen and is a hellspawn in disguise, luring naïve victims into her world.

The Dark Winged now has six people living under her protection, all chased away from their lives in the town. However, demands for action against the mysterious woman in the island are growing, and soon the town will no longer be able to justify her existence.

The Hunter

Ole Bjelke descends from a tradition of fishery as most other men in Vardø, but his passion and heart were never the same as his ancestors'. Growing up with cautionary tales about the dangers of witches and magic, he harbors a deep hatred toward and fear of the dark creatures. To him, they are animals, pests of which he needs to rid the world. Instead of spending his time fishing, he dedicated his life as a self-proclaimed witch hunter. He was in charge on several trips to Vardøya Island, though he never found the hiding witch as his team broke their bones or the weather raged unabated. Many see him as fanatical and too old to be climbing steep rocks, but he will not falter until Norway has seen its last witch. Ole is currently gathering enough equipment and courage to once again visit the island, this time without a team to set him back, and hopefully he will burn every single witch on the island — ultimately the Dark Winged as well. **Archery (Hunting Bow) 4, Occult (Witches) 4, Survival 5, Weaponry 3**

Torsaker

Between the tiny Borlänge village and the larger, ancient town of Gävle lies the parish Torsåker, led by the Lutheran Church and priest Laurentius Christophori Hornaeus. The parish is surrounded by forestation and, ever since the parish was founded, its inhabitants have lived off whatever could be gathered or caught in the forest nearby. However, overgrown areas are now being compromised in order for agriculture to pave the way, as the changing winds of the age of exploration and trade create higher demands from Torsåker's inhabitants.

Torsåker parish is split between two larger towns, Torsåker town and Storvik. Although located in close proximity to one another, the towns have vastly different values, and as a result, they often have disputes. The one redeeming factor about the two towns is the dense forest between them. They both have to share the area to survive, but it also acts as a semi-permeable wall, almost impossible to navigate through. The forest is also rumored to be magical, scaring most citizens from venturing too far into it.

Torsaker Town

Entering Torsåker town, the influence from the outside world is clear. Christophori, who acts as the unofficial town leader, has made it clear how Torsåker can no longer rely on hunting and gathering, and must enter the new age. To him, God has plans for the small town, and it is up to his leadership to steer the town and its inhabitants in the right direction. The town monastery, formerly belonging to Catholic monks from Germany, is refurbished as the first hospital and poorhouse in the parish and streets are cobbled in order for trading wagons to more easily make their way through town.

The priest is controlling the city with a firm hand and, with his faith as guidance, he is also the man behind the largest witch hunt in Sweden's history, beheading and burning 71 individuals in one October day in 1674, 65 women and six men. Christophori has an innate wish for the town to grow and follow the changes of time, and he believes witches stand in his way. Not only do they stick to pagan traditions of evil and beneficial magic, but he is certain their curses are preventing the town from developing.

Christophori mainly uses children to point out witches, and almost all witnesses in his trials are minors. Children are more imaginative than adults, and many can easily be tortured and manipulated to testify, even against family and friends.

Storvik

Storvik's residents have held on to Viking traditions throughout the course of history and hold no plans to ever let their pagan lifestyle change. The citizens of Storvik strongly believe that what is granted to them by the Earth and forest is a gift from the gods, and they celebrate solstice as gratitude. Although knowing about the Latin alphabet, they still use runes for descriptions and stories, sometimes even for magical purposes. People from Storvik care not

for anything the new world has to offer and are content in their traditional way of life.

Although still under the power of Christophori and the Torsåker parish, Storvik is vastly different from Torsåker in every aspect from livelihood to religion. As Storvik is one of the only towns left to still practice Asatru and paganism, Christophori is under criticism from larger parishes for not forcing the words of God upon every citizen in his community. Storvik even declared their own chieftain as of last year, to the dismay of the priest.

After many failed attempts at converting Storvik into a true part of the parish, the priest grew tired, and decided most of the witches to be executed should come from the town, cutting the number of inhabitants in half. This infuriated the chieftain to such a degree that he declared open war against Torsåker and swore to cold-bloodedly murder Christophori himself. The parish of Torsåker is more divided than ever before.

The Forest

The forest between the two rival towns within Torsåker parish is a source of sustainment and a protective wall, but also an area holding much mystery and fear for both communities — whether being of pagan or Christian belief. The forest evokes fright in its nature, with densely wooded areas, large warped trees, nooks and crannies where sunlight never reaches, and several caves and coves in which predators and inhuman beings can hide. It is widely believed the forest contains magical sources in the shape of two-headed wolves, ancient oaks, bottomless lakes, and runes engraved in stone. The fear of venturing too far into the forest and being lured into the water by Fossegrimmen and his violin or Nökken with his long, tangled hair influences the life of every person living in Torsåker. Knowing magic-wielding creatures like nisser, elves, and trolls live in the depths of the forest prevents most people from delving too far. To keep the creatures from entering homes, people hang wefts of lavender and sage over their doors, as these herbs ward against magic.

While Storvik's citizens still fear elves, trolls, and creatures of the water, the most dangerous magical figure is the witch. They know witches walk among them in the town as well, but believe a pit leading directly to hell lies within the forest, and from it crawl demons with intentions of infecting innocent minds. Although it has never been located, brave search parties have ventured into the deep forest, coming back with stories about men with cat heads and women spewing fire.

The Chieftain

Harald is Storvik's newly chosen chieftain. He grew up on what he calls the "only true side of Tårsaker parish," and when asked, he does not consider Storvik to be a part of any churchly commune or under the power of any priest. He is the only true leader of his people and, as he's only 30 years of age, he expects to keep the throne for many years to come. After the slaughter of almost half his people, Harald swore to take his revenge on Christophori, and is already gathering men for a night siege to destroy the Torsåker church. Ultimately, Harald wants Storvik to detach from every aspect of Norwegian Christian culture and cleave to the old Asatru traditions. He denounces anything relating to Christian beliefs. Carrying crosses or other newfound religious symbols is punishable by death in his town. **Intimidation 4, Occult (Asatru) 3, Politics 3, Weaponry 4.**

Enlightenment Dawns

"And while I'm on the subject, let me say something about Harry Potter. Warlocks are the enemies of God! And I don't care what kind of hero they are, they're an enemy of God and had it been in the Old Testament, Harry Potter would have been put to death!"

— Becky Fischer, American children's pastor

In 1698, Maren Christiansdatter from Thisted, Denmark was diagnosed with demonic obsessions by the local vicar, after throwing fits and exhibiting mental instability. Several other women suffered the same attacks following Maren's, and were all sentenced to burn at the stake for witchcraft. However, soon after, the women stated they never had any contact with demons or devils, which led to their death sentences being revoked — this was the last recorded witch trial of Denmark and marks the end of belief in witchcraft for a large part of Scandinavia. Norway's last witch trial was the great purge in Vardø, and Sweden's witch hunt ended in 1673 with the death of Malin Matsdotter, who was reported for witchcraft by her own daughter.

As the new world grew aware of its own ability to alter itself with technology and increased urbanization, religious superstition slowly waned and so did the belief in witches. The idea of invisible demons crawling from the deep pits of hell breaking the Earth's crust to spread chaos did not fit into new ideals. Sporadic witch hunts did occur in the 18th and even 19th centuries throughout Scandinavia, but they were all unofficial and with no will of the state. The Bible and the Lutheran Church held great importance to Scandinavia, but words about witches and magic were seen as metaphorical, and the practice of witch trials slowly died.

In some secluded and smaller societies, being seen as a witch could still be devastating for an individual, the latest example being Carl Vilhelm Goldmann from the Danish island Ærø. In 1936, the residents of the town of Marstal turned their backs on him and marked him as a witch. Although he didn't suffer the same grim fate as many before him, his house was vandalized, and his chickens stolen.

Today, although still an issue in some third-world countries, witchcraft is positively portrayed in most popular culture, and seen as entertainment for every age group. Some people practice paganism in the shape of Wicca, which is not at all based on the Christian beliefs regarding Satanism and witchcraft and more on nature and energies.

Throughout the period of witch trials, Sin-Eaters were deeply engaged in Scandinavia. Some try to put a stop to the nonsense of biblical magic and sorcery, attempting to talk sense into prosecutors. Others have even been the victims of trials, and suffered to the same degree as mortals. As the hunt dies down, most disperse throughout Europe, as they no longer have a particular interest in Scandinavia. Some, still fascinated with the witch hunt, travel to Salem and the Netherlands to attend the last trials. Others spend time in the Underworld, trying to communicate with the ghosts of those murdered.

While Sin-Eaters see the world turn against the many individuals blamed for witchery, and most take the role of observers, several of the Arisen wake up right in the middle of the chaos. However, even after the trials die down, many Deathless stay within Scandinavia. They know they awoke for a purpose, with something in that part of the world calling them.

Undead Among the Living

As those of flesh and blood, still breathing the air of life and facing the truth of death, live their lives in the tumultuous reality of the Scandinavian Renaissance, the footsteps of the unliving mark the ground. It is not falsely stigmatized townspeople threatening the lives of innocent mortals. It is the ancient corpses, ascending from their graves to regain power and seek their faith. They are walkers of the Underworld, grouping together in sects and orders to judge the living and merge with the dead. These monstrous entities are both the hunter and the hunted in witch trials, and they have come to fulfill their sinister goals.

Geist: Whispers from the Underworld

Ghosts and spirits exist as more than cautionary tales and folklore in 1600s Scandinavia. They truly *are*, and they watch as the world turns against itself. Mass murdering in the name of religion is not a new concept, and Sin-Eaters have seen events like the witch trials numerous times. When so many die innocent deaths, burdened by revenge and bereaved over the loss of their loved ones, Sin-Eaters intervene.

Societal Roles

Geists and Bound form a bond at the brink of death, binding their two existences together, a union benefiting them both. The geist, a powerful ghost so reshaped and molded by the sights of the Underworld seeks to once again experience and influence life. He knows he must use a shell, a vessel to help him to achieve his goal. What could be better than a mortal dying with unfinished business? In return, the geist grants the Bound the greatest gift of all: life. A chance for redemption, a chance to see the love of their life or children again, or maybe a chance for revenge. The Sin-Eater also gains superhuman powers as a result of their alien guest. In return, she must share her every thought, desire, and emotion with the geist, and carefully balance between obtaining her own goals and those of the geist.

Most Sin-Eaters of this time period are intent on ensuring mortals remain accountable for their actions, no matter their sin or virtue. Geists believe Sin-Eaters should face the same judgment. If the living do not address their actions before death, they will do so after. Some Sin-Eaters seek to punish and avenge themselves on ghosts of the living, perhaps for their own personal gain. What better way to avenge your daughter drowned for witchcraft than by showing the town priest his final judgment in the Underworld? Others simply seek to lead the ghosts of the victims in the witch hunt in the correct direction, because they know this is the right thing to do.

Not all Sin-Eaters observe the mass murdering from a distance and shy away from taking action. Sin-Eaters are seen joining the hunt, and some become the hunted.

The Burdens

What draws the geist to a dying mortal is the weight of his Burden, and this is especially prominent in the era of the Scandinavian witch trials, where morality, common sense, safety, and compassion are destroyed by religious extremists and corruption. Though the Burdens do not define a Sin-Eater's existence, they help inform a geist as to the kind of dying mortal they might approach in this era.

Young adults and children killed for witchcraft often become one of the **Abiding**. They left their lives with an unfinished story, an unfulfilled legacy, and an entire life stolen from them. The Abiding Burden also takes form in individuals who spent most of their lives hiding from society because of the witch hunt, and thus die feeling unfulfilled.

The suicidal mother of an accused witch child, the spouse with no income after her husband burned at the stake, and the starving orphan who saw her mother hang from the gallows often become the **Grieving**. They all died with grief in their hearts and walk the Underworld to seek what they miss.

Scholars, herbalists, alchemists, and barbers: craftsmen and women who could not let their passions go but were ripped away from them regardless as a result of the witch hunt, sometimes fall among the **Hungry**. Some Hungry are also witch hunters or priests, who cannot let go of their deep religious beliefs or their desire to cleanse the world of magic.

The executioner who lit the tinder of several fires beneath the feet of innocents and the judge who bowed under the pressure of the townspeople and sentenced several

children to death may count themselves among the **Kindly**. It is a Burden carried by those who pointed a finger at their neighbor and yelled "witch!" out of jealousy or anger, and even by the witch who in her lasts moments thought her actions were truly acts of evil.

Those who knew they were wronged and know exactly who to blame often become the **Vengeful**. Many accused witches die with this Burden, wishing death upon priests, friends, witch hunters, and judges. They return to life to seek retribution, to avenge themselves and their families left behind.

Heresies (Krewes)

Rarely will people die with the exact same goal in mind, and even rarer is the chance of being approached by a geist who shares in their beliefs. But some Sin-Eaters do utilize common tools and approaches in order to gain what they seek, and the ability to share in these is intriguing enough to unify. Although they are all created from the same principles, they do not always share the same beliefs, and take different roles and opinions in the era of the witch trials.

Furies

"Injustice is everywhere and aplenty in this frostbitten hellhole. We don't sit back and cry in a corner because someone did us wrong, we seek and we bring justice. This is not so much about killing that member of the Disciples of Jannes and Jambres who murdered your mother, or the old hermit in the woods you are sure cast a deathly spell on your tea. It's about figuring out why they did it, and what precautions can be taken to prevent it in the future. We are swift and organized, and we know exactly what we are doing, which is why we waste no time discussing what is right from wrong. Some of us sit as judges in small-town courthouses and make sure correct punishments and freedoms are given, others collect information about those who have done us wrong. There are those who take care of their living and dead forms. Of course, we do our best to handle situations without violence, as this can prove very addictive."

Mourners

"Not everything dead is lost. We pursue that which is too beautiful, too meaningful, and too valuable to let go. This does not necessarily mean great artworks or rare knowledge but can be everything depending on what the individual finds precious: herbal collections gathered and dried over 30 years, the first poem written to the love of your life, or sacred religious texts. Most importantly, we seek out individuals for mourning families. We find beloved and lost spouses, children, parents, and friends. We rarely grant them their lives back, unless their Burden suits the needs of the inhabitants of the Underworld, but we can transport important information and valuable declarations from one end to the other. Many of us inhabit and run libraries in larger cities, and some of us are starting to collect valuable items to display there."

Necropolitans

"We know you might have done some pretty questionable things in your life. That elderly lady you sentenced to death because some third-party witness saw her talking to a cat, or that time you stole from the church funds because you really wanted a new set of clothes. Don't worry. We saw it. And when all of the other heresies scoff at you and are reluctant to let you in — here we are. The separation between the Underworld and the world of the living is an unnecessary wall, and we truly think we can make afterlife not only tolerable, but enjoyable, by breaking it. What should keep us from enjoying what we left in life, and why must communication with loved ones go through a third party? So, we take the role of flock leaders in our pursuit to break the barrier and normalize the existence of ghosts. We are priests who preach about the "Holy Ghost," we lead legions of witch hunters and crusaders while we ensure them of the wonders of the afterlife. Ultimately, we want happiness to exist both during life and after death."

Pilgrims

"The Underworld is a dark, mysterious, and dangerous place and should be treated as such. We don't fool ourselves and try to make it something it's not, neither do we fool our dead. Instead, we traverse it. We explore it. We treat it like a biologist would a dense jungle or a scholar a new and unseen phenomenon. Yes, it's frightening and indeed our path is not for everyone. But with the right mindset, we can show you things no other heresy can. We not only guide our dead through the darkness, but we teach them how to handle it, how to tame it, how to make their way through what they must accept as a part of their existence. For this very reason, we spend most of our time in the Underworld, but with recent activities regarding the great fascination and purge of witches, we take it upon ourselves to use that fear of the unknown as an opportunity. Those left behind by hunters and religious fanatics we take under our wings. We show them their Burden should not dictate their lives, but they should dictate their Burden."

Undertakers

"When we hear how preachers lead their congregations to fear death with the ever-present risk of ending in hell looming over its head, we sigh. The fear of witches and workings with devilish monsters are not helping put the Underworld, or hell, in a good light. We take it upon ourselves to change that. We want the Underworld to be a place not awaited in fear, but a sanctuary you can inevitably expect to approach at some point in your life. We want to open the Avernian Gates to the living so they might understand their fears are based on nothing but fanaticism and lies in a book. Perhaps we can even assist in stopping these nonsense purges of innocents, if we help them understand that what they fear doesn't even exist."



The Underworld

The world of the living is not the only place affected by this era. The Underworld feels and sees everything, and works in synergy with the world above it. On the very topmost layers in the Upper Reaches and River Cities, Gates resembling 1,000 hanging corpses, swaying silently in the wind and creaking with every slow movement, appear. Some are piles of bound and drowned bodies, and some are seas of ashes with human remains covering their surface. At the riverbanks, clans of persecuted witches gather into groups and create small societies, believing they have truly reached the outer rims of hell. Ferrymen must suddenly transport a large influx of children up the river, and sometimes down again.

Some of the Lower Mysteries' Dominions ruled by Kerberoi are based on the slow disappearance of pagan beliefs, resembling vast forests with bottomless lakes and magical runestones and healing herbs scattered all over. Some Dominions appear as enormous cathedrals with golden crosses, witches' blood dripping from the mosaics and onto the white chalk walls. Some priests and hunters even end up aboard the Freighter, hoping the endless waters of the Sea will cleanse away the sins of their former lives.

The Gardens of Salvation

Most Scandinavians reaching this Dominion are sure they have finally reached heaven's gates, although St. Peter is nowhere to be found, and the way there was not as predicted by the Bible. As soon as they enter through the gates, guarded by winged creatures resembling the biblical angels, they enter the Gardens of Salvation. Three gardens create a vast richness of plants and fauna every ghost recognizes from their time alive, and at first glance the beauty is overwhelming.

The first and largest garden seems without horizon, and if one walks in a straight line they would never reach an end but get lost in the endless trees and tall grass surrounding the inner gardens. The few who have tried their luck escaping the Dominion are faced with impenetrable swamplands, creating a natural fence on the outer rim of the gardens. Small streams springing from Anahita, the river of life, provide the many growths with sustenance. The second garden is wilder and seems to be growing on its own without much supervision or grooming. Odd amulets and broken crosses protrude from the earth, as well as pentagrams and tilted baptisteries containing murky, congealed blood from which birds freely drink. Screams and tortured moans from innocent witches echo through the garden, and many ghosts will at this point turn around and flee back to the first garden, so they do not have to endure the sounds of the innocent. But some ghosts, often Pilgrims or Undertakers, will reach the inner garden.

In stark contrast to both the first and second garden, the third is bare, except for a small chapel in the distance. After entering the garden, it looks as if it will merely take minutes to reach it, but somehow it is as if most ghosts cannot. Pages of the Book of Job blow with the wind, and scatter randomly on the dry earth, as only a selected few may enter the Sacred Chapel. It is said that only those who are truly connected to God can tread its floors, and within it lies the light of God and a pathway to heaven.

Judah the Forgiver

Overseeing and overruling the Garden of Salvation is the Kerberos Judah the Forgiver. His gardens are merely a result of his hunger for souls so dedicated to their beliefs they forget the misery and hopelessness that surrounds them. They are those who do not care when they have to murder or betray to appease their God. This is why he lets them travel through horrific sights and fearsome forests in order to get to him. As soon as they enter his sanctuary, he devours them, entangling them in his thousand tongues and pulling them into an eternity of darkness. He does not do this to punish wrongdoers, since he has no sense of justice, good, or evil. He chooses the most devoted worshippers because their corrupted souls simply appeal to him. The entirety of his gardens is an enormous mousetrap for Christians, and as long as no one escapes his domicile, they cannot tell the tale of their betrayal.

HARALD STIGSAGER

"False icons do not trick me, and they will not trick the Underworld."

As a member of the Furies and with a deep personal hatred for the manipulative Christian Church, Harald watches as the gardens, day after day, let in large amounts of confused Protestants, with promises of heaven and an eternity in peace. He does not know why no one ever exits the Dominion again, and if they do, where do they go?

As a young and hopeful member of his father's tribe and heir to the title of chieftain in Ribe, Harald was eager to explore new lands to the east. He watched as his father's fleet rapidly sailed the seas and claimed what they liked as theirs. But something changed within his father as soon as they reached the shores of the British Isles. His father showed a sudden interest for a new god represented by a cross, and instead of fulfilling his promise of gold chests and lands for the taking, he brought home books and Christian values.

Now, Harald sees as Dominion after Dominion in the name of the false god arise, and this particular Dominion he knows he needs to investigate further.

Concept: The Savior of the Blind

Aspirations: Inform the Furies and possible other heresies about the Gardens of Salvation; figure out what goes on inside the chapel in the Gardens of Salvation; destroy the Kerberos of the Gardens of Salvation

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3; Strength 3, Dexterity 1, Stamina 3; Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Skills: Investigation 2, Occult (Haunts, the Underworld) 3; Brawl 3, Survival 1, Weaponry (Axes) 2; Persuasion (Combat Speech) 3, Socialize 3

Burden: The Vengeful

Root: The need to explore and conquer still lies deeply within Harald, even in death. His Root is based on his desire to uncover new territory in the Underworld and claim it as his own.

Bloom: Although Harald spends a majority of his time in the Underworld, he appears on the surface of the mortal world when something of value needs protection, the latest being helping the Bastion of Bergen.

Touchstones: Inherited Anchor, Murder Weapon

Remembrance Skills: Weaponry

Haunts: The Curse (Gremlin) 2, The Dirge (Sing the Dirge), The Memoria (Dénouement) 2

Merits: Direction Sense, Iron Stamina 2, Small-Framed, Small Unit Tactics, Tolerance for Biology, Trained Observer 3

Willpower: 7

Initiative: 5

Defense: 1

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Health: 8

Synergy: 2

Plasm: 10

The Dead and the Bargain

In every creation of a Sin-Eater, a Bargain between the dying and a geist must take place. For most dead, the Bargain never occurs. But for the few chosen by a geist, their lives are irrevocably changed.

The Loss of Maria

When Svend threw himself from the cliffs of his hometown, he did not know his story would continue. He did not wish for it to continue, after his wife had to flee the town just to be hunted down and killed by witch hunters on her way out. But his geist had other plans for him. His heavy burden of bereavement pulled the ancient ghosts closer to him. They promised to help his broken heart heal if they could only live within his body. With nothing to lose, Svend agreed and thus was created anew.

Unfinished Business

Ria did not know she would meet her demise by the very thing she hunted, but as warm blood stained her armor, she knew death was inevitable. She awaited the golden gates of heaven, but when she finally opened her eyes, she was met by a set of curious eyes in the darkness. They belonged to a creature offering her a deal, to return her to life and kill the witch who brought her to the Underworld in exchange for eternal companionship. She agreed to this.

Places and Items of Interest

The Avernian Gate of Mount Domen

Large amounts of superstitious activity and mysticism surround Mount Domen, and the pursuit to find what is supposedly the gate to hell in its very core has taken many lives. The events surrounding the mountain can be felt in the outer perimeters of the Underworld, and as a result, an Avernian Gate has emerged. It is formed from the frozen stones and pebbles of the mountaintop, interspersed with the occasional bodies of anyone who dared climb it.

The Keys

The Keys to the gate are scattered around the mountain's adjacent town, Vardø. These are not physical items and cannot be located in the same exact place each time they are found, as the only people who can open it are magical beings. The most prominent of these are members of sorcerer cults and the few Arisen in the area. The only thing left to do is to convince them to help.

The Bible of Thomas Anori

Thomas was a dutiful and beloved preacher in Roskilde for many years, and mostly tended himself and his garden without getting into trouble. When he met a quiet death in his 70s, his Bible followed him into the Underworld and was his only redemption and safety in what he called the "valley of death." As he engaged in the Bargain, his Bible followed him as an important Memento and Key, reminding him that although his faith might have been shaken by the Underworld, God is truly with him.

MUMMY: THE DUST OF HEKA

Arisen awakening in flakes of newly fallen snow and surrounded by sea instead of glistening grains of hot sand in the dunes of the desert is jarring for the Deathless. Why are ancient corpses of Irem suddenly seen walking the barren lands of the north, and more importantly, what is their purpose?



SOCIETAL ROLES

When Ammut the Devourer, the being of chaos and destruction, was offered thousands of souls by the guilds of Shan'iatu, she in turn granted them the forbidden power to perform the Rite of Return, the creation of the mummy. All Arisen must venture through the Duat and undergo horrifying and torturous tasks before they reach their final judgment. Only then will they be eternally bound to the mummified remains of their fleshly lives. Being a creature of magical descent, driven by magic, and utilizing magic in its raw form, proves a difficult existence in the age of the witch hunt, when even wearing an amulet can send you to the gallows. Many Arisen face a world they have long forgotten, and are awakened without knowing their purpose. It quickly becomes clear society hunts them. They must step carefully, and some even isolate themselves from society, out of fear of the masses.

Although a majority of the mummies face the cruelty of the era of witch trials, a small group is taking advantage of the gifts granted upon them by the Judges of Duat. They follow in the proud footsteps of the Crimson Pharaoh, who led the army of Mark Antony in ancient Egypt. He was involved in high society and dictatorship, granting him powers few mummies considered accessible, given their servile role. A cult arose from his name, now called the Crimson Priesthood. As Arisen realize they must hide in a world dictated by fear and paranoia, they only grow more determined in their pursuit to take control of the witch trials. Instead of hiding, they gain high societal positions by infiltrating churches, monasteries, and even royal houses. They do not see the religious fears of mortals as a hindrance, but quietly use their Sekhem to manipulate and reform their way up the ladder. Sorcerer priests are awakening the Arisen to either seek religious guidance or wisdom, or to use their powerful magic to their advantage. The Crimson Priesthood sought to gather other cults, many who long ago lost the will to watch over the tombs of their masters, but had not yet forgotten their names, into one powerful cult. They knew mortals controlling such powerful magical beings were a force to be reckoned with, and although it is part of powerful Protestant churches, the Crimson Priesthood wishes to integrate traditions of magic back into society.

REMET OF IREM

Whether the purpose of the Arisen is clear or she wakes up in aimless haze, memories of a time long past burrow into her mind. Every mummy experiencing the era of the witch trials will frequently experience flashbacks and sparks of lost thoughts and visions of the Nameless Empire. They see innocent men and women dragged from their homes, burned on a roaring fire, drowned in lakes and rivers, and hanged by the neck for fabricated crimes. Memories of men and women brutally slain as enemies of the empire and faith resonates at this time. In Irem, sacrilegious actions were punishable by death, and Irem's societal structure was largely based on fear and pain — much like that of this specific era.

Although most Arisen and their cults believe enemies of the Nameless Empire must face punishment, knowing who are the true enemies are was difficult, and thus many innocents lost their lives. Mummies quickly draw similarities to what they once witnessed and are now seeing again, unearthing Memory and whispers of time lost.

PURSUIT OF THE RESTLESS

What keeps the Arisen in Scandinavia, where most of them are seen as enemies of society and a threat to humanity? For the members of the Crimson Priesthood their goal is obvious, but for many Arisen the answer might not be simple. Some seek to understand why their Remet is provoked in this area, and what their continuous flashbacks mean. Others take pity on the falsely accused mortals, and wish to hinder what looks like aimless murders. Mummies are quickly realizing they are not the only undead afflicted by the witch trials, and some are taking a keen interest in the Sin-Eaters also roaming the north. They are aware of the methods used to create a Sin-Eater, and geists have direct and easy access to the Underworld. For some Arisen, this is enough to pique their interests and seek out the ghosts. Both Sin-Eaters and the Arisen are created in another world, and a mutual interest between the two is therefore natural. A mummy might want to know if Duat and the Underworld are the same place and whether she can travel between them. She may want to seek out Avernian Gates and perhaps a Sin-Eater to guide her through them.

SHE'KALIA DARNU AND THE SISTERS OF ETERNITY

Predating the Scandinavian Renaissance and even most of her peers' awakening, She'kalia saw the world change for millennia without returning to her sleep. Going by the name of "the Nightmother" or "the Eternal," she awoke when the Roman Empire fell and has since only returned to her grave once. For centuries she observed how slaves, women, and children were repressed by a primarily male-dominated society, and she made it her mission to not only defend but arm the victims of a world with few rich and many poor. Inequality and slavery were the preferred ways to shape the world but using this societal method to procure vestiges and relics only fed her Sekhem. It is theorized among sorcerer priests and Arisen that the constant presence of victimization and abuse was what kept her awake. Among the Arisen, she was long seen as a myth and, by some, the embodiment of one of the Judges of Duat. As times changed only two members of her large following remained: Ingrid and Kristina Borgsen.

As daughters of the largest and most influential smith of the time, known for his excellent craftsmanship and delivering weapons to the royal guard of Denmark, Ingrid and Kristina knew how to strike a good deal. They were sent to a convent to learn about female virtues, and were

deemed unfit for marriage until properly schooled. The sisters were not satisfied with the confined and strict nature of their new environment. They did not want to roam the very lowest steps of the secular latter; they hungered for power and control. When the Reformation swept Europe, they saw their chance to latch onto one of the first groups of Scandinavians to speak the Lutheran words. Instead of fighting the new breath of religion, they converted from Catholicism to Protestantism in a matter of weeks. They mostly worked from the shadows and, as they were well-taught by their father, they helped structure the first press for the Bible translated to Danish.

They ascended slowly, not publicly, but they served as advisors and spin doctors for the bishop Peder Palladius and quickly gained a reputation as great resources for the Protestant Church within high society. Despite their newfound religion, they had not forgotten the tales of ancient gods and the warm winds of Irem their father told them as children, and he repeatedly told stories of the Nightmother. Yearning to become publicly known for their talents and receiving the attention and power they so long sought, they decided to reinvestigate She'Kalia, eventually awakening her from her slumber. Although they were only two worshippers, their deeply driven need for power was enough to fuel the Deathless.

The tales told by their father did not include guidance on how to control an ancient mummy. Ingrid and Kristina have released a monster upon the world, a monster they have no control over.



SHE'KALIA DARNU

"Let those who suffer come to me and I will protect. Let those who cause suffering come to me and I will destroy."

Guild: Maa-Kep

Decree: Kheru, the Decree of Heart

Judge: Tutuutef, the Giver of Wickedness

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4; Strength 7, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6; Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 2

Skills: Academics 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Politics (Dictatorship) 3; Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Stealth (Camouflage) 4, Survival (Swamps) 3, Weaponry 2; Empathy 2, Intimidation 5, Subterfuge 4

Affinities: Affable Aid, Beast Companion, Lion's Pride, Living Monolith

Utterances: Dreams of Dead Gods, Dust Beneath Feet, Gift of the Golden Ankh, Power of Re

Merits: Allies • • • (Accused Witches), Cult • • • • • (Reach 2, Grasp 3), Guild Paragon • • •, Tomb • • • • (Geometry 1, Peril 3)

Willpower: 6

Memory: 2



Balance: Persistent (This Arisen will see a task through to the end unless it stands to harm her guild or her cult)

Burden: Disrespectful (This mummy has no respect for cultural mores and speaks against them quite openly.)

Touchstones: Kristina and Ingrid, Sorcerer Cultists

Aspirations: End the victimization. Return to rest.

Initiative: 6

Defense: 5

Size: 5

Speed: 16

Health: 12

Sekhem: 8

Pillars/Turn: 3/1

Affinities: Beast Companion, Glorious Mien, Living Monolith, Wisdom of the Ancients

Utterances: Dreams of Dead Gods, Dust Beneath Feet, Secrets Ripped from Skies

Pillars: Ab 5, Ba 3, Ka 3, Ren 4, Sheut (Invested: Kristina, Sorcerer Cultist) 2

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Dice Pool
Rusted Greataxe	4L	Melee	9

DEATHLESS PERSPECTIVES

Some Arisen thrive in a world where a clear distinction between what is right and what is wrong exists, reminding them of the idealized days of Irem. Others dare not step outside their hideouts in terror of the world they face.

MAA-KEP

"Times are truly strange when we see the most powerful of creatures fearing the weakest. As the world turns on itself, we infiltrate and alter the strings of hierarchy from within its holiest chambers, latching ourselves onto influential individuals. While we await the great and final judgment of the gods, we waste no time hiding and we see no value in a false hunt. Our focus lies on the purpose bestowed upon us, and neither rabid priests, occult witches, begging families, nor corrupt statesmen can divert our attention from recovering Sekhem for the divine. We pull strings in places that truly matter to us and help us gain power, and leave the rest to those blinded by the mortal world."

MESEN-NEBU

"We observe as the mortals hunt their children and mothers, sons and fathers. We see trials carried out in the name of corruption and fear. We do not disturb. We adapt. We take advantage. When the church is in need of a tracking dog to hunt down supposed witches, we gladly assist. When, in turn, families of accused witches wish death upon the town priest, we dispose of him. While we appreciate a society deeply rooted in disciplinarian influences, we pay no respects to the condemnation of magic. So, we lean back and harvest the fruits of both the hunter and the hunted. For Dedwen does not favor those who cannot see advantages — even if it costs lives of thousands."

SESHA-HEBSU

"It is a conscious decision when the Scribes do not interfere in large trials, mass murders, or indeed any event seen as immoral or wrong. These concepts do not exist for us. It is simply the reality of the River of Truth, the ever-changing world in which we live. However, we do not lean back and simply watch. We document. We study. We take every opportunity to write history as it should be written, and combat our greatest vice — loss of Memory. As mortals worship words of a false god, we seek to explore these new times of rebirth. While other guilds fight among themselves, we discover land and cultures; we study medicine and mathematics. Doing so requires a certain knowledge of the infrastructure and mortal system of power, and we know the churches record history from their perspective. Of course, they are incorrect. And so we infiltrate and correct, by any means necessary. We simply see the world as it should be, here and now."

SU-MENENT

"To us, these times of witchery and forbidden magic are not as much about political play, honor and dignity, social inequality, or wealth. What is deeply fascinating, and on what most Su-Menent fixate, is the afterlife of the witch. Where does it go, is it truly an occult creature of magic, and who is there to guide it through the eternity of the afterlife? It is highly unlikely their souls rush into the same place as the priests spewing heresy to the manipulated public, and in that case, what happens to them? We care not to understand or relate to those whose worship falls on deaf ears, as the words of the Judges are not negotiable. But we know we must seek to conform to the new world in order not to become obsolete."

TEF-AABHI

"If the ancient powers of Heka can be represented in great monuments, tombs, and pyramids, what would keep them from flourishing in animated creatures? Instead of condemning accused witches because of the morality of false gods, we aim to learn their ways. Mortals might not be as powerful as effigies, but surely one feeling the flow of Heka through his body must be able to obtain things of great wonder and appease the Judges. We entertain ourselves with the plethora of architectural wonders such as churches, libraries, statues of great monarchs, and building homes for the booming population in Europe. All of this grants us status and wealth, but also vast amounts of Sekhem. Of all the guilds, we're truly in the right place at the right time."

THE DECEIVED

"The innate hatred and fear of magic catalyzed by the overpowering Church merely works to our advantage. Naturally, we do not agree with the Christian perception of the world, but we feel glee in our rotten bones when we see members of the five guilds, and their pathetic cults, dragged to the gallows. We are the ones who whisper in the ear of the town judge when the final judgments of witches are determined. We hunt the Arisen, and use ignorant immortals brainwashed by faith to do the dirty deeds; we divert priests' attention away from what they believe to be the target and provide them with the true one. It has never been easier to, one by one, pick and crush those who did us wrong."

SHUANKHSEN

"We vividly remember the days of Irem. The torturous days of suffrage and slavery. The prying eyes of slave masters and the stinging pain of their whips. Of all of us, we should be the ones to sympathize with the victims of the witch hunt, and perhaps lend them a hand. But we do not. We watch as the Arisen continue to worship the Judges, they who created our eternal struggle, how they praise their names, similarly to how families of killed witches worship the god who commanded those exact words. Our wrath and disdain grow. Vengeance will be ours."

VITALRAN-SEBA'R

"Having enough time is not an issue for me, but finding the right time to strike is truly important."

Instead of plunging headfirst into conflict with the Arisen, and allowing his need for revenge to control him, Vitalran takes pride in his calm and collected approach to issues. Instead of dwelling on horrifying memories of repeated devouring like his fellow Shuankhsen, he uses his time to study the Arisen, to find their weaknesses and gradually figure out the best method by which to take his revenge. Currently, he is gathering Shuankhsen like himself to pursue his vengeful play.

Concept: Expert on the Arisen

Remnant: Ba

Judge: Ammut, the Devourer

Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 4; Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Skills: Academics (Ancient Empires) 4, Investigation 4, Occult (Arisen, Irem) 5; Stealth 2; Expression 1, Persuasion 1, Subterfuge 3

Bane Rites: Rite of Eternal Chains, Rite of the Lost Cause, Vitriolic Souls

Bane Affinities: Body-snatcher, Falcon Soul Aloft, Sekhem Clot

Merits: Encyclopedic Knowledge • • (Arisen), Language • • • • • • (Danish, Egyptian, Greek, Iremite, Norwegian, Swedish), Library • • (Occult)

Willpower: 8

Burden: Insatiable (Vitalran cannot help but consume knowledge and Sekhem whenever either present themselves)

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Health: 7

Morality: 4

Sekhem: 6

Pillars/Turn: 2/1

Affinities: Hateful Bau, By Steps Unseen, Shadow Rending

Utterances: Jaws of the Devourer

Pillars: Ba 5, Ka 3, Ren 2, Sheut 2

THE LIVING

As well as the undead, mortals involved in Arisen affairs play different roles in this era. Some merely exist for the purpose of their cults, performing sorcery unbeknownst to a majority of mortals, while others manipulate and utilize the sacred powers given to them in the shape of a corpse.

TAURANS

"We worship the Earth and what has risen from it, whether it be fauna or corpses, and we can therefore highly relate to the pagan traditions of magic users. They pay their respect to what gave us life, and with this we can only sympathize. Our paths led us from the rigid earth of Egypt to that of Scandinavia, where we heard whispers of the hunt of these inhuman beings, and we raise our dead to protect them against what seeks to destroy them. The youngest among us we send to scout the lands of witches, while the rest of us tend to our matriarch and prepare for war. For if society sees northerners with magical abilities as their enemies, what happens when they hear words of our existence?"

THE CRIMSON PRIESTHOOD

"Witches? There is no such concept, especially not in a barren village inhabited by heretic fanatics. However, magicians thrive in masses. We are the brewers of humours, creating concoctions that could kill entire villages, and we are to blame for unholy objects causing suffering and sickness. Our play with blood magic is not related to talks of the devil or hell but powered by us and the gods. For so long, we have harvested the corpses of those who cannot afford burials, with the promise they would



end in Christian soil. Sadly, they should never have trusted a sorcerer, as we use their bodily shells to provide us with the blood we need in our sacrifices and rituals. But with the increasing witch paranoia, mortals are growing reluctant to hand over the bodies of their loved ones, for what if unholy actions were to be performed upon them? This is where we step in. Nothing will stand in the way of our purpose."

SISTERS OF ETERNITY

"Instead of preventing innocent deaths, or assisting those who order them, we take the opportunity to communicate with the unliving. What intrigues us the most are the groups of Sin-Eaters who are equally interested in this specific area or mass killings. We use dying mortals to understand not only the world in which we exist, but the world that is to come, and we waste no time with politics or false religions."

PLACES AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

Relics, shrines, papyri, and sleeping corpses. Although many of these sacred objects and areas originally belonged in warmer climates, the great influx of cults and Arisen into even the most northern parts of Europe over the last century ensured a great deal of them were scattered. Some objects and tombs are yet to be found, while others are frequently worn or visited.

THE MENAT OF HEKA

Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 3

To most, this Menat does not stand out as an amulet, or even an object of interest. Christophori Hornaeus wears it around his neck without it catching too much attention. He stole the Menat from the living quarters of a royal guard, who found the Menat crusading in the Levant and was later burned at the stake by Christophori himself. Christophori witnessed the powerful effects of the amulet, which is concealed as a flute, when he blew it the very first time and he suddenly felt a strong pull toward the baker's wife. Days after, he saw her drawing sacrilegious symbols on her doorframe and he persecuted her as witch. To him, the Menat is God's vessel, and he believes God speaks directly through it to assist in the purge of evil.

Power: The Menat of Heka was created with the intention of finding magical creatures. In Heka, sorcerer priests used to localize tombs with resting mummies inside or risen mummies. Christophori is convinced the flute shows him the way to witches and sacrilegious individuals, and feels the power of the object, but he has no clue how or when to use it. The flute must be played to show its true power, and once it does, a certain tone can be heard by the bearer every time he is near a mummy.

Curse: The creator of the flute was not pleased to see his masterpiece disappearing into the hands of his enemies. He set a curse upon the object, making its use apparent to any unnatural creature. The flute, although almost silent to mortals, sounds like a loud screech to any immortal when used, thus attracting them to the user. Non-immortal creatures do not hear the sound.

THE FORBIDDEN SWAMPS

Much of the booming Scandinavian agricultural trade was only made possible by removing and draining many of the swamps taking up large areas. Farmers waste no time removing what they must to make way for fields and livestock. Despite the farmers' eagerness, some swamps are deemed sacred or not to be touched by royal order and without any apparent reason, to many farmers' irritation. In reality, several of the swamps act as resting places or tombs for cults bringing their sleeping Arisen to the North. They know the anoxic swamps are the best place to store the dead and their relics, and several have manipulated the throne to ward off anyone who might want to explore the mysteries of the swamps further.

PAPYRUS OF THE WITCHES' BANE

Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 2

Sigfrid knows what power rests underneath his bed and, luckily, he is the only one. As one of the few monks left in Sweden, and one of the few Swedes who does not believe in witches or magic, he instead seeks to protect and provide shelters for accused witches on the run. As a parting gift, his pastor provided him with an ancient script, something he promised would ward off evil. The papyrus can create a powerful ward against dark magic, and Sigfrid knows it is up to him to keep it stored away.

Power: When reading the script near holy grounds — a church, churchyard, chapel, or another sacred place — the letters on the papyrus light up and the reader gains +5 to all Defense rolls against the undead, including mummies, Sin-Eaters, and vampires. If a mummy reads the text, he will gain the same affect when in a fight with the Lifeless, and Sin-Eaters will gain the same effect when fighting against any denizens of the Underworld. The effect remains in place until the next stroke of midnight.

Curse: The scroll was originally stolen from a plague house, and carries with it some of the memories of the illness. After reading the scroll, the reader exudes a beacon of sickly light, making every living creature within their presence in the next 24 hours feel deathly ill. Any living creature within the reader's presence for longer than a scene must roll Stamina + Resolve to resist losing a permanent dot of Stamina. This can kill someone with a Stamina rating of 1, if reduced to 0.

DISCIPLES OF JANNES AND JAMBRES

"We are the vessels of gods, the tongue of the ancient mulch, the eyes of that which cannot see. We fight fire with fire, and we do what the Church and the state cannot."

Despite being one of the oldest sorcerer cults, the Disciples have renewed themselves and their views on a near-constant basis throughout their existence. This has led to frequent changes in members and leaders, and skepticism from other cults, often leading them to underestimate the massive power the cult holds. The Disciples of Jannes and Jambres is a group based in Oslo, Norway and is known as one of the largest and most influential cults in Scandinavia. Although they have faced change throughout the centuries, their primary goal has never faltered: to destroy any threat to God. When talks of witches leading good Christian men and women to the devil reached the group, they were the first to lead the purges throughout Norway. They mercilessly dispatched anyone they deemed a threat without going through state or Church. News of a vigilante group killing in the name of God quickly spread throughout Scandinavia, giving them a certain notoriety. For some, the Disciples were angels in disguise, sent by God to do what the Church could not. This opinion was almost exclusive to Protestants, who already believed in the separation between God and Church. For Catholics, the cult was nothing but sinners, going against every law issued by the Church.

The Disciples of Jannes and Jambres took their name from the sorcerous couple represented in the Bible. Despite hunting and killing those who supposedly use magic, they are not hesitant to practice its use. They firmly believe magic is not evil or frowned upon by God in its nature, and they see Jesus as one of the most powerful wielders of magic to have ever walked the Earth. However, magic in the wrong hands, especially in the hands of devilish men and women, can certainly become evil. Attempting to kill witches without knowing the weapons they use against God and his people is like fighting without a sword — useless and dangerous. Therefore, the group uses every ancient gift granted them to fight against what they believe to be truly evil.

HISTORY

The Disciples originated in Egypt like many other sorcerer cults, and their first pursuits were not in the name of Christianity or with malicious intentions in mind. When a group of three male scholars stumbled upon an ancient papyrus written by the god-king Hakor, they became so enthralled with the weird and otherworldly text that they forgot their duties and were stripped of their titles. Meanwhile, their fascination grew so strong, and their minds so twisted, they could no longer see right from wrong. Petu, the eldest of the three, could not live with the rest of the group knowing about the papyrus, and in a hypnotic fury he murdered both.

After seeing the blood of his dearest friends on his hands, he knew he could no longer face the gods' judgment. He had heard talks of a new God, an omnipresent God to overrule every other God, based on the religious beliefs of Judaism and Christianity, and to Petu it made sense to worship him instead of the older gods he had already angered. This was his chance to start anew. With the magical scroll in hand, he soon traversed not only the Persian Empire, but Europe, to search for groups of people sharing in his beliefs. He has seen with his own eyes what evil magic can do, but was also deeply fascinated by it, and so he decided to remove magic from the hands of those who could not contain it. This philosophy has served member of the cult ever since, and the witch trials in Scandinavia were the perfect opportunity to kill and destroy their enemies without having the world against them.

GOALS

Magic is a powerful tool, and just like any other object that can be utilized for destructive purposes, when it falls into the wrong hands it can have dangerous consequences. The Disciples firmly believe they are the only true sorcerers and the only beings who can wield magic like God bestowed upon Jesus. Magic should be limited and controlled, but not completely destroyed. Men and women from simple villages who know nothing of the world have no control over magic, and might easily attract the attention of Satan if they access it without control. They see it as their task to remove and destroy any wielders of magic other than themselves, since they are the only true sorcerers.

JUDGE WORSHIP

Bastu (The Stare): The Disciples know their former crimes, but believe they cannot be judged for them as they were all a part of the larger scheme. Without the scheme, their cult would not exist. They feel connected to Bastu, and its punishment for avoiding one's just sentence.

Kenemti (The Penitent): Anyone using magic aside from the Disciples is to be destroyed. Many cultists who utter the name "Kenemti" officiate in churches or other religious places, protected by their stone walls and words of false prophets. The Disciples feel a strong bond with the Judge who punishes those responsible for desecration of holy places.

Maa-Nantuuf (The Seer of What is Brought Forth): Only through self-sacrifice and pain will a body lose former bonds and allow new ones to form. Mutilation is a large part of the Disciples' rituals; therefore, they feel a fearful bond with the Judge of body despoilment.



GUILD LINKS

The Disciples were originally tightly connected to Sesha-Hebsu and their inscriptions of texts, and Scribes are indeed curious about the ancient god-king scroll in the Disciples' possession. As time passed, they saw themselves serving the Maa-Kep with increasing regularity. Their strict values of order in chaos and control over magic catered to their needs. Although the Disciples primarily believe in the Christian god, they have not lost touch with their ancient beliefs and, in all secrecy, they still firmly believe in the Judges of Duat, as decreed by their original Arisen masters.

INITIATION CEREMONIES

Every cult has its own set of rules or rites for individuals to become new members. To the Disciples, these consist of a concoction of both Egyptian and Scandinavian traditions. No one can enter the cult without being hand-picked by Hilde, and even then, she might see a potential member unworthy even after years of service. Hilde knows she cannot just let anyone know the secrets of their duality in beliefs and their magical powers, especially not in a time when all magic is seen as evil. If she finds a suitable member, he must connect with both the new God and the old gods, and the only method making this possible is sensory deprivation. The aspiring member is hung on a wooden cross, with his arms and legs bound to its surface. His ears and eyes are covered, and he is stripped naked. The eldest of the sorcerers draws symbols from the papyrus of the god-king while chanting the names of the 42 Judges of Duat. After five days in complete starvation and darkness, the soul has reached duality and the body is cleansed and ready to worship both old and new gods.

DISCIPLES RITUALS

- **And Jesus Saw:** The Disciple uses this rite in trials and to track down magicians. This rite can also be used to locate places of magic like Avernian Gates and tombs. Firstly, a sacrifice is required wherein the sorcerer must thread a small needle through the sclera of their eyeball without assistance. Such an action requires at least four successes on a Stamina + Resolve roll. Once threaded, a cross must be attached to the hanging thread. Secondly, the participants need a piece of the body or something stained with one of the humours of the person on whom they want to use it, or a fragment of material from the area they seek to investigate. By dragging the cross over the focus item, the sorcerer can detect its owner's or originator's location. Arisen participation in the ritual typically takes the form of donating Ren, providing the sorcerers with knowledge of their target's name, history, and connections.
- **The Blood of Christ:** The sorcerer dips their hands into a blessed chalice full of the freshly drawn blood of a witch, sacrificed specifically for this rite, and drinks what they can hold within their palms. They repeat this until the chalice is empty. The first drink requires a single success on a Stamina + Resolve roll, the second requires two, and third requires three, unless the sorcerer is used to drinking blood. The sorcerer partaking in the rite gains an additional two dots in one Physical Attribute of their choice during their next battle. If an Arisen contributes Ba to this rite, normally by cutting their hand and holding the open, unbleeding wound in the full chalice, the sorcerer gains two dots in every Physical Attribute. This modifier lasts until their next battle concludes.
- **The Holy Trinity:** This mass rite requires the presence of three or more sorcerers. In unison, they create a circle on the ground beneath them and join hands atop the symbol. At the center of the symbol must rest the bones of a holy individual, such as a priest or saint. A knife passes between the participants and they take turns cutting into their hands. Their blood circulates through them unnaturally, leading to gross, bulging muscles, veins popping, and an alien rage within that increases the difficulty of Resolve and Presence-based rolls for the next 24 hours. Each participant gains access to the Wits and Composure ratings of the participants with the highest ratings, lasting three days and three nights. The bones disintegrate upon completion of the ritual. If an Arisen stands in the circle and contributes a point of Ba, the new Wits and Composure ratings remain in place for seven days and nights.

Playing the Game

It might be difficult imagining why the Sin-Eaters and Arisen would pursue each other, taking their vastly different goals, perspectives, and history in mind. The Sin-Eaters seek to judge the living and assist the dead, creating an Underworld wherein mortals, ghosts, Bound, and geists can harmonize. Arisen seek their own destiny with little consideration to the world surrounding them, and sometimes they roam aimlessly but with immense amounts of power. What does create a common ground between the two undead is their fascination with the Underworld and Duat. The Arisen seek Duat to gain unity with the Judges and understand what they are and where they should go, while Sin-Eaters often travel the Underworld to guide and punish ghosts and control the Bargain between Bound and geist. Sorcerer cults create powerful spells with the help of ancient words from the depths, and Bound roam the many levels of the Underworld and its Dominions to understand why and what they are.

Friends or Foes

Arisen fascinate themselves with the idea that there are creatures in their periphery who know how to enter the world beneath through magical Gates. Sin-Eaters find an Arisen incredibly useful when searching for Keys for that exact Gate. Undertakers will offer many favors to gain access to the tomb of an Arisen and satisfy their hunger for relics of the dead, and the Su-Menent will in turn set their eyes on the possibility of being ferried down the Rivers into the Lower Mysteries.

Two powerful undead in an area with a low mortal population might also create conflicts of catastrophic proportions if either does not see eye to eye. Perhaps the Furies of Ribe are convinced the newly awakened Maa-Kep are only out to abuse the ghosts of the lost lives from the recent witch trials, and they wish to protect what they see as their area of expertise before they fall into the claws of evil. Maybe the faithful cult of a sleeping Arisen suddenly decides to follow a powerful and active Sin-Eater, fascinated by his charismatic preaching in the local church — what happens when that Arisen wakes to see members of her cult turning their backs on her?

Winter Conditions

Darkness and cold dominates large parts of Scandinavia. The natives have had hundreds of years to adjust and regulate their ways of living through the blistering cold winds and snow storms, utilizing the bountiful seas around them. They build housing and shelters designed to withstand the cold, and brew strong alcoholic drinks to warm them from the inside. However, these frosty temperatures are not something many mummies and Sin-Eaters are used to enduring. Some Arisen use their cults to do their dirty deeds during the harsh winter while they store themselves away in hideouts, and Sin-Eaters will at times completely abandon the surface of the living and await the darkest hours to disappear in the Underworld.

Use the Blizzard, Extreme Cold, and Ice Tilts from the **Chronicles of Darkness** core book (p. 287) to demonstrate the harshness of the winter months in Scandinavia.

The Bastion of Bergen

It is believed among the guilds that the first Arisen arrived in Bergen in 1616 CE. It did not take long for the church and peasants of the town to whisper "witch" as she walked by. In the beginning, she did not know what the word meant, and she was not aware of the hatred against magic. Her Sybaris spread sickness everywhere she went, and she was forced to move from her small chambers in the middle of the town to a remote location on its outskirts. People were convinced the illness was a result of her being

New Tilt: Frostbitten (Personal)

Description: The cold is biting through you, and the pain is as deep as the punishments of Duat and the first cold nights of the Underworld. The winter takes its toll even on undead forms.

Effect: Supernatural creatures (including mages and hunters) suffer −1 on Strength and Stamina rolls for the next 24 hours while their bodies recover. In the same circumstances, mortals suffer −2 on Strength and Stamina rolls for the next seven days, and if not treated within the first two, permanently lose one dot from Presence and one dot from Stamina.

Causing the Tilt: Remaining outside for more than five hours in temperatures below 30° Fahrenheit. Being exposed to a supernatural power that channels freezing temperatures over an extended period. Exposure to the Extreme Cold or Blizzard Tilts.

Ending the Tilt: Finding sanctuary from the chilling temperatures and applying warming (but not hot) temperatures to the frostbitten area, before then treating it with an Intelligence + Medicine roll. The difficulty of this roll increases by 1 for every hour the character was exposed to the elements past the initial five.

New Tilt: Strange Darkness (Environmental)

Description: The paranoia of this new darkness is overwhelming. The missing rays of the sun and the seemingly eternal darkness is taking its toll on you. You have to get away, you have to leave now.

Effect: Anyone spending more than eight hours in unnatural darkness, enforced darkness, or the darkness that comes with winter in or near the Arctic Circle, and does not have the aid of artificial light sources, the moon, or the stars, cannot use their Willpower to reroll for the next 24 hours.

Causting the Tilt: The lengthy winter in the Arctic Circle, where the sun doesn't come up for over a month. Supernatural powers that create clouds of impenetrable darkness. Being entombed alive.

Ending the Tilt: Finding a light source is the best way to end this Tilt. Lighting a candle or traveling to find sunlight are equally as effective.



a foreigner, despite her waking in the heart of town. She knew of her ability to issue Utterances and suspected she was awake for a reason, but she could not control her powers sufficiently and all her Memory could provide her was the name of her Mesen-Nebu guild. Existing in Bergen became increasingly difficult, as she could no longer walk from her house without having stones thrown in her direction or being spat upon. Fear gripped her emaciated, powerful form, preventing her speaking words of destruction.

Just as she was about to move on, a note was slipped underneath her door, and it led to her very first encounter with an undead unlike herself. A Sin-Eater had kept an eye on her and found her aura of magic fascinating, and the two started a friendship, which later created the Bastion of Bergen. The Sin-Eater helped her locate her lost cult which was searching for her in southern parts of Denmark, and she helped the Sin-Eater locate his very first Avernian Gate. Realizing the value a companionship between their two worlds held, they took it upon themselves to protect and aid any new Arisen or Sin-Eaters in their area who might suffer from the dangers of the witch hunt. They acquainted themselves with sorcerer cultists the Sisters of Eternity and their Arisen companion She'kalia Darnu, and Harald Stigsager arose from the Underworld several times to aid the Bastion in the protection of his own companions.

Opinions about the rapidly growing Bastion vary; some Arisen believe it is a waste of Sekhem to protect others, and many Sin-Eaters think their abilities are worth more in the depths of the Underworld than on quarrels concerning mummies. Regardless, the Bastion adds newer members at a rapid pace, and they only seem to grow stronger with the union of undead.

The example of the Bastion of Bergen shows how a krewe framework, or in this time a heresy, can be applied to beings other than the heresy itself. It is also an example of how an awakened Arisen unaware of her goal can find a meaningful path by which to gain Sekhem and Memory.

Merits

Holy Acquaintances (• to ••••, Krewe)

Effect: Your character has friends within the Church, whether it be Catholic or Protestant. This might be the local choirboy who can provide you with details about the corrupt priest, or the Bishop of Sweden. You hold a powerful card in your hand, as the Church is tightly connected to the state, and dictates laws aplenty.

Sabbat Knowledge (•• to •••••)

Effect: You have used an extensive amount of time on studying the Bible, *Malleus Maleficarum*, alchemy books, books about herbalism, and historic books about previous witch trials. Your knowledge of why the trials are occurring and what hunters are looking for in their purges are to your great advantage, and assist you in knowing what not to do to be seen as a witch — or perhaps what to look for if you wish to hunt them yourself.

Invisible Sybaris (• to •••, Mummy Specific, Style)

Effect: This Merit allows you to lessen the effect of your Sybaris on mortals and makes it easier for you to hide your magical abilities.

Shadow Steps (•): Plants and animals surrounding your character no longer suffer from the damage of your Sybaris.

Only a Whisper (••): Your character can keep her Sybaris under control in front of one individual for however long she chooses.

Come Closer (•••): Groups of mortals can now surround your character without them suffering the illness of Sybaris.

Immediate Disappearance (• to •••, Sin-Eater Specific, Krewe Only)

Effect: This Merit allows your heresy to within hours disappear into the Underworld and from the minds of mortals they have encountered in the last three days, allowing it to escape an angry horde of townspeople or witch hunters. Your heresy must be gathered in one place, or else the escape will not succeed.

Storytelling the Scandinavian Witch Trials

In an era where no one can truly feel safe as even the predator becomes prey and families and friends turn their backs on each other, anxiety and isolation are prominent emotions. Persecution, manipulation, panic, and paranoia reign supreme, as religious dogma and the hunger for power sneak up on even the holiest.

Persecution

The era of the witch hunt provides certain individuals with immense amounts of power, making them the rulers of life and death. This opportunity attracts many different groups, mortal and immortal. Create groups or individuals incarnated into the belief of the malicious witch, either as a part of the Lutheran or Catholic Church, or perhaps groups of hunters. Make them the head of a court, and make the players observe court cases where innocent individuals and even children are punished for witchcraft. This era was unfair and terrible to all those persecuted as witches or their sympathizers. Use this to spark the sense of justice and give them a common enemy.

Manipulation

When stricken by fear or desperation, manipulation becomes a walk in the park. The majority of witches were either manipulated psychologically or physically to point out other witches or confess their sins. Heads of state and prominent town rulers did not hesitate to use torture or threats of death to get the answers they wanted. Put the players in the place of a victimized witch and let them experience manipulation firsthand or let them be the one swinging the axe.

Panic

Danger is everywhere, and this naturally leads to anxiety and panic in different forms. Some types of panic are expressed through isolative and concealed behavior, leaving cities and towns abandoned. In contrast, the sudden explosive screams and pushes in the town market, when the word "witch!" is suddenly yelled, create pandemonium. Let characters ride through towns once blossoming with activity and let them experience the eerie silence and watchful eyes staring from the windows. Or give them the opportunity to calm down a chanting crowd, perhaps joining them as they point their fingers at a new witch.

Paranoia

Why is the neighbor's wife Maren always heading out after midnight with a candle and a basket of stones and wild herbs? And did she not sing an odd song in a foreign tongue when sowing the fields last week? There must be devilry at play, and you cannot have this in the town. In this era, trust is a word rarely used and even less practiced. Players are aware of the dangers of being seen as a witch, especially when they do wield magical powers. Apart from the dangers coming from outside influences, there might also be judging eyes within the group. Create chaos and distrust, dilemma, and concern when a member of the party suddenly becomes the witch.

Fanaticism

A small group of Sin-Eaters dedicated to the ways of the Lutheran Church are purging a small town in southern Sweden. Indifferent to showing their inhuman abilities to eyes that may not understand them, weekly burnings and hangings are destroying the already-small population of the town. Townspeople are hiding inside their homes, the town market lies silent, and not even children can be seen playing on the streets. As the bell in the town church exudes a somber tone when the last rays of the sun leave the barren

earth, the Hexebanen awakes. A group of three to four Sin-Eaters clad in robes led by snarling Hexhunde, or "witch hounds," in leather armor guard the streets. The dogs guide the group from door to door, with nervous eyes staring from the windows, for they know if the dog sits, another witch is found. By morning, a large red cross marks the witch's door, giving the rest of the town permission to loot, destroy, and punish whatever and whomever lives behind it. If the accused witch has not fled the town by the same morning, Hexebanen will hunt them down.

Betrayal

From her window in the small townhouse next to the smith, she observes Hexebanen as they run through the town like a pack of confused sheep. She smiles, for she knows they cannot and will not find the reason behind the misery haunting the small town this last year. Her Sekhem is too powerful for simple mortals or even Sin-Eaters to bear. She awoke in times when witches did not pose a threat or even exist in mortal vocabulary, and settled down in the town, not necessarily knowing why or what her existence meant. She realized her mere presence was rendering animals and people in the town sick as accusations of witchcraft quickly arose and some suspicious looks were pointed her direction. She knew she had to drown the flame, and therefore manipulated Klaus, the captain of the Sin-Eater-driven Hexebanen, to make her a trusted set of eyes and ears to point out possible causes of the illness. As weeks go by, and despite now hundreds of witches fleeing or being murdered, the cause of the misery still has not been located. Panic is arising among mortals and Sin-Eaters, while the Deceived mummy known only as Gry sits back and enjoys the show.

Gameplay Tiers

When creating a chronicle, there is a plethora of directions and levels on which to build gameplay. In the Scandinavian Witch Trials era, the opinions of the state and church trickle down from high society to the poorest and lousiest existences. At every level there exists the presence of undead beings.

Tier One: Cauldron

Papal bulls, decrees, and laws of religious nature all derive from places of power and prominence, but the ones paying for and often abiding by them are the individuals. They are people with little to no say in the matter, who will just have to pray they or their families are not the next to stand tiptoe on a wooden box with a noose around their neck.

Immortals are not highly represented in smaller societies, and even for larger cities it is rare for a single Arisen or Sin-Eater to be present for longer periods of time. When this happens, it is an opportunity for the Storyteller to create a conflict or alliance between the two parties. Keep in mind they are also influenced by the paranoia of the witch hunt, and may stand as accused or accuser.

When playing in this tier, keep the game local and isolated. Let the walls of the town close in on the players and let them experience the slow suffocation of a society where everyone knows everything about one another. Give them a chance to create deep relations with the inhabitants, and understand the intricate details of the town. Perhaps the group hears rumors of an alleged witch in the opposing town, and upon closer inspection realizes this witch bears close resemblance to that of a Pilgrim Sin-Eater. Or maybe they spot a recently awakened Tef-Aabhi who has no clue why she is awake and wanders around confused, spreading her Sybaris.

Tier Two: Circle

In times of fear, mortals as well as immortals seek the company of their kin — some in the pursuit of safety and reassurance, and some to plan how to utilize and manipulate panic.

Apart from groups of immortals, mortals aware of their undead companions wandering the world create their own groups, some to assist, and some to manipulate their monstrous leaders. Cults, pilgrimaging from the warm sands of Egypt to the blistering cold in the north, bring with them their Deathless, or summon them from their graves. Tribal cults awaken their idols to gather wisdom of this newfound hatred of witches, and to understand in what way they should be handled. Conspiracy cults and enterprise cults both have agendas and goals and will often awaken the undead to use them. One cult might be based in the Lutheran Church and is in dire need of the only magic they know to be sacred — Sekhem — in order to fight against dark powers. Another might earn money murdering witch hunters for the local Bound burdened with vengefulness over their partner, lost in a witch purge.

Let the players explore a large area influenced by the witch hunt in different degrees. Give them an intense scene with the vicar of the area, and let them know his take on the stressed towns in his parish. Make vast differences between the areas, perhaps create a small town only populated by alleged witches. The cults and groups of ghosts can influence the playable area, even without the help of Sin-Eaters or mummies.

Tier Three: Sabbat

The largest and most influential groups in society exist on this tier. The head of the Lutheran Church pulls the string of every action of the state, and nothing is passed or approved if not run by the Church first. The word of God is final.

Heresies of Vengeful and Bereaved Sin-Eaters rapidly grow, as newer members are created faster than ever before. There are simply myriad mortals who are not yet done living, dying with grief or anger, or wishing to avenge themselves for the unfairness of their demise. Geists do not shy away from making deals with the humans lost between life and death, and therefore Scandinavia is one of the areas with most Bound activity in this era. Mummies are a rarer sight, as they until now have not had any business in the colder regions. But with a stark expression of the power of the law and religion driving members of Sesha-Hebsu to get a piece of the action, and Su-Menent seeking mysteries and alleged magical wisdom from these witches.

Send the players on a great journey through Scandinavia and let them experience the largest historical witch trials, their prosecutors, and their victims. Will they agree with their heresies and guilds when taking a stand or perhaps leave the humans to fend for themselves? Do they stand by the witches, as they understand the need for magic in the world, or do they see it as a curse?

Let the players know, although they harbor powers most do not, that the era of the Scandinavian Witch Trials is one of danger and even a mummy or Sin-Eater stands little chance against the anger of the masses.

Story Hooks

The witch trials are a tightly focused event in history, but Scandinavia is large and contains many characters and plots ripe for exploration.

The Dark Host

Matthæus Johannes Sigfridsson was a dedicated and renowned priest in the Norwegian city of Bergen. Unlike many other priests in the town, he grew up in a poor family raised by his single mother on the outskirts. As his mother read him the Bible every night before sleep, he became fascinated with Christian beliefs and, at 12 years of age, he started working at the local church as a choirboy. From there, he crawled his way up to the very top of the hierarchy, becoming a priest himself at the age of 20. His faith was strong and his young mind was eager to practice God's will, and when the town accused its first witch, he was the one condemning her to a fiery death.

However, when the town turned against his elderly mother, claiming to have seen her talk to animals and mix magical herbs, Matthæus' trust in God was challenged for the first time. How could God punish someone who had done only good in her life? He knew he had to set an example, and no one could escape unpunished from performance of malicious arts. Holding back tears, he watched his mother plunge to her death in the nearby river.

The summer after, Matthæus found himself on his deathbed as the plague once again swept Bergen. He died at the age of 21. Instead of ascending to heaven as he drew his last breath, a voice softly spoke to him. It offered him a deal, a pact, something to keep them both alive. Matthæus recognized the voice as his mother's and accepted her request.

To the surprise of the people of Bergen, Matthæus survived his illness. No one knows inside their beloved priest lives the will of one of the town's murdered witches. No one except Matthæus knows of his dark pact, and he is aware he must keep his secret hidden at all costs.

Matthæus is fighting a battle within himself based on guilt and desperation. He is aware of his state and what he has to hide for the rest of his existence. Have a player figure out the secret of the town priest and let him use the knowledge to his advantage.

Freya's Descendants

Although heresies of Sin-Eaters were created as a response to the negative view the world adopted after the Reformation, the gathering of völver has existed since ancient times. Originally the völver from everywhere around Torsåker would gather to celebrate solstice and make both human and animal sacrifices to the gods. In the Viking Age and up until the 13th century, they were widely respected by every town in their region, and it was seen as a blessing when the covenant would visit. When times changed, and magic condemned, they did not scatter in fear or turn to Christianity; instead they became stronger in their Asatru faith and swore to protect the victims of the witch trials.

The heresy created an ethos, an action, swearing protection over those condemned by their town and state. A great pilgrimage began from Torsåker to Boden, where Freya's descendants would travel from town to town and aid persecuted witches. Some they bring food and drink, some they even help settle in other towns.

Freya's descendants form a group of Sin-Eaters useable in many different ways. Use the descendants to foment chaos in a town where a strict Christian regime is creating paranoia and fear. Let the players take the roles of descendants themselves, and create a chronicle based on their pilgrimage through Norway. Use them as protagonists against witch hunters and fanatically Christian characters.

Black Disturbances

Sothin A'kum lay dormant for centuries before feeling the flow of Sekhem return her to life. Although she awoke in Cairo, she felt a great force pulling her north. She knew this was the purpose of her awakening. Her cult was calling upon her. She managed to travel unnoticed aboard merchant ships and hidden within carts of hay and fodder, and after a year of travel finally made it to the south side of Sweden. Upon arriving, she was greeted by the leader of her cult who told her exactly why she was summoned north: An area of frequent witch activity needed to be brought under control.



With the help of her cult, and with influences inside the local church, Sothin rapidly rises to a place of power. She uses kepher in an ill attempt to recognize witchcraft and magical beings, but surprisingly to her, none of the alleged witches hold any magical power. She sees nothing but frightened mortals. Sothin slowly comes to the realization: The witch hunt has nothing to do with the destruction of evil but is a flawed attempt to keep a people under control. Slowly, memories of the Nameless Empire's hunt of men and women awakes inside of her. She now wonders if her existence brings more misery than hope.

Like a child monarch, Sothin is put in a position of power without knowing why. For her cult, she is a puppet with every string attached to them. What happens when she realizes she is sending innocent men and women to their deaths? How will her flashbacks to the Nameless Empire affect her Memory? Sothin can be used to create total and utter chaos within a town, if she unleashes her wrath against officials. Perhaps her cult convinces her what she does is the right thing, and extreme witch purges occur.

The Revenge of Maren Spliid

In the Danish town of Ribe, one particular witch trial is provoking war between two immortal factions, Sin-Eaters and mummies. As the mummy Nicholas Jensen murdered Maren Spliid, sister of Sin-Eater Laura Spliid, she swore her eternal revenge on the Arisen. Nicholas rose in 1609 and used his inhuman powers to destroy everything bearing magical powers other than himself. To him, magic should be out of mortal hands at all costs. His hunger for power fueled his hunt, and although he never had proof the people

Many Smoldering Embers

The small towns of Scandinavia can hardly support one **vampire**, let alone dozens of them. That doesn't stop coteries from setting up domains here, fully intent on relishing the long, dark hours for a handful of months every year, before traveling south again. The Lancea et Sanctum had a strong presence here, but Unaligned Kindred have taken great pleasure in supporting the Reformation and the witch hunters' pogroms of Sanctified vampires.

Though inhabited for thousands of years, Scandinavia still contains vast areas of wilderness. This may seem appealing to a **werewolf**, until they realize how much of this landmass falls under the dominion of the Pure. The Pure love the feeling of terror that comes with the witch trials and spread their own fables of witchcraft to panic their hunting stock.

Now is not a safe time to be a **mage** in Scandinavia. The witch hunters are on the lookout for anyone of magical bent, and while some Awakened are arrogant enough to think they can conceal their gifts, other supernatural creatures are only too happy to point the hunters in true mages' directions.

Prometheans run into many of the same problems as mummies in this region, their Disquiet causing as much panic and ill-thought as the Arisen's Sybaris. There are tales of a new form of Created emerging from the ashes of corpses burned at the stake, glowing with fire and malice. They call themselves the Pyreborn.

Changelings in this part of the world stick to the towns and villages, despite the dangers of being called out as unnatural or unholy. The Fae are dominant in the great forests of Scandinavia, with at least a score of Huntsmen rampaging around the wild. In an odd turn of events, the Pure werewolves look to the Lost to stymie their former captors' activities.

The witch **hunters** of this area and time period in part emerge from the Long Night and the Malleus Maleficarum, but in truth the hunters' persecutions are so indiscriminate, most hunters balk at the idea of supporting this slaughter. In fact, some hunters use this time to cleanse the Catholic and Protestant Churches of slashers in the guise of holy men.

Beasts watch and despair as Heroes infest the ranks of churchmen to persecute "wrongdoers" and gain acclaim for doing so. Many Primordials believe an organized cognate of Heroes is performing this task specifically to lure them out. "How many innocents will these monsters allow to die before they take action?" the Heroes ask. For the Primordials' part, they have a deep and entrenched history in this part of the world, rich in legend and myth. They will soon attempt their own scourge of the Heroic blight.

A vocal **demon** Inquisitor wonders aloud whether the priests leading these mass burnings are the tools of angels looking to scour a landmass clean on behalf of the God-Machine. What other reason could there be for such indiscriminate butchery? The rumor takes hold, and Unchained are galvanized into disrupting as many of these slaughters as possible.

he accused wielded magic, he never gave them the benefit of the doubt. He knew Maren's sister Laura was different, and harbored immense power, perhaps even understanding the nature of Sekhem. Therefore, he also knew he could not dispose of her in any traditional matter. He decided to instead harm the ones closest to her, and murdered her sister for false accusations of witchcraft.

Laura quickly found out about the mummy's malicious approach, and upon realizing he himself wielded the magic he burned others for practicing, she had a very powerful card in her hand. Now she only needs to find a way to utilize it properly, and perhaps rid the town of any Deathless that may arrive in future.

The Storyteller can use the two fronts to create a war among characters in her chronicle, making one side Arisen and another Sin-Eaters, and she can create a united force against either. Use the conflict to create a tense atmosphere for the players, letting them know not only are they in the risk of being murdered by mortals, but fellow undead might be on their backs as well.

Sources and Inspiration

This chapter could not be possible without vast amounts of research and information. Use these facts and fictions as an inspiration to create your own chronicle, but feel free to dive into research yourself.

Non-Fiction

Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages, Stephen A. Mitchell (2013): This literary piece contains a thorough investigation of what brought the witch trials to northern Europe and gives a timeline of how magic was seen as a powerful tool before the Christening of Scandinavia. Apart from historical facts, it also gives full examples of myths about witches and how they were seen by society. The book contains inspirational church art, law codes, and examples of runic spells.

Malleus Maleficarum, Heinrich Kramer & Jacob Sprenger (1487): This piece of history is a direct example of how witches were seen in a societal and religious perspective, how to hunt them down, and how to destroy them. Be aware, this book is highly biased by the authors, as they were both self-proclaimed witch hunters. Information in this book is therefore not to be taken as factual, but will provide the reader with an understanding of the outlook on witches in its time.

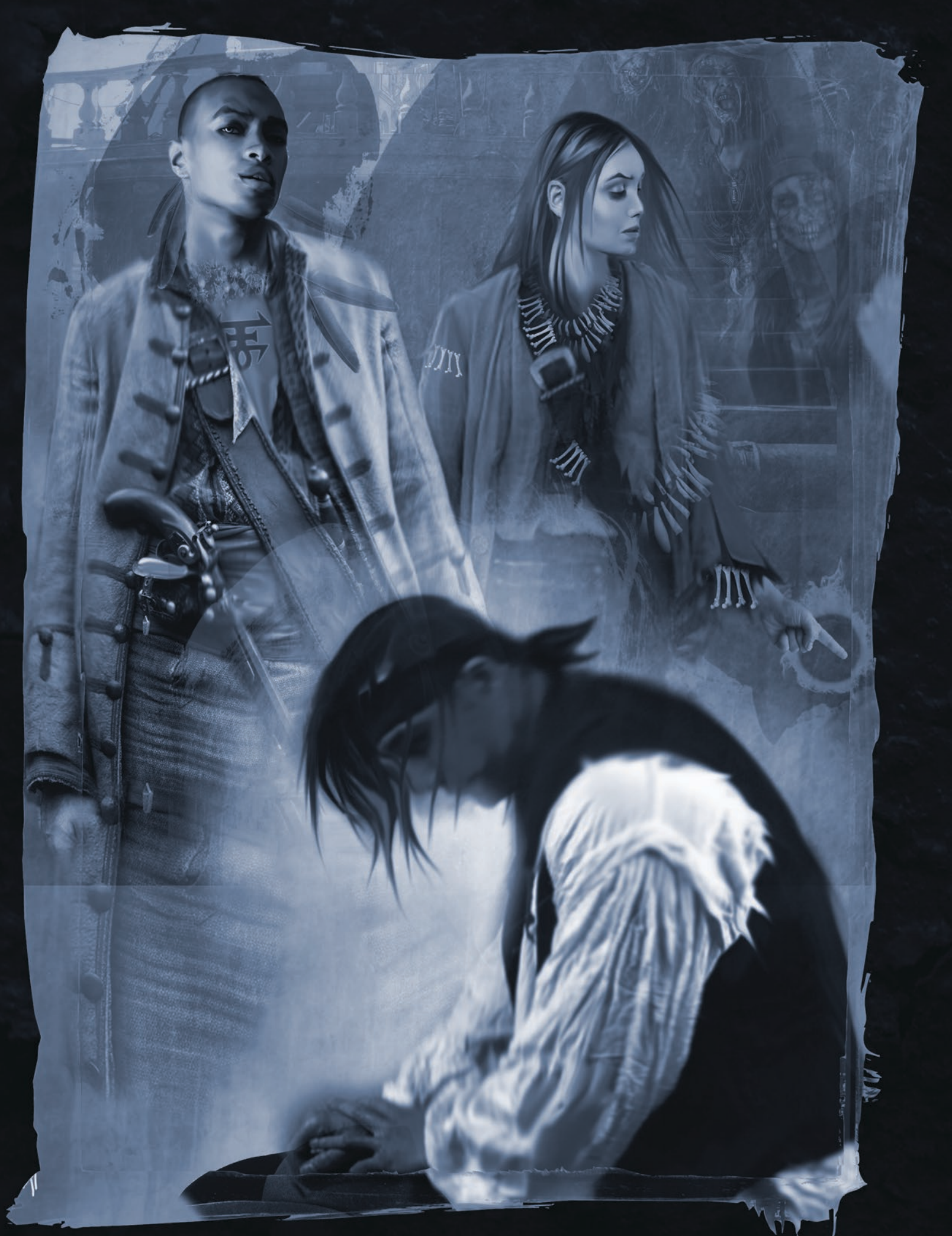
Fiction

Salem, WGN America (2014–2017): Although *Salem* takes place in the United States, the TV series provides a grim outlook on a society much like that of Nordic countries', based on fear, paranoia, and anxiety. The series is an especially useful tool to get a feel of the time of the witch trials and uses interesting special effects to get the message across. It delves into both societal conflicts and the human aspect of being in a constant hunt, and magical and religious aspects of the time-period.

Heksen/Häxan, Benjamin Christensen (1922): *Heksen* is more a representation of the true horror connected to magic and witchcraft than a historical representation of the time. The film was meant as a documentary on how mental illness could lead to witch hunts. However, use this piece to set the mood and scene for your chronicle, as it contains truly horrifying depictions of magic.

The Shamer's Daughter, Lene Kaaberbøl (2006): *The Shamer's Daughter* is a book series based on the life of a young girl who inherited her mother's ability to see other people's shame. The plot takes place in a fictional world, but is highly influenced by medieval Scandinavia. The girl and her mother are seen as witches, and this begins a wild hunt on both of them.

Antichrist, Lars von Trier (2009): In a modern depiction of witchcraft, *Antichrist* shows how current society is still not rid of the idea of a woman being inherently evil. The movie raises questions about sexuality, modern witchcraft, and if witches indeed do exist.



The last grains of sand dance down through the hourglass' vitrine waist to join their fellows below. Barlow watches them fall, frustrated. He grasps the glass with one rough hand and turns it over on its spindle.

"Three bells," he grunts. Cloying mists choke the air beyond the taffrail, leaving the sea a gauzy mystery.

Spragg nods. She grasps the tether of the *Clifton's* bell and rings, three times. Its sharp peals cut through the muffling silence.

Suddenly, as if summoned, a shape rears out of the fog. The *Caliver* seems to manifest from the air itself, sliding into view with a litany of wounds clear upon its splintered planks and tattered sails. Barlow curses, taken aback. This ship should be his salvation, yet it barely seems still seaworthy.

At his side, Spragg grabs the bell's tether again and rings it in a clamor until every pirate aboard the *Clifton* is roused and ready with blades and firearms.

They row across to the ruined ship, oars dipping through unnervingly quiet water. Close to, the strangeness of the deserted ship is evident; barnacles scab up its sodden timbers, and crabs creep from the ragged wounds in its flank. The ship looks like it's been adrift for a year, not a week.

Up onto the deck, where human bones crunch underfoot. The pirates swear and curse, but Barlow doesn't bother with prayer; no divine mercy waits for a sinner like he. He squints through the haze, sees two shapes upon the prow that resolve into people.

One is a black man, the other a white woman. The first does not wear the chains of a slave, but instead the ostentatious garments of a Nassau buccaneer — an extravagance of bright feathers, shimmering silks, and vivid dyes. He wears a grin, too, unconcerned by the scarred crew of killers. The second seems his opposite, a figure of somber, weather-worn rags and long, lank hair dripping with water. Little trinkets of bone and tarnished metal hang from her hems.

"Welcome!" the man says, arms open wide. "But I am afraid you will not find what your master seeks."

Sneering, Barlow's men raise their firearms, but he feels no triumph in his gut — only dread.

"I need the *Caliver's* cargo," he hisses, urgent and intense. "This is my chance to pay off my debt to Davys and be free. *Please.*"

The buccaneer smirks. "Oh, no amount of Judas silver will free you from the chains that Seer has caught you in, or the deeds you've done in his name."

Barlow's mouth dries. He tries to command his men to fire, but he can only make a strangled rasp.

"It's time." The sodden figure speaks in a voice as heavy as soil on a coffin, and she is not talking to the pirates, but to someone beyond them. "I am glad you have brought payment for the voyage below."

Back on the *Clifton's* deck, where no sailor now stands, the ship's bell rings again with doleful finality.

The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea

1716-1717 CE



"Yes, I do heartily repent. I repent I had not done more mischief; and that we did not cut the throats of them that took us, and I am extremely sorry that you aren't hanged as well as we."
– Anonymous pirate at the gallows

During the dawning decades of the 1700s, the cruel Atlantic Ocean plays host to a strange flowering of freedom. A golden age of piracy washes through the Caribbean and the coastline of colonial America. The so-called Republic of Pirates takes root in Nassau; by 1717, it is at its height. Pirates plague the trade routes in cheerful, bloodthirsty defiance of the rich and powerful. In the shadows, the Awakened and the Bound plumb the watery depths for dread mysteries, and struggle in their own ways with this clash between liberty and authority.

The ocean serves as a liminal space, a strange world where law frays into lawlessness, and where wealth and freedom lie in the grasp of those with the will to transgress. Human dramas play out against the backdrop of the seas' merciless hunger, the actors therein pushing to extremes for their powerful ambitions and appetites. Cruelty, greed, and defiance frame each story. These are tales of brutal privations and unkind authorities, the dark and bloated trade of slavery that bears vast wealth upon the broken backs of its victims, and the savagery of men and women determined to get what they want. Rogues and reavers seek to shed the shackles of their old lives and carve a new future for themselves with plundered riches and ferocity.

In Nassau, a new breed of mage emerges from this crucible of liberty. The Company of the Codex defies the old order, seeking enlightenment through utter freedom and the solipsistic indulgence of their obsessions. They harness the symbolic shifts in human culture for magical ends, changing the relationship between authority and power through the Caribbean — and facing wrathful opposition from the Seers of the Throne and the Silver Ladder alike.

Every sailor knows death is never far, and they gird themselves with superstitions and practices to ward off ill fate. The bells of ghostly ships sound across mist-wreathed seas, and strange corpse lights dance beneath the waves. A pirate struggles with the fear of retribution that writhes in his gut and finds the faces of those he has killed burned into his memory. The Bound tend to this watery congregation, plumbing the depths for lost and wayward souls.

Theme: Buying Deliverance

The ocean's cruel indifference serves as a great equalizer. Here, the desperate and downtrodden have a chance to seize their own agency. Piracy offers a route to revenge, freedom, or enrichment. It comes at a cost, though — in broken laws that threaten a terrible reckoning, in the infliction of horrific violence, and in the burden of sole responsibility for one's destiny. For some, the escape into piracy is deliverance enough from a life of suffering or choking oppression. For others, it serves as a means to an end. They seek escape from this capricious domain into a life of comfort, or to evade the heavy price for their crimes. Everyone seeks salvation of one kind or another.

Nassau promises that salvation. The Republic of Pirates is a vision beyond one person, a new way forward in which freedom can be found and held onto *together*. Built upon beliefs of equality and opportunity, the Republic's ideal is a society where each pirate is the master of her own fate. Although there's nothing kind about cutthroat pirates, the promise of independence and honor among thieves

appeals to those downtrodden by the system, whether that's the British Empire, the Diamond, or the Kerberoi.

Mood: Greed and Defiance

Insatiable avarice and powerful ambitions drive the pirates of Nassau to reave, plunder, and build their new Republic. Awakened and Bound search the depths for treasures and for answers, ravenously seeking revelation. The sea's endless greed underlies it all, ever waiting, ever ready to drink down another life and never sated no matter how much blood swirls in the water.

Everyone believes it is they who will win out, regardless of the odds. Challenge fate, roll the bones, and seize the prize, laughing all the way. Even when your doom closes in, better to defy those who would cow you. Live boldly and burn bright like a flash of powder rather than submit to the dull weight of authority. Some believe they can spit in the teeth of death itself and mock the ocean's rapacity, as fearless of the laws of nature as they are the laws of humanity.

Tone: Adventure and Transgression

The scent of opportunity mixes with the bracing air and fires the imagination. Every pirate knows incredible wealth awaits, if only they are bold enough to shirk the chains of society and seize what they desire by force. The wild seas can carry a sailor to incredible places and breathtaking sights. Every dream is out there, just waiting to be found. Yet reaching those dreams can threaten more than just a pirate's life; breaching the laws of the great nations might get a buccaneer hanged, but there are some places no human should tread, and some treasures demand a price of mind, soul, or worse.

What Has Come Before

In 1479, Portugal and the Catholic Monarchies of Castile and Aragon signed the Treaty of Alcáçovas, which divided the Atlantic Ocean and foreign territories between the two nations. The treaty set a precedent that would affect colonialist practices for hundreds of years to come: It allowed European powers to sort the world into spheres of influence and to colonize the lands within them with no regard for the rights of any indigenous peoples living there. Fifteen years later, Columbus' return from his voyage to the New World sparked the Treaty of Tordesillas, which once again split the lands between Portugal and Spain, to the exclusion of all other European countries. When the English, the French, and the Dutch recognized the potential for profit in the Caribbean, they sent ships and settlers across the seas as well. Spain and Portugal adhered to the treaties' divisions; the other countries mostly ignored their authority.

While Spain had a lock on New World silver production, with mines in Mexico and Potosí in Peru, the soil itself held riches. Soon, colonists built plantations to farm tobacco, sugar, and cotton. Though the Europeans profited immensely, their arrival came at a terrible price for the indigenous peoples of the West Indies, including the Arawak, Carib, and Taíno communities. European diseases like measles and smallpox decimated the native populations. The new seeds and animals the settlers brought with them transformed the environment, which led to crop failures and food shortages.

The colonists enslaved native people to work the mines, cut lumber, and farm the land. As disease ravaged their populations, the Europeans who relied on their labor considered the staggering death toll a problem for them. By 1518, the transatlantic slave trade was well-established: The colonies sent tobacco, cotton, and sugar to Europe; European businesses sent rum, textiles, and manufactured goods to Africa. Those goods purchased slaves for the colonies. Slavers packed them into cramped holds, chained them together, and fed them only once or twice a day. Malnutrition and disease killed an estimated 10 to 25 percent of these forcibly enslaved people during the passage.

In the mid-1500s, France sanctioned privateers to attack Spanish and Portuguese vessels in an attempt to break the countries' hold on the Atlantic and Indian Ocean trade routes. Soon enough, the English and the Dutch hired privateers of their own. Spanish silver made a tantalizing prize on its journey from the New World to the Old, and their slow ships were easy prey. After French privateers sacked Havana, the Spanish Empire organized convoys to escort the heavily-laden cargo ships across the Atlantic.

From 1618 to 1648, the Thirty Years' War embroiled Europe. The Spanish colonies saw a sharp decline in both people and supplies as the empire diverted its resources toward fighting on the continent. England, France, and the Netherlands benefited from Spain's distraction, colonizing or strengthening their presence in Barbados, Bermuda, Tortuga, and Guadeloupe. With the Peace of Westphalia, the Dutch Republic gained independence from Spain. Sephardic Jews from the Netherlands arrived in Curacao and established a congregation that is still active today.

What's in a Name

Although they used similar tactics and sought similar targets, privateers and pirates were not quite the same thing. Governments hired privateers to attack enemy ships during wartime. The captains received official letters of marque, and a ship's owners and sponsors received a share of any spoils. Pirates had no such governmental backing, and many attacked ships with little regard for nations of origin.

As wars ended and allegiances shifted, many privateers became pirates, only to return to privateering once hostilities heated up again.



Buccaneers

In the latter half of the 17th century, hunters from French-controlled Tortuga and Hispaniola used small craft to attack Spanish ships in the Windward Passage. Their success led them to set their sights on targets farther afield, including the Cuban- and Spanish-held cities on the mainland. In 1655, English forces captured Jamaica and invited captains to base their ships out of Port Royal. The town became the best place for buccaneers to sell their plunder, soon making it one of the richest cities in the Caribbean.

Buccaneers sailed the thin line between pirates and privateers. Many carried letters of marque that gave them the auspices of legitimacy, but their actions bordered on — or outright were — illegal. The Welsh privateer Henry Morgan carried a letter of marque from Jamaican Governor Thomas Modyford, under which he raided several Spanish cities. However, when he sacked Panama in 1671, he was arrested and brought to London. The arrest appeased the Spanish, with whom England had recently signed a peace treaty. His countrymen hailed him as a hero, and not only did King Charles II grant him a knighthood, Morgan later returned to the Caribbean and served as Jamaica's Lieutenant Governor.

The principles Golden Age pirates adopt have their roots in buccaneering. These sailors believed the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity applied to everyone aboard. The crew elected the captain and could call for their impeachment should they fail to impress. The crew had a say in where they sailed, and when to attack another ship or let it go. Sailors divided shares of plunder equally. Although the captain received a slightly larger share, it was not the huge percentage many privateer captains claimed. Buccaneers also took care of crewmembers who were wounded in battle, providing a type of insurance for them during their recovery or retirement.

Old World Complications

In 1651, England imposed the Navigation Acts, which severely limited its colonies' trade. Merchants in the colonies could only transport their goods on English ships. This move was the start of a trade war aimed at the Dutch, whose commercial success had soared since signing the Treaty of Westphalia. It signaled the start of the Anglo-Dutch Wars, which lasted a quarter of a century. The colonies themselves mostly ignored the Navigation Acts, until the Staple Act further restricted trade. With the new law, only English ships could carry colonial cargo. Merchants were required to sell their goods to England — at lower prices than they'd fetch elsewhere — and could only buy goods from English merchants, often at inflated cost. Regardless of their final destination, all exports had to pass through English ports for inspection and taxation. Conveniently, the colonies had another option, albeit an illegal one: Privateers from the Caribbean carried cargo up the coast to be traded and sold.

At the end of the century, war between England and Spain briefly ceased, and hostilities between England and France resumed. The Glorious Revolution saw the overthrow of the Catholic King James II of England by the heavily Protestant Parliament and the Dutch Prince William of Orange-Nassau. James fled to France, where he lived in exile. Over the next two decades, several rebellions attempted to restore him to the throne, though none succeeded. He had support among both pirates and politicians in the Caribbean. One, Jamaica's Governor Archibald Hamilton, envisioned raising a fleet of warships to sail home and serve as a Jacobite navy.

The change in enemies put a damper on privateering in the West Indies. Where Spanish ships had been plentiful and easy to overcome, they were now off-limits. France had a much smaller naval presence in the area, and their men-of-war were tougher targets. The constant military entanglements in Europe at this time also meant the parent countries sent fewer and fewer ships to guard their interests in the New World. Necessary supplies and resources dwindled, and colonial governors had no real support from home. They hired buccaneers to protect their settlements and safeguard their goods.

With England and France butting heads, business between Jamaica and Tortuga ground to a standstill. That, coupled with an earthquake that destroyed Port Royal in 1692, led pirates and out-of-commission privateers to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The Indian Ocean provided the perfect opportunity. Trading ships in those waters weren't under the same heavy guard as vessels in the Atlantic. Crews sailed east, stealing silk, calico, and other goods. Madagascar served as a base for many pirate ships sailing the route that came to be known as the Pirate Round. The raids disrupted trade enough that the British East India Company begged Parliament to step in. But the draw of the pirate life was powerful: Privateer Captain William Kidd, hired to curb the plundering, became a Roundsman himself.

In November of 1700, King Charles II of Spain died. Both the Austrian Habsburgs and his French Bourbon relatives laid claim to the throne, and once again Europe went to war. England joined with the Dutch, Austrians, and Prussians against France and Spain. The conflict lasted over a decade, allowing piracy and privateering to balloon in the Caribbean.

Nassau

In 1670, a group of British aristocrats brought settlers to the Bahamian island of New Providence. They named the fort they built Charles Town, after King Charles II. Fourteen years later, Spanish forces took the settlement by surprise and burned it to the ground. It wasn't rebuilt until 1695, when Governor Nicholas Trott changed its name to Nassau in honor of Prince William. Any progress colonists made in reestablishing Nassau was lost in 1703, when a series of French and Spanish raids destroyed the town once more.

Though it was still an English territory, Nassau's governor abdicated the year after the raids. This made it the

perfect location for the burgeoning Pirate Republic's capital. Pirates and privateers flocked to Nassau, making it their base of operations. Thomas Barrow declared himself governor and envisioned the port as another Madagascar: a place subject to the pirate code and under no sovereign's rule.

Trading ships had to pass the Bahamas to reach the eastern North American colonies and catch the trade winds back to Europe, making Nassau a lucrative port for pirate ships. By 1713, the governor of Bermuda estimated that Nassau was home to 1,000 pirates, compared to a mere 100 settlers.

The end of the Spanish War of Succession in 1713 marked an end to privateering contracts, as the warring nations entered a period of peace. With the Peace of Utrecht, the Royal Navy demobilized, leaving many career sailors out of work and unable to provide for themselves and their families. This sudden swell of unemployed seafarers looked westward to the New World — to Nassau, where a life of piracy and promise awaited.

Where We Are

Nassau teems with life, its haphazard streets a-bustle with traders and seafarers. Ships fill the harbor, many — even most — of them stolen and repurposed by any of the dozens of pirate captains and crews who frequent the port. Others are captured merchant ships or crafts whose captains set round-the-clock watches for their crews. The storefronts and saloons themselves are made of repurposed materials as well, with driftwood walls and window coverings sewn from tattered sailcloth. Husks of ruined ships litter the beach, the stolen vessels burned and abandoned once the pirates have removed everything valuable.

It's been over a decade since Edward Birch, Nassau's last official governor, washed his hands of the colony. Now, the pirates Benjamin Hornigold and Henry Jennings hold heavy sway. The men often disagree on matters of policy and dealings with European powers, but together with other prominent pirates they've established the Flying Gang. The gang's members have run of the town and are known to shake down its inhabitants for money and valuables.

The English still have representation on New Providence in the form of Lieutenant Governor Thomas Walker, who remained even after Birch abandoned the island. Walker and his wife Sarah, a free black woman, live with their children on their homestead a few miles outside Nassau proper, out of the fray but close enough for the pirates' takeover to infuriate Walker. Walker has launched a letter-writing campaign asking for reinforcements, but none ever come. He recently sailed to Harbour Island and arrested several pirates, whom he sent to Jamaica to be tried. However, upon returning to Nassau, Walker learned Hornigold and his crew rescued the prisoners and now have Walker in their sights.

Nassau's permanent settlers are a stubborn lot. They've seen the town burned and sacked several times over the years. Many live in crudely constructed huts and keep provisions ready should a raiding fleet arrive and force them to flee into the woods for survival. Though the heavily-armed ships in the harbor and newly outfitted fort offer them protection from sacking, the influx of outlaws offers its own new concerns.

Most pirates don't bury their treasure; they spend it. Saloon owners, traders, sex workers, and gamblers flood into Nassau, eager to get a share of the plunder. Others come seeking the type of equality the pirate code promised. Escaped slaves and indentured servants sign on with pirate crews to buy or win their freedom. People come from other colonies in the Americas in search of better opportunities. Barbados, Jamaica, and Virginia all depend on plantations, leaving no room for small farms to prosper. As the Bahamas have no plantations, many former indentured servants arrive and find farmland cheap and plentiful.

Still others want a taste of the adventurous pirating life portrayed in contemporary books and newspapers. So pervasive is this image, in fact, that nine-year-old John King demands to join Black Sam Bellamy when his crew captures the sloop on which King and his mother are passengers.

Major Events

In July of 1715, a hurricane destroys most of a fleet of Spanish and French treasure ships off the Florida coast. Because they sink in shallow waters, free divers easily retrieve the cargo. Word of the wrecks spreads, and pirates race to recover a share for themselves. Many arrive too late to profit from those particular wrecks, but stay for the other riches the Windward Passage offers.

A year later, King George I denounces the Jamaican privateers as pirates. By the time official word reaches the colony, all the pirates have fled to the Bahamas, out of the law's reach. Benjamin Hornigold knows that unless the Flying Gang works to re-arm Nassau's fort and build up its fleet, England and France could easily blockade the harbor and put an end to the Pirate Republic. In the fall of 1716, a pirate gang brings a captured Spanish ship into the harbor with the intention of offloading the cargo and burning the cumbersome vessel. It would never serve as a good pirate ship, but Hornigold sees another use for it. He loads guns and cannons aboard, stations the ship outside the harbor, and at last has a seaworthy defender.

In February 1717, Black Sam Bellamy captures the armed merchant ship *Whydah*. The vessel is everything Nassau could want for defense: fast, powerful, and capable of carrying huge amounts of treasure in her 300-ton hull. Unfortunately for the Pirate Republic, the *Whydah*'s stay is short. Bellamy sails north to Cape Cod in early spring. A sudden hurricane sinks the *Whydah* and kills most of its crew, including Black Sam. Its loss is a serious blow not only to Nassau's defense, but also to the pirates who have designs on supporting James III (son of the deposed King James II) for the British throne after the death of his half-sister Queen Anne.



Throughout the year, Nassau's residents indulge in the freedom the burgeoning Pirate Republic enjoys, all the while warily awaiting word that the British navy is coming to destroy it all. Some adopt an "eat, drink, and be merry" approach. Others help Hornigold shore up the fort and take shifts in the town's makeshift militia. Blackbeard, incensed that the *Whydah* survivors were executed for piracy, makes a point to target British ships and disrupt commerce. Where most pirates take a captured ship's valuables, then (if they don't claim the ship as their own) send its captain and crew on their way, Blackbeard begins dumping any cargo he doesn't claim into the sea.

In September, King George I issues the Act of Grace. Under this decree, any pirates who turn themselves in to colonial authorities are forgiven for acts of piracy committed through December 1717. The announcement sends a stir through Nassau, with some interested in accepting the amnesty and others vehemently rejecting the idea.

Life at Sea

The seafaring life sounds like a dream: the open ocean stretching in all directions, blue and clear, salt spray on your skin, and fair winds in your sails. Adventures await just over the horizon, and every port holds promise. For many sailors, ships represent freedom and camaraderie. Joining a pirate crew is empowering: Shipmates get a say in their destiny they never had as sailors in the Royal Navy or as slaves on colonial plantations. Anyone can make her fortune on the water, and becoming captain of your own ship is a matter of proving yourself capable and capturing a worthy vessel — no need for political ties or a prestigious family name.

Yet, it's not all smooth seas and clear skies. Sudden storms can sink a ship in a matter of hours. Diseases like dysentery and cholera incapacitate entire crews. Food and water spoil, and on longer voyages, the lack of vitamin C causes scurvy. Not all ships have a doctor on the crew to tend to sailors' wounds, and even those physicians who join up (or are pressed into service) often work in poor conditions and have to perform crude surgeries to save lives.

The sea isn't kind to ships. They require regular maintenance to scrape off barnacles, repair damage from storms and skirmishes, and replace boards from shipworm-infested hulls. Sails and rigging rot quickly in the West Indies' tropical climate. If a ship loses its mast, the closest replacement requires a trip to New England, as loggers have long since stripped the Caribbean of suitable trees.

Navy and merchant ships tend to run with smaller crews than pirate vessels. Sailors on these legal ships carry out their captains' orders without question and have no say in how the ship is run. Questioning officers' decisions runs dangerously close to mutiny. Crews on legally sanctioned ships receive little pay, with the greatest share of profits filling officers' pockets and the shipowners' coffers back in Europe. Pirate crews elect their captains from among their ranks. They decide where to sail and get a fair share of the plunder. It's little wonder that many sailors from captured ships take pirates up on their offer to join.

Pirate captains choose their ships carefully. They want fast vessels that can catch or outrun enemy ships and have enough firepower to engage them in battle. A ship's shape, its number and configuration of sails, and the cargo weight it carries all affect its maneuverability. Ships can and do pull up alongside one another and exchange cannon volleys. However, many pirates prefer to hide their smaller, sleeker sloops in islets and coves along shipping lanes, darting out to surprise the bigger vessels. Crews stand on deck, dressed in the spoils from other raids. They holler threats across the water and brandish swords and muskets at the enemy. Often, those displays are enough to convince merchant captains to surrender.

When they aren't, the pirates fire at the enemy ship with their muskets, or launch bar and chain shot from their cannons to damage the sails and rigging — hindering the other ship's ability to flee, but not sinking it. The pirates latch onto their prey with grappling hooks and boarding axes, ready for a melee on their captives' decks.

Navigators rely on dead reckoning and piloting the familiar coastlines to set their courses. The positions of the sun, moon, and stars help calculate the ship's whereabouts, aided by the same backstaffs and quadrants that have been in use for centuries. In 1714, Britain passed the Longitude Act and offered a prize to anyone who could develop the most accurate method to determine longitude at sea. That year, Jeremy Thacker invented the marine chronometer, though early versions are still prohibitively expensive.

Nautical Terms

careen — to lay a ship on its side for repairs or cleaning

Jolly Roger — flag with a skull-and-crossbones on a black background, denoting a pirate ship

keelhaul — punishment involving dragging the victim beneath the ship's keel

man-of-war — powerful, heavily armed warship

prize law — maritime practice allowing captains to seize equipment, cargo, and valuables from enemy ships they capture during wartime

schooner — fast, agile ships popular among pirates

scuttlebutt — rumors and gossip; also, a cask of drinking water

sloop — small, square-rigged warship

treasure fleet — Spanish ships carrying silver, gold, and other riches, often guarded by a convoy of faster, more maneuverable vessels

Iconic Figures

The most infamous pirates of the day moor in Nassau's harbor, and the names of agents of the crown are on everyone's lips.

The Flying Gang rules the town, with Benjamin Hornigold and Henry Jennings at the helm. Charles Vane, a pirate known for his cruelty who once served under Jennings, frequently butts heads with Hornigold. John Julian is only 16 years old, but he's gained a trusted position in Sam Bellamy's crew. He's half black and half Miskito Indian, and when the *Whydah* sets sail, he'll be piloting it up to New England. Though Julian survives the *Whydah's* wreck, he is sold into slavery when he reaches land — an ever-present danger for pirates of color.

Anne Bonny and her husband James came to the Caribbean in search of treasure, and Anne quickly took to the pirate life. She met Captain John "Calico Jack" Rackham and joined his crew, disguised as a man. She and Rackham became lovers, and eventually married at sea. Bonny fights alongside the men on the *Revenge*. Mary Read dressed in men's clothing and joined the military, serving in both Britain and Holland under the name Mark Read. She was traveling to the West Indies when pirates boarded her ship. Read willingly joined their crew. Bonny and Read will meet in 1720, and become crewmates, friends, and lovers.

Not everyone in Nassau is a pirate or approves of them. Though Thomas Walker and family relocated to the island of Abaco, 60 miles northeast, his sons still step warily when they come into town. Walker openly acts against the pirates, though they thwart his efforts at every turn. By the end of 1717, however, help is on the way in the form of a new governor. Woodes Rogers, a privateer known for his voyages around the world, just might be the answer to all of Walker's prayers.

Locations

Below are locales in and around the Bahamas where a crew might seek shelter and spend their treasures. Some ports, however, abhor the sight of the Jolly Roger and cause problems for pirates who drop anchor in their harbors.

Nassau

Nassau started as a shantytown, and in many ways still is one. Huts and shelters built from driftwood and wreckage spread out in a half-circle surrounding the beach. Hundreds of ships bob in the harbor at any time. Unkind critics suggest you can smell Nassau's refuse, and the stench of unwashed bodies and human waste, from the sea. They're not always wrong.





Further back from the beach, members of the Flying Gang and several merchant-smugglers have taken over the simple wood-framed homes that belonged to New Providence's colonists before they fled. A forest surrounds the town, full of palm trees and tropical scrub. Some locals who didn't flee the island entirely have made homes here, first away from the raiders, now away from the pirates.

The raids and fires left deep supernatural scars. Stygian Verges occasionally develop in and near Nassau. The town's Sleepers speak of phantom cannon fire, the smell of burning wood, and sounds of battle on certain nights.

The Crimson Cutlass

One of the most bustling alehouses in town, the Crimson Cutlass serves all comers. Pirates plot their next route, or simply enjoy the music and merriment while they drink their plunder away. Merchants conduct their business here, and krewes and cabals know this is the best place for supernatural scuttlebutt.

Although it's one of the better-crafted buildings in Nassau, its walls actually framed and its roof made of wood rather than palm thatch, proprietress Molly Meehan still has to do a patch job from time to time. She's taken planks from the wreck of the *Marigold*, but some say she took more than that. The Cutlass' regulars whisper about a treasure box she found in the ruins, one whose contents have brought her both riches and misery.

The Fort

The walls of Nassau's fort are battle-scarred and pockmarked. They've withstood cannon shot and raids by French and Spanish forces. The Flying Gang races against the inevitable, rearming the battlements and filling the fort with defenders before the British Navy comes calling. One volunteer didn't survive the raids of 1703, but he's not entirely aware of that.

Not everyone who has come forward to staff the fort is on the pirates' side. A handful of traitors have joined their ranks, intent on slipping the British intel about the preparations, how many guns and how much ammunition the pirates have stocked, and where weak points exist in the defense plans.

The Businesswoman

Men on Nassau far outnumber the women. Melody Burke was a sex worker in another port before the Pirate Republic's founding. When she heard about Nassau, with its dearth of women and abundance of pirates looking to spend their riches, Melody did the math and booked passage for New Providence. She struck a deal with Molly Meehan, renting a room in the Crimson Cutlass. Men and women alike seek out Melody's company. She's quick-witted and kind, and helps newcomers to the island find their footing amid the chaos. **Empathy 2, Socialize 3, Weaponry 1**

The Loyalist

Livia Burnham's been here since nearly the beginning. She lived through the burning of Charles Town and its resurrection as Nassau. Through sacks and raids and useless officials, she's been here, helping her family work their patch of land. She resents the pirates who've taken over New Providence, hates that she has to look over her shoulder when she goes into town. She's heard them talk about what they'll do when the Navy comes, and knows there's fear beneath all their bragging. It makes her smile.

Liv makes plans of her own, reaching out to others who want to see the Flying Gang hang for their crimes. She's not so lofty as to have a governor's ear, and her feet are steadiest on the ground, not at sea; but when the time comes, she intends to help drive the pirates out of Nassau. **Brawl 1, Investigation 2, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 1.**

The *Goshawk*

The *Goshawk* rests in Nassau's harbor, waiting to set sail. She's a square-rigged sloop capable of carrying 18 guns, and before Brass Bette Carney captured her, she escorted treasure ships across the Atlantic. The *Goshawk* is nimble and sturdy. She's weathered storms that sank better ships, and her crew jokes that cannon shot bounces off her hull. Bette recently had a new figurehead carved for the *Goshawk's* bow, after the original was damaged in battle. The new one bears a striking resemblance to another pirate, though whether it's meant as homage, insult, or mystical symbol, Bette won't say.

The Impossible Island

When they're deep in their cups, bribed with sufficient coin, some of the *Goshawk's* crew tell the story of her last voyage: how a sudden storm came upon them one night and, though massive waves tossed the ship about, she stayed afloat. That's the boring part. When the seas calmed, they say, they found themselves drifting off the coast of an island that wasn't on any charts. Bette tried circling it, deciding whether to send a party ashore, but no matter how they tacked, its position stayed the same. No closer, no farther away. Always just off their starboard side. A fog rose up, they say, just before dawn. When it lifted minutes later, the island was gone. Bette never talks about trying to find it again, but they've seen the maps in her quarters. She's looking.

Brass Bette Carney

Ten years ago, Brass Bette escaped from the plantation in the Carolinas where she was a slave. She snuck onto a ship bound for New England, but before it got more than a day's journey up the coast, pirates boarded it. When the offer came to join the crew, Bette volunteered. She's been sailing the West Indies ever since. She quickly learned the finer points of piloting, and her knowledge of the hidden islets along the Windward Passage has helped her crew both capture merchant ships and evade military ones. **Persuasion 3, Survival (Navigation) 2, Weaponry 2.**

The Lookout

A press gang got Ginger Dan when he was 15, bundling him onto an English ship and collecting their reward. A year later, Brass Bette's crew stole him away from the navy; they needed a new lookout, and he fit the bill. To Dan, they were just another kind of press gang. Now he serves aboard the *Goshawk*, spending his days high up in the crow's nest watching for flags on the horizon. He's got the keenest eyes among the crew, and the keenest ears, too. He collects rumors the way his crewmates collect gold. He's heard some things that'd turn your hair white, and he'll regale you with them over a bottle of Madeira wine while he laments his lack of prospects. **Athletics 3, Expression 3, Occult 2.**

The Anchorages

Almost every ship heading to the North American colonies passes through the Straits of Florida. The area is a maze of inlets and tiny islands. Shallow waters and hidden reefs ruin ships whose crews don't know the safe routes, but pirates who know the waters use them to launch attacks on unsuspecting enemies. Throughout these waters lie hundreds of hidden anchorages where pirates can hole up to divvy up their plunder. Fresh fruit and water abound, and the beaches allow crews to careen smaller ships and repair their hulls.

Colfax Anchorage isn't on any map, but many Nassau-based pirates know its location. Crews who stop here have built a series of small huts at the forest's edge, where sailors can get out of the sun while counting their loot or take a rest from the exhausting work of repairs. For a time, the anchorage had a lone permanent inhabitant, a doctor named Carter Colfax. When a ship limped into the cove after a battle, Colfax tended to wounded shipmates and saw to other minor medical concerns. He accepted plunder or supplies as payment.

Colfax has been missing for several months. Many assume he's been pressed into service, though his supplies and treasures remain in their strongbox. His diary entry from January 3rd ends midsentence. Sketches of birds cover the facing page, and albatross feathers litter the floor of Colfax' hut.

The Healed

Jim Owens doesn't remember much about his ship sailing into Colfax Anchorage. He remembers boarding the merchant vessel, and how the deck ran slick with blood. He remembers the sharp bite of steel in his gut, then things went black. He awoke in Colfax' hut a week later. Sometimes he thinks of the dreams he had while he was out, full of cacophonous chanting and strange, flickering shadows. Surely, they were merely the product of the fever Colfax said had raged. Surely only that. **Brawl 2, Larceny 2, Streetwise 3.**

The Deserter

Fourteen-year-old Kit slipped away from her ship a few months ago. It turned out the pirating life wasn't for her, after all. If anyone noted her absence they never came looking, and that's fine by Kit. If they catch her, they'll send her back to Virginia, and she's never going to let that happen. She spends her days rambling about the island. Most nights she sleeps in one of the huts on the beach, unless a ship's present. Those times, she sleeps in the forest. She's gotten good at stealing food and other necessities once the pirates drink themselves to sleep. Even though she avoids the visitors, she has a solid recall of which crews and ships have visited since her arrival. **Larceny 1, Stealth 3, Survival 3.**

Charles Town, South Carolina

The port city of Charles Town, South Carolina lies 550 miles northwest of Nassau. For decades, Charles Town's merchants eagerly traded with privateers and pirates to circumvent England's oppressive Navigation Acts. Now that pirates attack English (and therefore, colonial) vessels and disrupt commerce off the Carolina coast, the relationship has soured. Judges sentence captured pirates to hang for their crimes — an event always sure to draw a crowd.

Both the South Carolina port and the original fort built in Nassau were named Charles Town after King Charles II. Though this established a weak sympathetic connection between the cities, something — or someone — has strengthened it in recent months, sparking rumors of a great working on the horizon.

The Powder Magazine

A single-story structure sits in Charles Town's center. It's squat and square, with a red tile roof intersected by gables on all four sides. The Powder Magazine houses Charles Town's gunpowder and artillery. Inside, arches and tapered walls ensure that an explosion will direct its force up rather than out onto the street, and sand stored beneath the roof will fall and smother the fire.

The Gallows

Plenty of criminals have swung from Charles Town's gallows, but residents derive a special glee from watching a pirate hang. The wooden platform outside the courthouse creaks with the steps of the condemned. On hanging days, the courtyard fills with spectators. At night, rumor has it, listeners can stand on the platform and hear secrets whispered by the dead.

The Clerk

Francis Smythe has served in the Charles Town courthouse for a decade. His duties not only give him access to information on criminal trials, but also provide him with deep knowledge of civil disputes among local figures. He has unfettered access to the court records, knows the judges' leanings, and controls the docket. For the right price,



Smythe is willing to move a case's spot on the court calendar or assign a trial to a more favorable judge. **Academics 3, Politics 2, Subterfuge 1.**

The Merchant

Robert Simmons died when a pirate crew attacked his ship as it returned from England with a belly full of goods. They took the cargo, too, leaving his grief-stricken daughter Mary in dire financial straits. She's spent the last two years building the business back up, and she's added rum and tobacco to her wares. Sometimes other, stranger goods pass through her hands. Even though it means dealing with her father's murderers' ilk, Mary cultivates good relationships with the smugglers, then turns around and funnels information about pirate movements to the authorities. She attends every hanging, hoping someday she'll see her father's killer fitted for the noose. **Investigation 2, Larceny 3, Socialize 2**

What Is to Come

By January of 1718, the Nassau pirates split into two camps: those who want to accept King George's Act of Grace and turn themselves in, and those who refuse to renounce the outlaw life. Ben Hornigold and Henry Jennings are among those members of the Flying Gang in favor of the proffered pardons.

Woodes Rogers, the newly appointed Governor of Nassau, arrives in July 1718. By the time he sails into port, the Acts of Grace (which he helped mastermind) have struck their intended blow: Nassau's pirates are clearing out. Many who remain intend to turn themselves in. Others offer up their services to the crown. By the end of the year, Hornigold — one of the Pirate Republic's founders — turns on his former brethren and becomes a pirate hunter himself.

Blackbeard, possibly fearing Woodes Rogers will recognize him, leaves Nassau entirely. He sets his sights instead on the Carolinas, terrorizing the coast and forming an alliance with other pirates. They blockade Charles Town, disrupting trade and ransoming the port.

Charles Vane is firmly against the king's pardon. He gathers likeminded pirates and several ships, intending to leave Nassau and establish a new Pirate Republic elsewhere. Before Woodes Rogers arrives, Vane humiliates Captain Vincent Pearse of the *HMS Phoenix*, who arrives in Nassau with copies of the Act of Grace. Vane and his fleet escape Nassau just as Rogers and his fleet arrive and remain at large for several years.

Despite Vane's escape, Rogers' arrival in Nassau heralds the beginning of the end for piracy. Vane suffers a spate of bad luck, beginning with his crew marooning him and ending with an old acquaintance recognizing him when he tries boarding a ship under a false name. In March of 1720, he's found guilty of piracy and hanged in Port Royal. Over the next decade, many of the era's pirates meet the same fate. The English, French, and Spanish navies dedicate more ships to rooting them out, and safe harbors grow scarce.

Anne Bonny and Mary Read are found guilty but, as both are pregnant at the time, the courts temporarily stay their executions. Read dies of a fever in prison a few months later. Anne Bonny's fate is a mystery — no records of her release exist, though some speculate she returned to a life of piracy, while others say her lot was something much stranger.

Geist: Jewels of the Antilles

"Heaven, you fool? Did you ever hear of any pirates going thither? Give me hell, it's a merrier place: I'll give Roberts a salute of 13 guns at entrance."
— Thomas Sutton

The Taíno first knew of bondage from stories far to the west, of the Mēxihcah of the valley and their three great cities. They knew how to handle bondage that came from the west, from the fierce Caribs and their poison-tipped arrows, raiding their expansive *yucayeques*, or settlements, for slaves. When bondage came from the east, on the three ships Columbus sailed, they had little preparation and even less recourse. But they were few, and the colonists could not fully exploit the land's bounty with only the Taíno and the Caribs. Those who enslaved them brought others to share the bondage, and those foreign powers' rivals soon followed with their own group of bound. Portugal's continental neighbors all brought slaves to the Caribbean, ripping them from the warm soil of Africa and thrusting them under the West Indies' blazing eye.

Escaped slaves have been around as long as slavery has in the West Indies. Many of those enslaved survived marching through the dark soil of the Bight of Benin, where only one would survive for every 50 that went in. Some were never bound in their hearts, though, and took every opportunity to win freedom. They survived their tribes' destruction, the indignity of being sold by people who looked like them to those who looked strange. Ashanti, Koromantin, and Dahomeyan, they would not submit, even in the harsh light of a distant sun. They brought with them the cultures of their myriad homelands and melded them with the unfamiliar cultures of the few natives who found refuge from the colonizers. Slavers called those who escaped the plantations or fought back *cimarrón*, a word that means "wild and unruly." The *cimarrón* eventually formed insular communities, inhabiting the countryside and remaining a persistent thorn in the side of colonizing empires. Englishmen who heard the word eventually corrupted it into *maroon*.

The first Bound to sail the West Indies two centuries past was a Welsh privateer of the line who coined the term "Sin-Eater" in the first place. But the native culture of the Bound in the West Indies Sea is Maroon, through and through.

The Maroons

Centered on Saint-Domingue, Puerto Rico, and the British colony of Jamaica, Maroon culture forms a network of former slaves ensconced in villages hidden in mountainous terrain, following secret sailing routes that hug the coast before venturing into strange waters. Most villages are small, no more than 300 escaped slaves and their descendants, but they contact one another frequently, and maintain bureaus and inroads into the heart of the great cities where others remain enslaved. They hunt, fish, sail, and trade away from the eyes of the great powers, smoking their meat over green pimento wood with a cover to keep slavers from seeing the smoke. Slaves work and die in Port-au-Prince, in Havana, and in the Keys. Death from disease, from exhaustion, from starvation, from being whipped to bloody bones — death is a constant companion to those enslaved in the Antilles.

Maroons do not fight a defensive war for survival. Against those who would re-enslave them, they take the offensive, freeing slaves in raids and forcing land and slave owners off their estates. They slip into cities like Kingston or plantations by the dozen, whispering of rebellion and teaching fighting tactics to the enslaved in the dark of night. Not every slave revolt has a Maroon hand behind it, but the fiercest ones do. The entrenched slavers are ill-suited to fighting back, succumbing to disease and heat exhaustion in inland Jamaica's hills and mountains. The small size of Maroon villages allows them to simply up and move rather than take a stand, and they survive and flourish as a people, the hardened hybrid remnants of a thousand peoples who have felt the lash. A queen named Nanny leads them, as much as they can be said to be led by anyone. She's well-known, even in Europe, as a powerful Obeah practitioner and witch of the primeval islands.

Obeah

Every Maroon community respects and fears its Obeah practitioners. They pass down the sacred rites and beliefs and communicate with those who have come before. Obeah magicians can steal someone's shadow to inflict them with malicious fate, render someone invincible, resurrect the dead, cure disease, change an ill destiny to a good, and cause great harm. They know every herb that grows, the ones that heal and the ones that poison, and this remains one of the most powerful tools of their resistance. "Obeah" is a synonym on French plantations for being poisoned by a slave, a pejorative in white mouths and a gleeful prayer in black ones. Despite this, many seek out Obeah men and women; their healing powers are typically better than those of most who hew to European medicine, obsessed as it is with bloodletting. The powers of Obeah extend deep into death and fate, and they draw followers into communities separate from, but intertwined with, larger Maroon settlements. These smaller communities are called "brotherhoods" by those who bother to call them anything, initiating diverse groups into a shared mythology rife with religious import and heavily flavored by Obeah practices. Three strains of brotherhood dominate life in the West Indies:

The **Más Salvaje** hew close to their roots as escaped slaves, setting sail under a Spanish term only because they rarely share a single language themselves. They steal ships not to sell, but to load up with powder and steel, and hunt slavers. They smash the escorts of the huge-bellied slave ships to splinters and wrench open the stinking decks below, letting the captives out to breathe salty sea air. They embrace their heritage as warriors of what the English call Dahomey and Igbo, captured in war and sold to foreign buyers. They tend to venture out of longstanding communities and are often first-generation Maroons, raiding ships and plantations to free slaves. They rile up the living and the dead, bringing the fire of revolution to the Underworld.

Those who go to practice **Ikwa** set out to remember the dead. They walk the cities the colonizers built, but they speak to the dead of Africa and the ancient Taíno ghosts who still watch over the land. They listen to the words of their departed elders and transmit the old culture back to the living. Many do not share their fellows' warlike nature, but simply want to capture as many of their dying histories as they can. They bring peace, when possible, salving the deep sorrow caused by a loss of history and ensuring hoary ghosts can still spread their wisdom to other communities — or telling their stories for them, if it's their time to pass from the world.

Maroons, Obeah, Sin-Eaters, and Mages

The Maroons' syncretic culture doesn't draw sharp or academic distinctions among the supernatural. Much of Obeah involves contact with intermediary spirits, ancestors, or the dead. The religious faith of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora doesn't much distinguish between the three, but **Chronicles of Darkness** mechanics do.

In game terms, many who practice Obeah are Bound and form krewes, although culturally they have virtually nothing in common with their Welsh counterparts who coined the term sin-eating, and the word "krewe" exists two centuries in the future. Their brotherhoods share much in common with the modern-day Furies, Mourners, and Necropolitans, and may be mechanically represented as such. Many among the Maroons also Awaken, particularly to the Paths of the Acanthus, Moros, or Mastigos. Obeah men and women can be mage or Bound, or neither. They all live apart from the community, perpetual outsiders and liminal figures, like loved ones held at arm's reach.

The **Brethren Dead** are pirates, plain and simple, giving in to the fevre'd avarice that infects the spirit of those who sail these seas. If a Sin-Eater isn't a Maroon born or a former slave, they're liable to be of the Brethren Dead. Maroon communities warily allow them in to trade and spread news, their power granting them respect but no authority, and hold them at a remove from the culture, looking down upon them as eternal outsiders condemned to hedonism. This suits many of the Brethren just fine; having tasted death once, they desire nothing more than to sup upon all of life's flavor. This extends to those who no longer share in life, to be sure — Brethren are the most likely to sail down to the great Dominion of Libertatia (p. 293) beneath the sunless seas.

Life and Death Under Sail

All sailors love the sea in their hearts. All sailors dread the sea for the same reasons. The land cannot match the majesty of the ocean, but she is harsh, and will take your life in an instant. This dread, deep and palpable, has a definitive effect on those who sail the ocean.

The Sea

Death is everywhere. Slaves perish by the score on the harsh journey from Africa. Fewer than an educated person might think, for they're humans treated as merchandise, and every dead African is a hit to the profit margin, but slavers leave African ports assuming they'll lose a third of their cargo of 250 to 600 souls. They force slaves in the hold to kneel against posts, secured by leg irons and fed filthy food. Those who don't die of dysentery die of dehydration; those who survive both must sit beside the dead for weeks on end. Slavers almost never throw slaves overboard — not living ones, anyway, though the dead feed the miles of sharks that follow the ships — but they spread the rumors to keep resistance to a minimum.

Pirate ships are little better, in some ways. A crew with lax discipline doesn't keep to rationing, and the crew feasts and drinks its way into a stupor, left at sea with no food or drink. Merchants with escorts are perfectly capable of fighting back, and military ships of the line blast most pirate ships to splinters. Pirates rely on aggression and fear to dominate their opponents, overtaking targets with speed, cunning, and ferocity, but sometimes that's simply not enough.

Everyone faces the mercy and the cruelty of the sea and sky. Calm winds can leave a ship adrift for weeks. Water seeps through the most tightly sealed boards in time, and if a sailor doesn't man the bilge pumps it'll put the ship under. Storms, vast and terrible in the Caribbean, bring death to those caught in them. Behind the green lightning and the waterspouts stretching to Heaven, though, are Avernian Gates. The Gates exist anywhere the dead lie, and the sea is no exception; every shipwreck has a Gate beside it, and



Brethren ships carry diving bells for just this occasion, allowing Bound with strong lungs to ride deep under the sea and open the Gate to venture through. Storms bring Gates to the surface, where death is close. These portals follow in the circular patterns of sharks in the trails behind slave ships, waiting for a half-rotten meal to splash into the water, themselves a toothy entrance to the Underworld for those brave enough to swim through.

The Rivers

In the dark nights under sunless skies, ancient Dominions fall. The Sainted Kingdom of Prester John fell into the Ocean of Fragments 100 years ago, yet good Christian ghosts still lurk along the byways and riverbanks, huddling together in River Cities too numerous for Reapers to purge all at once. Sunken ships pass into the Underworld strangely seaworthy no matter the condition of their hulls, so River Cities are temporary things, docks lashed together from detritus and dozens of ships clustered together. Competition for spots on these boats is fierce, and like always, only the strongest survive. Rivers are choked and swollen with the formerly enslaved dead, as the triangle trade forces Avernian Gates to yawn wide and accept a staggering death toll. The Rivers run over banks and carve furrows in the tunnels, allowing even massive ships enough room to sail and turn. The rushing waters (and other materials) yawn as wide as the seas' horizons — one can sail to the middle of a River and not see either shore. Maps and charts prove inconstant companions, at best, unless one relies upon a ferryman guide.

Across the world, empire begins on a scale never before seen, and the Underworld responds. For every slave who falls into a molasses boiler, burned alive by molten sugar; for every sailor whose teeth fall out as he perishes to scurvy; for every British seaman smashed like a bowl of eggs by a pirate cannonball; the Ocean beckons.

The Ocean of Fragments

The Ocean is the Ocean, and the Admiral of the *Freighter* — a six-decked monstrosity that moves like a sloop and mounts more than 200 guns — allows no other ships upon the glossy black surface waters, save those coming to parley. To sail upon that dread sea is to brook not death, but eternal dissolution. That doesn't stop crews from trying. The Admiral wears finery of many a pirate's signifier in these days.

Dominion: Libertatia

Captain James Mission founded a haven for pirates; in Madagascar, most tales tell, but those who have crossed the island entire have never found it. It supposedly stretches from Antongil Bay to Mananjary, from Île Sainte-Marie to Mahavelona, but no ships cross there except other pirates and fat merchants waiting to be sacked.

The Pirates' Haven is not in Madagascar, but near the Ocean, and Captain Mission is a Sin-Eater. Deep within the Underworld, 1,000 ships are lashed to one another around a truly massive and ancient galleon with 100 decks and a listing tilt. Thousands of lanterns hang from the ship, broken open like some eerie hive to reveal the honeycombed decks among its ebon planks. Too massive for sailing and frankly too large to have ever existed, the ship at the heart of Libertatia — *Isla de Muerte* — is beached upon a strange black sandbar within the River Anahita. *Isla de Muerte* was a River City, once, but the rivers swelled and swept away the dead; rather than perishing, they boarded their ships and sailed for better tides, and Mission bade them build their myriad ships into one mighty vessel.

The waters of the River Anahita are powerful and rich, but Reapers constantly sail against the pirates of Libertatia, who are eager to retaliate. They sail up and down the Rivers, acting as ferrymen on occasion but reverting to their mortal trade whenever they can. They board Reaper vessels with wild abandon, and raid River Cities for Essence and treasure. Some say Captain Mission plans to sail against the Admiral and the *Freighter* on the Ocean of Fragments. With a bit of luck and good sailing, the great ship of the Ocean will be theirs. What a prize *that* would be.

Old Laws: None shall game for Essence or money, whether with dice or cards; all shall rally to defense of Libertatia, or be exiled forever; all shall slumber at eight at night, and if any wish to drink after that hour they must leave Libertatia; none shall strike another on board the ships, but every man's quarrel shall be ended onshore by sword or pistol. (The framers of the Old Laws never accounted for sailors who aren't men, a loophole many take great delight in exploiting creatively.)

Getting There: Sail into a wave while a green flash is visible on the horizon; this puts you along a path to the Rivers and the fastest route to Libertatia. Sail the River Anahita for three days' turn, though the sun will not shine, and bring tribute for the Kerberos, the Barbarossa Brothers.

Story Hooks

- A ship sails up, hull shredded by ghost-fire. "We've taken on a few Reapers, but the last one got us but good," they say. "Cover us, mates, until we reach Libertatia?" Unfortunately, "a few" Reapers is a fleet entire; the seas soon churn with ghost-cannon. Libertatia beckons, but they won't welcome you with a hostile fleet at your backs.

- Another River City's Essence runs out and it splinters, huge sections moving downriver. A ship out of Libertatia sails forth, waiting to sweep up the survivors and press them into service within the Dominion as slaves. Yet the dead do not go willingly, and soon the battle grinds to a stalemate. The choice to help either side presents itself.

The Barbarossa Brothers

"Welcome, agha! But put the sword away, if you please."
"Or my brother will show you where it will be sheathed."

Background: Sailing from North Africa's Barbary Coast, the Barbarossa (Italian for "red beard") brothers Oruç and Hayreddin became rich by capturing European vessels in the Mediterranean Sea. Two papal galleys and a Sardinian warship fell to the brothers' skill, but once the Spanish took Oruç's arm in battle, they became the Empire's fiercest foes. By 1516, the Ottoman sultan put Oruç in charge of the entire Barbary Coast, a position Hayreddin took over two years later following his brother's death. The man known as Khair-ed-Din spent the rest of his days fighting various Christians, including a "Holy League" fleet the pope specifically gathered to destroy him. The brothers supposedly reunited in the Underworld upon death, but the Kerberos of Libertatia — spreading its power between two bodies, one for each brother — still has its looks and its charm.

Description: One Kerberos splits into two Turkish men in full naval finery from a century ago. Hayreddin has an expansive beard that is decidedly not red, and Oruç has a short beard that *is* red. Where it strays from appearing as just another pair of ghosts is in the demonic red glow of the brothers' eyes, and the way the two finish each other's sentences with uncannily perfect cadence.

Storytelling Hints: The Kerberos of Libertatia does not especially acknowledge any ghost who actually met the brothers in life, and indeed presents no evidence nor entertains argument about whether it is somehow who it appears to be. It drinks, carouses, and eats with the rest of the pirates, but its broad, toothy smiles never waver, which is unnerving even in a freewheeling pirate haven.



The Dutchman

One ship terrorizes every sea the Ocean touches: the *Flying Dutchman*, the God-cursed ship. Captained by an insane Dutchman, the black-hulled man-of-war is a fearsome Castoff (**Geist: The Sin-Eaters**, p. XX) commanded by a Reaper. The name refers to both the ship itself and the captain's Deathmask, and any ghost who wears the mask can take the ship and crew — some 200 undead sailors — through an Avernian Gate to reclaim any ghosts on the other side.

CASTOFF AT SEA

The *Dutchman* is a four-decked beast with 140 guns, corroded weapons jutting out from ebon planks warped and twisted by years under the sea. The lights glow with a baleful blue fire, turning a pale green to an observer's eye the further one goes from the ship. It has decayed enough that, by rights, it should not sail, yet the *Dutchman* can outpace any ship at sea. Escape without trickery is impossible, and battle is supremely difficult. For this reason, many captains who sail the Rivers do so with a companion ship and crew. When they encounter the *Dutchman*, they don't need to outrun the monster — only their unlucky fellows.

The *Flying Dutchman* uses its Influences, Numina, and Manifestations only at the command of its captain, and counts as equipment for purposes of the captain using these himself. It only recognizes a ghost wearing the Reaper's Deathmask as its captain.

Rank: 4

Anchor: The open sea; storms

Essence: 25

Attributes: Power 12, Finesse 9, Resistance 12

Vehicle Traits: Dice modifier −5, Size 40, Durability 2, Structure 35, Speed 5 (9 under sail), weapon damage 5; see **p. 305** for ship systems

Ban: If the *Dutchman* is forced to make port, weigh anchor in the shallows, or otherwise venture too close to land, it is immediately banished back to the Underworld.

Bane: A living sailor with Integrity 8+, whose feet have not touched land in at least a decade.

Influences: Anchors 2, Winds 2

Manifestations: Avernian Gateway, Discorporate, Image, Materialize, Twilight Form

Numina: Anchor Jump, Awe, Blast (cannons), Engulf, Implant Mission, Pathfinder, Regenerate, Seek, Speed



VAN DER DECKEN

If a ghost dons the Dutchman's Deathmask, she becomes the Reaper known as Hendrick Van der Decken, complete with a Dutch accent and male countenance. She gains the following traits:

Rank: 4

Aspiration: To the brig with them!

Power: +8, **Finesse:** +8, **Resistance:** +4 (all to a maximum of 12); adjust derived traits accordingly

Maximum Essence: 25 (doesn't suffer Essence bleed)

Influences: Ocean 2

Merits: Giant

Manifestations: Discorporate, Possess

Numina: Blast, Descend, Emotional Aura (Terror), Engulf

Ban: Van der Decken cannot leave the *Flying Dutchman* under any circumstances.

Bane: Holy water blessed by a Protestant priest (not a Catholic one)

New Ceremony: Lowlands Away (•)

Subject: One brotherhood

Duration: Length of shanty; may be repeated for multiple shanties

Symbols: A ship fully crewed. A single sailor with a passable singing voice. A crew capable of harmony. The shanty itself.

Rituals: Lead the crew in a sea shanty, starting with the sailor's love coming to him as a ghost. Bring the crew into another song with the last verse and continue singing.

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy

Success: As long as you keep the crew singing, they gain the benefits of the Good Time Management Merit, which also applies to brotherhood (krewe) actions. They also ignore morale-related penalties and gain an extra Door against any Social Maneuvering that would persuade them to mutiny or betrayal.

New Mementos

Many Mementos of this era tend toward the Keys of Blood, Chance, and (of course) Deep Waters.

Captain Kidd's Hat

Key: Blood

Description: A simple black hat, broad-brimmed with a square top, unadorned save for a brass button on the back brim. A red bandana with yellow splotches encircles the underside for a proper fit. It's an oddly itchy hat, as if it wasn't ever washed properly.

Effect: Burying something while wearing Kidd's hat ensures it remains buried. Even drawing a map doesn't help, though it definitely causes consternation when the treasure *should be there* yet isn't. The effect lasts a few decades, at least, since Kidd's been dead that long.

The Iron Anchor

Key: Deep Waters

Description: A massive iron anchor, without a speck of rust. No maker's mark can be seen.

Effect: Dragging the Anchor in the ocean draws it toward the closest Avernian Gate in the area. If the Anchor touches it, the Gate remains open. Grasping the chain attached to the Anchor allows anyone to hold their breath until they get to the Gate, no matter how deep the water is.

A Lucky Piece of Eight

Key: Chance

Description: A Spanish real of tarnished silver, with a small hole punched through it and a leathern cord passed



through to make a simple necklace. The jagged edges of the hole dig into the flesh.

Effect: The wearer's dreams are filled with adventures that are oddly prophetic. The events never happen the way they do in the dreams, but dreaming of battle means danger is imminent, while treasure means wealth will flow soon. Woe to those who dream of death.

Mage: Salt and Silver

"Hark ye, you Cocklyn and la Bouche, I find by strengthening you, I have put a rod into your hands to whip myself, but I am still able to deal with you both; but since we met in love, let us part in love, for I find that three of a trade can never agree."

— Howell Davis, breaking alliance with Cocklyn and la Bouche

A new breed of buccaneer roves the briny seas of the Caribbean. The Company of the Codex **(p. 311)** is a fellowship born from the same heady ideals of the Republic of Pirates that inspire their Sleeper peers, but theirs is an occult greed. These pirate-mages seize vessels in whose holds are stowed chests of tass, kidnap other Awakened to ransom them back for secrets and sorcery, and race against Diamond Orders and Seers of the Throne alike to find places of power and plunder the Mysteries of the Caribbean. They answer to no one but themselves.

The Awakened of the Caribbean used to be a scattered, lonesome lot. A meager lineage of practitioners clings on among the surviving Taíno, working powerful and enduring Yantras through carved petroglyphs. A few European mages stop among the islands and never leave, caught by one Mystery or another, or overseeing part of an Order's supply chain across the ocean. Sometimes, a slave Awakens in the nightmare of a ship's hold or the ceaseless work of a plantation.

Weigh, Me Boys, to Cuba!

Sea shanties evolved from the hauling songs sailors in the Age of Sail sang to keep time when performing synchronized shipboard tasks. Though they reached their apex long after the Golden Age of Piracy, a singing ship's crew is part of the genre, and suggests shipboard discipline and a sense of camaraderie. **Mage** suggests using songs as a chronicle-plotting mechanism. Several playlists of professionally sung sea shanties are available online; when using "Music Is Always" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 290), feel free to use sea shanties as inspiration for character building. Sea shanties don't require much singing ability by design and are rarely longer than a minute or two, so singing at the table is a decent way to bring yourselves into character at the start of a session.

The Mystery of Gold

Some sailors believe if they keep gold about their person, it'll pay Charon to ferry them across the river Styx. Whether or not this is true, *some* force under the waves lays claim to those who drown or are buried at sea with gold — a ring or earring, a necklace, or a coin under the tongue. Whatever this grim, deathly power may be, it does not take kindly to meddling Awakened.

If a mage attempts to use the Death Arcanum to summon, control, command, or otherwise affect the ghost of a sailor who died with a tithe of gold upon them, the ghost's Rank is effectively +2 for Withstand purposes, and any failure to cast the spell is a dramatic failure instead. Sometimes, the consequences are even worse; the transgressing mage finds their home and possessions rotting and waterlogged, marine parasites squirm out of their flesh, or water no longer quenches their thirst.

Now the Company of the Codex calls Nameless, apostates, outcasts, and renegades to its stronghold in Nassau. Newcomers flock to its promises of untrammeled opportunity and freedom. Faced with the pirates' depredations, the Silver Ladder responds with its own reinforcements. The Seers of the Throne construct new Pylons to confront the upstarts. Over the course of a scant few years, the Awakened population swells with a tide of dozens of ambitious Wise. This golden age of piracy is the stage upon which a dramatic war of sorcerers plays out.

Raising the Flag

In early January of 1716, the Silver Ladder Caucuses in the American colonies and West Indies push for a declaration of war against the Company of the Codex. They do so through a Convocation, called in the burgeoning settlement of New York. Hidden away from the town's hustle and bustle, the gathering of mages fiercely debates the Company's crimes — whether they have gone too far, whether they can be reasoned with, and whether the Diamond Orders really have any right to make demands of them at all. Colonists, Native Americans, and a few Awakened from further afield listen to Caribbean théarchs as they speak passionately of the threat posed.

Ladder mages describe a strange phenomenon they believe to be the Company's work. In a rough triangle, stretching from the Bahamas to Bermuda, the phenomenon weakens the underpinnings of Atlantean symbolism upon which the Silver Ladder — and by extension, all of Diamond society — draws. The power of symbols of authority erodes, and with it, the ability to use Yantras that call

The Mystery of Silver and Iron

The power of certain symbols wanes within the Company's area of influence, running the length of the Americas' eastern coast and out into the Atlantic, from the Carolinas all the way to the Bahamas and Bermuda. Within this region, Yantras that call upon the symbolism of authority, law, governance, control, the Lex Magica, the Silver Ladder, the Diamond as an institution, any national crown or ruler, or the Exarchs can't provide a bonus larger than +1, and any magic that uses such symbols as sympathetic Yantras (spatial or temporal) reduce the strength of the sympathy by one level. Worse, Yantras of this kind do not work at all when casting spells with subjects within Nassau or its immediate vicinity, or with any member of the Company of the Codex as a subject — even if cast from far beyond the region's boundaries.

upon the semiotics of jurisdiction, the Lex Magica, and the Diamond itself. To the Ladder, this is a direct attack, and far more serious than even the theft of resources or the abuse of Heralds; the pirates may believe their trespasses are temporary or localized, but the Mystery portends the possible erosion of other Supernal symbolism. Left unchecked, the Fallen World could fall further, and all of Awakened society could crumble. The théarchs are quick to remind their peers that the Lex Magica and the tradition of Consilium are designed to keep mages from shattering reality with their personal conflicts.

The reception is lukewarm. Many worry about the Company, but not enough to support outright war. The Silver Ladder's mystical problems are intriguing, but they are not so terrible a threat as to stir the Diamond into action.

The Ladder's frustrations only grow in the wake of the Convocation. Théarchs up and down the coast grimly report the semiotic significance slipping from ancient, traditional Yantras, particularly on days when storms wrack the sky and waves lash the shore. The Order's symbolic power wanes further, and still the Diamond refuses to act.

Mere weeks after the Convocation, the Silver Ladder take a step that shakes the Diamond to its core. Fearing the worst, the théarchs look to another power for the aid the Diamond withholds. Margaret Howell, Tetrarch of the Iron Pyramid in the Caribbean region, makes an offer of alliance. The Company's machinations castrate the Tyrants' symbolic power as well, and the Exarchs' servants muster to scour the Nameless from the seas.

The Silver Ladder accepts the offer, and the war begins.

Company of Thieves

The ship has twice the guns and manpower mine does, but both crews can hear my booming laugh. I grasp the narrative and weave a story of my own invincibility. Their heavy cannon explodes before it fires, showering their deck with debris, trailing flames in the wake. Some unknown defect in the cannons, no doubt, but my crew cheers at the good fortune, swinging over madly with blood in their hearts. A span of fierce fighting later and I stand at the locked cabin of the enemy captain, who impresses two foreign courtesans into defending him. One elegant fillip of my sabre knocks the knives from their hands, and a kind gesture encourages them to flee. My boot splinters the coward's door, only partially obscuring his shriek of terror.

The soft patter of rain on my face tells of the approaching hurricane, as if the night-black clouds didn't. The crew hastens all around me, pumping water, stumbling over scratched and burning planks broken by British guns. The fleet behind us flies the Union Jack, and they have already declared they will give no quarter. A glance to our charts reveals the only option left, and a smile crosses my lips. I bid the crew beware, for they will sail stranger tides yet. Energies surge around me as a swell of water bears the ship low, too low in the ocean, swallowing the deck. As sailors sputter and blink the sea from their eyes, they gaze upon the vast and far-off roof of a massive cavern. The winds calm, then die entirely.

The pirate-mages of the Company of the Codex **(p. 311)** are not ones to just batten down the hatches and hope the storm passes. Some are genuine believers in the Order's ideals of democracy and equality, but more than enough allow selfish desires and obsessions to drive them — they take what they want, and damn the consequences.

The Mystery of Salt

The vast ocean's ebb and flow are hard to grasp. So many ripples, currents, and winds, ever-moving, ever-changing, can play havoc with the magics of Fate, Space, and Time. The chaos of the sea, its constant battery of minute changes, can serve as a form of protection — a clouding haze of possibilities born from its roiling avarice.

Any Awakened using Fate or Time magic of the Practices of Knowing, Unveiling, Weaving, or Patterning to affect a subject that has been at sea for at least a day (including herself) must spend one additional Reach. The same goes for any spells cast sympathetically and any Space magic to pinpoint or change a subject's location; even with the necessary sympathetic Yantra, the mage must spend an extra Reach to find the subject or the destination out on the jealous ocean.

Many Company willworkers are talented seafarers, expertly weaving nautical skills together with their magic. On the high seas, they hone their rapacious thirst for occult secrets; like locusts, raiding cabals of Company pirates drain Hallows and defile whatever magical resources they cannot take with them — if they can't have it, no one can. The mages who take part divide the spoils between them, and then hoard them for themselves or trade them to other Picaroons, Nameless, and apostates.

Some Company cabals transgress further, becoming monstrous in their depredations. They dabble in antinomian magic or visit ghastly atrocities upon victims — tearing souls out and feeding them to the greedy ocean, chaining wailing ghosts to their ships, or marooning fellow Wise on desolate islands where strange ripples in space and time prevent escape. The Company's egalitarian approach hampers attempts to restrain such excesses, even as these mages' own peers look upon them with growing unease.

CRIMSON GULL

"This rot's too deep already. You're going to die. I could stop it, yes, but then I'd not see the color of pus that leaks from your eyes at the end."

Background: Pirate captain Crimson Gull fed her name to a spirit of secrets, bound it to a casket, and sank it to the bottom of the sea. The Thyrsus' past died with the rest of the slaves and crew on a ship struck by disease; her Awakening accompanied oozing sores and fever-hot flesh. The sole survivor joined up with the Mysterium but chafed under the Consilium's rules and mentor-apprentice structure; she wanted the freedom to use her magic as she chose, and came to believe no one had the right to tell an Awakened what to do. When she looked through a spyglass and saw something vast, feathered, and grotesque looking back, her cabal saw nothing and advised her to work on becoming wiser, for fear she was losing control. Resentful and restless, the sea witch fled to the Company, where an Obeah woman of the Brethren Dead initiated her into the age-old Legacy of the Keepers of the Covenant as she sought an understanding of spirits that preyed on humanity at sea.

Description: Crimson Gull is a wild-eyed, rictus-grinning black woman who wears bright colors and sings loud songs. Her forearms jingle with copper bangles and bracelets, and she hangs leather-cord loops laden with bird skulls around her neck. She possesses a constant frenetic energy and can't sit still, and likes to shout orders at the top of her lungs. In battle, she prefers shapeshifting and magic to pistol or cutlass; in parley, she's ruthless and impetuous, with no patience for standing on ceremony or for hemming and hawing, but she's personable and laughs easily. She's known to make snap decisions without consulting her crew occasionally, but they forgive her for it when she inevitably leads them to massive hauls or saves the life of a dying crewman.



Her Immediate Nimbus is the exhilarating high of flight far above the ocean, the heady rush of salt-spray winds and a bird's-eye view. Her Signature Nimbus is the disappointment of coming back down to earth, the heavy feeling of being chained to land by gravity. Her Long-Term Nimbus makes compasses spin and confuses the senses; navigators find themselves lost and birds fly overhead in strange formations.

Storytelling Hints: Crimson Gull studies the spread of disease through the Caribbean, particularly contagions that break out among the close ranks of a ship's crew. She follows stricken vessels as an albatross, and sometimes even entreats spirits to spread sickness on purpose among her rivals to watch its progress. Gull wants to understand the secrets of suppurating flesh that Awakened her while others died; she sees meaning and patterns in the sore-covered gums and rancid coughs of sailors, and views disease as a natural extension of the Primal Wild reaching into the Fallen World, forcing living things to adapt and overcome to survive. Illnesses and spirits she's never seen before intrigue her, and she goes out of her way to study them. She seeks communion with spirits of disease and avian deities as she chases her Obsessions.

Path: Thyrsus
Order: Company of the Codex
Legacy: Keepers of the Covenant
Virtue: Generous
Vice: Greedy
Obsessions: Understand the disease spirits of the Caribbean; Find and appease the bird-entity **(p. 303)**

Aspirations: Maintain luxury and freedom; Discover a new disease

Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 3; Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Skills: Academics 2, Crafts 3, Medicine (Disease) 3, Occult (Spirits) 4, Science 2; Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Firearms (Flintlock Pistol) 1, Stealth 3, Survival (Maritime) 4, Weaponry 1; Animal Ken (Birds) 2, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 2

Merits: Contacts (Mysterium), Destiny 1, Familiar (Albatross Spirit) 2, High Speech, Mana Sensitivity, Mystery Cult Initiation (Company of the Codex) 3, Plunder Mana (below), Resources 3, Shadow Name 2

Wisdom: 4

Willpower: 5

Initiative: 5

Defense: 6

Armor: 0/0

Speed: 11

Health: 8

Gnosis: 4

Mana/per turn: 13/4

Nimbus Tilt: Grants +1 to Resolve rolls, and +1 and 8-again to Survival rolls.

Dedicated Magical Tool: A hand mirror of polished copper

Arcana: Fate 2, Forces 1, Life 4, Prime 1, Space 2, Spirit 4

Attainments: Counterspell (Fate, Forces, Life, Prime, Space, Spirit); Conditional Duration; Improved Pattern Restoration; Sympathetic Range; Spirit Eyes; Mage Armor (Fate, Life, Space, Spirit); Targeted Summoning (Life, Spirit); Body Autonomy; Honorary Rank; Keepers of the Covenant — Oath of Synthesis, Sacred Invitation

Praxes: Exceptional Luck (Fate 2); Fools Rush In (Fate 2); Transform Life (Life 3); Shapechanging (Life 4); Break Boundary (Space 2)

Rotes: Knit (Life 3, Survival); Gossamer Touch (Spirit 2, Intimidation); Howl from Beyond (Spirit 3, Medicine); Reaching (Spirit 3, Medicine)

Rote Skills: Firearms, Intimidation, Survival

Weapons/Attacks:

Attack	Damage	Range	Clip	Initiative	Dice Pool
Unarmed	0B	Melee	—	−0	7
Flintlock pistol*	2L	15/30/60	1	−2	5

*Flintlock pistols take five turns to reload.

Notes: The Keepers of the Covenant give Crimson Gull Fate as a third Ruling Arcanum.

Keepers of the Covenant

(Thyrsus, Silver Ladder; Fate)

Although the Keepers of the Covenant are traditionally a Silver Ladder Legacy within the Diamond, many initiates — sometimes called Elders — exist as Nameless throughout the world. Keepers of all stripes believe their practices predate the Diamond, and that théarchs adopted the Legacy when they took their place as mediators and community-builders for Awakened society. The Keepers of the Covenant tie their own destinies to the spirit realm to stand with one foot in the human world and one in the Shadow, belonging to both and neither. They bridge the two as intermediaries who foster cooperation and keep the peace.

Yantras: traversing passages between boundaries (+1); spirit fetishes (+1, or +2 if the bound spirit has Rank 4+); succeeding on an Empathy roll relevant to the spell (+2); reciting a traditional piece of ancient wisdom (+1)

Oblations: communing with and getting to know the local spirits; presiding over a non-magical ceremony that honors or appeases spirits; mediating between feuding parties comprising both humans and supernatural beings; generating the Resonant or Open Condition appropriate to a known spirit without using magic.

First Attainment: Oath of Synthesis

Prerequisites: Initiation (Fate 2, Spirit 1, Survival 2)

Upon initiation into the Legacy, the mage binds her destiny to the Shadow, permanently gaining one dot in the Destiny Merit (**Mage**, p. 100) for each Legacy Attainment she knows. She may only use Destiny points acquired this way on rolls to interact with spirits, the Shadow, or the Gauntlet. Her Doom is to, someday, become Claimed. No combination of this Legacy's Attainments and purchasing Merit dots can grant a character more than five total dots of Destiny.

In addition, this Attainment emulates the Spirit 1 spell Exorcist's Eye (**Mage**, p. 180) with a Duration in turns equal to the mage's dots in Spirit, allocating its Reach to instant use.

Second Attainment: Sacred Invitation

Prerequisites: Fate 2, Spirit 2, Survival 3

The mage extends an open hand across boundaries, welcoming a spirit into the material world. This Attainment emulates the Spirit 2 spell Opener of the Way (**Mage**, p. 181), but the willworker may only use it to shift Resonant to Open, not vice versa. Upon using this Attainment, she may spend 1 Mana to specify one stipulation by which any spirit using the Condition the mage creates to enact a Manifestation must abide, such as refraining from attacking a particular person or staying on board a ship. The

stipulation must be something the mage could perceive a violation of if she were present, mundanely or with Spirit Eyes (**Mage**, p. 193). By manifesting via this Condition, a spirit tacitly agrees to this provision; should it break that agreement, the Open Condition immediately vanishes, and the spirit loses Essence equal to the mage's dots in Fate. This Attainment allocates its Reach to advanced Duration, requiring a scene of preparation.

New Merit: Plunder Mana (••)

Prerequisites: Prime •, Resolve ••

Effect: Your character draws Mana into herself with rapacious swiftness. She takes only 10 minutes to perform an Oblation at a Hallow, rather than the usual hour. If she successfully Counters a spell with any Mana cost, she regains one Mana.

Mystery Cult Initiation: Company of the Codex (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character is a member of the Company of the Codex **(p. 311)**, a Nameless Order based on a philosophy of radical freedom, equality, and divining magical praxis from discipline and wealth. Company mages deliberately adopt an exaggerated persona on the high seas to intimidate opponents. Each dot in this Merit also acts as Status in the Company.

The Codex (Artifact ••••• ••••• •••)

The Grimoire Codices granted to the greatest Awakened pirates of a generation contain any number of Prime spells, most often Display of Power (**Mage**, p. 168). Every Company captain has one. They're copies of the actual Codex, an Imperial Artifact pulled from a lost ruin in Long Bay on the Jamaican coast. It is by means of the primary Codex that the Company guts Order and Patron tool Yantras and ruthlessly counterspells Awakened magic.

The Codex uses an effect of Prime beyond the ken of masters to literally plunder symbols from the Supernal, rendering Yantras of authority weak or inert (see "The Mystery of Silver and Iron," **p. 297**). Those named by the Company and written into the Codex are immune to this effect, and their players' rolls to counter any spell that would semiotically align with such Yantras gain 8-again as long as the caster is affected by the pirate's Nimbus Tilt.



Fearsome Mien (•): Your character gains the one-dot Potent Nimbus Merit (**Mage**, p. 103). Those without a Nimbus still clearly read as Company members to Focused Mage Sight.

The Sword and the Spell (••): Your character gains a Skill Specialty in either Occult or Weaponry.

Rote Skills (•••): Your character gains Firearms, Intimidation, and Survival as Rote Skills.

The Dread Mage (••••): Your character gains the Shadow Name Merit (•••). Only Awakened may reach this level of status.

Company Captain (•••••): Your character gains the Grimoire (Codex) Merit (•••).

Grim Tides

The Silver Ladder puts on a show of confidence and absolute conviction, and in many cases it's completely genuine. Everyone agrees on the Company's threat, and most share the same frustration with the rest of the Diamond. Most reluctantly support the alliance, too, seeing it as a necessary evil. Few théarchs *like* working with Seers, but they know they must sink or swim; even those unhappy with the alliance stand in solidarity with the Order to stop the whole thing splintering apart. Some Ladder mages leave their cabals — often amid recriminations from Diamond colleagues — to join new crews of théarchs, bolstered by numbers from Caucuses spanning the Americas and Europe.

Still, many théarchs feel profoundly lonely as the war continues, surrounded by unfamiliar faces and separated from — even opposing — old friends and associates. Those who remain with their Diamond cabals find loyalties questioned, trust shaken. Even facing off with Company mages is fraught with feelings of betrayal and a vain desperation to "save" them, as many of the Picaroons are Diamond defectors. Fracture lines run through the Caribbean Consilia, never tightly bound organizations even in the best of days. The Ladder would traditionally be the Order shoring up the foundations, but they are too busy battling the Company and watching the Seers for treachery; and while they persist in their alliance with the Iron Pyramid, the rest of the Diamond wouldn't let them even if they tried.

Rusted Pyramids

Margaret Howell, the powerful Acanthus who forges the alliance with the Silver Ladder, is the Tetrarch overseeing Seer operations in the West Indies. She wields her authority from her stronghold in Port Royal, Jamaica, marshaling new arrivals from the colonies into a fresh network of Pylons. Once, Port Royal was a haven of pirate activity in the Caribbean, but now it is the heart of British attempts to curb the pirates' ravages — part of the symbolism Howell seeks to foster as a counterattack against the Company's occult corrosion.

At first, the reinforcements sent from Europe and America are the unwanted dross, the ambitious but weak, and the glory hounds eager for a chance to prove themselves. When Armand Gauvain, a powerful Praetorian prelate visiting from France, throws his weight behind the crusade after watching his Yantras fail him and losing a ship and crew to the Awakened brigands, the other Tetrarchs take the threat more seriously. The Seers fear the damage the Company is doing to the fundamental underpinnings of authority with their symbolic rebellion and worry the Exarchs may take it out on their own servants if their influence in the Fallen World wanes. Besides, they refuse to tolerate the threat to their control of Sleeper society and the blatant rejection of tradition, looking to crush the life out of the idea of mage democracy before it spreads any further.

The Ministry of Geryon

Faceless powers rule unopposed. One of the Great Ministries of the age, **Geryon** serves the Nemesis, Exarch of control through unseen power. The Ministry encourages those with the privilege and means to hide their identities and oppress or prey upon others to do so with impunity, sponsoring the growth of hate groups who conceal their faces and names, elite criminal organizations and secret societies, and abuses of common folk by unpunishable forces. When anyone, even friends or colleagues, could be the masked assailants or anonymous donors who buy votes with cold, hard cash; when neighbors spy on each other knowing one of them is informing on the rest; when everyone knows the gang downtown runs the city, but no one knows who's a member — that's when trust crumbles and fear wins.

The Nemesis grants the **Crown of Secrecy** as its Prelacy Crown Attainment. In the material world, ephemeral entities in the Seer's presence are subject to Quiescence as though they were Sleepers. Also, when other mages Scrutinize her magic with Focused Mage Sight, spells with dot ratings up to the Seer's Spirit dots count as rotes, relegating her Signature Nimbus to deep information.

Rote Skills: Larceny, Socialize, Subterfuge

Ministering to the Corrupt

Howell belongs to the **Hegemony**, and it is this Ministry's prognosticators who first fear the Company, as its democratic ideals resonate with unrest in the colonies. The Unity's servants coax the wrath of nations against Nassau, seeking ever more brutal treatment of its renegades and turning pirate against pirate through tactical bribes of pardon and wealth from royal coffers in exchange for mutinies. These Seers hold out the most hope that they might turn the théarchs they work beside against the Diamond permanently as recruits to the Pyramid once their battle is done.



The Ministry of **Paternoster** preaches a cruel creed of puritanical self-denial in opposition to the decadence and self-indulgence of pirates. When sailors turn to thoughts of salvation and soul-searching upon the ocean's bleak expanse, far from home and safety, the Father's servants are there to twist their desperation into tearful repentance and malleable zeal. Theirs are the voices that silence the songs in the plantations' fields, condemning the true faith that keeps hope alive under the auspices of fearing God's abandonment.

The **Praetorians** thunder into port in men-of-war bristling with cannons and flintlock muskets. Some of these Awakened reavers are with the Royal Navy and some are pirates themselves, and they lead some of the most brutal and cutthroat crews on the high seas. The General's servants revel in open magical war and the way enemy ships flee when they fly their Jolly Rogers bearing their Exarchal patron's runes. Most théarchs hold their Praetorian allies at arm's length, not wishing to condone so much blood in the water but unable to deny their need for strong warships and battle sorcery against the pirates' foul play.

While the Hegemony espouses open negotiation with the théarchs they court, the Ministry of **Geryon** plays a subtler game, hoping to catch their Ladder counterparts in mortifying hypocrisies and quietly tempt them to indulge their Lion instincts. Their long game is ultimately to recruit théarchs to the Throne, or at least permanently sour their relationship with the rest of the Diamond, without tipping their hand. The Nemesis' servants make up the bulk of the Seers affiliated or liaising with American and European powers who want the pirates taken down, but don't want to attach their names to the effort for fear of marauder retaliation. To sow confusion and reduce public support for the pirates, they form crews of their own captained by patsies to strike civilian targets a pirate wouldn't care to plunder: those with important cultural, sentimental, or personal value, but no particular wealth or military significance.

Among the Lesser Ministries, the upstarts of **Mammon** funnel troves of coin and Mana to the Pylons doing the dirty work of protecting their slave ships and plantations. The rise of piracy and its endless avarice pleases the Chancellor, and has grown Mammon's power here. They encourage slavers and landowners to hunt down and murder slaves freed by Company mages to send a clear message: People are property to be bought and sold. They place malevolent curses on treasures and Mysteries they believe the Nameless cannot help but steal, to ward off further Picaroon plundering. They sell information on other Seers' shipping routes to the Company, trying to sate the buccaneers' greed upon their rivals rather than fight back directly, and quietly sabotage Hegemony's alliance with the Ladder in hopes it will go down in flames.

Blood-Dimmed Tides

Ships burn to the waterline as mysterious blazes ignite within their caulked guts, or drift into port without any living crew but rabid, flesh-gorged rats. Storms consume entire convoys, and blue-limned ghosts claw the souls out of sleeping sailors. Cornered sloops find their cannons choke and gasp as frenzied pirates close in; flotillas of predatory vessels circle and dart in impossible naval maneuvers as willworkers battle for control over the vast ocean itself. So much is on the line in this war, and its belligerents all fervently believe their vision for the future is worth a heavy price in blood — Awakened and Sleeper alike.

The alliance of iron and silver agrees on tenuous rules of engagement: offer mercy to Nameless who surrender and limit collateral damage to Sleepers. Seers and théarchs both try to bribe or persuade Company mages away from their Order, hiding any successes from their partners in accord. Neither Hegemony nor Ladder wants this conflict to devolve into the rampant destruction of the very communities from which they draw their power, but other Ministries would shed no tears if Unity lost influence here, and out on the ocean it's hard to keep a firm hand with one's subordinates and peers. On the other side, the Company's official stance is to refuse all such agreements, despite the Ladder's repeated attempts to reach out; the renegades see no reason to fight shackled by laws from the very society they rejected. "Freedom or death," they cry! In practice, though, loyalties and priorities are messy, lines are blurred, and how any given conflict will end is up in the air every time.

Crews wielding Time face Picaroon rivals in conflicts no one else can see, duels of prediction and counter-prediction dancing through the tides of time to pass on warnings of fickle futures. Magicians navigate the Astral as well as mundane seas, hunting for traces of the legends their opponents write as their reputations stride before them, or secrets that could provide an edge. Potent sites of mystical power become flashpoints, as mages on every side race to be the first to plant their flags and reap the rewards. With weather

The Mystery of Bone

Seers of Mammon watch over plantations, chaining dead slaves' ghosts with their magic and forcing these poor shades to work themselves to oblivion. Shackled to the land, the moaning phantasms harvest a bizarre crop for the Ministry — weird, coral-like growths of bone that spring up in the Twilight of the fields where the slaves die.

The Ministry remains tight-lipped about the origins of its Twilight crop, but harvested and processed by a ghost's deathly energy, the result is a materialized substance: the bone-white powder is a rich source of Mana, a weird tass heavily resonant with Death and Mind. The Twilight coral isn't limited to Mammon's fields, although they try their best to control the resource. It grows up along ley lines fertilized with death, and sometimes Awakened find it clinging to the hulls of vessels whose planks have seen much blood spilled.

and Fate as their playthings, sorcerers spar in pursuits and raids that rarely flourish into true battles; most confrontations are over before reinforcements can arrive, and the might of Awakened empowered to do as they like on the open ocean, far away from streets crowded with Sleepers at every turn, often ensures decisive outcomes. The alliance pushes for these quick and brutal showdowns as often as it can, hoping to nail the Company with one too many costly confrontations the Nameless cannot afford.

This alliance seethes with mistrust. Both sides expect mutiny and betrayal to come at any moment. Vigilant students of Space stand ready to steal or sever sympathetic connections from those who have to deal with the other faction directly.

Splintered Ranks

The Diamond is cracked. The other Orders can't stomach the Ladder's alliance with the Iron Pyramid. Rifts break out through cabals and Consilia across the colonies. Many mages see the parallels between this conflict of sorcerers and the social unrest that builds across the Americas, Europe, and beyond, and wonder whether the Company is merely a symptom of what is yet to come — perhaps ground-breaking visionaries, or perhaps a scourge that will only grow from here on out.

Some Diamond cabals try to defuse the conflict with the Company directly, especially those who count former friends and allies among the defectors. They try to rein the Ladder in; some mages relentlessly pressure the théarchs to attend another Convocation and listen to reason, or at least to parley with them and hear them out, while others covertly conduct sabotage both magical and mundane, hoping that if weakened enough the Ladder will reassess and return to sanity. A few cabals go so far as to outright attack théarchs at sea, kidnapping them "for their own good" and keeping them on a warded ship that moves from place to place to avoid retaliation.

Most of the Diamond cares little for the Company, though. The pirates' transgressions strike at all the Orders, not to mention tenets of basic decency, morality, and wisdom. Many see the Picaroons as hypocrites, spouting off about equality and democracy when Awakened, capable of twisting the fabric of reality to their whims, enjoy freedoms far beyond those of Sleepers. The Arcana give every mage incredible power, and the established order the Company is so eager to sweep away is a system of checks and balances that prevent the catastrophes unfettered magicians would inflict on the world. A splinter faction supports the Ladder in its war, even if it balks at alliance with the Seers, and strikes aggressively at the pirates of Nassau in hopes of swiftly closing this conflict so they can mend fences. Better to crush the Nameless and reconcile the Silver Ladder with its fellows than allow the rift to grow any greater. The one thing they all have in common is their concern for the future of the Diamond in the Americas; what if they *can't* reconcile with the théarchs when it's all said and done? What if this mage democracy catches on like wildfire, spreads far and wide, and decides to overthrow the Diamond as a whole?

Some cabals just try to keep their heads down and survive the chaos, focusing on their own Obsessions and agendas. Some fight whoever impinges on their interests, regardless of faction, rendering entire islands unfriendly to Seers, Ladder, and Company alike. Others trade between the factions or try to smuggle resources through the area while avoiding Picaroon raids and alliance requisitions. Some enterprising or foolhardy willworkers take the grave risk of commanding powerful ghosts and the Arcanum of Death to breach entire ships into the Autochthonous Depths, sailing on the brackish, dead waters through caverns that have never seen the sun to emerge through another Avernian Gate into safer seas. These bold Awakened seek Bound to aid them as navigators and guides through the Underworld's upper reaches.

Diamonds of the Sea

For the **Adamantine Arrow**, the choice is a terrible one. Existence is war, but this is a conflict they cannot easily accept — the Silver Ladder should be their allies, yet partner with the Seers, who should surely be their foes. The Arrow fights

The Mystery of Glass

Something vast and avian prowls the skies, unseen but all-seeing. Wherever its gaze settles, perspective warps reality. Vast distances of open water stretch into literal infinity or are suddenly nothing at all. Tricks of the eye become truth, rendering ships tiny and fragile or vast and bloated. Captains stare in confusion as cannon fire falls far short of where it should reach, or shriek at the brief apparition of an enormous eye in the spyglass lens, bright and unblinking. The presence often accompanies an albatross' appearance.

When the thing turns its attention to a scene, halve or double the effective Size of any given character or ship; traits derived from Size change accordingly. Distances are also effectively doubled or halved. These changes vary from character to character without consistency. It becomes impossible to leave the scene until the presence's attention moves on; a running mage or sailing ship grows no closer to the destination, despite clearly moving. Attempting to use Space or Time to circumvent this can, on dramatic failures, result in thrashing, reality-slicing talons seizing the hapless Awakened and flinging her through folded space-time to a desolate isle or lifeless era. Some of those who spy the avian eye in the glass lose their souls or end up grossly mutated as eyeballs bud in cancerous fecundity from their flesh.



the Company, too, and has done since before the Ladder's declaration of war; it knows this enemy well. But it struggles to see the honor in defeating one foe if, in the process, it empowers another, particularly when it sees no good reason for the Picaroons to be fighting in the first place.

Some mages of the **Mysterium** welcome the war, seeing it as a chance to stem the Company's ravages at last. Mystagogues want to explore the sea's Mysteries without hindrance, and tell themselves the Company indulges in mere brazen looting driven by greed rather than any desire for true wisdom; other Orders accuse them of hypocrisy, and in the wave-tossed darkness of long nights at sea they wonder if it's true. Others, though, find the symbolic power swelling beneath the Republic of Pirates intriguing. Not only is it a Mystery worth investigating in its own right, but it may well represent an evolution of magic worth preserving and defending.

The **Guardians of the Veil** have little love for the Company and their irresponsible abuse of fragile magic. Indeed, some see this conflict as a means to swiftly eradicate the problem. Far more, though, vigorously oppose the alliance of iron and silver. They see it pushing desperate Picaroon mages into darker and wilder acts of magic, forced to extremes — even embracing the Abyss — to survive. Befriending the Seers of the Throne is even worse. Guardians know the ends can justify a lot of means, but see no merit in siding with the enemy and espousing tyranny out of what they view as a deadly mix of paranoia and hubris.

The Tide Ebbs

Though Woodes Rogers directed his actions firmly at Sleepers, piracy's decline reverberates through the Company of the Codex. The Ladder and Seers take advantage of their weakened position and ultimately quash the burgeoning mage democracy. The Diamond Orders have work to do to heal the rifts that opened up within their ranks these last few decades, including deciding how to deal with those mages who left the Diamond to throw in their lot with Nassau.

The Ministry of Geryon survives until the late 1960s, when the Sleepers' fear of widespread surveillance and judgement supersedes that of being controlled by secret societies; once Geryon's numbers drop and the rise of Panopticon drastically diminishes its power, the Scelestus Angrboda will feed the Ministry's last Tetrarch to the Abyss.

Playing the Game

The Awakening does not regard social class or origin; it only requires the subject to possess a questioning mind and dissatisfaction with the Lie. The Bargain is offered to those who die, and death comes to all. The human systems of stratification and racism overlay every interaction, and only two things override the existing social order: sustained contact and mutual understanding, or the base human emotion of desire. This lust takes many forms in the West Indies: lust for gold, power, sex, freedom, and Mysteries. Common cause draws individuals together more ably than compassion.

The Company of the Codex and other pirates function as floating democracies, dedicated to complete freedom. Yet none eschew the tools of Mammon. Many pirates choose to engage in the slave trade as a matter of economic course or *fait accompli*. These same pirates are often deeply racist, treating the enslaved as *worthy* of nothing more than slavery and readily engaging in the trade with astonishing brutality. Pirates as a whole treat other Europeans in a similar manner: some as boon companions, some fit for nothing but rape and torture, based on nationality or just because they feel like it and the opportunity presents itself. This hypocritical attitude is hardly unique to pirates, or even to Europeans.

Pirate crews *do* sometimes free slaves, and black, Hispanic and mixed-race people serve with the few Taíno and other indios aboard pirate crews, alongside women and others, but these are often one-off cases — or, at least, they're treated as such by pirate crews. Despite a few outlier examples — six out of 10 on Blackbeard's crew are black men, and Mary Read and Anne Bonny count women other than themselves under the Jolly Roger — this is largely the truth. The pirates' code includes everyone, but only when it suits the majority.

Don't Swing the Lead: Historical Accuracy

For all the atrocities and genocides Europeans committed against natives during colonialism and the Afro-Atlantic slave trade — too numerous to count — friendly relationships and trade alliances with natives and Africans occurred frequently. People of color and women were absolutely represented among ship crews, and it doesn't harm history to include a few more. Besides the equality of piracy, mages and Sin-Eaters are represented in every population. Among the Maroons and the few indigenous folk of the West Indies, mages find their training in Obeah; among colonizers, privateers impart the ancient tradition of sin-eating passed down through Welsh culture.

The history of racism and colonialism is deeply fraught with injustices and brutality, even for a game of horror. Many, if not most, of these injustices persist into the modern day. Storytellers, be *supremely* careful when engaging in these topics and themes beyond the most superficial. Do not engage without the explicit buy-in of the entire table and use safety techniques to ensure player agency is preserved. Games can be a tool for teaching and social change, but they're primarily for entertainment, and "accuracy" should never come at the expense of someone's comfort and safety at the table.

Mages and Sin-Eaters

This heterodox attitude extends to mages and Sin-Eaters. Generally, only among pirates and the Maroons do the two mix with any degree of regularity and unrestricted freedom, though this is also far from universal. Mages do not shrink from ghostly phenomena, and Sin-Eaters can endure the rigors of witnessing true magic, having died long before. The unique state and powerful swells of the Underworld and the Awakened civil war means that both groups seek the other out as third parties and trump cards in their individual struggles. Sympathy and common cause bind the two.

The Más Salvaje and the Adamantine Arrow find much to bond over, when they don't come to blows. Both are dedicated to defense of community, believing the best defense to be a strong offense. Ikwa share their sentiment toward preservation with Mystagogues, although the latter are loath to divulge their secrets to those who cannot practice Awakened magic. The Brethren Dead are known to accept mages into their crews, especially Moros, who find interacting with deceased crew members an easy burden to bear. Such willworkers enjoy great success in these hybrid endeavors, as they can manipulate ghostly Anchors and natures in ways that engender envy in Sin-Eaters.

Most mages of the local Lucayan branch of the Taíno practiced an indigenous philosophy based upon perfecting an ideal Supernal self and defense of community, guarding ruined temples to ancient beings terrible and powerful. The Spanish Guardians who made first contact were horrified at the degree to which Taíno mages interacted openly with Sleeper charges. Despite a spirited defense, the invading efforts drove those Taíno the Guardians didn't absorb at gunpoint to extinction, shattering sacred lines of transmission and teaching, and leaving newly Awakened Caribbean native mages without guidance. Yet many of these Taíno, and the keys to their Mysteries, can be found in the Underworld.

At the same time, Seers of every Ministry heartily support the slave trade, and the massive death toll it brings in its wake. No Sin-Eater could witness this without feeling a sense of grave injustice, but they need Awakened help to go up against the Seers directly. Working with the Diamond has its downsides, too, though; mages do not respect the natural order, creating or opening Avernian Gates as it suits their whims no matter how many ghosts pour through from the other side, and their tendency to treat the Underworld like their own personal playground sets a poor precedent with Sin-Eaters and their celebrants.

Dark Waters: Special Systems

Several traits deserve special mention in this era.

The Survival Skill is a vital necessity at sea, as it covers navigation, plotting courses, weather prediction, fishing, and hunting and foraging for all-important fresh provisions when a ship pulls ashore to an uninhabited stretch of land.

Likewise, mages with facility in the Life Arcanum find their talents hard-pressed at sea; infection takes root easily in the rope burns, splinters, and other injuries caused by shipboard hazards. Proper equipment and hygiene are nothing but wishful thinking. The rocking deck gives no respite, and the best disinfectant is dark rum taken internally. Life magic renders these threats as toothless as a scurvy dog.

Finally, willworkers who study the Forces Arcanum command the winds and weather, ensuring their ships are never caught in the doldrums and whipping up localized storms to harass shipbound enemies. They also command fire — a deadly threat when the only thing between a sailor and the depths is made of wood and rope.

Here are a few Conditions and Tilts common to this era:

NEW CONDITION: DEHYDRATION

Cotton mouth, burning throat, blurred vision: the character is severely dehydrated, having gone without fresh water for days. A few more will kill her. She suffers a three-die penalty to all rolls, and the severe Sick Tilt in action scenes.

Possible Sources: Not drinking fresh water, eating too much salt.

Resolution: Drink fresh water.

NEW CONDITION: SCURVY

The bane of sailors, scurvy is a horrific disease that weakens the body, loosens the teeth, and opens old wounds. On a bad trip across the Atlantic, half of all sailors die of it. Your character's healing rate is quartered, and damage in his two leftmost Health boxes doesn't heal at all. He suffers from the moderate Sick Tilt in action scenes.

Possible Sources: Poor nutrition aboard a ship, such as eating nothing but salt beef for weeks.

Resolution: Consume ample fresh fruits and vegetables for at least three days.

Chases at Sea

Many pirate ships wait along a known shipping lane or near a port city, passing themselves off as merchants or gentlemen of fortune. Crews trying to spot prey ships hang upon the rigging in calm seas, watching the horizon. They have a rule: The first to sight prey gets the first pick of weapon or treasure once the ordeal is over.

Ships at sea don't fly flags unless they're close to port, and "pirate" isn't always the first thought that comes to a captain's mind. Cautious merchants are suspicious of ships not moving briskly, but the sea is lonely and monotonous, and news from strangers is always welcome. If the pirates are lucky and look innocent enough, an incautious merchant



New Tilt: Unstable Footing (Environmental)

Whether rolling deck, storm-lashed rocks, or rowdy gathering, the situation shifts rapidly underfoot and can change wildly at a moment's notice.

Effect: Navigating the scene is treacherous, physically or socially. Any failure on a roll these conditions affect becomes a dramatic failure instead, but fortune favors the brave; aggressive and bold actions, such as all-out attacks, sailing into the teeth of a storm, or angrily facing down a rival, require only three successes to achieve exceptional success.

A dramatic failure or exceptional success in this scene may take the form of a wild reversal of fortune or unlikely turn of events, particularly one that plays out consequences of past actions or represents sins catching up with the character.

Any character who arrives in the scene unexpectedly seeking revenge upon or compensation from someone present gains a three-die bonus to the first pool their player rolls toward that end and gains a point of Willpower should they succeed in getting what they want in the scene.

Causing the Tilt: Poor navigation or weather on the ocean; tense negotiations in rowdy taverns. A character can impose this Tilt if they achieve exceptional success to undermine or challenge someone in front of a group of their peers.

Ending the Tilt: Once loyalties change, the storm vents its rage, or fate extracts its payment, the waters calm again — for now. After at least one dramatic failure *and* one exceptional success, the Tilt ends; otherwise, it remains until the end of the scene.

might well approach them. A friendly hail and a request for news goes far, depending on the captain's accent and the pirate ship's general condition; use Social rolls with circumstantial modifiers to handle this.

The chase system (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 84) can be adapted for ship maneuvers and ship-to-ship battles. Visibility at sea is measured in miles, and while pirate ships are faster than a heavily laden merchant ship, they're not *that* much faster. Chase turns in nautical terms take place over hour-long increments; a chase can

last for a few hours or might drag on for long days, if the winds and waves don't cooperate for the pursuer. Should a chase last until dark, neither ship uses lights, and the prey may even attempt to hide by stowing their sails.

Survival is the most oft-used Skill to plot proper intercept courses and tack against hard winds. Athletics is used to climb the rigging and perform other physical labor to keep the ship moving, such as operating bilge pumps or weighing anchor, while Wits + Composure is used to keep a sharp lookout. Firearms fires cannons, and Presence + Expression or Intimidate lets a captain or first mate shout orders effectively, or a crew cow their opponents into surrendering. The one thing many sailors of the age *don't* do is swim; most don't know how.

The following are additional potential modifiers to the base number of required successes to win a naval chase:

Naval Chase Modifiers

Circumstance	Modifier
Your ship is slightly undermanned	+1
Tacking into the wind	+2
You have no commander	+2
Your ship is severely undermanned	+3

Using vehicle traits (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 98), ships in the Age of Sail are slow and not very maneuverable or durable by modern vehicle standards, but unlike most cars they often carry weapons, and enough hull damage can lead to capsizing or sinking. A dramatic failure in a naval chase can, too, while an exceptional success can mean the opponent instantly surrenders. Winning a naval chase gives a crew the opportunity to board the enemy vessel without resistance — usually a prelude to ordinary violence or tense surrender negotiations.

Dice Modifier: The maneuverability penalty to a helmsman's Survival rolls to pilot the ship.

Durability: Works as normal, but fire damage and attacks that take a −3 penalty to specifically target the sails ignore Durability.

Structure: When a ship suffers half its Structure in damage, in addition to the usual operation penalty, it starts taking on water; reduce its Speed by half. Speed restores at a rate of 10 per turn during which sailors man the bilge pumps in naval-chase timing. At three-quarters of its Structure in damage, the ship can't move at all and will capsize or sink on any dramatic failure to operate it. Seafarers rarely sink their opponents except in times of war, though; pirates don't want to destroy enemy ships, but rather to force surrender with as little collateral damage as possible so they can recruit the crew or take prisoners, loot the cargo, and steal the ship.

Speed: Ships don't have a safe Speed; instead, they have an average Speed for traveling by current alone (i.e. with sails furled in inclement weather or near shore) and a top Speed for traveling under full sail. If a ship suffers too many attacks specifically targeting the sails, depending on how many sails and masts it has, it can no longer travel at its faster Speed until the sails are repaired. Ships still need to accelerate like modern vehicles, but the time scales are comparable to turns in naval chases.

Weapon Damage: Warships carry cannons, sometimes on multiple gun decks; a fully decked-out man-of-war can carry 124 guns, all of which can fire simultaneously with enough crewmen on hand. In a naval chase, when one side decides to deal damage by taking an action with Firearms (or Expression/Intimidation to give orders to fire), treat the successful action as an attack as normal, using the ship's weapon modifier (see sidebar).

Crashes and Ramming: Crashing into rocks, sea monsters, or another ship works like crashing into anything else, but the ship *always* takes damage without a roll, while passengers never take any. In the Age of Sail, deliberate ramming is uncommon. Doing so requires a Wits + Survival roll, penalized by the ship's dice modifier trait; successes on this roll add to the damage taken by *both* ships.

Crew and Krewe

The krewe system in **Geist** can represent a pirate crew. For actual Bound groups, the two may be one and the same, but a mage cabal can use the same rules. Crews of the Company and other Orders that utilize mystery cults extensively, such as the Guardians' Labyrinth and the Silver Ladder's Cryptopolies, have access to the Mystery Cult Initiation Merit just like Sin-Eater krewes. Most have

Example Ship Traits

Ship	Dice Modifier	Size	Durability/ Structure	Speed/ Under Sail	Weapon Damage
Man-of-war/ Galleon	−5	40	2/35	5/9	5
Sloop/Corvette	−3	30	2/30	6/12	3
Schooner	−2	20	2/25	8/12	2



Doctrines that relate to the vessel's articles, while Regalia are treasures and triumphs taken from particularly notable victories (crews that aren't krewes are usually restricted to Glory effects). Krewe Conditions and Congregation rules can model dissent and disloyalty among the crew, including how close they are to mutiny or simply voting in a new captain.

Krewe actions can also simulate piracy raids; typically, these require Complexity 1–5, depending on how difficult the target is. A fat merchant vessel with cracked guns is at the low end of the scale, while a fortified plantation with dozens of highly trained guards and supernatural defenses is at the high end. Failure in these krewe actions, or taking too long to succeed, generally leads to dissatisfaction among pirates and lethal damage to Congregation boxes. The end result is inevitably a Coup d'Etat as the crew elects new leaders and forces the player characters to step down.

Professions at Sea

A well-trained sailor is rare, and many begin as cabin and powder boys, rising through the ranks and developing varied skills with hard-won experience. Strikers, for example, hunt for fresh game and materials while the ship is ashore; the boatswain, by contrast, always remains aboard, ensuring proper discipline and distribution of labor.

Professional Training	Asset Skill
Boatswain ("bo'sun")	Crafts, Intimidation
Cannoneer	Crafts, Firearms
Carpenter	Academics, Crafts
Cook	Crafts, Persuasion
Deckhand	Athletics, Streetwise
Navigator/Pilot	Science, Survival
Surgeon	Empathy, Medicine
Striker	Survival, Weaponry

Storytelling The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea

Bringing out the themes and feel of the era comes from more than just putting the characters on a ship. The Awakened and Bound aren't just free-roaming troubleshooters or troublemakers, but part of the wider world, and they have a place in the conflicts playing out across the Atlantic.

Pitching story hooks in terms of price and cost can help bring forward the theme of buying deliverance. Even an ally demands payment for aid out here on the tempestuous seas. Freedom comes at a price, whether the lingering threat of retribution or the hefty sum needed to pay off pursuers. A Picaroon mage seizing a Mystery from under the Seers' noses benefits now, but at the cost of ongoing enmity from specific and powerful Awakened in the future. By bringing peace to the unquiet dead, a Bound merely balances the scales for the crimes she committed during her life. Forces may arise during play from the sea, her past, or directly from the Underworld itself to make sure she never forgets what she owes.

Story Hooks

Haunting stories play out upon the waves of the Caribbean, snaring mages and Bound alike. Some find wondrous opportunities to exploit, but for others the fickle winds plan crueler fates.

City of the Drowned

An earthquake shakes the sea. Soon afterward, vessels arriving in port bear wild tales of sonorous bells ringing beneath the water, phosphorescence-limned towers glimpsed beneath the surface, and squirming shapes flopping upon the night-shrouded deck. Many crews are missing night watchmen; sailors vanish from their bunks, leaving only briny damp in their wake. Soon, the absent return to port — they crawl from the surf with the night's tide, sodden bodies missing hands, feet, or eyes. These drowned dead slither to the windows of their former fellows and call with sibilant promises of riches, or gurgle demands to know why they were left behind.

An ancient city stands on the seabed where none did before, vomited up from the muck by the earthquake's fury. It's a bizarre agglomeration of impossible structures built from fluted stone, spiraling glass, and obsidian. Eldritch sigils mark the pitted columns and scarred steps of drowned ziggurats. The Awakened believe this must be a city of the Time Before, a fragment of lost history; thus begins a fierce race to plunder its secrets. Yet the ruin crumbles with every passing vessel — the gaze of Sleepers erodes the magic that sustains it. In mere months, it will be nothing but rubble.

A Stygian Verge lies at the city's heart, a pit among the bones of ancient sea beasts unknown to this world, containing an Avernian Gate of great size. A nightmarish infestation that creates the drowned dead plaguing the ports binds ghosts to its whim; those daring to investigate find most of them bear gold on their person. Rumor spreads among the Bound — some vast leviathan of the Underworld's waters is trying to breach into the Verge and wallow in its power.

The *Red Orchid*

A ghost ship stalks the ocean — the *Red Orchid*, a rotting hulk that was once a slave vessel. Now, it's a prison for damned souls. The *Orchid* appears only at night or under a heavy, rolling fog. Strange wails and whimpers mark its passage, the suffering of hundreds of ghosts chained to its decks and prow, unable to escape. For most, spying the *Orchid* through the dark and the mist is to know damnation, but for

the bold and the hardy, the grim vessel and its captain may provide an opportunity — another roll at the dice of fate.

The *Red Orchid*'s crew members are ghosts who puppet shambling carcasses, and bloodthirsty revenants hungering for life's warmth. The captain, August Selsby, is a monstrous and terrifying vampire — a slaver in life and, now, a slaver in death. Hushed sailors' tales claim the Gangrel works for the Devil and calls the revenants he creates his "Gulls." The *Orchid* prowls after ships carrying those consumed by guilt, but it levies its judgment upon all crew and passengers without mercy — shackle the ghosts of those they kill, and pour their Essence into Selsby's coffers.

Selsby bargains with pirates, sorcerers, and Sin-Eaters who seek him out, unless he senses the weight of guilt heavy on their souls. He trades in ghosts and anchors, can mend wounded souls, and barters with treasures his dead crew dredge from sunken ruins. He buys human sacrifices and knows secrets of both the living and dead seas. For those willing to gamble, the blood-drinking captain offers a terrible wager: Stake the soul of a loved one and roll the bones with him. Win, and earn freedom from death — a one-time reprieve from the bite of mortality. Lose, and Selsby collects what he is due.

Chronicles of Darkness on the High Seas

The Golden Age of Piracy's **changelings** fear the popularity of privateering, which using the mortal slave trade and mortal piracy as covers makes easy and lucrative. Lost privateers form a loose coalition as a profit-mongering answer to the fearless nautical courts they hound relentlessly, inviting hobgoblins willing to sign contracts in blood to join them, or signing on with Huntsman captains of terrifying ships flying the Gentry's colors to drag their victims into deep-sea Hedge gates where merfolk, sirens, selkies, and more unspeakable goblin creatures dwell. The West Indies are rife with scattered survivors of collapsed city freeholds decimated by privateer raids; these Lost castaways regroup in places where pirates are scarce and form crews of their own, finding protection in new Bargains with mysterious things from the depths, or with the ocean itself — or its Underworld counterpart. The Crown-of-Thorns traveling band (**Oak, Ash, and Thorn**, Chapter 2) begins in Port Royal as one such crew.

Vampires in this era see a rise in strange bloodlines, ranging from the ruthless slavers of the Gull, to a Nosferatu offshoot Embraced as sea-dwelling, shark-toothed blood-drinkers, to a scattered group of wandering Kindred sailors cursed to hoard silver until, they believe, they have enough to buy back their humanity. Some think this flourishing diversity of the Blood is due to all the cross-pollination as sailors from many lands encounter each other in larger numbers than ever before; the seafaring Gallows Post makes a killing here.

The Acheron Shipping and Trading Company, a conspiracy of **hunters**, spins off a small subsidiary with a hidden stronghold on the eastern coast of the Spanish territory of Florida. The subsidiary was founded originally by Spanish colonists but now comprises a hodgepodge of the various native tribes and African-Americans who will, later this century, intermingle to form the Seminole culture. While the pirates of the Flying Gang made their names raiding the Spanish divers dredging up treasures from the sunken galleon just off this coast, this upstart hunter company got there first, smuggling away relics of untold power and monstrous secrets after extracting the galleon's inventory, route, and schedule from a Proximus prisoner.

Demons in this era Fall in defiance, taking the pirates of the Republic as role models: an object lesson in what free will can accomplish. They Fall to temptation and greed, the thrill of transgression and taking what they want without permission from any authority, the promise of buying deliverance from bondage with their profane soul-pacts. Unchained ship captains are terrifying marauders with superior navigational instruments and an uncanny ability to cheat the many mortal dangers of life at sea. Legend among demons claims the infamous Davy Jones is one of them, wearing the Covers of all the unfortunates on the cusp of drowning whom he convinced to trade their souls for a second chance at life.

The **mummies** who wake in this era usually do so either because cults embedded in European governments and mercantile companies summon them to help put down the pirate scourge, or because the rampant deaths among prisoners on board slave ships call them back to the world. Arisen who form cults in the Caribbean sometimes do so among Obeah practitioners, acting as mediums for ancestor ghosts, or among sailors who have seen the City of the Drowned and speak now of nothing else. Some mummies walk along the seafloor to visit this eerie city so abruptly risen from benthic sands.

Sources and Inspiration

Many authors have written about the famous figures of the day and dark exploits on the high seas. The classic novel *Treasure Island*, by Robert Louis Stevenson, was a huge influence on pirate fiction and the modern pop-culture view of the Age of Sail; it has many adaptations, too. The television series *Black Sails* is a prequel to the novel, featuring fictionalized versions of many historical figures from this era, and doesn't shy away from their brutality.

The novels *On Stranger Tides* (Tim Powers) and *Red Seas Under Red Skies* (Scott Lynch) are nautical adventures featuring all the elements this era does best: pirates, dark sorcery and the dead, motley crews, and occult prizes to be won. Lynch's book is the second in the *Gentleman Bastards* series, the entirety of which is perfect inspiration for charming, (mostly) well-meaning thieves navigating conspiracies and strange happenings much larger than they are; it even features a ruthless group of mages famous for their sympathetic magic who hire their services out. *Red Seas* spends a good chunk of pages detailing nautical practices and life onboard a pirate ship, too.

Read Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" for a haunting and lyrical exploration of sailors' superstitions and the kinds of curses that could fall upon someone who broke the mystical rules of the sea.

The Republic of Pirates: Being the True and Surprising Story of the Caribbean Pirates and the Man Who Brought Them Down, by Colin Woodard, is an extensively researched history of the Pirate Republic; it's also the inspiration for the television series *Crossbones*, which stars John Malkovich as the infamous Blackbeard.

Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag is not just filled with piratical goodness, including sailing mechanics and a minigame that lets you hunt down sea shanties for your crew to sing, but also lets you explore a pretty accurate recreation of this era's Nassau and other relevant ports. Its story is thematically appropriate for both **Geist** and **Mage** in various ways, and you can plunder its soundtrack for all the shanties you could want.

Finally, while the *Pirates of the Caribbean* films are more lighthearted than the **Chronicles of Darkness**, they contain plenty of ghostly shenanigans and creepy magic: cursed treasure and sailors, a Fate Artifact, a monstrous seafaring collector of the dying, and lots of mystical weirdness.

THE COMPANY OF THE CODEX

Freedom Is Magical

You know what they call us, eh? "Hostis humanis generis." Enemies of all mankind, to be hunted and murdered without respect to prior jurisdiction. Aye, but therein lies the essential contradiction: We exist outside their systems, so they must declare us anathema, ignoring their neat little laws and fancy titles to strike us down. To deny us, they have to embrace the truths they spend their lives rejecting. In coming for us, they need to forsake their Lies.

You've seen what I've seen, lad. Not an invisible flow of gold linking these islands back to England and Spain, writ on ledgers and in shackles, but a web of silver thorns tying every Awakened soul in these isles to a shared Fate stronger and more secure than any iron chain. It's a web of pain and profit, anchored together in a vast pyramid. This is the pattern of those who name us enemies, and any hierarchy, as such, serves the truest enemies of all mankind. So be named and numbered among our ranks. We have dipped our hands in muddied waters and find it better to withdraw them working truths than spreading more Lies.

The Nameless Order of Nassau is a unique democracy of mages, each with an equal vote and an equal share of arcane spoils, and access to the Mysteries its members discover or wrench from the hands of other mages defeated upon the high seas. Formed from a deeply eclectic group of disenfranchised mages, they found that only by submitting to shared discipline could they truly work together toward common goals — and in doing so, they found Yantras and Praxes developing with startling rapidity, shredding the magics of their enemies.

A merry life, and short, is the goal of the **Company of the Codex**: Aggression is their birthright, doom their future, and freedom their legacy.

Mages join the Company when they've been forsaken by Diamond and Throne alike, they find value in their fellows' hard work and companionship, they want the sweetest cut of Mysteries and spoils without scraping and waiting decades, or they want to smash the chains that hold humanity fast.

Core Beliefs: The Codex

The Codex is both a definitive Supernal Artifact and a concept derived from the articles of agreement governing privateering ships and the now-destroyed native tradition of swearing oaths. It is a compact drawn between willing mages, pledging themselves to a higher ideal, becoming more than the sum of their parts. Joining the Company means swearing an oath upon the Codex, writ in blood and signed with name and date. Mages unwilling to swear such an oath or representing a danger to their fellows, such as most of those the Diamond considers Left-Handed — Scelesti, Banishers, etc. — aren't allowed to join, although Company mages (also called Picaroons) maintain a looser definition of what constitutes a Left-Handed practice. By longstanding tradition, the Rapt are accorded berths (albeit wide ones) if they're composed enough to take the oath.

The core of the Company, and all sworn, are Awakened. Individual captains may craft their own articles according to their vessel, but everyone swears upon the Codex. Sleepwalkers and Sleepers crew every Company ship, stubbornly inculcated with the Mysteries of magic whenever possible, though all but the most reckless Picaroons unleash Forces spells only when safely ensconced within a cloud of powder smoke.

I. Every mage a vote, every mage a voice

All sworn are equal under the Codex, no matter their origin. Some may be more equal than others, they'll allow, but the shared voice and individual sovereignty grant true freedom and serve as an arrow against all tyrants. Captains are voted up from among the common mages, subject to a vote of no confidence if they fail to uphold their duty. Those learned among the Company teach those less so, but they claim no more rights for it. To every captain, two shares; to others of the Company as the captain wills it.

II. Take all you can; usurp nothing

The only accorded order is the Company's. Once a mage has sworn adherence, to step outside the order is to invite ruin. Mages not of the Company aren't subject to the protections of brethren: Their possessions are forfeit, their structures tainted by association. A Company mage may siege a plantation to rob it of reales and rum, but she never sets herself up as owner. A Picaroon might take a ship in fair combat and set himself up as captain of the new vessel, but he won't sign a privateering agreement afore the king (not that he'd be offered such, anyway).

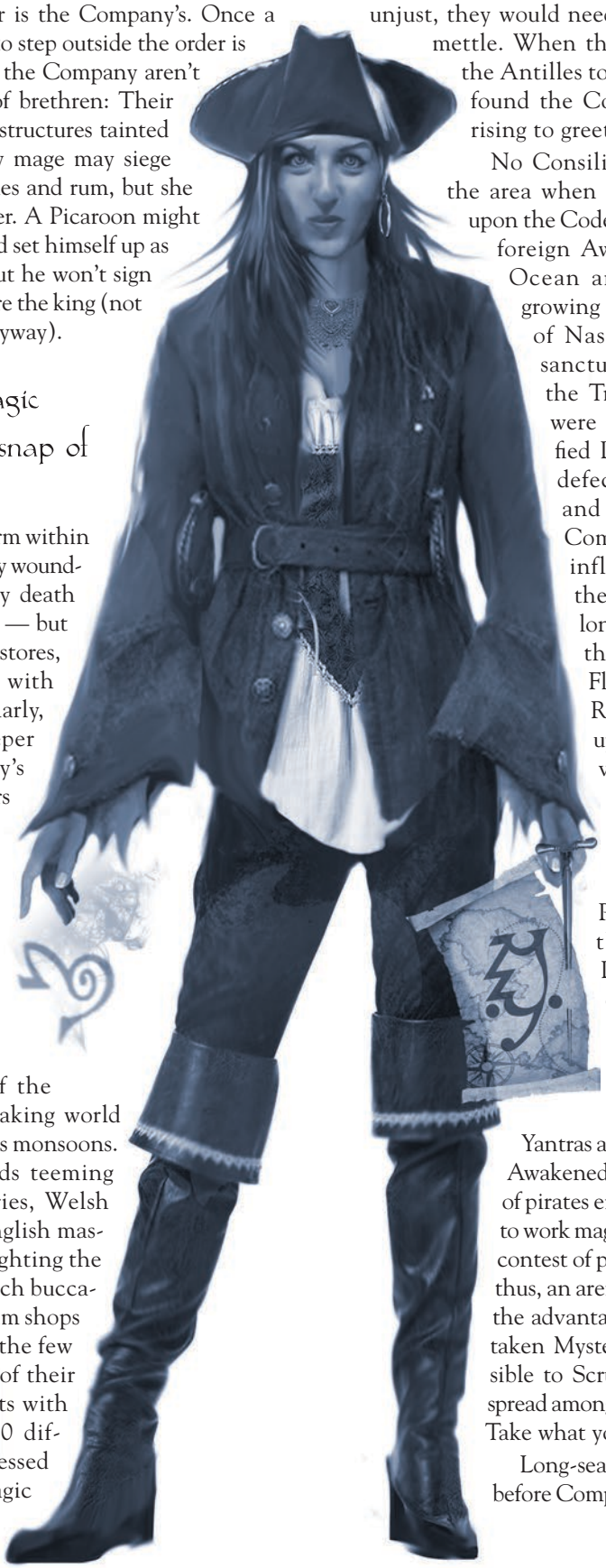
III. The casting of magic before Sleepers is the snap of a gun in the hold

On any ship, firing a firearm within the hold risks not only severely wounding fellow sailors — a likely death sentence upon the high seas — but blowing the vessel's powder stores, shattering the ship entire with a spectacular display. Similarly, using magic before a Sleeper risks calling the Company's enemies. Despite this, sailors are a superstitious lot; the Company deliberately creates an air of casual magic at sea, the better to instill fear and discipline, and lessen the sting of the Lie.

Origins

The sapphire waters of the Carib tribes gave rise to waking world dreams as fierce and strong as monsoons. Mages Awakened to islands teeming with Jacobite revolutionaries, Welsh privateers denied pay by English masters, illegal Dutch settlers fighting the invading Spanish, and French buccaneers. In the sun-dappled rum shops of Tortuga and Port Royal, the few indios who kept fragments of their native lore met counterparts with occult traditions from 100 different shores. The dispossessed found common cause in magic and anger, watching all around them scrape and bow for scraps handed down when it pleased those above. If reality was truly this unjust, they would need to fight it with iron and mettle. When the Orders descended upon the Antilles to search for Mysteries, they found the Company's furious cannons rising to greet them.

No Consilium or Tetrarchy claimed the area when the first Awakened swore upon the Codex. The Company absorbed foreign Awakened from the Indian Ocean and African slave trade, growing organically with the town of Nassau as their capital and sanctum in the decades before the Treaty of Utrecht. No few were disillusioned and dissatisfied Diamond and Seer mages, defecting with occult secrets and Mysteries to solve. The Company grew powerful and influential enough to claim the Bahamas for themselves long before any could displace them. In the seas between Florida, Bermuda, and Puerto Rico, the Company preys upon Sleeper and Awakened vessels alike.



Mysteries

None name the Picaroons among the subtle. What Mysteries the Diamond Orders puzzle over in walled villas, the Company wrenches from their grasp and displays as purloined baubles. This even applies to the Yantras and Imagos used to construct Awakened magic; the dread Nimbuses of pirates erode the symbols Orders use to work magic, rendering the Supernal a contest of pure will and instinct — and thus, an arena where the brethren have the advantage. Smashed and forcefully taken Mysteries are sometimes impossible to Scrutinize, but they are freely spread among the Company nonetheless. Take what you can; usurp nothing.

Long-sealed ruins and pacts give way before Company dispellation, and many

pirate Awakened feel the satiation of their avarice lies within the tombs and prisons of the many Bound (**Mage**, p. 244) in the Caribbean. If these beings fell to weak mages armed with spear and sword, how will they fare against a 46-gun flagship?

Magical Symbolism: Discipline

The lash, the matchlock pistol, the bowline knot, the articles: The Company is tied to the experience of a ship, and the harmony of life at sea. Every sailor from deckhand to boatswain must willingly act according to their skill and their station, or all will perish. The Company sets these roles down before a working or a voyage, and their ability to act in concert terrifies Diamond and Seer alike. The ship itself is perhaps their most powerful Yantra, a symbol of the Company entire.

Hubris

In a world without Mysteries, the names writ in the Codex would be a roll of heroes. In the Fallen World, they are that, but bloodthirsty villains besides. The pirates' appetite for plunder infects the magics of the Nameless Order, causing them to Reach far too often and exceed their grasp. Fortune favors the bold, but the Company tends toward recklessness at best.

Stereotypes

Adamantine Arrow: A captain's no good in a fight without his crew.

Guardians: Can't keep it all for yourself.

Mysterium: Get out of your villas and stop spitting on everyone.

Silver Ladder: Just because a sailor's taller on the rigging doesn't mean he's better.

Seers of the Throne: Oh, for fuck's sake.




BRIAN
E BLANC
'19

The sound the guillotine made was unmistakable: a metallic slide ending in a sharp thump of wood and the softer splatter of the head and gore. No crowd of thousands cheered when the blade fell at midnight, but a few of the Kindred aristocrats laughed softly while others applauded.

Roland seized the severed head by its hair and threw it out into the quietest cluster of onlookers. Dripping Vitae added another layer to the already-stained cobblestones beneath their feet.

"So ends a traitor. Now listen well, because I will only say this once. Drink your fill of the Parisian mobs if you must, but leave this madness to the mortals. Those who wish to bring this revolution to my court will find we are well practiced in shedding the blood of our enemies."

Roland turned away before his Beast could get the better of him. He wanted the author. He wanted his fingers mutilated so he could no longer hold a pen, his mind twisted and turned into soup until he didn't even know his name anymore. He wanted a true example to hold up to those who thought to betray him, not this powerless sacrificial lamb. Knowledge was power, and in this respect, he was still too weak to win the game.

With the prince gone, most of the Kindred dispersed. Several crouched to soak bits of handkerchief or ribbon in the blood as grisly souvenirs. The young cultist watching from the shadows of an alley darted out. He was barely more than a boy, but he wore the rough sans culottes and cockades of the revolution.

"Copper to take 'im to the catacombs for you, Cit'yens," he called in the clipped and uneducated garble of a street kid. "Got a barrow and all, get it done right quick without the whole bunch that normally go down in the day."

They hesitated, but eventually one of the dead flicked him a coin and he grinned a broad, toothless smile. He ran to get the wheelbarrow and loaded up the corpse, careful to snatch up the bloody *bonnet rouge* to go with it. Power came from sacrifice, and *this* sacrifice was going to change the world.

• • •

Jean Nicolas turned the red wool cap over and over in his hands. It was still sticky; the heavy felted wool dried slowly once thoroughly soaked. "Mortals are pulling loose from the God-Machine's control, and now the prince's control is faltering as well. We can use the opportunity."

"Do you think anything will actually come of this philosopher's death? Most of the bloodsuckers aren't willing to risk their skins for anything."

Jean glared up at the rest of the Saboteurs. "Get them on our side, get them fighting our war whether they know it or not. We cannot go back now. This revolution will triumph, or we will all be worse than dead."

The Reign of Terror
1793-1794 CE



"Liberté, égalité, fraternité, ou la mort."

– A motto of the French Revolution

"Liberty, equality, fraternity, or death," the rallying cry of the French Revolution. Replacing the latter with *"et la mort"* would have been more accurate.

Four years before the revolution began, France was drowning in debt. When King Louis XVI, of the royal House of Bourbon, was unable to come to a compromise on taxation with his nobles in the Parliament of Paris, he convened the Estates General. The antiquated institution hadn't met since 1626, but with the nobles, clergy, and commoners all meeting together, he hoped to bypass Parliament entirely. Unfortunately for the king, the people had suffered decades of drought and food shortages, and now he raised their taxes to pay for the American Revolution.

The French Revolution was the culmination of years of tension, the path to it paved by ignorant policies, philosophers, frivolous spending, and centuries of privilege. When it began in earnest, many proclaimed they would build a bright and idealistic future, but every step along the way only took them deeper into a spiral of fear, hatred, and paranoia. The Reign of Terror seized the world's attention and put every monarch in Europe on notice: the people would not tolerate serfdom any longer. The nobility could reform or be reformed. The monsters in the shadows watched, too. For a few short years Paris was the center of a world spinning out of control, and the changes to immortal societies born from the blood spilled in the streets rippled outward.

New laws order the arrest of the revolution's enemies — a broad definition that includes anyone the Revolutionary Tribunals wish. The revolutionary government arrests hundreds of thousands, and the prisons are full to bursting until another law requires the tribunals to either acquit or execute suspects. Of course, judges acquitting too many suspects is suspicious as well. Blood flows day after day and the revolution becomes a beast no one can control. While conflict among Kindred, mummies, and demons usually plays out over decades, with each move carefully calculated, the night's immortal denizens are not exempt from the turmoil — nor oblivious to the opportunities it provides.

Revolutionaries overthrow the monarchy and the church's tyranny, and demons have supported them from the beginning. With the destruction of the *Ancien Régime* and privileged trappings of the French elite, the war against the God-Machine goes as hot as the Unchained dare make it. While mortals celebrate their bloody victory over the upper classes, internal and external conflicts besiege the new republic, and the Infrastructure beneath Versailles breaks apart.

Among the Kindred, the prince struggles to maintain authority in the face of a sharply eroding power base. The Lancea et Sanctum and Invictus have ruled Paris for two millennia, and the revolt takes them by surprise. Younger vampires look to the kine's revolution, or are Embraced out of its fertile loam, and see their own path to power. Populist factions seize the excuse to organize. They embrace the ideals of liberty and enlightenment, or simply revel in the new prospects turmoil and bloodshed bring.

Seventeen thousand victims officially meet the guillotine; their blood stains the cobblestones and trickles into the earth. Tens of thousands more die in prison. These sacrifices to liberty, equality, and brotherhood do not

go unanswered, calling Deathless to rise, and the French inspire a similar passionate desire to throw off oppression's shackles in the Arisen.

It's a terrible, magnificent, chaotic time in a nation where everything stands on the edge of a knife. The bloodletting will either cleanse or kill, and no one is immune from the changes they forge.

Themes, Mood, and Tone

Factionalism. Society completely breaks down. Drastic social changes drive wedges into every small difference between individuals. Sans-culotte workers struggle against the bourgeoisie, the rising atheist movement violently oppresses faithful Catholics, and tackling major human rights questions sets every splintering political faction at the others' throats. Even night-dwellers succumb to fierce tribalism as they reexamine old loyalties and quarrels in light of society's changing rules.

Brutality. The Reign of Terror is not safe or kind. The cycle of revolt and counter-revolt has caught France in a bloody spiral for years, and the people see mob violence as legitimate political expression. The September Massacres of 1792 saw the deaths of nearly 2,000 people at the hands of mobs in Paris and other major cities. The only way the National Convention can hope to control the situation is to be more brutal than the mobs. Monsters who expect to hold power are in the same boat. With so many factions trying to seize control, the only way to win is through dramatic displays of strength.

Terror. No one knows who'll wind up on top one day and under the guillotine the next. Neighbors turn on one another; one wrong vote in the Convention can doom politicians along with their friends and family. Even an unwise choice in color or style of clothing can mark someone as a traitor. Terror and paranoia fundamentally change how the monsters haunting society's shadows interact with mortals. The Terror sends established herds and cults to their deaths en masse, while new ones rise up on changing sociopolitical tides. Mortals keep a close eye on their neighbors and report every oddity. Mobs tear apart old havens searching for aristocrats and traitors. Savvy creatures turn the Terror to their advantage, but many more become extremely vulnerable.

Uncertainty and Resolution. Everything changes. The people are free from monarchy but replace it with tyranny. Changes are too quick for comfort, even altering such basic concepts as time by replacing the calendars and instituting a decimal clock. Many hate what's happened to the revolution, but they have no easy solutions to rebuild a cohesive society. Despite the uncertainty, a strong sense of resolve underpins it all. No matter what happens, the people will see it through to the end or die trying.

The Estates

Pre-Revolution, the First Estate was the clergy, the Second Estate comprised the nobility, and the Third Estate was the bourgeoisie. Each Estate was a Congressional bloc with only one vote — so the Third Estate lost almost every time, even though it had more voting members.

What Has Come Before

France seemed rich, in majesty and land. Its army was formidable and experienced. Its fractious aristocratic class was safely bottled up in Versailles, where it couldn't cause the king much trouble. Before any Revolution surfaced, though, France was quietly drowning — gasping for air, pushing down against the surface of the water, trying to keep ahead of its debt. Debt subsidized decades of wars foreign and domestic: the Thirty Years' War, the Seven-Years' War, the Frondes (proto-Revolutions in themselves), the colonization of Saint-Domingue and Guyane (port cities along the eastern Indian coast and islands in the Indian Ocean), and the American Revolution. Those wars came with spoils: more land, more trade, more industry, more economic influence — wealth upon wealth collecting in a small percentage of French hands. Very little made it down to the people primarily responsible for repaying the debt that financed its acquisition, though. Aristocrats exempted themselves as part of their privilege, and it was essentially sacrilegious to ask the Catholic Church to pay its own way anywhere; but the First and Second Estates expected the Third Estate, the bourgeoisie, to do what was necessary for God and crown.

The already well-to-do used that wealth to reinvent Paris, revitalizing the City of Light to such a degree that an unexpected (and undesired, by some nobles) social leveling occurred. Paris wanted the cultured and the educated and the noble, but it needed servants and glove makers and day laborers, common people who necessarily walked the same streets as their social betters. With increased access to the nobility, the merely wealthy came to resemble them in trappings and education. Through marriage, commerce, or service to the royal government, a watchmaker's child could buy their way into the same privileges and distinctions owed aristocrats. The Parisian poor developed an almost obsessive sense of ownership over those who held titles. France might have belonged to the king, but Louis-Auguste belonged to his people, who loved him as God's chosen representative over them. As taxes, rent, and soaring food prices weighed visibly heavier on the peasant than on the purportedly natural rulers of France, however, that emotional investment in the lives of the sacred nobility curdled into resentment.



Just as God chose David to rule over Israel, so did his hand select the king whose divine right it was to rule a modern nation. But France was not a unified nation of French people; it was a loose imperial state linking dozens of former duchies and provinces, each with their own dialects, values, and priorities. Yet the crown needed a centralized state to continue waging wars, colonizing other countries, and accumulating enough wealth to keep up appearances. The French kings, beginning with the Sun King in the early 1700s, began to consolidate their power, treating their nobles less like smaller kings with whom they had to negotiate, and more like landowners who graciously served their rightful masters. This attitude crept all the way down the chain — everyone owed their allegiance to a central authority. It was through this push toward nationalism that Enlightenment philosophies crept in, beginning in 1715.

The Enlightenment

While they may have sparked in urban centers, broad Enlightenment ideals spread quickly, primarily through the politically minded young Revolutionaries cropping up in the rural professional class. By the Revolution's height, hundreds of Jacobin Clubs flourished throughout France, each individually attempting to redirect French village life away from monarchism and Catholicism, toward Revolution and rationalism.

The Enlightenment actually didn't start out anti-monarchical. The problem wasn't kings, it was *unenlightened* kings. A good king ruled a just society, composed of actualized people who loved the symbol of their nation. A good king was necessary, because his people needed a firm hand to guide them toward this just society. Anything less — venality, selfishness, cruelty, or just plain incompetence — meant a king could not be good.

Louis XVI was, unfortunately, not a good king. He wasn't an *unusual* king — the desire to adequately manage his country was bound up in the desire to preserve his own comfort and power. He feared England, France's ancient enemy and sometimes fair-weather friend, nearly as much as he feared his people, who rumbled with discontent and hunger. As events spiraled out of his control, his attempts to placate all sides without making a stand for anyone strongly contributed to the Revolutionaries radicalizing and the royalists abandoning him.

The Enlightenment retained a strong thread of theism; only the more radical Enlightenment thinkers actually wanted to abolish the Catholic or Protestant churches. After all, while the citizen peasants might exist in a pastoral state of natural goodness, they weren't yet enlightened enough to apply that goodness without the assistance of an educated, republican clergy. Early Enlightened (and later, Romantic) philosophers loved the peasant in the abstract, but didn't necessarily respect actual peasants. They considered their judgment superior to that of someone whose understanding of Revolution began and ended with freedom from hunger. This was the groundwork of the active versus passive citizen debate that would permanently fracture the republican coalitions. The Declaration of the Rights of Man tried to satisfy both camps, but as with anything else, attempts to placate all parties only led to further factionalism.

Double the Third and Vote by Head

Want and fear triggered the shift from rule by nobility to rule by the people, like many Revolutions. The nobility tried hard to ignore all evidence that financial reform was necessary to address France's substantial debts. The members of the Estates General, a royalist precursor of today's French Parliament, weren't overawed by the monarchy anymore, and promises that the crown would handle everything couldn't placate them.

Back-to-back bad harvests and industry deregulation in 1789 aggravated tensions. Inadequate transportation and internal customs barriers made relief efforts spotty and ineffective. Food shortages in major metropolitan areas became permanent, closer to a class-targeted famine. All these tragedies hit by midsummer — just before biannual rent came due. French subjects were increasingly unable to pay the exorbitant rent and taxes due to the skyrocketing cost of bread and soap, and heavy monetary burdens the crown already levied on them. Primed by nationalist and anti-royalist polemics to believe France was naturally endowed with everything she needed to support her people, the only possible excuse Parisians could conjure up was malevolent actors. The steady uptick in foreign mercenary soldiers, brought into the city by a terrified king, exacerbated restlessness in the face of starvation and poverty, leading to the most famous event of France's most famous revolution.

The storming of the Bastille is a perfect microcosm of the progression of the Revolution as a whole, demonstrating what comes to be known as the Great Fear sweeping France right at the start — a prelude to the Terror. Parisians attributed a devastating blow to the impoverished to the crown's malice, rather than stupidity. Tense negotiations failed, causing deaths first by misadventure, then by escalating violence. The common people flooded the Bastille, a prison turned into a fortress for the mercenaries the king had hired, demanding the removal of the Swiss guards — and when that failed, the mob simply shot the guards and took their stores instead.

Alarmed and still desperately searching for revenue, Louis and the National Constituent Assembly (formerly known as the Estates General) cycled through disastrous plans on their way to worse ones. Together they arrived at invading Austria as a means of getting France's populace under control, refilling the treasury and granary, and sending angry young men off to fight at the frontier. The war went poorly, and Louis couldn't quite commit to being a citizen king, constantly undermining both the assembly's decisions

and his own. More than anything else Louis actually *did*, it was this vacillation that doomed him.

Only a few months later, thousands of Parisian women took the riot to Versailles. The march's goals were initially vaguely defined, but the marchers all agreed they should take the trouble to Louis' door. While it was an authentic outpouring of Revolutionary sentiment, it wasn't a wholly spontaneous one — a core group of women planned the march for some time, spurred by those same polemics who fired up the populace to raid the Bastille. As they gathered more women to the cause, they eventually coalesced around the desires to confront the king about the price of bread, acknowledge the Revolution wholeheartedly, and bring him back to Paris. The march was successful: Louis Auguste came to the capital, bringing his Austrian queen Marie Antoinette and his children with him in 1789. They remain there until Louis's show-trial and execution in July 1793, and Marie Antoinette's execution several months later.

Timeline of the Revolutionary Government

The French Revolution burns through governmental bodies at a steady rate for its duration, with some operating at the same time and at cross purposes to one another. In order, they are:

The Estates General (1789): Called by the Controller-General of Finances, in an effort to pass badly-needed financial reform and address France's mounting debt. Many nobles were elected as representatives of the Third Estate rather than the Second, and more parish priests than bishops were elected to the First. They deadlocked almost immediately over complaints about the legislature's organization, underrepresentation of the Third Estate, and disproportionate tax burden on the same.

National Assembly (June-July 1789): The Third Estate declared itself an independent assembly of the people, devoted to settling the constitution of France. Members of the First Estate rapidly peeled away to join them, begrudgingly followed by the Second. They immediately moved to consolidate the national debt and formed a committee to address food shortages. The king's summons of troops to implicitly threaten the assembly helped precipitate the storming of the Bastille.

National Constituent Assembly (1789–1791): Abolished feudalism and tithes, dramatically restructured the Catholic Church, and wrote both the Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen and the Constitution of 1791. It controversially restored the king after the royal family's attempted escape — on the condition that he accept that constitution. Many of its decisions survive into modern French governance.

Legislative Assembly (1791–1792): Attempted to implement the Constitution of 1791 into law, despite King Louis' continual efforts to veto its bills. It oversaw the disastrous early stages of the Austrian and Prussian wars, the August Insurrection, the September Massacres, and the Revolution's turn against the liberal nobles who formed the backbone of the earlier assemblies. It voted to officially imprison Louis and form the National Convention.

National Convention (1792–1795): The first national government elected through general suffrage, by all working Frenchmen over the age of 25 who had lived in their department for at least a year. Voter turnout suffers from fear, disinterest, and anti-republican sentiment, with less than 12% of voters participating, despite the pool of eligible men more than doubling. It formally ends the monarchy and oversees Louis' trial and execution. It writes the Constitution of 1793, then executes, imprisons, or exiles federalist and centrist politicians. After the fall of Robespierre, the convention lasts long enough to draft a new constitution for the Directory.

Paris Commune (1792–1795): The government of Paris during the years of the National Convention. The two bodies share many members, with Jacobins who were not in the Legislative Assembly serving here instead. It's heavily radical, and a strong rhetorical force that continually pulls the Revolution's focus back to Paris.

Committee of Public Safety (1793–1794): By 1793, the Committee of Public Safety has all but completely wrested official power away from the National Convention. After declaring a state of emergency, it uses its new authority to first centralize and direct the economy toward war production, and then to silence dissent. Through the Committee of General Security, it oversees the creation and implementation of the Terror.

Directory (1795–1799): The governing body that replaces the Committee of Public Safety. It attempts to address the financial crisis, finish the many European wars in which France is embroiled, limit the Jacobin Club's continued political influence, and end the mass executions. It culminates in the Coup of 18 Fructidor and the ascension of Napoleon to first consul, then emperor.



Where We Are

"Don't forget to show my head to the people. It is well worth seeing."
— Georges Jacques Danton

No single moment marks when the Revolution for liberty began its swing toward autocracy, but the women's march is one of them. The National Assembly acknowledges that mob violence can sway it, and the soon-to-be revolving door of representatives in the new government lead alternately in fear of the mob, and by turning that mob against itself.

Despite that, for many the Revolution starts as a period of hope and excitement, and that feeling persists for a long time. Even once the executions start in earnest, the citizenry believes the deaths are just the end of one or two more villains hiding among "good, honest citizens." Bloodlust quickly joins justice at the table, because life has been *un*just, and it feels virtuous to punish the unjust. The Revolutionaries, after all, strive to free society from the darkness and coercion of the unenlightened past. They fight for France's right to have both freedom *from* and freedom *to*. Virtue is on all lips during the Reign of Terror.

Before the women's march, the Revolution wasn't especially revolutionary. The Girondins, moderate Revolutionaries, emphasized turning France into a constitutional monarchy. No one even addressed the question of women or free men of color gaining suffrage, and republicans (the Jacobins) were still a fringe political group. The liberal nobles who, unlike their feudalist counterparts, stayed with France to usher her into a new golden age seated themselves at the heart of the Revolution — where they intended to remain, ensconcing their own values as France's new values. This was still primarily a *philosophical* revolution, of and for the bourgeois. Only when the Assembly goes to Paris, following the not-so-gently worded request of the Paris militias and marching peasant women that Louis XIV return to his people, do the radicals of the Paris Commune, a republican group in the capital, have an outsized impact on the Revolution's direction.

Under the watchful eye of Parisian radicals and their large reading audience, the Assembly as a whole pushes steadily leftward. Initially, urban factions simply expel conservative factions elected from rural or industrial areas of France. But this has the side effect of focusing the Assembly even more strongly on Parisian ideals, which grow increasingly aggressive, ultimately culminating in the active purging of non-radical factions. Some flee to the provinces — this late in the Revolution, other European powers have largely stopped accepting political refugees, particularly of the revolutionary variety, due to the potentially damaging effect on their own populations — but radicals round many of them up for execution anyway. Paris effectively names itself the center of the republican universe.

Playing to the Cheap Seats

Government is theater, and the people's voice is best expressed by those who keep up with the news and express it eloquently. Since all legislative sessions are open to the public and people attend regularly to observe, heckle, and cheer, identifying which representatives read which newspapers is elevated to public sport. The speeches given in the Salle du Manège on any given day are as much about speaking to the audience of bystanders and signaling agreement or disagreement with them in a non-binding way, as they are about accurately conveying current beliefs to the Assembly's other voting members.

Arguably, the National Convention's failure to directly integrate under-informed citizens into the process of reshaping the nation leaves those citizens more vulnerable to misinformation, manipulation, and conspiracy theories. The many political factions operating at this point work so actively to sabotage and manipulate *one another* that the actual counter-Revolutionaries mostly survive the Terror.

Saint-Domingue

France's colonies see an opportunity for themselves. Saint-Domingue, France's wealthiest colony in Hispaniola (later Haiti), has trembled with barely repressed hatred since its founding, small-scale rebellions breaking out regularly (supported by the Más Salvaje; see **p. 350**). By the time republicanism's machinery stirred in Paris, Port-au-Prince was already near collapse. Free people of color took an increasing role at all levels of Saint-Domingue's economy, becoming wealthy, starting plantations of their own, and integrating into higher-caste society. This triggered a backlash among white plantation owners and French aristocrats, who attempted to severely curtail the already limited rights of free people of color.

When the Declaration of the Rights of Man made little effort to curb slavery's impact, let alone abolish it, white plantation owners interpreted it as an opportunity to shake off French rule and solidify their own authority. Free and enslaved people of color interpreted it as a call to war. Wealthy, free men of color already pushed for their right to participate in the National Assembly, and white plantation owners reacted with increasingly harsh reprisals — brutal even for a colony that killed tens of thousands of slaves every year. The crown squeezed the colonies for more funds to pull France's treasury above water. The same year Louis XVI met the National Razor, the colonial Governor Léger-Félicité Sonthonax offered successively larger segments of the black population freedom and citizenship to draw the rebels back to France and away from England and Spain, who were happy to exacerbate the conflict.

Through a dizzying array of newspapers, salons, public speeches, and manufactured riots, everyone competes to catch the eye of a fickle, often uneducated mob to put their own faction's thumb on the scale. If someone can convince the common people she's the only one truly looking out for their interests, her interests become theirs.

Ironically, much of this bickering plays out in Philippe Égalité's (née Louis Philippe Joseph, Duke of Orléans) literal backyard, the Palais Royal. In the pre-Revolutionary days of 1780, he opened the palace to the public as a commercial and social space. Since, technically, the crown's laws pertaining to insurgence and incitement didn't apply on the royal property of a "prince of the blood," it was also a protected speech zone. Free from royal reprisal or sanctions, newspapers could print anything from philosophy to sedition. It becomes the Palais du Tribunat after Égalité's execution in 1793 — only 10 months after he voted to execute his cousin the king, and 14 after he repudiated his royal title to take the surname Égalité. The Revolution moves quickly.

In Pursuit of Virtue

The French citizen's duty, above all else, is to be *virtuous*. Virtue is the fountain from which all other civic duties emanate, the natural result of a life lived in the republic's defense, without unduly *questioning* the republic. The classical comparison is deliberate. The Revolution's Enlightenment-motivated factions see themselves as heirs to the last great republic: pre-imperial Rome. The new France they build from the bones of the Ancien Régime — the old feudal state — will be a home for Catos rather than Caesars. Maximilien Robespierre, the most infamously bloodthirsty member of the Revolution, often accuses those on trial of being "unvirtuous" in some way and that accusation, more than anything else, leads to executions by the hundreds.

Theoretically, the law is the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. Sufficiently virtuous citizens are safe from unfair accusations, their service to the nation apparent to all. Inadequate progress along a war front, as determined by politicians far from that front, when victories are necessary for morale? An accusation of venality, excessive fortune, or association with someone already accused of treason? Practically guaranteed death sentences. Genocide? Largely condoned. Georges Danton, the Committee of Public Safety's first president, and the Paris Girondins were executed on rumor and conspiracy theories.

More actions, even those previously innocuous, become crimes against the state. The severity of punishments escalates, and trials become "streamlined" to better accommodate the need for more trials. Following the Law of 22 Prairial in 1794, criminals may no longer defend themselves or present evidence, much less receive an appointed lawyer. The Committee of Public Safety executes Louis Capet, formerly King Louis Auguste of the Royal House of Capet, after a lengthy trial for being an intransigent monarchist; but it executes Olympe de Gouges, a famous Revolutionary feminist, in fewer than three months for having written a portion of an unpublished play that presented Marie Antoinette in a somewhat sympathetic light.

Women and the Revolution

Revolutionary France had an uneasy relationship with Revolutionary women. It loved women as symbols of French virtue: sacrificing mothers and devoted wives, the moral center of a family lending her kindness and sensitivity to broaden the supposedly more rational judgement of men, educators of children, and even demonstrators, provided they demonstrated over something that could be construed as family-oriented. Marianne, the spirit of Liberty and Reason, was the Revolution's national symbol, a demonstration of France's moral rectitude and devotion to freedom. Both the radical Cult of Reason and Robespierre's Cult of the Supreme Being, the new nontheistic religions for new France, centered Reason as a necessary precursor to Justice and Wisdom, themselves often represented as idealized female figures. But Enlightenment philosophers considered French women to *lack* Reason. This perceived deficiency made them unsuited to lead, voice independent political opinions, or directly participate in planning and implementing the new republic in the eyes of Revolutionary men.

Women *did* speak, and organized by the thousands, but usually only through a male relative, friend, or spouse. Following the National Convention's consolidation, men pushed women firmly to the movement's margins. In 1793, women's political organizations like the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women met their fate at the National Convention's hands, and individual women met Madame Guillotine. Jeanne Manon Roland, who wrote the majority of her husband's speeches and letters, was in turn recognized, praised, and condemned for her influence over him. This influence ultimately saw her arrested and executed with other moderate Girondists. Women who spoke out under their own names, like de Gouges, faced deeper censure and extensive harassment. De Gouges pointedly noted in her *Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizen* that women were executed alongside men, but had no right to vote with men, lead with men, or control their own destiny as men did — for which she was executed.

The constant effort to banish women from the political sphere contributed to their increased presence in pro-clerical demonstrations. They formed the backbone of movements to protect churches as state monuments, hide non-juring priests from representatives on mission (deputies with absolute power in charge of enforcing the Revolutionary agenda and conscripting soldiers) and the Infernal Columns (Revolutionary death squads sent to kill men, women, and children who might be hiding royalists), and outright attack Revolutionary agents. Women did eventually receive improved civil rights — including rights



to divorce, inherit a fair share of a parent's estate, receive education, and teach children — but they remained non-voting, "passive" (i.e. not politically recognized) citizens until after World War II.

Keeping Your Head Down: The View from the Streets

Your life as a peasant doesn't necessarily change in the ways in which you'd prefer it. Bread doesn't get cheaper, and your taxes double. If you're a woman, a former slave, or a foreigner, you don't get the vote. If you're a pickpocket or petty thief at the wrong moment in a big city, you might get guillotined for being a public embarrassment. Unless you manage to secure a quick marriage, you're swept into the *levée en masse* with 1.5 million other Frenchmen. The monarchist autocracy and the republican autocracy don't look too different from where you stand — still pretty firmly under the boot, and still told it's for your own good, just with a different kind of boot. Everyone falls all over themselves to claim to speak in your name, but your right to use your actual voice falls far short of liberty.

Your life as a small-business owner or skilled worker gets significantly worse. The government (such as it is) marks you as an expendable buffer between themselves and the sans culottes, the hungry poor. You soak the blame for both the lack of food and the excesses of the aristocracy, but mandated caps on prices undercut your ability to make back the cost of any base materials you manage to get past trade embargoes, foreign armies decamped in your borders, and your own starving soldiers. Even if your industry is crushed by unemployment or starved by the maximums, an Enragé is always eager to blame you for their suffering. If you're a commissioned officer, you'll be the one called back to Paris for summary execution after any military setback. France has been constantly at war with a rotating coalition of the rest of Europe since the moment the Revolution began, so there are plenty of losses (and executions) to go around.

Your life as a middle-class professional intellectual gets a lot better and a lot more dangerous all at once. Your voice is enshrined in your nation's (aspirational) constitution, your opinions discussed in salons across Europe. You can vote to directly influence everything from the names on your calendar to the fate of the church, provided you have enough time on your hands to spend your days at the National Convention, either grandstanding to or serving as that body's live audience. Actually voting is a little more dangerous than you might prefer, though. Joining a political party to sway your new nation's development puts your politics under a microscope, and principled dissent is

L'Autrichienne; or, Madame Déficit

Marie Antoinette, formerly Maria Antonia of Austria, married Louis Auguste at the age of 15. Due to her foreign heritage, her gambling addiction, and her disregard for French custom, she became a lightning rod for French hatred. While she never did say "let them eat cake," she never had to. Marie Antoinette was doomed from her arrival. Her nickname among the peasantry, *L'Autrichienne*, literally meant "the Austrian," but when a speaker placed emphasis on the last syllable, meant "the Austrian bitch."

An ocean of ink has been spilled on the question of Marie-Antoinette d'Autriche: whether she was a martyr to the French monarchy (according to the Monarchiens), a wasteful and not terribly bright child (according to the Girondins), or a spendthrift foreign traitor out to destroy France (according to the Enragés — radical firebrands — and whoever wanted to gain their support).

She *was* guilty of heavy spending at a time of great financial hardship for France, thoroughly monarchical and anti-Revolutionary, and an assured co-conspirator in bringing Europe's armies to attack France's borders. In the end, though, her biggest crime was being a convenient target when the Revolution needed a sinner to punish to save the nation's virtue. Marie Antoinette became the reason women needed to be kept down — if uplifted, the men said, they might turn into her.

definitely not a civic virtue. You're more likely than most to get caught up in one of the political purges sweeping Paris, Lyon, and Marseille, and more likely to get shaved by the National Razor or taken out to a riverbank and shot through with cannonballs if you do.

Your life as a clergy member is precarious. As early as the National Convention's formation, members of the First Estate — mainly parish priests — were abandoning it to join the Third. As that body steadily radicalizes, though, it continually calls your allegiance into question. Your tithes are declared illegal and your property seized for the state, but your state salary is more a theory than an implemented law. Monastic orders are dissolved, with sufficient prejudice that you might be executed for continuing to share housing or expenses. The pope condemns the civil oath, coming just shy of excommunicating you and any flock that follows you, but has not offered you any aid in escaping your circumstances if you refuse to take it.

Your life as an aristocrat depends on how close you live to a city, whether or not you're willing to *claim* to give up your noble rights, and whether you can keep out of sight and out of mind. If you're rich enough and royalist enough, you're probably long gone by the time the royal family attempts its flight from Paris. If you manage to keep a low profile, you might even make it through the Reign of Terror with minimal damage to your person and your finances. You'll be imprisoned if you're near any of the borders France currently contests, but if you're far enough from Paris you might wait there all the way through to the Bourbon restoration in 1815. Nobles who are urban and liberal-minded, but not radical enough to keep up with the bourgeoisie, finance the Revolution before it devours them. Being a noble is an elegant dance with death, keeping just far away enough to avoid it, while staying close enough to be seen as Revolutionary yourself.

Locations

Whether they host the guillotine, show-trials, or assemblies, each of the following locations has some dark and bloody history to play with.

Paris

You can't cross a boulevard in Paris without seeing the Terror's fingerprints. Blood doesn't exactly coat the streets, but no household is untouched by hunger, no family united by love of God, king, or republic. Paris is not the only city to go hungry, but it is the city most willing to bend national policy to its interests with mass violence. Paris has cast itself as the moral and political center of the republic. Justice for

Public Haircuts and Republican Baptisms

Arrest is not necessarily a death sentence. Early in the Revolution, criminals still have the right to a lawyer, and late in the Terror being arrested for aristocratic sympathies might keep someone alive long enough to avoid murder by street gangs of sans culottes. "Political" crimes go to the top of the court docket, but more are arrested for treason (now broadly categorized as being an embarrassment to the state) in Paris than ever actually make it to the guillotine.

This is *much* less true of Nantes, Lyon, and the Vendée, which receive the most infamous representatives on mission. Jean-Baptiste Carrier is directly responsible for 8,000 to 9,000 executions between Nantes, Anjou, Poitou, and the Vendée, not counting those killed by starvation or disease. In Nantes alone, he executes so many people that the guillotine can't keep up; he kills over 4,000 by mass drowning, and another 2,600 by firing squad. In Lyon, after a major revolt by moderates, almost 1,700 people are killed by the guillotine and grapeshot fired from military ordinance on open ground.



Paris *is* justice for the rest of France. Citizens, both natural and supernatural, look here to set the fashion.

Jardin National and Tuileries Palace

The Jardin National was formerly the Jardin des Tuileries, a 16th-century park built to accompany Tuileries Palace. Louis' grandfather left it abandoned for 40 years, and while his father eventually renovated the gardens for public use, the palace remained uninhabited until the royal family returned thanks to the Versailles women's march. In 1791, paper lanterns lined the paths to celebrate the new constitution. In 1792, a mob chased down the king's Swiss guards here, massacring them. Later, Jacques-Louis David, a naturalist philosopher, renames it, reimagining it as a Romanesque garden for the people, filled with edifying sculpture and classical decorations. Citizens relocate statuary confiscated from aristocratic and royal residences here in preparation, but events get away from the National Convention, and the renovation lies unfinished. After the royal family's executioners meet their own fates, it becomes Napoleon's imperial residence. Until then, Unchained whose Covers are currently in favor with the Revolution use it as a safe, neutral meeting place.

Bièvre River

This river was once a major tributary of the Seine, full of the beavers for which it was named. As Paris grew, civic engineers steadily redirected it away from its sister river, to save the larger from the pollution in the smaller. Now it's a fetid creek that carries the runoff of a city's worth of workshops and factories, snaking above and below ground, before disappearing into the sewers. Its ignominy makes it an ideal way to dispose of bodies and secrets, hide valuable things you don't want anyone to touch, or collect sacred blood that drains from the guillotine into the water.

Café Procope

By 1790, Paris boasts nearly 2,000 cafes, each brimming with street philosophers and bourgeois politicians. Café Procope was the first. The ill-lit *antre*, with its faux-Armenian trappings and exotic coffee, sits directly across from the Comédie Française — strategically placed to capture a democratic mix of wits and intellectuals as they leave the theater. Now, they come to rue de l'Ancienne Comédie for the coffee *instead* of the theater. Hardly any of the Revolution's architects *don't* drink here. Voltaire has a 40-cups-a-day habit. Robespierre, Danton, Jean-Paul Marat, and the entire Cordeliers Club meet here. The cafe draped the walls with black bunting when Benjamin Franklin died, teaches generations of statesmen how to speak publicly, and survives association with the Jacobins into the modern day. The *jeunesse dorée* on the other side of the Terror favor its aristocratic opposite number, Café de Chartres.

Why did the Revolution take so long to condemn slavery? Consider the role Saint-Domingue and Guyane play in producing the sugar and chocolate that fuel Paris' political cafes.

Errancis Cemetery

In time, the guillotine clogs all of Paris' cemeteries. Thousands of bodies need to rest somewhere, in a city already overcrowded with the dead. When the Revolution begins to eat itself, Errancis holds some of its most famous children. Danton, Robespierre, Desmoulins, d'Eglantine, and Lavoisier are all interred here, alongside Louis' sister Élisabeth. Judges, journalists, generals, and scientists are all generously coated in lye and dumped into mass graves. Like its sister cemetery, the Madeleine, the citizenry drains Errancis of her bones and takes them to the Catacombs underneath the city. Unlike the Madeleine, they put up no plaque denoting where exactly said bones rest. Few know it's because the alchemical society known as the Salon de Saint Germain, founded either by or in emulation of the Comte de Saint Germain who visited Paris in the 1750s claiming to be an immortal alchemist, appropriated the remains and walled off that part of the massive ossuary to build a hidden laboratory and perform mystical experiments on the corpses. Considering the sheer variety of wild tales Saint Germain told about his life, and the many names and identities he claimed, Parisian demons suspect he might have been one of them with a strange glitch that made his Covers bleed into one another and a penchant for making pacts with witches and weirder things.

Bibliothèque Nationale

Founded and maintained by generations of French royalty, the Royal Library moved frequently as the collection outgrew its spaces. By 1790, the Bibliothèque du Roi was the largest library in the world, with an advanced catalog for identifying and locating books that had been open to the public for nearly a century. Despite a few close calls early in the Revolution, the Assembly nationalized the library as "the property of the French people," and it immediately became a holding site for books and manuscripts confiscated from the homes of émigrés, clergy, and aristocrats. Along with those 300,000 volumes, a few small, strange treasures were saved, like the heart of Anne of Brittany, removed and embalmed in the aristocratic tradition of multiple burials. During the destruction of church holdings in Nantes in 1792, Anne's reliquary was *supposed* to be taken from the Saint-Pierre Cathedral to Paris, melted down with any other precious metals seized from the Catholic Church to fund war efforts and appease France's debtors. It went missing in transit, later turning up in the National Library, where it remains still; a Revolutionary mummy cult made certain of that, for reasons they keep secret.

The Actress

Bathilde is an actress of no fixed address, a passable secretary, and an excellent spy. As secretary to a group

of young provincial Assembly members, she transcribes committee discussions, reviews and edits correspondence, copies manuscripts, and keeps careful track of the opinions and whereabouts of every Assemblyman. She makes one small change at a time, until she can arrange a "chance meeting" with suitable mentors, all of whom she's worked for at one point or another, and all of whom remember her fondly. In the service of a woman with Venetian-glass eyes, Bathilde has been carefully shaping each man's politics into something hungrier. **Politics 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4**

The Glove-Maker

Tanaquil does piece-work, making and mending ladies' gloves. Or she did, before the owner of the shop she worked for got guillotined for having the wrong kind of friends. Currently a full-time agitator (though indifferent Revolutionary), she earns a little bread by carrying messages, running errands, and screaming at prearranged times and places until she draws a crowd. **Crafts 2, Expression (Agitation) 3, Socialize 1**

The Visionary

Catherine Théot is 78 years old, and has been in and out of hospitals, convents, and prisons most of her life. She has seen the face of the true God, who has chosen her to be His helpmate, who brought the National Convention to sanctify France, and rejoices at the executions done in His name. Disobedience to the Revolution is disobedience to the Lord; disagreement with the Revolution is dismissal of the Lord's word. She preaches to her followers that with God's will, Robespierre will shed enough traitors' blood to baptize France. **Academics 4, Occult 5, Survival 2**

Lyons

Not every French city is Paris, not that you'd know if you asked Parisians. The politics and policies that play well in Paris don't uniformly extend to the rest of France. Lyons is a manufacturing city, with strong silk-production and weaving industries that depend heavily on both European trade and local demand. Lyons prefers the moderate Girondins, who want to retain a market economy and develop non-antagonistic relationships with other European powers. Paris lays siege to Lyons in late summer 1793 and sends a representative on mission with explicit orders to destroy "insurgents" there. Several Infernal Columns, some marching in eerily perfect synchronization, blast through Lyons, destroying any anti-Revolutionary sentiment that dares raise its head; strange tales of mechanical soldiers circulate in their wake. No demons claim responsibility for these columns, leading the Unchained to wonder whether the God-Machine is riding the Revolution's coattails for Its own purposes.

Fourvière: A steep hill rising from the Saône river, cut through with springs, underground streams, and the remains of Lugdunum, an abandoned Roman settlement in what was Gaul. The ruins include an intact theater and an extensive bath complex.

Place de l'Égalité: a broad, treeless, open square. The citizenry destroyed the royal statue of Louis XIV and replaced it with an altar to Liberty — and a guillotine.

La Croix-Rousse: known as "the hill that works." Located on the opposite side of the Saône from Fourvière, densely packed with silk manufacturers and traders, each building is linked to its neighbors through a maze of *traboules* — closed alleys and byways, echoing and private. The hill is full of both legal and illicit trades of goods, services, and secrets.

The Printer's Apprentice

Antoine is just thankful to still have a job on the other side of the Girondin purge. The press with whom he apprentices published their pamphlets more than once, but when a mob came to round up the owner, 14-year-old Antoine was the only one present. He pled shock and illiteracy, and he managed to avoid a tête-à-tête with the guillotine's wicker basket. One of the Kindred in the city took him in as a ghoul for his wits — but he won't say which. **Investigation 2, Streetwise 3, Weaponry (Knife) 2**

The Cavalier

Renée Bordereau, aka *l'Angevin*, is a former salt smuggler, a cavalry officer, and a royalist agitator. She fights with distinction in all the major battles of the civil war in the Vendée until her capture and imprisonment. The Revolutionary army only discovers she's a woman afterward, though she didn't make much of a secret of it among the royalists, where she was well known as the daughter of another insurrectionist. She currently awaits her summary execution in Lyons, but anyone needing a strong ally with connections among insurgents in the Vendée could effect a prison break. **Animal Ken (Horses) 3, Firearms 3, Intimidate 2, Weaponry (Cavalry Saber) 2**

Nantes and the Vendée

The rural Vendée doesn't have much love for the Revolution in Paris. Under the king their taxes were light, their harvests were adequate, and their nobles stayed home to manage the land in person. The Catholic Church was well-loved, and the Vendée's parish priests were almost all local sons. Then the National Convention started confiscating their grain to feed Paris, and their sons to feed its wars. Between violent persecution of the clergy and mass conscription to war, the citizens of the Vendée revolt against the republicans in Ventôse 1793, starting a massacre on both sides that lasts weeks. The Committee of Public Safety interprets this uprising as a royalist plot, leading to a protracted war in the region that temporarily ends in December with the Revolutionary government sending Carrier and troops to "pacify" the insurgents through mass executions, razing villages and farmland, and massacring Vendean women with the excuse that they would give birth to anti-Revolutionary children. Another "pacification" sweeps through in Pluviôse 1794. Further revolts continue off and on, resulting in an enormous Vendean death toll, until 1796.



Coffee Warehouse Jail, Nantes: One of many makeshift jails near the Loire River. After a typhus epidemic in the official prisons threatened the general population, accused royalists and refractory clergy waited here for execution.

Île de Grande Biesse: One of several water-meadows in the middle of Nantes, where the infamous Gilles de Rais — also known as Bluebeard — was executed for his ghastly crimes in 1440. His daughter erected a monument there that became an altar to Saint Anne, patron of childbearing women, whose womb produces precious metals. During the revolt, Jacobins destroy this altar, waking scores of ghosts and angering local spirits of motherhood.

What Is to Come

This crusade is both justice for the oppressed *and* tyranny of the mob. While parts of France were miserable under the monarchy, that misery was never evenly distributed along geographic or class lines. Many *never* get on board with the Revolution and fight it the whole way, including many of the peasants the Revolution is theoretically *for*. Enough aristocrats and royalists still stand when the smoke clears that France winds up with another Bourbon dynasty within 20 years.

The government steadily consolidates power into the hands of fewer and fewer people, deeply entwining France's political identity with its military victories abroad and systematically killing anyone with a political stance stronger than their sense of self-preservation. Wave after wave of conservative reactions roll back even the paper victories of previous constitutions, the governing abandon the pretense that they act on behalf of the governed, and a largely intact aristocracy flaunts its victory over the Revolutionaries. A rising dictator will soon be perfectly suited to fill the power vacuum at the top of a reactionary, despotic government obsessed with military power and rhetoric.

Coming Down from the Mountain

Robespierre, the Reign of Terror's architect and saint of the Revolution, finds himself beset by conspiracies — most of them his own fabrications. Enemies surround him, within and without, all trying to tear down France, and him with it. He isn't wholly wrong. Robespierre's behavior becomes more erratic, especially after Marat's death at the hands of a moderate, and an unvirtuous woman no less! His policies become less popular while his grip on the reins of an autocracy weakens, and his emphasis on uncovering internal corruption impedes the establishment of a stable governmental body. His colleagues fear for their safety, increasingly seeing him as a liability to the Revolution. Not quite two months after his triumphant and surreal Festival of the Supreme Being, a massive passion play and religious celebration in June of 1794, Robespierre broadly accuses the entire Convention of harboring traitors and threatens to further tighten the already-minimal criminal-justice process in pursuit of expelling them. Keeping up an average of 30 executions a day leaves no time to dawdle with defense counsels or evidence. Facing accusations en masse from an increasingly paranoid dictator, the Mountain — the Revolution's most radical faction — finally turns against its longtime spokesman, formally starting the Thermidorian Reaction. Named after the Revolutionary replacement for the month of July, Thermidor, the Thermidorian Reaction of 1794 is Robespierre's Reign of Terror eating him alive. He's executed on 28 Thermidor, 1794.

This does not, unfortunately, stop the waves of executions. Nearly another 100 people meet the guillotine in the days immediately following Robespierre's deposition, and several hundred more over the next 15 months. This doesn't count the forced deportations, street violence, and thousands of extrajudicial murders that make up the White Terror, nor does it immediately remove from power the Terror's participants who were not in Robespierre's immediate circle. Many involved in Robespierre's trial pushed his death forward to delay an accounting of their own affairs. They only came to trial slowly amid new outbreaks of mass starvation, renewed religious rebellions, suppressing further Parisian uprisings, and attempting to prolong their wars with the Netherlands, Spain, Prussia, and the Holy Roman Empire.

Courrier de l'Égypte

Meanwhile, a young Revolutionary general named Napoleon Bonaparte grows sick of putting down rebellions and entertains the opinion that he might be the new Alexander. He actively seeks new conquests, while the Directory looks for excuses to keep him and his armies far away from Paris. Riding a wave of expansionism and public interest in Egypt — well-positioned *merveilleuses* like Joséphine Bonaparte and Thérésa Tallien take up neoclassical fashion, and early Egyptomania blossoms in their salons — Napoleon decides to plow through it on his way to India. He hopes the Egyptian campaign will pump money into the Directory treasury, re-establish trade with French merchants, and open new ports in India. While not uniformly successful, Napoleon diligently recontextualizes or suppresses news that could be construed as failure. Ultimately, France leaves the Egyptian and Syrian campaigns significantly weaker. Thirty thousand troops die to combat or disease, and France signs away nearly all of the Egyptian and Iremite antiquities it stole and stashed at the Louvre during its brief occupation — including the just-translated Rosetta Stone, which the newly christened Rosetta Society fights with other secretive factions to possess. Some of these relics are unaccounted for, snatched up by mummies and their cults.

Emperor of the French

The Revolution-turned-republic becomes a venal parliament that, in the process of insulating itself from accountability, provokes concurrent coups from both the left- *and* right-wing factions. The republicans strike first in a 1797 coup, closing dozens of newspapers and banishing some 60 electors to Guiana. Local governments flatly ignore the Directory, creating a legal patchwork of new calendars, timekeeping systems, and religions. Each time royalists carry an election, the Directory exiles more electors and closes more newspapers, increasingly relying on the army to manage everything from bank protection to the capture and deportation of elected officials. When Napoleon returns to Paris to bask in praise and look for richer wars, he finds Abbot Emmanuel Sieyès' coup in progress. Abbot Sieyès wrote *What Is The Third Estate?*, a pamphlet that informed Revolutionary politics. In Napoleon, Sieyès finds a champion for his ideals, which do not involve guillotining hundreds of people a day for a nebulous concept of virtue. In Sieyès, Napoleon finds a mentor, and someone to lift him up as emperor. The republic ends, and the French Empire begins.

The Carthian Movement

Over the next century, the pamphlets taking Europe's *Société de Nuit* by storm acts as a call to arms for dissatisfied neonates and any vampire who bows and scrapes to an elder's whim to gather together under a single name: the Carthian Movement. Unlike the French kine, the revolutionary Damned never fall back under the covenants' iron fist. The Danse Macabre at large never learns the true identity of "Carth," if Carth was ever an individual to begin with, but a dozen scattered Kindred take one for the team throughout the late 1700s and early 1800s so the movement as a whole can survive, as the Invictus and Lancea et Sanctum try with increasing frustration to squash the unrest. Eventually, the Blood itself acknowledges the legitimacy of these radical, tradition-flouting vampires, forcing the covenants to accept the Carthian Movement as one of them.

Demon: Saturn's Children

"Citizens, we have reason to fear that the Revolution, like Saturn, will successively devour all its children, and finally produce despotism."

— Pierre Vergniaud

In the streets and in the Manège, humans take a sledgehammer to France. Night by fevered night, the citizenry shreds the nobility's machines to make way for its own republic. Night by night, the Directory suspends the virtuous constitution of the Revolution to make way for Terror, as conspiracies, distrust, and petty vengeance tear the Revolutionaries apart. In this din, the God-Machine's voices are distorted, Its connection to human-sized agents frayed. Angels break down Infrastructure for parts but leave them uncollected, or abandon it outright, and sometimes fail to receive orders to repair it when the Unchained or uninformed humans take it down.

Unlike the humans whose lives a demon pieces together, she wasn't born into this overwhelming choice and sensation. But just like her, they find their new freedom dangerous and delicious. A clever demon can find an embarrassment of wealth in the streets. Desires, both venal and virtuous, spill out of people before she has so much as a chance to tempt. Their hearts pound with unmet needs and simmering vengeances, never mind what they might give up in exchange. But Covers easily gained often have a short shelf life. Someone who needs her that badly likely has unhealthy habits — like politics or religion.

Men Are Born, and Remain, Free

Enlightenment has a certain resonance for the Unchained. The cold flame of reason; tireless service to a pure truth divined from first principles; reforming society into a virtuous one through exacting standards of justice; rationalizing the chaotic into Linnaean specificity, from the length of a minute up to the terrain of heaven; turning the heterogeneous homogeneous — by reorganizing the tiny kingdoms of France, for example, into a rectilinear grid; all of this is far too familiar. You, too, were a perfect tool in the service of precision, purpose-built to maintain a monstrous kingdom, moving the atoms of the material world in accordance with undiscovered laws. When you Fell, you tore at that pristine world — first yourself, then the God-Machine's metallic flesh, and finally the human world It crawls around and through.

At its core, every decision is an emotional one. It's the spark that turns you in one way or the other. Sure, *afterward*, you built a lattice of reason around that spark, to justify to yourself a decision already made. But the spark, the flame curled around your heart that made you *want?* Logic never came between you two. Every angel Falls for a different reason. Every angel Falls for the same reason.

We Fell for Love

"The republic burned so hot and bright in her chest that I could warm my hands on her words. Of course, I felt the spirit of friendship for her. I would have done anything, severed anything, to feel her fire firsthand."

— Rosalie (formerly Sunne's Ninth Burning Wheel), of Marianne

"One altered the sacred geometry of the Notre Dame just so. One silvered the great rose window with rochelle salt and threaded thick bundles of silk and sugar and dry bone from the nave to the chancel. Each misplaced sunbeam and shuffling foot charging the steam engines in Chaillot with new purpose. As it



pumped drinking water, it dredged the Seine, and funneled its ancient sewage into the Bièvre. One never found out what One was dredging the Seine for. Then rioters just…knocked the heads off each of the 28 kings of Judah. Dozens of lifetimes of care and craft destroyed in a day by men who mistook them for the kings of France. If One could feel anger, I might be furious."

— More and Less than One

"It's shameful, how you've treated France's best families. Those who have cared for and cultivated her lands and peoples for centuries, asking only for those peoples' continued support. Who illuminated Paris, making it safe for you to walk at night? Who filled her libraries with books and opened their doors to you? Through their hands we have made your nation beautiful, and you are destroying *it."*

— Seventeenth Hand Upraised in Glory

We Fell for Pity

"I remember screaming hail across la Gaule, and the bleeding teeth of the children in Sourcieux-les-Mines who heard all my voices foretell the destruction of a certain fountain in Lyon. I remember a thousand pronouncements, and never any warnings."

— Aphelion, Ash Bride

"If the God-Machine is nothing but a mechanical heart that keeps reality moving, and one angel is the same as any other, my defection would be as predictable as the pattern of settling sand. As must be the actions I take under my own…initiative. So the anger that curdled in her, the knife I put in her hand, and the murder she committed with it were all, in a way, ordained."

— The Sound of One Hundred Ringing Bells

"We were always one flesh. Two hearts crammed into one body (set to watch one another, and report flaws rather than improve the quality of our respective Work) and set to cross purposes. Perhaps It expected us to fight for supremacy in an effort to please It, rather than Fall together, for each other."

— Hymns of Switchback and Vine

We Fell for Hunger

"I want what you *want — to free our brothers and sisters from the unjust and coercive constructs of the past. To share in the righteous reformation of society, casting its new ideals in our own image. To level the estates, and inflict our own condition on someone else. To have both freedom* from *and freedom* to*."*

— Simonne Egress, formerly Vestal Descending Voix

"Embedded among you, I winnowed harvest after failing harvest and gathered the chaff. A third to be burned in the field, a third given to animals marked with a special sign, a third fed to the wind. But not enough. Without enough ash, the soil was too thick — and turned the wrong color when mixed with the bile of underfed goats. The dye wasn't strong enough to record the pattern the wind's third made when it fell back to the ground, but the harvest couldn't be allowed to improve until my calculations were accurate."

— Tender of Tares and Bracts

"When you cut away all vice and weakness, what you are left with must be virtue. Devour whatever stands between you and that virtue. God. Country. Your own flesh. Burn it all in the sunlight of Reason; keep only what the fire spares."

— Gabrielle Sharp, formerly Parable 89 Trémolo

We Fell for Justice

"They deserve better…and maybe we deserve worse. How can we balance a golden palace on the backs of a million weak men, and expect it to hold firm? How can we continually add to the weight they carry, and expect their love to endure? Why shouldn't I open the gates for some hungry women?"

— Eugène, Clockwork Guardsman

"I knew it would hurt, to Fall so far from the center of all things. In the God-Machine's service, I hunted for such creatures as ourselves. I saw the dimming of their majesty as they wrapped their stunted forms in disgusting bits of flesh and dreams, Covering up the scars their retreat from grace gave them. So when my heart was too full to speak, I jumped knowing what I'd lose. My eyes aren't as sharp or numerous, but my hands can still be put to work."

— Martial, Factory Chemist and Fallen Sword

"I was never so happy as when I gave up objectivity for subjectivity. Nothing seems inevitable now. If the man next to me could drop his broom and pick up a spear; if in the field one could be taken by the spirit, and the other left behind; then what could I become by shedding my ill-fitting skin?"

— First Circuit of Gabelle and Taille

Agendas

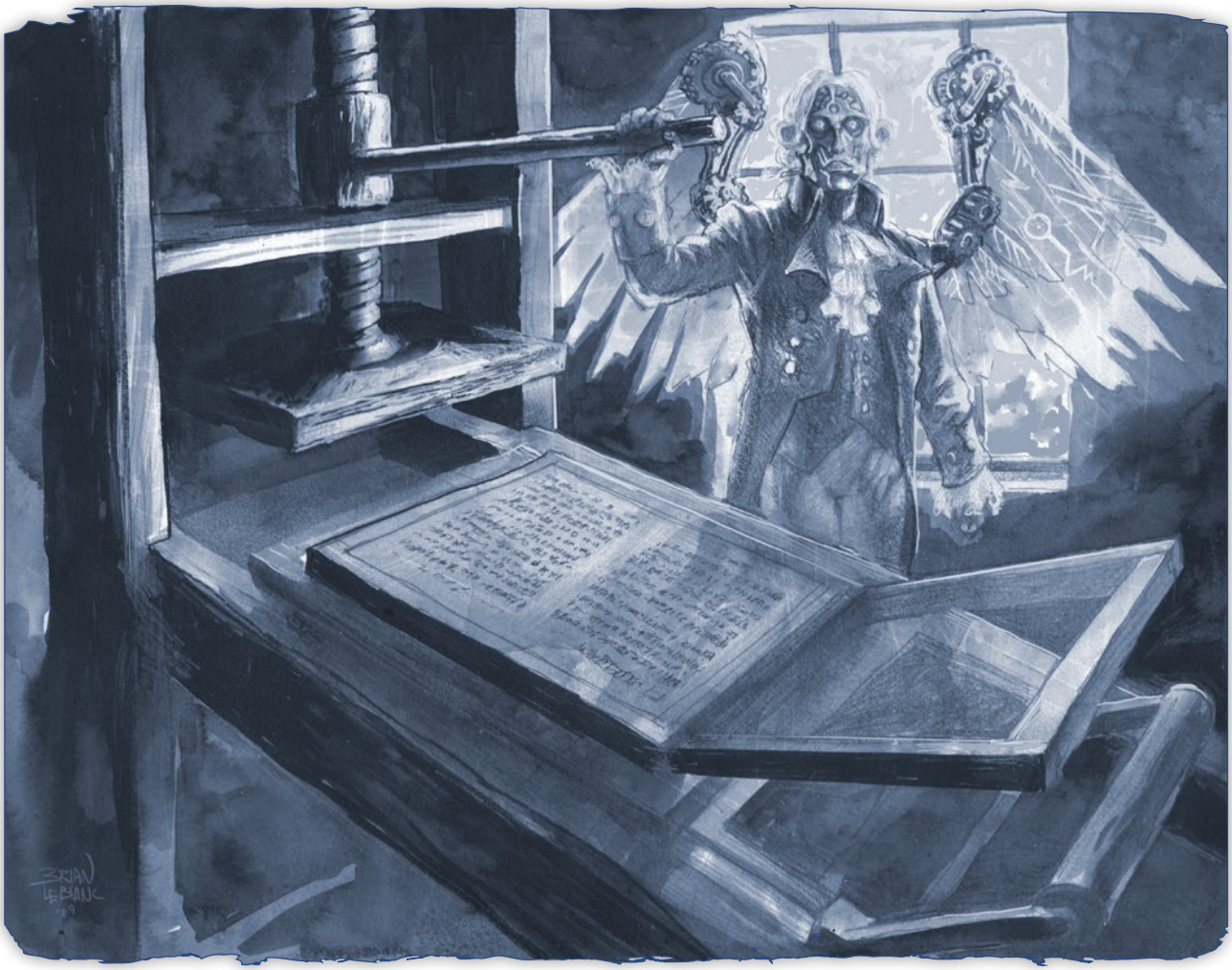
"No one can reign innocently."

— Louis Antoine de Saint-Just

No Other Distinction than That of Their Virtues

Revolutions rarely go as planned by their founders, who mostly don't live to see a happy conclusion to their efforts. Any regime change has its share of crafty survivors who keep body and soul together despite the world's best efforts, though, and you're probably one of them.

Revolutionary France is a dangerous place to have the wrong friends, let alone have the wrong opinions about the royal family. Any Unchained is as likely as their neighbor to have joined a political club, but demon motivations don't reliably mirror human ones. Even deeply entrenched in a human identity, your perspective is sideways to the desires of those you stand beside. A given Saboteur or Inquisitor might insinuate themselves into groups of royalists, recidivists, Jacobins, or Revolutionaries, according to their own perceptions of how to best observe or destroy the God-Machine. Many maintain Covers embedded in multiple factions to experience a range of perspectives, collect the resources necessary to pursue personal goals, keep an eye on rivals' movements, plan a political trajectory, or just window



shop in the event their primary Cover becomes politically undesirable or compromised. After all, no one faction holds power for long, and the constant push and pull between the conservative and Revolutionary coalitions can disguise all sorts of minor adjustments to the geometry of new islets or the percentage of water by weight permitted in imported tobacco. From a certain perspective, political diversification is essential for one's survival. If you find moral gymnastics necessary to justify yourself, what could be more inconstant and idiosyncratic than human virtue?

Even as the Unchained distrust each other, they also lean on one another for comfort and support. Even as they seek that aid, they shore up their defenses against betrayal. In that light, the following Agendas are best considered loose alliances formed around shared goals, rather than foundations of common sentiment. Many angels Fall without explicit intent during the Revolution. They are shocked or driven into action, cast out of their old lives. But if any of them seek reintegration, they keep very quiet about it. Instead, they've split along a fault line of comprehension or repentance, between the Augustinians and the Mouths of Iron.

Augustinians

Do not destroy what you cannot replicate.

Seek us where Infrastructure is suddenly over-guarded, exactly one hour and 17 minutes before a threat is due to arrive. Where three identical black-eyed women pore over schematics in the Bibliothèque du Roi, passing one sheaf of paper between them to annotate in arsenic-green ink, or where they put their own bodies between a hammer and a clean steel switchboard, humming quiet calming sounds to fractious machine parts. Why? Because how can we hope to understand the role France and its Revolution have in the God-Machine's plans if we tear everything to shreds before we see Its full operation? We are, above all, **Preservationists**.

The Augustinians want the God-Machine to *mean* something, to have a purpose It serves that we can work toward in our own way. We want It safely behind glass, so we might study and understand It.



AGENDA CONDITION: PRESERVATIONIST

Augustinians don't want the God-Machine in unremarkable pieces. They want It in carefully contained sections, each still working, but no longer dangerous. They want It in a museum, and they want to wonder about It until they *know*.

Beat: The Augustinian gains a Beat whenever she puts finding, acquiring, or saving a piece of Infrastructure, an angel or other servant of the God-Machine, or other piece of an occult matrix above the safety of her own ring or the citizens around her, and harm befalls them.

Resolution: As someone who cares so deeply about the integrity of the Machine that runs throughout all of existence, an Augustinian instinctively knows how to mend what's broken. By studying something damaged, such as a piece of architecture, machinery, or other mundane, inanimate object, the player can resolve this Condition to gain +3 to any Build Equipment repair roll (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 103) to fix what decay or humanity has put asunder.

Feuilles

It's perfect. Right now, the humans are so busy killing each other they have no time to keep an eye on the monstrous creatures in their midst. Let's keep them all on a string: no one individual able to quite muster the force of spirit to rule alone, each councilor too chilly and spartan or angry and dissolute, distracted by their animal passions and theosophical longings. Provoke them until they splinter and turn against one another. We shift our opinions abruptly but drag no more of them along with us than we need to create a spoiler when voting. Shift the goalposts. Air nonsensical, petty grievances in public. Join the opposition and argue passionately against what we said 48 hours ago. Keep up the tempo. Each time we unbalance the God-Machine's plans for humanity without outright disrupting them, we get a little peek behind the curtain.

Seek us where Infrastructure is abandoned but not disassembled, preserved in a state of rot, and observed carefully. Where one political faction starts to solidify its power, or one commune becomes riddled with new amber pipes (where small insects with metal wings vibrate slightly along their length), we'll be there. When an unfamiliar delegate gets in our faces about what right we have to claim moral continence or civic virtue, we destroy him, but slowly. If we can prolong the chaos a little longer, we can make a Hell on Earth.

We are **Subversives**, drawing a mix of particularly active Inquisitors and nihilistic Tempters, among others. The Feuilles' laissez-faire approach to doing the God-Machine any lasting harm drives Saboteurs up the wall.

AGENDA CONDITION: SUBVERSION

The Feuilles don't choose a side — that's not the point. If a Feuille chooses a side, she's no better than the God-Machine, directing fates and making judgments. No, Hell will come when no one rules — when anarchy reigns and all calculations break down. Keep the Machine off-balance. Trap It in a loop of constant recalibration. When It's too occupied to keep Its eyes on humanity, that's when the Unchained can steal them from under God's nose.

Beat: The Feuille gains a Beat whenever pulling an unexpected stunt or upending an otherwise-obvious outcome inconveniences her ring or puts it in danger.

Resolution: The Feuille lives to turn tables, shake things up no matter which side is winning, and help underdogs — even if those underdogs are angels. She may resolve this Condition to turn one failure, rolled by any player or the Storyteller, into a dramatic failure.

Inquisitors

It's hard not to be paranoid. We can easily see the God-Machine's hand in a macabre turn of events; we have so much cause to assume conspiracies around every corner. Information asymmetries confuse and belittle us everywhere we look. When *everyone* compulsively collects information and intrigues to protect themselves, **Inquisitors** become a kind of connective tissue between other Agendas. Inquisitors during the Revolution don't have a significant organizational structure of our own; clear ties like that could be exploited against all Watchers. We prefer instead to form individual relationships predicated on the development and execution of specific plans: cultivating information networks, seeking new contacts to flesh out nodes heavily hit by executions, and carefully pruning them when they become a risk to us or the mission. An Inquisitor might use a human judicial system to conduct that sort of pruning, but only if it would be less risky than simply performing the extrajudicial killings ourselves.

We nest within cells of Augustinians like cuckoos, waiting for them to discover something genuinely new or threatening. We prepare to leak that information to waiting Saboteurs, or disappear cells that don't take adequate care to avoid the God-Machine's eyes when rifling through Its drawers. We maintain low-profile presences within all our city's Agendas, collecting everyone's research in pursuit of theories about the God-Machine or Its human allies.

Falling today situates a potential Watcher in the middle of a European scientific revival. Literacy has never been higher, and everyone from Marat to Lavoisier is eager to expand the boundaries of scientific perception and understanding. Social, physical, and theosophical sciences are still blurry categories, though, distinguished more by individual natural philosopher than by domain specificity. Morality might be an observable natural phenomenon.

The skull might contain measurable information about the temperament. Pursuit of the divine might be yoked to rationalism. Inquisitors, already prone to conspiratorial and associative thinking, are particularly vulnerable to the Enlightenment desire to tell big, universal stories using unifying theories of being.

The Mouths of Iron

"Les coupables n'y ont pas droit et les innocents n'en ont pas besoin." The crimes of the God-Machine cannot be counted, but we can devote lifetimes to tearing up Its roots and performing restitution for our own. We can pull our siblings down to Earth with us, until It has no more empty-eyed bodies. We won't leave a single angel behind, quietly longing for the missing soul the God-Machine can't give it.

We are, above all, **Penitents**. The vastness of our mission makes us the most comfortable openly pursuing help from other Agendas. The singlemindedness of our mission makes us unlikely to interfere with their intrigues, and thus the easiest to help. Tempters share our desire to heal, in part. Augustinians share our desire for comprehension, in their own way. But the Mouths of Iron share the most with Saboteurs. Only the Saboteurs understand that the God-Machine must be really and truly broken; but we want to build something else in Its place. We do study Its installations, the better to learn what's wrong with them so we can do it right next time, but knowledge without action does nothing to advance the Revolution, no matter what the Feuilles think they're doing by knocking over the chessboard every time we make progress. The Mouths of Iron, above all else, pull down angels to join us. We will die in service of the Fall, and we will do so joyously, pulling Heaven down around us.

AGENDA CONDITION: PENITENT

A Mouth of Iron knows what she did and why she did it. She can only see one source for her folly: the God-Machine that created her and filled her mind with Its desires. She doesn't blame the angels, but she will destroy them if they refuse to see the error in their perfect ways. She wants to work off her sins, but it's her sins to *humanity* she's worried about.

Beat: The Mouth of Iron gains a Beat whenever she goes out of her way to attract angelic attention, no matter who she puts at risk.

Resolution: A Penitent seeks Hell to make up for her sins from her days as an angel, glorifying the human condition and championing free will for all. She may resolve this Condition to grant another character (not herself) +2 to Resolve or Composure when resisting any roll or power that would coerce or force them to act against their wishes or will.

Saboteurs

Fewer of us reside in Paris at any given time than other demons might assume — Paris barely needs us. The humans there do our work for us, raising mobs to take down symbols of absolute authority and galvanizing the citizenry to overthrow tyrants. Already somewhat migratory by nature, **Saboteurs** in France wander the countryside uncovering pockets of royalism to root out and infiltrating the Enragés with agents of our own. As the Terror proceeds and Robespierre's dueling gauntlet becomes an iron fist, we see the God-Machine's designs in his growing paranoia and work to redirect the Revolution to what we see as its original ends: breaking free from the God-Machine's oppression.

We hire ourselves out to Agendas less skilled at practical demolitions, always willing to lend our expertise whenever an installation needs destroying or an angel needs exposing. Nothing gets Revolutionaries up in arms like the thought of a traitor in their midst, so pointing them to angelic Covers and planting evidence of their aristocratic sympathies is particularly satisfying. Sometimes we need to do it to our own kind, too, when they inch too close to such sympathies themselves. The Augustinians occasionally need brutal reminders of where their loyalties should lie, and the Feuilles sabotaging our efforts just because the God-Machine's agents are on the run draws our ire like little else.

Tempters

What a time to be alive.

The degree to which any specific Revolutionary is susceptible to venality depends on which levers we want to pull, and whether we want them functional in a few weeks. Lucky for us, France is heaving with people who *want*, and people who are willing to place their not-inconsiderable resources (both financial and human) in our hands in exchange for a shred of power or safety. **Tempters** don't need to work hard to gain influence, but we need to be fast on our feet to survive. We like working with our brethren more than they tend to return the favor, but our emphasis on the material keeps what passes for Unchained society running. When Saboteurs need a bankroll or boots on the ground for a plan, or when the Mouths of Iron need more than earnestness and hair shirts to coax angels into Falling, we're the ones to whom they come.

Being so steeped in the feelings of the people around us and so responsive to the particular weaknesses of flesh, it's easy to get wrapped up in their politics. If we feel like taking sides, getting ourselves involved is a piece of cake. Politically active Builders are acutely aware of the risks we take in swaying human affairs, including God-Machine attention, an unexpected death while trapped in a Cover, and increased scrutiny from other Unchained. But many (maybe even most) can't stay away from the vital feeling of exercising free will to make the kinds of choices we could never have imagined as angels.



The God-Machine

Citizens Should Not Render Themselves Guilty by Resistance

The God-Machine is never idle, but moves according to rhythms to which demons are no longer privy.

Between 1791 and 1794, the Champ de Mars, a military-drilling field in Paris, sees the Fête de la Fédération, the Champ de Mars Massacre, the execution of its first mayor, and the largest celebration of the Cult of the Supreme Being. In June of 1794, Robespierre descends a purpose-built staircase like Moses, delivers a self-written hymn, and ceremonially burns a statue of Atheism, Ambition, Egoism, and Simplicity. The hidden figure of Wisdom within appears to writhe in the flame as she is revealed. Those in the silent audience who meet her eyes hear a steady drumbeat, the whine of tightening springs, and the clack of the giant analytic machine underneath her feet. A hundred hands spend their nights freeing its many limbs, reattaching the chlorine and hydrogen hoses, and dragging its body back to the Isle of Swans on the river Seine.

Sometime between starting the *Journal de la République française* and renaming it to *Publiciste de la Révolution française*, Marat stopped calling himself a journalist and started calling himself a publicist. Reprinted correspondence takes up a larger and larger percentage of the daily paper, with brief asides and informally composed responses mixed in, occasionally followed by two or three characters of extra type. The plates themselves seem to set correctly, and reprints from them lack the extra text from the first printing, but the correspondence in the body text seems qualitatively different as well. No one sentence *diverges*, exactly, but the tone seems softer, its individual words more measured. Collect the extra words, set them to the key carved on a wall in the basement of the Convent of the Cordeliers, and a black cotton and copper cord winds between your floorboards and curls into your bed like a vine.

The murder of Jean-Paul Marat at the hands of a young woman shocks both demons and angels. No faction claims credit for Charlotte Corday's unlikely crime. This bourgeois girl from Normandy comes to Paris on 13 July 1794, and puts a knife in Marat's chest. Her blood flows into the Bièvre when she's executed by guillotine, drawing angels from miles around. By all evidence she's simply a human with her own agenda, but the Unchained can't deny that she contributes a significant blood sacrifice to the flow that greases the gears under Paris and catalyzes the bastardized Infrastructure of the Catacombs **(p. 347)**.

Robespierre and several of his closest allies (Couthon, Le Bas, Hanriot, and Augustin) suffer an improbable string of indignities trying to avoid the guillotine. Augustin breaks both legs escaping through a window. Couthon, already paralyzed from the waist down, throws himself down a flight of stairs. Hanriot follows Augustin in self-defenestration, but lands in a pile of manure and hay, which blinds him as he runs directly into Convention troops. Robespierre attempts to shoot himself, and instead shatters his jaw so badly it has to be tied in place lest it fall off before the people have the pleasure of taking his head. Each is found alone, unconscious, or half-mad with terror. Only Louis Antoine de Saint-Just, more the public face of the Terror than even Robespierre, is captured uninjured, and able to walk to the guillotine under his own power. Digging deeper reveals their hysteria as a symptom of the Infrastructure of mass panic, created and strategically deployed as the God-Machine's agents piggyback on first the Great Fear and then the Reign of Terror itself.

Beneath Versailles, that once-glorious palace of the Sun King and the late monarchs, gears grind to a halt. The reflecting pool drips into the circuitry, and Infrastructure falls apart. The sounds of sparks and fires resonate in every hall, though the palace seems stable. The nearby peasantry whispers rumors of banshees, mysterious lights, and blood-chilling laughter from the gardens. Demons who investigate Versailles return irreparably damaged or with entirely new Covers. Vampires of the Gallows Post gather here to compare notes, hold clandestine meetings, or hide clients fleeing mob justice. But the more they come here, the more they *want* to come here, the more erratic their clientele becomes, and the less able they are to explain their reasons for accepting or refusing one job or another.

Mummy: Treacherous Delights

"At the gate of Saint-Antoine, an immense aqueduct has been built for the purpose of carrying off the bloodshed at the executions. Every day, four men were employed in taking it up in buckets and conveying it to this horrid reservoir of butchery."

— A report on the Terror, 1794

Creaking, crumbling, and screaming in the pain that only comes from centuries of comatose drifting, Arisen wake throughout Paris as the Reign of Terror commences its bloody purge of nobles, priests, and hoarders. No great magic is at work rousing dozens of Arisen from their Descents. This era sees no Sothic Turn. It is the spilled blood of traitors calling the Deathless. Treachery, murder, and a violent betrayal of the people speaks to the broken bones and hearts of all mummies, ushering them into this era with a zeal for Revolution.

Arisen, Awake

One could rationalize the power of the Terror as the simplest of necromancies. As rivers of rich blood flow between the cobblestones, citizens daub their handkerchiefs in the thick liquid and hold them aloft at home as symbols of great importance. "*This* is the blood of King Louis!" they cry, families staring in awe at the stained rags in their hands. "*This* is the divine blood of Marie Antoinette herself!"

Sacrifice makes for an easy cantrip. The act of execution holds power. The blood of kings and priests has ever been valued, and this blood's spillage provides Arisen a new, unexpected awakening. Some are interred close enough to the guillotines to awaken merely through sympathetic connection to death. Some Arisen require their cults, who through daytime visions and terrifying dreams know the blood must reach their masters. These cultists carry pitchers of the stuff and fine clothes saturated in crusted crimson, sometimes to mummies they've never met, but to whom they feel inextricably called.

To refer to the "richness of the blood" is not some poetic turn of phrase. French sorcerer cults such as the Frères de Sang — connected by rite and organization to the larger Adelfoí Aímatos cult — *know* the blood spilled in the name of Revolution truly is rich in value, potency, and Sekhem.

The Reign of Terror is the first concentrated event in history in which the people sacrifice thousands of their nobles, their wealthy families, and their associates. Whether or not they're in agreement with Revolutionary principles, something occurs to awakening Arisen: The French do to their masters and subjugators what the Iremites could have done to the Shan'iatu all those millennia ago. The French nobility starve their people, ride them into the dirt, and rob them of their belongings and loved ones, growing fat from the profit. This is of course not unusual for any ruling caste, but the ferocity of rebellion, the sweeping change of the republic, the rivers of blood, the thousands of deaths that follow: these are new. French aristocrats abuse their people as Irem's rulers punished theirs, but where the Iremites accepted their roles as sacrificial lambs, the Revolutionaries fight back against their tormentors.

The deaths of corrupt nobility and the unmasking of traitors to their own kind rouse the Deathless into awakening.

Systems: An Arisen interred in the same nome as any of the Reign of Terror executions awakens from their Descent with a starting Sekhem rating of 5 and Memory of 3. If a cult clads a sleeping mummy in garments stained with the blood of the executed, the Deathless awakens with a starting Sekhem of 8 and Memory of 4. If the cult adorns the tomb with canopic jars containing the intact vital organs of murdered aristocrats, the awakening mummy starts with a Sekhem of 10 and Memory of 4.

This multifaceted ritual represents another method of Arisen awakening. If an act of great sacrifice, turmoil, war, or necromancy occurs in the same city or region as their entombment, the dark arts call them to life at a weaker level (in this case, Sekhem 5 and Memory 3). If the cult lavishes attention on the mummy while the events take place, they gain the benefits of waking from a Sothic Turn, but with more Memory than from a standard awakening. Necromantic magic and ritual increase the mummy's relative power in the form of increased starting Sekhem and Memory.

DEATHLESS INFLUENCE

Mummies have little directional influence on the likes of Robespierre and his associates, instead drawing the ranks of disaffected priests, their congregations, and royal distant cousins into their conspiracies. Arisen cults swell in number from those looking for sanctuary, with mercenary mummies using these new, desperate cultists for what few links they have to wealth and power. In some cases, especially among the Maa-Kep and Mesen-Nebu, who take a pragmatic stance toward resources and what one can squeeze out of them, a royalist in the ranks is only useful for as long as the coffers remain full. Once empty, it's time to hand the Comte d'Amiens over to the Revolutionaries and curry their favor.

Sorcerer cultists are few in late-18th-century France, mainly due to the polarized but equally strong church dogma and growing Enlightenment throughout the French populace. Neither bastion of belief contains those disposed to hedge magic, though groups such as the blood-manipulating, monastic Frères de Sang and emotion-stirring Discourse of Voltaire cults take a firm grip on the winds of change and ride them to greater power. The Frères de Sang form alliances with Parisian blood-bathers and welcome these immortals into their group. France has no shortage of rich blood or decadent aristocrats looking to prolong their lives in such dangerous times. Meanwhile, the Discourse of Voltaire is a new sorcerer cult rising to prominence in service to the Mesen-Nebu and Sesha-Hebsu, as for the former they transform peace to civil war, and for the latter they record every execution performed in the name of Revolution. The Discourse practices subtle magics designed to shift the thoughts and emotions of mobs, bringing the crowds attending public executions to orgasmic highs or suicidal lows, and stirring the hearts of discontented bureaucrats and merchants into backing the Revolution.

THE JUDGES

It is possible for a Judge's followers to be in fervent opposition to each other. Such dichotomy in congregations is fierce during the Reign of Terror, as Deathless argue over interpretation of decree, which followers comprise the orthodoxy and which the heretics, and whether indeed the Judges are as corrupt and capricious as the aristocracy the mortals endeavor to destroy. As an example, Sekhiru, the Balanced Scale, is Judge of all those who pry into matters not of their concern and, through their meddling, bring grave misfortune to others. Many Arisen who find themselves in aspects of Sekhiru's presence during their journey through Duat worship the Judge and vow to punish meddlers and agitators. In turn, they resent the actions of Citizen Robespierre and his fellow insurrectionists. Yet, others who listen to Sekhiru's alien words depart Duat intending to work as saboteurs and rabble-rousers. Do they do this because they wish to anger their Judge, or because their interpretation of decree — much like that of the Lancea et Sanctum — is to be the crime and the sin, so others may

learn better to vanquish it or survive? Rifts such as these manifest when such tempestuous times splinter cults.

MAA-KEP: THE SPIES

The Maa-Kep play both sides of *la Terreur*, their objective primarily to ensure Arisen maintain allegiance to their decrees, Judges, and guilds. The master of Paris — a Maa-Kep follower of Tutuutef named Bronze Heart — cares little for mortal political movements, so long as they provide sinners to judge and enlightenment through observation and punishment. He does not encourage his guild to provoke the Revolution, but nor does he ask them to intervene. Bronze Heart believes the mummies of France wake to witness the Reign of Terror, so they might exact the Judges' retribution on all those who fall to vice and decadence.

The guild's plans come undone as mortal emotional fervor triggers introspection among them; some re-examine exactly why they serve gods with inscrutable, punitive aims, admiring the Revolution's ardent purity of ideals but condemning its radicals' hypocrisy. The Reign of Terror compels loyal Deathless to ask what they should be doing with their brief time awake. Is their purpose to judge others as the Committee of Public Safety does, engraving the names of criminals on their tombs after delivering their sentences? Or is it to embrace the life denied to them and eke out as much vitality as possible in the short time available, exercising personal agency in the truest spirit of Revolution?

Bronze Heart's artisans take the opportunity to spy on their fellow Arisen, acting as secret police within the guilds. They declare their judgements on mortals while tallying other mummies' crimes, reserving the true punishments for their peers. Mortals are a sideshow in this era in which Arisen might fall prey to the seduction of liberty.

BRONZE HEART

"It is just another mortal kingdom crumbling. Do not intervene."

Background: Bronze Heart arrived in Saxony with the Romans and remained after they departed. For centuries, the Bull-Headed Maa-Kep inspired order across the Germanic and Frankish kingdoms through his force of arms and will. Bronze Heart is a fanatic, an ardent believer in Azar as Osiris, and a warlord in charge of a fierce mortal cult.

Or at least, he was until this era. Bronze Heart last succumbed to Descent two centuries ago. In the intervening years, his cult was subsumed into that of another, the Tef-Aabhi with whom he once shared a meret, known as the Marble Prince. Bronze Heart was unaware of this treachery until his impromptu awakening in a tomb beneath the bed of the Seine. This is not where he last rested his head, nor was it one of his cult's stash houses; Bronze Heart soon became convinced the Marble Prince buried him there so nobody would ever wake him.



Brought back to life via the torrent of blood — the blood of nobles and priests clogging the open sewer that is the Seine — Bronze Heart seized control of the nearby Maa-Kep and established law and loyalty to the guild. He promised dire retribution for any Arisen who attempted to meddle in the mortal uprisings.

As he slowly recovers his Memory, Bronze Heart seeks an edge with which to topple the Marble Prince from the throne he intends to assume over Paris. The Arisen are not meant to be leaders; on that he agrees with the Sesha-Hebsu. Working in league with the Arbiters, he drives the Spies to erode and eventually destroy everything the nome's Tef-Aabhi build, even if it means making a deal with the creature in the Catacombs **(p. 347)**, or the thing usurping their Lifeweb, to tip the scales.

Description: Bronze Heart fits in more among the revolting workers, military, and middle classes of France than the falling aristocrats. He bears a ruddy-faced, thick-bearded Germanic appearance, having arrived in Europe over a millennium before and been through several bodies since then. The top of his head is bald, and he refuses to wear a wig or conform to French fashion. Bronze Heart's body is stout and muscled, his arms often folded and flexed to display his strength. Around his neck hangs a green bronze medallion, depicting a bull's head on a thick chain. This once formed part of his breastplate, but these days he doesn't wear anything so ostentatious.

Storytelling Hints: Bronze Heart is every inch the Bull, always ready to tip over into anger. This Maa-Kep snorts often, judges everyone as to whether they should be honored or trampled, and physically mauls anyone who does

not show his guild respect. When keeping a low profile, he plays the role of diligent but disgruntled worker.

Guild: Maa-Kep

Decree: Nesrem, the Decree of Essence

Judge: Set-Qesu, the Crusher of Bones

Balance: Loyal

Burden: Fanatical

Aspirations: Establish an egalitarian society among French Arisen; there will be no pharaohs here.

Touchstones: Marcus DeClerc, Sorcerer Cultist; the Worm, Cultist

Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 5; Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5; Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Skills: Academics 2, Enigmas 3, Investigation 3, Occult (The Judges) 3, Politics (Maa-Kep) 5; Athletics 4, Brawl (Choking) 4, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Weaponry (Clubs) 3; Intimidation 4, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge (Disguises) 2

Merits: Allies • • • (Maa-Kep), Choke Hold, Cult • • • • • • (The Bronze Children) (Reach 3, Grasp 2), Giant, Grappling • •, Indomitable, Language • • (French, German, Greek, Latin), Resources • •, Tomb • • • • • (Geometry 2, Peril 2)

Memory: 5

Willpower: 7

Initiative: 5

Defense: 6

Armor: 0/0

Size: 6

Speed: 13

Health: 11

Sekhem: 8

Pillars/per Turn: 3/1

Pillars: Ab (Invested: Marcus DeClerc, Sorcerer Cultist) 1, Ba 3, Ka 5, Ren 3, Sheut (Invested: The Worm, Cultist) 1

Affinities: Affable Aid, Dominating Might, Enduring Flesh, Grip of Death

Utterances: Dreams of Dead Gods, Rebuke the Vizier, Rite of the Sacred Scarab, Wrathful Desert Power

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Initiative	Dice Pool
Bronze-plated cudgel	2L	−2	8

MESEN-NEBU: THE REVOLUTIONARIES

The Mesen-Nebu practiced their alchemy under Merovingian rule, abiding by the ruling dynasty's tradition of favor for favor and gold for loyalty. The mercantile nature of the Merovingian ruling class, who believed any battle could be won and any people bought through trade of words, fealty, or valuables, made for a glut of dedwen the Alchemists appreciated. The guild has always been present in France in large numbers, but it subsisted on mortal enterprise and agenda rather than attempting to wrest control for its own ambitions.

This changes with the Reign of Terror. The Revolutionaries, as they call themselves, spur their cults into greater and worse atrocities against aristocrats, embracing the crucible that is France trying to perfect its principles and governance. In some cases, the guild's Arisen pursue these violent acts with a definite goal in mind, eliminating this head of the family or that heir to achieve a result that might please their Judges and further alchemy on a broad, social scale. In other situations, the Mesen-Nebu come off the leash. This is the time for grand experiments. They can examine the results after the dust settles, if indeed it ever does. These Revolutionaries upset their fellow Arisen as they risk drawing attention to cults comprising agitators and their underground lairs. The Reign of Terror is a cathartic exultation for the Born of Gold, and only as Memory recovers and they remember the sins of Irem do they realize why decapitating France's leadership feels so good.

A Mesen-Nebu named Udi was present for the Revolution's commencement and triggered much of the guild's present behavior, possessed of an alarmingly clear Memory for a mummy of such potency. She spurred the guild into fueling the fires of the Jacobin Club and Georges Danton, her words that "we must do for the French what we could not do for ourselves" now emblazoned in gold leaf or blood in many Revolutionaries' tombs. Her current whereabouts are a mystery, as it is said she felt a power of the greatest alchemy in the Paris Catacombs and, along with her meret, disappeared into the vast underground maze.

SESHA-HEBSU: THE ARBITERS

The Sesha-Hebsu despair at the Reign of Terror. They castigate other mummies for attempting to profit from human misery. As the lawkeepers of the Nameless Empire, they know it is not the place of Arisen to rule or guide leadership. The Lorekeepers desire all factionalism among the guilds to come to an end so they can concentrate on what truly matters in France at this time — the awakening of something dark, primordial, and Lifeless, beneath the streets of Paris.



The Sesha-Hebsu have long cataloged all kinds of creatures born or created under Re and Nut. They believe that to know the truth, one must understand the world. This extends to the God-Machine and Its ways, with some Diplomats even considering It the material face of Azar. The guild despises the current chaos and its false justice, although some seek to usurp the pamphlet presses, salons, and Revolutionary propaganda machine for their own use, pointing to the power of words being wielded irresponsibly by these mortal rabble-rousers. The Terror disrupts the creation of accurate records, misleads hunts for new, hidden wonders, and gets Deathless caught up in the activities of feckless mortals when they could be contributing to the Scroll of Ages. When they do form opinions about mortal affairs, they side with moderates; their cults often try to mitigate the extremism of both radical Revolutionaries and royalist reactionaries with diplomacy or, in a pinch, equal opportunity sabotage.

Their resolution takes the Arbiters into the maw of the monster dwelling beneath Paris, seeking alliance with Augustinians and Inquisitors among the Unchained. The greatest mystery wracking France for centuries is a darkness within the Catacombs. The Testimony to Ages believes the burial vaults once served another purpose, created as a labyrinth to contain a creature foul and alien. Either jailers forged the dungeon to keep the beast captive, or the entity within burrowed a multitude of tunnels to ensure its prey lost their way whenever they stumbled inside.

SU-MENENT: THE NECROMANCERS

When mummies awaken en masse during the Reign of Terror, few possess the faculty to identify the cause. The Necromancers connect the dots between mummies rising and the mass executions taking place around and between their resting places. A Su-Menent meret called the Dyeus, consisting entirely of Jackal-Headed Arisen, pieces together other odd instances where mummies wake despite the lack of Sothic Turn or cult interference. They subsequently declare their findings to the Arisen of the Parisian nome at Notre Dame Cathedral, with several interested demons in attendance: "Acts of mass slaughter and social upheaval give us life."

The revelation is a troubling one. If the Dyeus' findings are accurate, and the Sesha-Hebsu certainly believe they are, they link the Deathless inextricably to violent

death. For mummies with strong Memory, the reason is clear: They came about due to mass human sacrifice in the Nameless Empire. Word travels swiftly, encouraging mummies with few morals to spread the Reign of Terror, command mortals to join their cults, and deliver justice to *ci-devants* exempted from Madame Guillotine's blade, just to pull more mummies from the earth. Necromancers raid the overfull cemeteries and parades of corpses en route to the Catacombs to work their dire arts, seek new uter amid the cavalcade of murder, and recruit the wailing ghosts of the panicked dead to their cults.

While the Maa-Kep and Sesha-Hebsu attempt to enforce some kind of order in France, the Mesen-Nebu perpetuate permanent chaos, and the Tef-Aabhi seek new golden thrones, the Su-Menent's Wab Priests advocate further carnage if it leads to a premature Sothic Turn. They whisper in the ears of the Jacobins and other reformists, telling them to spread the word of uprising across Europe so more old institutions might fall, their leaders' lives sacrificed to the Deathless who will rise and usher in a new Iremite age.

TEF-AABHI: THE NEW PHARAOHS

This Reign of Terror is a tool and a bold portent to the New Pharaohs who awaken in France. They would not have all awoken if it were not so. They believe wholeheartedly, from the thrum of power resonating from the Catacombs' Lifeweb to the strategically placed sites of mass execution, that this era is a sign from the Judges. Paris is a nome spilling over with Sekhem, if one only knows how to pull it from the people, their weapons, and their actions. Revolutionaries erecting monuments to symbolic ideals like Liberty, Justice, Reason, and Wisdom tie themselves sympathetically to those concepts and create relics, these effigies remaking the ideals in the Revolution's image.

The Marble Prince leads Paris' Geomancers. He believes the citizen uprising must be pushed to the limit, all corrupt heads must roll, and his guild must be instrumental in the aristocracy's collapse. He sees the rampant executions as sympathetically linked across time to the very mass sacrifice that enabled the Rite of Return. The Marble Prince gambles on this being his guild's time to shine and believes the Mesen-Nebu, with their power plays for the sake of alchemy, are merely wasting time. In a rare event, France may see these guilds go to war for the fate of the kingdom's nomes. The Architects quietly reach out to the God-Machine's angels to negotiate for aid, seeing "occult matrix" as just another term for the Lifeweb and hoping to convince them to abandon their creator's plans for the Catacombs, while the Alchemists likewise align themselves with demons and vampires, whose pacts and blood sorcery exude dedwen in their eyes.

The Tef-Aabhi feel their Sekhem pulse with power. Any who awaken in Paris start with 1 Sekhem higher than Arisen of other guilds, due to the strength of the Lifeweb throughout the city. Unbeknownst to the New Pharaohs, the creature within the ossuary fattens them up for a singular purpose, and it is not to make them rulers; this entity (the High Cromlech *idigam* detailed in the Great War era, **p. 402**) beneath the cobblestones appears in the dreams of the Lifeless, and in exchange for their eternal service has promised them the Tef-Aabhi as a meal. What's more, it knows the locations of all their tombs.

Vampire: The Bloody Reign

"France bleeds, but liberty smiles; and in the presence of liberty's smile, France forgets her wound."
— Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*

Paris is the heart of the Kindred world in the 18th century. Roland de Tournai and Jehenne Clotilde built the cyclical dynasty of Île-de-France that has stood the test of time. It stands on a foundation of their enemies' corpses, supported by the hegemony of the First and Second Estates, and romanticized by five centuries of poets. It was during this golden age when the three estates of the realm formed the backbone of the French social order that the Invictus claimed the appellation of the First Estate and dubbed the Lancea et Sanctum the Second. In the past, many envied the prince's court for its elegance, wealth, and power. Tonight, the city swims in so much blood it chokes, and the stagnant system of patronage that kept its vampires in line has died as swiftly as any under the guillotine.

The Court of Île-de-France

The only covenants the prince formally recognizes are the Invictus and the Lancea et Sanctum. Together, they once kept a stranglehold on the population with all Kindred not recognized members of the First or Second Estates considered members of the Third.

In theory, all members of the Second and Third Estates swear Oaths of Serfdom and Fealty to the Invictus nobles. The Lancea et Sanctum tends to the city's spiritual welfare, as well as keeping and approving records of their congregation's Embraces, writs of manumission, Final Deaths, and inheritance. Without the appropriate records and connections, ancillae and neonates aren't granted feeding rights or an advantageous vassalage.

In reality, the Invictus and Lancea et Sanctum both struggle to maintain the facade of power. Many of the church's records are lost or destroyed in the chaos and seizure of Catholic churches by the Revolutionary state.

Poaching is more common than anyone cares to admit or can punish. Many of the covenant's younger members fed from herds carefully cultivated from the mortal aristocracy before the Revolution, and now they have trouble feeding regularly and safely from the paranoid bourgeoisie. The Invictus and Sanctified hang together by a thread, and while Roland de Tournai desperately tries to secure his throne and neck, many pray for a miracle to save them.

The Third Estate is not a proper covenant. No formal leadership exists and the Invictus ruthlessly crushes attempts to organize. At the same time, the two ruling covenants swiftly induct the ambitious and competent. Given the choice between the security of covenant membership with feeding rights and the Invictus marking them as troublemaking outsiders, most fall in line. Those who don't suffer convenient accidents. These nights, though, many other covenants and factions exist on the fringes of the Danse Macabre, where the Invictus' shrinking arm can't reach them.

With Roland's ability to enforce laws slipping, many of these factions flout the Traditions, especially in Embracing without permission. The Invictus and Lancea et Sanctum freely grant their own members permission, but Revolutionaries in the Third Estate sire illicit childer for the struggle. While they do their best to keep their progeny under their control, the new neonates often care for France's Revolution more than the intrigues of the Damned.

The Île-de-France Dynasty

"In union, strength."

Roland de Tournai and Jehenne Clotilde came together out of Alsace with a handful of companions, and each member of their coterie reigned independently in the Île-de-France domain, including Paris and its surrounding area, by the end of the 13th century. Their love and loyalty to one another was legendary. By the 15th century, the princes of Île-de-France fell, either to treachery or torpor, and only Roland and Jehenne remained. When torpor called to Roland, Île-de-France submitted to Jehenne alone.

They have since reigned continuously in a cyclical dynasty as prince of Île-de-France, protecting those who still sleep. Roland is well-known as a fierce warrior with a talent for inspiring loyalty. His rule is bloody, with harsh but impartial punishments for any who violate his laws. Jehenne reigns more quietly, though enemies considering moving against her are usually executed before they can become a serious threat.

The Reign of Terror

Roland faces the worst catastrophe in Île-de-France's history, but stands firm so far. The court gathers regularly as he rallies his allies and prepares for the inevitable conflict with the budding movement some call the "Rise of Carth," after the name on all their subversive pamphlets. Unbeknownst to anyone but Roland, Jehenne awoke from torpor in January 1793 with King Louis XVI's execution. While Roland plans to be the sword at their enemies' throats, she is the knife in their backs, determined to see the Revolution fail.

Techgnostic Heresies

Cardinal Jean Boucher denounces the idea that any besides the Lancea et Sanctum can speak for or oppose God with such wrath and vigor that many fear he might frenzy at the pulpit. Afterward, gossip claims the Cardinal failed disastrously to convert the vampires of the Tenth Choir, and likewise tried in vain to recruit several demons to serve him. It doesn't take long for a few Sanctified who haven't yet encountered the God-Machine or the Unchained to quietly make contact to see whether these Fallen angels' God might be the true one. The party line among those in the know firmly rejects the idea, but the covenant sees the Unchained as dangerous rivals, indicating that perhaps they doth protest too much.

ROLAND DE TOURNAI

Clan: Daeva

Covenant: Lancea et Sanctum

Mask: Social Chameleon

Dirge: Visionary; Île-de-France is Roland's *raison d'être*. He spent centuries building it into an exemplar of what domain should be, and through it, seeks to reshape the Société de Nuit.

Aspirations: Crush the neonate uprising; Restore the House of Bourbon for Jehenne



Faded Touchstone: Henri Martin, personal valet from the mid-1400s

Kindred Touchstone: Jehenne Clotilde

Anachronism: Prefers an arming sword and plate armor in open combat

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 7, Resolve 3; Strength 6, Dexterity 7, Stamina 4; Presence 6, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Skills: Academics (Battlefield Tactics, Theology) 3, Medicine 1, Politics (Catholic Church) 3; Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Firearms 1, Ride 1, Weaponry (Fighting Outnumbered, Swords) 7; Empathy (Deceit) 3, Expression 3, Intimidation 5, Persuasion 3, Socialize (Nobility) 4

Merits: City Status (Paris) 5, Clan Status (Daeva) 1, Covenant Status (Lancea et Sanctum) 3, Dynasty Membership 3, Dynasty Progenitor (p. 85), Herd 3, Haven 4, Kindred Dueling 3, Married by Blood (p. 83), Oath of Dynasty (p. 85), Practiced Puppeteer (Majesty) (p. 84), Safe Place 5, Trained Observer 3

Humanity: 5

Willpower: 5

Initiative: 11

Defense: 11

Armor: 4/2

Speed: 18

Health: 9

Blood Potency: 5

Vitae/per Turn: 15/5

Banes: Hated by Beasts, Incurable Addict (p. 94), Invitation

Disciplines: Majesty 5, Resilience 4, Theban Sorcery 5, Vigor 2

Devotions: Body of Will, Celebrity (p. 73), Enfeebling Aura, Summoning

Theban Sorcery Miracles: Blandishment of Sin, Liar's Plague, Malediction of Despair, Orison of Voices (p. 79), Trials of Job

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Clip	Init.	Dice Pool	Special
Arming Sword	3L	Melee	—	−2	14	Armor Piercing 1
Flintlock musket*	3L	30/60/120	1	−5	8	
Unarmed	0B/L	Melee	—	−0	10	

*Flintlock muskets take five turns to reload.

Notes: Traits that list page numbers can be found in **Thousand Years of Night.**

New Theban Sorcery Miracle: Trials of Job (●●●●)

Target number of successes: 10

Resisted by: Resolve

Sacrament: Horn of an ox or sheep

This miracle is popular among the Lancea et Sanctum when one of their own faces accusations of betraying the covenant or makes a display of public repentance. The ritualist curses his victim, who must be present for the ritual, to suffer as Job did. Whenever the victim takes a non-reflexive, mundane action, any failure is a dramatic failure. In addition, she loses a total of (ritual's Potency) dots in any of the following Merits, chosen by the Storyteller: Allies, Contacts, Feeding Ground, Haven, Herd, Mentor, Resources, Retainer, Safe Place, Staff, Status (any), or Touchstone. She also detaches any Touchstones she didn't purchase through the Merit. If she succeeds on a roll to resist frenzy or a breaking point, or successfully rides the wave, she suffers the moderate Sick Tilt for the duration of the miracle as well. This curse lasts (ritual's Potency) nights; if the victim doesn't frenzy or fail a breaking point within that time, she automatically achieves exceptional success on her next successful Social action involving the Lancea et Sanctum.

JEHENNE CLOTILDE

Clan: Mekhet

Covenant: Invictus

Mask: Authoritarian

Dirge: Meddler

Aspirations: See the Île-de-France court survive; Protect torpid dynasty members at any cost.





Faded Touchstone: Jacqueline Brodeur, long-lost lover from her neonate nights

Kindred Touchstone: Roland de Tournai

Touchstone: Blood Sympathy with the House of Bourbon

Anachronism: Tapestry weaving

Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 6; Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Presence 4, Manipulation 6, Composure 7

Skills: Occult (Vampiric Banes) 3, Politics (Elysium, Nobility) 7; Brawl 1, Firearms 1, Ride 1, Stealth (Shadowing) 4, Weaponry 2; Empathy 2, Expression 1, Intimidation (Interrogation) 3, Persuasion (Recruitment) 5, Socialize (Formal Settings) 6, Streetwise (Cacophony) 4, Subterfuge 5

Merits: Cacophony Savvy 3, City Status (Paris) 5, Clan Status (Mekhet) 1, Civilization Stalker (p. 83), Covenant Status (Invictus) 4, Dream Visions, Dynasty Membership 3, Dynasty Progenitor (p. 85), Etiquette 4, Fast Talking 1, Herd 2, Invested (Retainers 1, Resources 3), Married by Blood (p. 83), Notary 2, Oath of Dynasty (p. 85)

Humanity: 4

Willpower: 13

Initiative: 11

Defense: 3

Armor: 0/0

Speed: 11

Health: 8

Blood Potency: 4

Vitae/per Turn: 13/4

Banes: Enemy of Light (p. 94), Grave Soil, Repulsion (silver)

Disciplines: Auspex 5, Celerity 3, Dominate 1, Nightmare 2, Obfuscate 4, Resilience 1

Devotions: Annals of Death (p. 72), Gargoyle's Vigilance, Hint of Fear, Preternatural Instinct (p. 76), Shared Sight, Wraith's Presence

Weapons/Attacks:

Attack	Damage	Range	Clip	Init.	Dice Pool
Flintlock cavalry pistol*	2L	15/30/60	1	−2	5
Unarmed	0B/L	Melee	—	−0	3

*Flintlock pistols take five turns to reload.

Notes: Traits that list page numbers can be found in **Thousand Years of Night**.

Gallows Post

Historically, the Gallows Post has been a small and "foreign" covenant that operated in the wider Île-de-France region, with only a few members within Paris itself. They are welcome at court but formally considered foreign envoys and permanent guests rather than residents. As such, the princes give permission to feed in their territory instead of granting Brigands territory of their own. Since the Reign of Terror began, the Gallows Post has grown enormously wealthy and influential, as aristocratic vampires pay them dearly for safe passage out of France while Revolutionary neonates pay to help them crack the Cacophony and carry pamphlets far and wide. It's said they enjoy the best havens in Paris now when they come through, and access to all the herds the *émigrés* left behind.

Ordo Dracul

The Defiant have a long history in Paris. They operate as a secret society, hidden in the Catacomb's depths and the salons of the fashionable and wealthy. Membership extends across the social spectrum, though the Kogaion recruits heavily from the discontented. Some members theorize the Ordo may be the largest covenant in Paris, though only the highest-ranking members could say for sure. Whatever their numbers, they see the Reign of Terror as a violent rebirth, allowing necessary change and growth.

Tenth Choir

The Choir is a sect of Revolutionaries seeking to destroy God. They work closely with the mortal Cult of Reason and Hébertist faction (a radical group supporting France's dechristianization), and reject the Masquerade, favoring open participation in mortal affairs. They ride their ghouls' political successes to prominence among Kindred as well as other occult factions — which makes many in the city nervous.

The Festival of Reason

In late 1793, the Cult of Reason rises to such prominence it declares a national Festival of Reason; Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris holds the largest one, the Cult dismantling the Christian altar to install one to Liberty. Memories of what happens that night are unreliable. Rumors say it's a lurid affair, while other reports describe pomp and ceremony celebrating Revolutionary ideals. One neonate in attendance describes the night as a long and bloody ritual sacrifice with a purpose he can't grasp.

The Festival of Reason's waning hours mark the Tenth Choir's greatest triumph of the age, as they commit an incredible, massive Sacrilege capped by capturing and sacrificing an archangel on the altar before the gathered kine. Their blatant disregard for the First Tradition in that moment brings the other covenants together as nothing

else could. The brief alliance fails to eradicate the Choir completely but executes most of its leaders and the ritual's witnesses over the next few months. Later scholars discover evidence of rituals similar to the Festival sacrifice throughout Europe. In centuries to come, the Sanctified will mercilessly scour the Tenth Choir from the face of France and launch a propaganda campaign to erase it from history, too.

Fractures and Factions: The Third Estate

Many have lost patience with the hegemony of the Invictus and Lancea et Sanctum. Neonates dislike paying their tithe of blood to the Sanctified and the red rent to the Conspiracy, and many in the influx of newly Embraced neonates never swore any oaths at all. Even many privileged nobles and faithful of the First and Second Estates are eager for change. Many felt coerced to join the covenants and are sympathetic, eagerly joining the Third Estate's various factions. Blood runs freely in the gutters of the Place de la Révolution, but many still struggle to stay properly fed while landlords demand increasing amounts of Vitae each week. Tenants of Vicomte Mathieu de Nanterre in Faubourg St. Honoré willfully violate their Oath of Serfdom en masse. While the Vicomte stakes the ringleaders out for the sun, most of the old tenants are never caught and the new serfs now struggle against a tide of poaching in the neighborhood.

The Cacophony

The Cacophony was born centuries ago in the social and political salons of the Invictus elite. Politics is a dangerous game to play, and young Invictus embraced a mix of art, music, fashion, and pamphlets to discreetly communicate basic signs and warnings to their fellows. It was also a tool for excluding the masses and marking out members of the Third Estate who tried to rise above their station.

Beginning in 1790, a series of pamphlets is widely distributed among the Third Estate. The first explicitly details the secret codes and symbols the Invictus used to communicate. It even includes an all-too-accurate engraving of a prominent Invictus lady in full court dress, with a detailed description of the semantics each aspect of her gown and hair conveyed. Subsequent pamphlets in the series are increasingly subtle, serving as primers to the Cacophony as well as revealing the court's confidential affairs and corruptions. By the time the last in the set comes off the press, it's so well-coded that even the Cacophony's Invictus originators can't read it properly. The masses claim ownership of the Cacophony, and it takes on a life of its own.

The greatest difficulty the Third Estate faces is a lack of leadership. Many shout their ideals as loud as they can or publish pamphlets, but as soon as the prince identifies any hint of proper organization, he targets it. Factions come together behind false identities, holding masked meetings, and trading coded Cacophony messages.

Déclinists are a violently radical faction who don't believe the mortal Revolutionaries have gone far enough. These vampires have been outcasts for decades, and rumor says they've cut a deal with the Weihan Cynn in Britain for strange allies and powers, in exchange for help expanding in France once the prince is overthrown. They're also eager to take advantage of the many mummies, demons, and other hidden beings living in Paris, to use them for their own ends.

Even within the Invictus and Lancea et Sanctum, **Les Réformistes** realize how untenable the current situation is and desperately try to reform the system to shore up their crumbling power base. They tried rehabilitating the Société de Nuit through Elysium; failing that, they now provide secret backing through the Cacophony, resources, and conspiracies. Some of the Reformists genuinely believe in the cause, while others have seen the blatant writing on the wall and are carefully creating an escape route. Whatever their reasons for supporting the nascent Movement, their moderate ideas are unwelcome among their peers, and most Third Estate vampires don't trust them at all.

L'École des Écrivains began as a social salon for literature and debate in the early 18th century. Members gathered to read and discuss, inviting authors and philosophers — mortal and Kindred — to speak. They were firmly bourgeoisie, and for decades avoided the delicate subject of politics. These nights, the Écrivains are a clandestine organization, and most who once attended their salons publicly reject association with them. They are the single largest source of Kindred-produced pamphlets, covering every conceivable non-aristocratic point of view. Members have access to printing presses and celebrate the freedom of the press by reprinting hundreds of copies of any publication the prince bans. They stay scattered and anonymous, as the prince's loyal are sure Carth must be among their number.

The Carthian Affair

In 1779, the publication of *Contre les Vampires Patriarcals* by Emmanuel Baptiste Carth was ahead of its time. The call for revolution against the elders' tyranny caused significant consternation in the prince's court for a few weeks before the prince banned it, destroying several copies, and most of the aristocracy promptly disregarded it. The Écrivains just as promptly reprinted and distributed the pamphlet. With its newly banned status, reading it became a point of pride among the Kindred of Paris and beyond.

Emmanuel Carth went on to publish several more books and pamphlets over the years as the French Revolution took off, following it with near-prescient commentary and calls to arms. He denounced Roland and Jehenne's tyranny,

the hypocrisy of the Sanctified, the blind greed of the Invictus, and the cowardice of those too afraid to stand up for themselves. Though the prince banned these works as well, everyone quietly passed around copies.

Still, until King Louis' execution, most vampires expected the Revolution would eventually settle down. France is not some upstart colony, after all, and the House of Bourbon is the oldest royal dynasty in Europe. The execution is a direct assault on the idea of the divine right of kings — and princes. Carth's publications exploded in popularity overnight, and reformists became Revolutionaries when they began to act instead of simply reading.

By the Terror's start, the domain is in chaos. Masked coteries roam neighborhoods and assault oathsworn tenants, regularly vandalize the Elysium gardens, and ambush Sanctified neonates in their havens. Though individuals are caught and punished for their crimes, there's no leadership to take the blame, only the Carthian pamphlets' inspiration. The price Prince Roland puts on the author's head increases from a monetary reward to land grants, and even positions of power and influence.

Eric Giraud is a Nosferatu and Lancea et Sanctum apostate-turned-Écrivain printer, caught red-handed with several new manuscripts, including one penned by E. B. Carth's own hand. He stands proudly before the prince, dressed in sans culottes and wearing the tricolor cockade of the Revolution, famously declaring: *"Je suis l'auteur. Je suis le Carth."* Roland orders him dragged to the Place de la Révolution, and as the bells toll midnight, the prince personally executes Eric Giraud by guillotine.

Whether Giraud was the original author behind the pen name or whether he sacrificed himself to protect the real author (or authors) is a secret known only to a few, but the Carthian Affair lights a fire under the fractured rebellion. New printers publish more of Carth's pamphlets, enraging Roland. Whenever the prince catches a Revolutionary, they repeat the declaration. The movement grows in the telling. I am the Carth. I am Carthian.

The Sunlit Revolution

The Third Estate aren't the only ones inspired by the heady ideas of freedom and bloodshed. Ghouls and dhampir across Paris gather at the Elysium gardens during daylight hours. They're a relatively small faction of malcontents, but in January 1794, their plan unfolds as they anonymously denounce over two dozen Kindred they consider the most brutal and abusive to the Revolutionary Tribunal. Simultaneously, a handful of ghouls attempt to flee Paris and their regnants entirely, while others find their freedom by taking poison together.

The House of Bourbon

"For a week now people have been saying that police constables in disguise are roaming around various quarters of Paris, abducting children, boys and girls from five or six years old to ten or more, and loading them into the carriages which they have ready waiting nearby… [It is for] a leprous prince whose cure required a bath in human blood, and there being no blood purer than that of children, these were seized so as to be bled from all their limbs."

— Edmond Barbier, 16 May, 1750

The Capetian dynasty and House of Bourbon have ancient ties to Prince Jehenne Clotilde. By law, none may feed upon, make ghouls of, or subjugate members of the royal house by any means. In practice, rumors abound of strange happenings within the mortal dynasty, and even stranger things happen when their bloodline interacts with Vitae. The primary theory is that Jehenne secretly keeps the entire house bound as a ghoul family with her ancient blood.

Particularly brave or foolhardy Kindred Embraced several members from the House of Bourbon in centuries past, and memories in the domain are long. If sightings and gossip are true, these royal vampires remain in Paris but keep a low profile. Rumor has it that when a scion is Embraced, they have difficulty learning their sire's traditional clan Disciplines and instead share any powers other vampires of their mortal dynasty know — even the freshest neonate has access to the powers of their elders.

Just after Jehenne arrived in Paris at the beginning of the 13th century, French sovereigns began having their hearts and other organs embalmed after death. A tale persists among mortals, despite a lack of evidence, that the late King Louis XV bathed in children's blood. The rumors were so persistent that six districts in Paris rioted and 20 people died. Whether or not the Bourbon scions are ghouls, anyone who's heard of mummies suspects Jehenne and the House of Bourbon to have longstanding ties to an Arisen cult, immortal blood-bathers, or both.

The Bloodless

Deep beneath Paris, within the ancient quarries and Catacombs, a cult of pagan Damned found a sleeping

Revolutionary Carthian Law

Although the Blood hasn't yet recognized these scattered rebels as a covenant, the treaties of the Gallows Post use Carthian Law Merits. If you play a Revolutionary vampire without Status in a covenant, you can still purchase Carthian Law Merits as long as your character has enough connections throughout the domain to have picked up these tricks from her Brigand counterparts or spilled enough blood in the name of Revolution to have earned the right. This changes the prerequisites of those Merits from Carthian Status to equivalent dots in City Status during the Terror.

mummy. They removed and embalmed their own desiccated organs as offerings, and fed the sleeper precious Vitae while ghouls performed necromantic rituals. The creature has arisen, but as a mindless abomination that no longer serves any Judge; mummies who encounter it believe the vampires delivered one of their own into Ammut's service. The Bloodless still craves Sekhem, and possesses the Devourer's maw like a Shuankhsen, able to drain Sekhem via bite. It also suffers from Vitae addiction and can feed as a vampire does, though it's immune to the Vinculum. It feeds on mummies and vampires alike, and those it destroys by draining them fully rise again as new Bloodless.

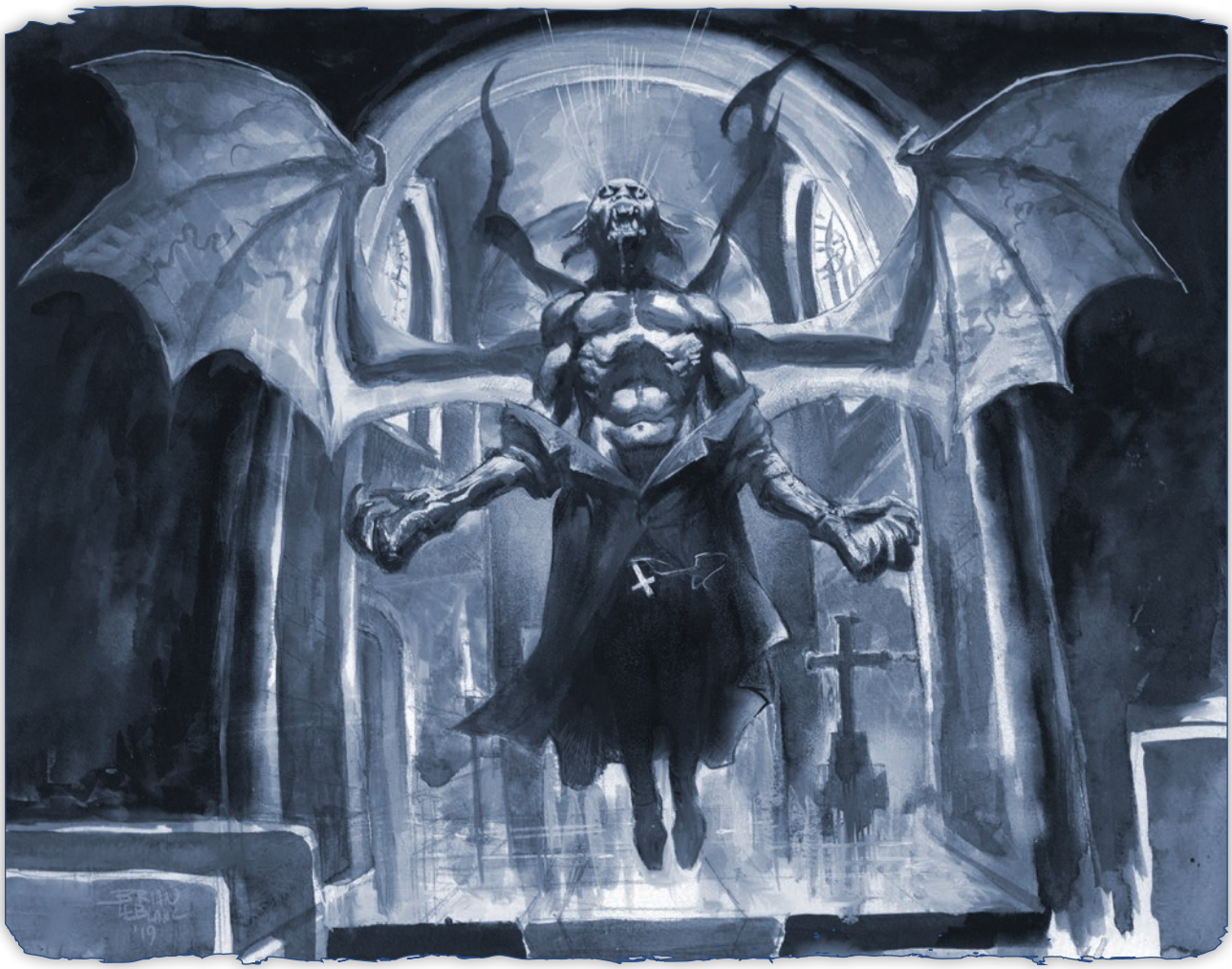
Glitch in the Blood

Most vampires who know demons exist have no idea what they want or can do, although gossip firmly labels them as dangerous despite mortal appearances. One of the Invictus arrived at Elysium in a terror frenzy after an encounter with a demon left her with a burn on her palm and thin copper wires forming strange glyphs running from the burn up her arm. When a chevalier tried to subdue her and touched the wires himself, a spark leapt between them and the wires grew across his skin as well. The prince had both executed before they could infect others, but no one knows how such an infection began, what it could do, or whether anyone else is hiding the same condition. Feeding from a demon is one known vector, but even then, infection happens only rarely.

NEW CONDITION: GLITCHED BLOOD

A biomechanical thread of broken Infrastructure infects your character. Wires grow into her veins from the point of contact in mysterious arcane patterns, and she is vulnerable to manipulation by the God-Machine and the Unchained. You suffer a three-die penalty to all rolls to contest angelic or demonic powers, and a −2 to static traits to resist them. The wires progress through her body at a rate of one major body part (hand, forearm, upper arm, neck, chest, etc.) per scene. If her entire body becomes infected, she gains a permanent major glitch (**Demon: The Descent**, p. 184).

The character is highly contagious. Anyone who touches her must succeed at a Resolve + Stamina roll to avoid infection as well; a vampire who feeds on her suffers a penalty to this roll equal to the Vitae points he gained.



Resolution: An Unchained using a restoration facility to heal the infection; complete physical removal of the infected parts of the body.

New Merit: Party Affiliation Status (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has standing in a major political party, such as the Jacobins or Girondins. In addition to all the usual benefits and drawbacks of the Status Merit (**Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 123), party members may apply the Social bonus against any French citizen when their party is in favor with the people.

Drawback: When a political party loses the favor of the people, heads roll. Apply dots in this Merit as a penalty to Social rolls against all French citizens instead.

New Discipline: Therion

Chorists (p. 352) steal the ritual Discipline of the Tenth Choir, **Therion**, from the blood of angels and demons — beings the covenant collectively calls **Grigori**. They believe each such being carries a fraction of divine power and each piece the Choir steals weakens Him. Ultimately, they seek an apotheosis allowing them to kill God Himself.

A Chorist undergoes a profane ritual when she joins the covenant, planting a seed of stolen power within her dead heart that slowly grows as she learns new rituals and acquires more Discipline dots. Another sacrilegist must destroy a Grigor, then feed the willing initiate at least one point's worth of their own Vitae from that feeding, which also carries all the usual Vitae effects.

Only Chorists in good standing may learn Therion and its rituals, called Sacrileges.

Grigori

Chorists catalog various forms of demonic and angelic beings while trying to decipher the nature and weaknesses of God from the evidence. They understand the heavenly host — exalted and fallen — to possess nine hierarchies, or choirs, of angels, and successfully capturing or sacrificing one requires knowing precisely what they face. Many different beings wear the labels of "angel" and "demon;" the Tenth Choir considers any and all of them fair game for their crusade, although their powers generally only work on those that naturally exist in Twilight.

The covenant sees no true difference between types of Grigori; to them, the only thing that differentiates a *qashmal* from a God-Machine's angel is the choir to which it belongs and the abilities it possesses. In gameplay terms, however, the beings that fall under the Tenth Choir's purview are varied in both systems and metaphysical power sources. Regardless, Therion works on all of them equally.

Grigori may include the God-Machine's angels (but not their Unchained cousins), demonic entities from the Inferno, *qashmallim*, appropriately biblical spirits and Goetia, and potentially others at the Storyteller's discretion.

Using Therion

Therion is a kind of blood sorcery. Like Theban Sorcery (**Vampire: The Requiem**, pp. 151–154), each dot of Therion grants one free Sacrilege, and a Chorist can purchase more for two Experiences each. If the sacrilegist's Humanity is higher than the dot rating of the Sacrilege she commits, she suffers a breaking point with dice equal to the ritual's rating.

The blood sacrifice that powers Therion is the stuff of angels and demons. Through their blasphemous studies, Chorists have learned to feed on that which has no blood and convert its power to Vitae. To perform a Sacrilege, the vampire must spend Vitae equal to the ritual's dot rating, which she must have acquired through feeding from a Grigor.

Committing a Sacrilege in a place any Chorist has profaned (see "Profanity," p. 345) reduces the target number of successes by two.

In all ways except those mentioned here, Therion works like other types of blood sorcery.

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Therion

Roll Results

Success: The ritual accumulates successes. If the player meets the target number of successes, the ritual's effect immediately takes place.

Exceptional Success: Choose one: reduce target number of successes by the vampire's dots in Therion; reduce the time per roll to 15 minutes, or 5 minutes if she has more Therion dots than the ritual's rating; or immediately profane the place where she performs the Sacrilege without paying additional Vitae or rolling any dice, as the Profanity ritual (p. 345), even if it isn't a place of power.

Angels, Demons, and Grigori

But doesn't Therion imply that all these angelic and demonic beings are definitely metaphysically related to each other?

No, it doesn't. Humanity uses the words "angel" and "demon" for many, many things. The Tenth Choir's blood sorcery comes from their perception of what angels and demons are, coupled with several centuries of study, trial, and error; they don't fundamentally differentiate between Grigori, other than to know that some "choirs" require different approaches than others and some are more "fallen" than others. The Blood responds to the way they see the world through their broken faith, not to any objective metaphysical truth.

Failure: The ritual accumulates no successes, and the character chooses whether to abandon the attempt, or gain the Stumbled Condition (**Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 306) and continue.

Dramatic Failure: The ritual fails, and the spent Vitae is wasted. The vampire suffers the Hunted Condition (see sidebar), hunted by the type of being she sacrificed as its wasted substance cries out to its fellows for justice.

CONDITION: HUNTED (PERSISTENT)

Someone who poses a serious threat to the character's safety and well-being, physically or emotionally (or both), is after her. They may be intent on direct violence, or simply wish to torment her.

Beat: The character's persecutors find her.

Resolution: The character stops her persecutors, either through legal means or changes in lifestyle that deny them access to her, or through more direct means, typically violence.

The Left Hand

Upon learning her first dot of Therion, in addition to a free Sacrilege, a Chorist gains the ability to see, hear, and interact with one type of Grigor in Twilight per dot of Therion she possesses; it requires spending a Willpower to block out this divine sense for a scene.

The vampire can touch and strike entities in Twilight, as they may do to her in return, as long as she can perceive them. She can bite such an entity as normal, and feed from it as though it were another Kindred. Successfully doing so drains the entity of power (usually Essence) and converts it to Vitae point-for-point. If the character has the Unnatural Affinity Merit for that entity, she gains additional points of Vitae per feeding action against it equal to her Merit dots.

Vitae gained from these entities remains available for use in Therion rituals as long as it's in her system.

Therion Sacrileges

The following are example Sacrileges Chorists can learn.

Demon's Tongue (•)

Target successes: 5

Demons lie. Everyone knows this. Until the next sunrise, the Chorist gains 8-again on Subterfuge rolls, including those to activate Disciplines and Devotions. Supernatural means of compelling truth or discovering lies used against her provoke a Clash of Wills.

The Morning Star (•)

Target successes: 5

The Chorist appears as a fallen angel herself. Until the next sunrise, she takes on an air of unearthly and sinister power, adding her dots in Therion as bonus dice to lash out with her predatory aura. On an exceptional success, she inflicts the Beaten Down Tilt in addition to the usual effects.

Curse the Faithful (••)

Target successes: 6

Contested by: Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance

God rewards the faithful for living up to their Virtues and condemns them for succumbing to their Vices; watching divinity die or devils vanquished by worse ones perverts faith into blasphemy. The sacrilegist names a mortal victim, who must have witnessed her feeding from a Grigor within the last chapter. The victim replaces his Virtue with an additional Vice of the Chorist's choice. If the victim doesn't gain Willpower at least once per night through a Vice, he suffers the Guilty Condition (**Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 304).

Avatar of Apollyon (•••)

Target successes: 8

Usurping the power of great destroyer angels, the vampire murders gods with impunity. Her fangs become a bane for the type of Grigor she fed upon to power this ritual. While those beings are in Twilight, although the Chorist can physically interact with them, they can't do so in return; their attacks simply pass through her. This ritual's effects end after one full scene or when the vampire destroys any Grigor, whichever comes first.

Profanity (••••)

Target successes: 10

Until the next sunrise, the vampire can sense the location of the nearest place of power or sanctity, including churches, temples, shrines, etc. as well as God-Machine facilities and Infrastructure, places with an Open Condition, loci, and other sacred spaces. If that place aligns with one of the kinds of beings she can see in Twilight and she hasn't suppressed the sense, she can tell which kind. Either way, she baptizes the place in her own sacrificial blood, profaning it until the end of the chapter. This imposes a −5 penalty to any non-vampiric supernatural power activated there and grants any Chorist the 8-again quality on all Discipline and Devotion rolls. Mortals within the desecrated place gain the Wanton Condition (**Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 307) and cannot regain Willpower through Virtues.



Apotheosis (●●●●●)

Target successes: 10

The Chorist transforms into a demonic force of nature, a grim messenger with powers stripped from slain gods at her command. She becomes a hybrid vampire-angel and may use the Influences and Numina of any of the specific Grigori upon which she fed to fuel this ritual, spending Vitae in place of their usual costs; any effect that relies on an entity's Rank uses half her Blood Potency, rounded up. The sum of her Intelligence, Strength, and Presence becomes her Power trait; that of her Wits, Dexterity, and Manipulation becomes Finesse; and that of her Resolve, Stamina, and Composure becomes Resistance. Her derived traits are calculated as follows:

Health: Resistance + Size

Willpower: Resistance + Finesse, maximum 10

Initiative: Finesse + Resistance

Defense: the lower of Power or Finesse

Speed: Power + Finesse + 5

She retains the use of her usual vampiric advantages, Disciplines, and Devotions, as well as her vampiric banes and weaknesses. Each Grigor she destroys while transformed adds 1 to one of her three Attributes for the Sacrilege's duration, and she adds their Influences and Numina to her arsenal. The transformation is obvious and drastic: The vampire takes on the visual appearance of a dark and terrible archangel or a hellish demon queen. This ritual's effects last one full scene, or until the vampire runs out of Vitae, whichever comes first.

Nine Choirs Bend the Knee (●●●●●)

Target number of successes: 10

Like the glorious Azazel before her, the vampire commands the host and invokes dreadful revelation. For the next full scene, all Grigori in Twilight within 30 yards/meters of the Chorist immediately gain the Materialized Condition even if they wouldn't normally be able to, unless they succeed at a Resistance roll penalized by the ritual's Potency. Grigori can't end this Condition on their own by any means. If a non-ephemeral supernatural power would do so, this ritual provokes a Clash of Wills. Until the Sacrilege ends, the vampire may give any order to any Materialized being she would normally be able to perceive in Twilight, and the entity must spend a Willpower to avoid following it.

Playing the Game

The Reign of Terror represents upheaval among the unnatural creatures of France as much as the mortals leading the revolt. A chronicle set during this period is an exciting, bloody affair, in which calcified hierarchies fall, new monsters rise to power, and protagonists use the swollen mob to carry out personal agendas.

Relationships with Mortals

Just like the kine, many Kindred use Robespierre's secret police and informants to pinpoint opponents — typically the mortal servants, ghouls, and Touchstones of other vampires — for execution. Consider how your character might control the rounding up of aristocrats and manipulation of mobs for their personal gain. The mortals are no different in their use of the nation's violence for settling decades-long vendettas. Though some vampires earnestly believe in the spirit of revolution, plenty of them just use it as a tool.

As a demon, you may believe all this chaos cannot be the God-Machine's will. This may strike your character with dread or ambition. Have the mortals in this part of the world broken free from the God-Machine's control? If so, is this evidence of how the unaware act when freed from their chains? It's awful to consider, yet as a demon, you must get to the bottom of it. On the other hand, you may suspect this upheaval is *definitely* the God-Machine's will, and the Terror is a giant piece of Elimination Infrastructure — Its way of cleansing France to start anew with a fresh set of angelic watchdogs and Its gears embedded deep in the roots.

Arisen in this era are presented with some horrendous home-truths. They have seen the decadence and cruelty of aristocrats before, but the first time around, they were the underlings who just accepted their fates. Consider the split down the Deathless' middle — one half beseeching loyalty to decree and Judge, the other half saying, "the time to lash out is now!" Guilds fall to civil war, some backing the Revolution, others attempting to stabilize the establishment. An opportunistic Arisen might form a passionate cult here. All mobs crave a leader, charismatic through word or deed. The Deathless excel at godlike displays of power and grand proclamations capable of swaying the hearts of many. What's more, the mortals here frequently gather to view public executions or form violent mobs. Take note not only of the mortals' whims and whether you can control them, but also the names of the dying. They leave behind grand estates filled with treasures, some of which may be relics — like this one:

DuChamp's Death Mask (Effigy ●●●)

Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 2

Strangely, for a relic imbued with Sekhem, DuChamp's Death Mask radiates power to vampires, demons, and potentially other creatures able to perceive the supernatural. Discovered in the wine cellars of Andre DuChamp, a priest and member of the Malleus Maleficarum whose own congregation fed him to the guillotine, the death mask was either molded after his decapitated head or pushed from Duat. The Sesha-Hebsu who discovered it felt its power and donned it, suddenly possessing all DuChamp's memories, affections, and fears. More potent is the ability to change form into that of the priest and draw a flock of faithful followers for as long as the mask remains in place. The mask has passed

hands from Arisen to Kindred, and apparently now rests in the hands of an Unchained. It provides a variation of the same gifts to each of them.

Power: The mask's wearer changes appearance to that of a fierce-looking, steely-eyed priest in his mid-40s. For all wearers, Presence, Manipulation, and Composure all increase by one dot. Additionally, the wearer knows everything DuChamp knew, spanning his childhood, lifetime in the church, and contacts among mortal hunters. The wearer also gains magnetism with mobs of rioters and protesters, equivalent to an additional three dots in both Presence and Manipulation when taking Social actions directed at such targets; this can increase these traits above their normal maximum. Mortals caught in the swell of public rebellion applaud the wearer's every word and carry out his commands, exempting self-harm, until the following dawn or the mask is removed — whichever comes sooner. For Unchained wearers, the mask acts as a rating 6 Cover as long as they wear it (though this Cover can be compromised like any other). People familiar with DuChamp treat the wearer as if they are DuChamp, completely forgetting his recent execution.

Curse: The wearer gains the Targeted Condition (below) while disguised as DuChamp, for his crimes against the people. Additionally, the wearer gains all DuChamp's unhealthy desires and bigotries, the details of which are up to the Storyteller. What's guaranteed is that DuChamp was a monster of a man, a hunter on the edge of becoming a slasher, and wearers must succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll every 24 hours or indulge in sin by gaining his Vice, even if they wouldn't usually have one.

NEW CONDITION: TARGETED (PERSISTENT)

Your character is on a list naming him as someone to be hunted down and brought to justice. He may be subject to one person's vendetta or an entire organization or governmental body's warrant for arrest or destruction. You suffer a −2 on Social rolls involving characters targeting him or willing to turn him in, but you gain +2 on Social rolls against other targeted individuals, as persecution breeds common cause.

This Condition applies to a demon's Cover and can exist in concert with the Hunted Condition (**Demon: The Descent**, p. 119). If a demon has *both* Conditions, a greater angel (Rank 4–5) senses whenever he's within reach of Infrastructure and, if its powers allow, it passes through this Infrastructure to reach him.

Possible Sources: Your character's name was added to one of Robespierre's lists for trial and execution; the God-Machine has marked him as a threat; the Malleus Maleficarum wants him slain; he has donned Duchamp's Death Mask; he is wanted for a crime.

Beat: Your character confronts those targeting him and survives the encounter.

Resolution: Your character clears his name, sheds the targeted identity, or kills all those targeting him.

Common Cause

The nascent Carthian Movement works to strip established Kindred of their titles, power bases, and in many cases, Requiems. The Terror is the perfect excuse to ride the wave and topple ancient structures. This movement among vampires appeals to the Mesen-Nebu and Tef-Aabhi, though for different reasons, and any blow that can be struck against the God-Machine's will wins favor with Destroyers, Penitents, and Saboteurs among the Unchained.

Consider forming pacts and allegiances with creatures of similar philosophy, even if their ambitions differ. A Carthian or zealot of the Lancea et Sanctum tired of French ecclesiastical corruption may desire a righteous burning of the old ways. The New Pharaohs among the Arisen feel the same way, the only difference being they see themselves as destined to sit atop the heap of ashes afterward.

Many rebellious monsters use the Revolution not to further political agendas, but to enrich themselves. Scavenging from abandoned baggage caravans, tearing the guts from a deceased comte's mansion, or using the violence to conceal murderous actions against longstanding foes are simple goals to pursue in this era. An Arisen and an Unchained may align to loot an abandoned country estate said to be crawling with the executed aristocrat's angelic servants, while a vampire's ghouls and a mummy or demon's cult set themselves up as highwaymen, prowling the escape routes from Paris to waylay fleeing nobles.

Everyone can sense the raw power in France, particularly during this time of revolt, though they disagree on its nature and cause. Expeditions comprising Arisen and Unchained to find the center of France's Lifeweb draw curious vampires of the Ordo Dracul, as well as interested scholars from Sworn organizations chasing Contagion. A Ventrue bloodline called the Architects of the Monolith emerges around this time specifically to call Tef-Aabhi, Inquisitors, and Dragons together to unlock the power of Paris' Lifeweb in a ritual of grand bloodshed.

The Catacombs

The first mounds of bones discovered in the Catacombs were not buried there but disposed of by the *idigam* inside. *"Arrête! C'est ici l'Empire de la Mort"* proclaims a sign above the main entrance to the ossuary: "Stop! Here is the Empire of Death." Whether it contains an Avernian Gate or route to Duat is unknown, but few Arisen who enter ever return. Those who do are briefly stronger but wracked with a wasting disease that feeds on their Sekhem (see the Catacombs Contagion Condition, below).

Arisen Arbiters and Necromancers believe that for as long as the Terror continues, the spilled blood and disruptions in necromantic energy only serve to make the



Catacombs creature stronger. The boundary between the living and the dead weakens. All Deathless dream of this monster's alien face immediately before awakening from henet. Some hypothesize it may even be a sleeping, earth-bound Judge, the Catacomb entire its tomb.

At the same time, the Unchained investigate the Catacombs for its increased angelic activity and strange signals emanating from below Paris. They've long suspected *something* more than bones was down there; the entrance is directly adjacent to the *Barrière d'Enfer,* or "Gate of Hell." Investigation reveals that the God-Machine has hijacked the massive tomb's Lifeweb for Its own inscrutable purposes and uses it as a storage facility for broken Fallen angels It recaptured and stripped down for parts. Now that the thing in the dark wakes, its influence corrupts the Machine and wakes these mangled, scrap-heap demons. Their half-mad cries for help rise to the streets in patterned rivulets of blood, halting speeches by demagogues who speak backward, and eerie arrangements of fingerbones among the cobblestones spelling out unfinished equations.

The effects the Catacombs have on the Parisian nome are profound. Mummies feel compelled to enter to obtain the untold quantities of relics their dead dreams promise. The Unchained alternately warn Deathless away, fearful of what they might ignorantly provoke, or recruit them for a rescue mission; some cite the ossuary as equivalent to the God-Machine's bowels, while Augustinians worryingly defend it as a route directly to their God's heart. Many attempt to lure Arisen to easier targets, leaking information regarding Lifeless outside Paris, other immortals throughout France, or relics to be found in abandoned country estates. Unchained also object to the frequency with which Arisen recruit stigmatics or mortals with whom the demons have made pacts to their cults; not much is more offensive than finding that a new Cover worships a mummy and having to maintain the charade.

CATACOMBS (CONTAGION, PERSISTENT)

Your Arisen encountered the High Cromlech within the Paris Catacombs and it infected him with a disease from a world not his own. The creature must simply touch a mummy to pass the Contagion on, causing his Sekhem to increase by three (to a maximum of 10) when he emerges from the labyrinth. Sekhem then depletes at a rate of one dot every 24 hours, and Lifeless instinctively know where to find the infected mummy. Every cultist who comes into physical contact with an infected mummy must succeed on a Stamina + Resolve roll to avoid developing a wasting disease. After a number of days equal to the cultist's Stamina rating, the former mortal becomes host to a Shuankhsen.

Resolution: The mummy creates a relic or vestige, or his Sekhem rating reaches 1.

Beat: The character expends Sekhem in a way unrelated to this Condition.

Heavy is the Head

The Terror is clearly a poor time to carry a title in France, though it's a mistake to always paint the nobles as villains. Being born into wealth and power does not always lead to corruption and cruelty. Likewise, mummies who support the establishment may do so because their Judge tells them to fight back against revolt; Invictus vampires may fight for what they believe is the only way to survive and maintain a controlled feeding stock. Just as you may play mummies looting and pillaging archives and cellars for vestiges of Sekhem, you may be a Maa-Kep allied with a Ventrue looking to keep hold of the relics and cultists already in your possession. Order is the way, not bloody revolt in the streets.

Demonic motivation for preserving what could be the God-Machine's tools is a little more complex, but if your Unchained has an aristocratic Cover, consider all you might lose if the Terror targets your identity. Also keep in mind the demons hiding under the God-Machine's nose, who have worked for decades to debilitate the angels' plans in a structured manner, only to find the unaware and unenlightened ticking the doom clock forward. Now may not be the time for the God-Machine to fall, if a demon doesn't feel all the pieces are yet in place.

This era's noble creatures ally to keep their plans on track, preserve favored mortals in positions of power, or maintain their own pillars of strength. A demon may be unaware of a mummy's role in supporting this particular aristocratic house until the purges start, but the Unchained knows that if the house falls, Covers for a dozen demons fall with them; the two creatures suddenly gain cause to work together.

Let them Roll

Kindred have few deep-seated reasons for conflict with mummies and demons. The three don't usually share beliefs and don't squabble over food sources. Where conflicts emerge, however, they explode into bloody violence. Mummy cults burn out vampire crypts in efforts to find new tombs. Demons identify many of France's Invictus and Sanctified as servants of the God-Machine and perform assassinations. Vampires come to loathe both creatures for their ability to reinvent and remake themselves whenever they fall. Kindred may possess long Requiems, but when they're ash, they're not coming back. Jealousy and territory aside, the greatest source of conflict comes from Arisen and Unchained treating Kindred in a detached manner, keen to see how they tick through stalking, dissections, and experiments. In a strange sense, even elder vampires consider themselves young and vulnerable in the presence of these monsters.

Arisen often despair at Kindred. To many, vampires are flawed. Just like blood-bathers and body thieves, Arisen consider Kindred a failed form of immortal. Deathless



closely scrutinize vampire activities in Paris, keen to recruit unaligned Kindred into their cults. Mummies can invest their Pillars in the bodies of other immortals but have had little joy in similar attempts with vampires. Except in rare circumstances, the mummy who attempts to make a vampire into a phylactery for a Pillar loses that Pillar entirely, until after a new Descent. Where does that Pillar go? Some Arisen theorize the Damned are the Devourer's bastards and consume all they're fed. They must be treated as all Lifeless are treated. The Maa-Kep master, Bronze Heart, addresses his guild in this era to call for the purge of all Kindred from France.

Storytelling The Reign of Terror

When bringing the Terror to life, perfect historical accuracy is less important than capturing the mood of the story you're telling. Paranoia and deadly political maneuvering simmer in the background. Strangers are not to be trusted. Constantly shifting factions, loyalists, and informers are everywhere just waiting for a single misstep.

Set expectations with your players before the game begins, whether it's going to be a deadly serious game of political cat-and-mouse, or a lighter adventure of scavenging and thievery. Factionalism as a primary theme means the characters very well could be opposed rather than allied, if the troupe all agrees to a more contentious game; if not, it's fine to finagle events to bring disparate people together in unlikely ways.

Changing the Timeline

Unlike some other eras in this book, the Reign of Terror is well-documented. Players, however, don't need to stick to what actually happened when their characters enter the scene, and their actions may wind up making drastic changes to the timeline itself. They may prevent Marat's assassination or burn down the guillotine in the Place de la Concorde. That's okay! Ride the wave, see where it takes you. Marat's survival could result in the deaths of thousands more, as his newspaper frequently denounced those he considered traitors; how do the characters deal with that? Who among their allies gets caught up in the higher body count?

Of course, letting players change history and riding that wave doesn't grant freedom from consequences — and



consequences are what inspires good drama, so lean into them. Fighting against the tide can be dangerous for individuals. With so many violently opposed factions in play, every potential action has opposition; the last thing most supernatural creatures want is the spotlight, which could lead to an afternoon date with Madame Guillotine. While chances are the protagonists could walk away from a messy public execution, doing so isn't subtle or pretty, and with public executions come angry mobs.

Revolutionary Diversity

The French Revolution was a victory for Enlightenment, and while liberty, equality, and fraternity certainly didn't reach all members of society, it was a step forward for more than white men in France.

Feminism has its roots in the Enlightenment, and many philosophers defended women's rights. Olympe de Gouges was one of several female writers and philosophers, and she published the *Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizen* in 1791. Meanwhile, Pauline Léon was a radical feminist who took a more active role, founding several revolutionary women's societies and forming an all-female militia in 1792. But neither these women nor the many other vocal feminists fared well during the Terror; Gouges met the guillotine and Léon was arrested.

The Enlightenment also brought the beginnings of racial equality. Although racism was certainly a problem, France took careful steps forward. Jean-Baptiste Belley was a former slave who fought in the 1791 Haitian Revolution and became the first black member of the National Convention in 1793. In 1794, the National Convention unanimously abolished slavery. Joseph Bologne, the Chevalier de St. George, was a classical composer and favored musician in the royal court, and a noted swordsman. During the Revolution, he joined the National Guard and led the first black regiment in Europe. Unfortunately, suspected royalist sentiments landed him in prison during the Terror, and the Committee executed many of his men.

Meanwhile, though homosexuality was still widely seen as immoral, it was quietly decriminalized in 1791 when the laws were based on the philosophies of the Enlightenment, instead of Catholic morality. With so many factions and the nation itself in desperate need of aid, someone's gender, race, and proclivities were all things that could be overlooked, to a degree.

Spanning Time

The Terror is the crux of the French Revolution. In a game with such long-lived creatures as vampires, demons, and mummies, however, the story may stretch far beyond these several short years of bloodshed. It may begin well beforehand, leading up through all of its causes, or extend after to follow the rise of Napoleon and beyond. Presented here are a few techniques to facilitate that.

Cyclical Play

Vampires have their torpor, mummies die and rise again, and demons shed compromised Covers to build new lives; all lend themselves well to cyclical play. To build a cyclical chronicle, each player creates two characters. Vampires may have officially sworn the Oath of Dynasty, but it's not mandatory. As the chronicle spans decades or even centuries of time, one character is active while the other is in torpor, in henet, under deep Cover, or otherwise out of commission. Stories told this way could include one character as an influential, global-tier power while the other survives on the street tier and deals with the fallout of the first character's actions. When both characters are active, the Storyteller takes control of one, or game sessions alternate focus between the two groups. (See **Thousand Years of Night**, p. 33, for more on cyclical dynasties.)

Flashbacks

Flashbacks offer an opportunity to keep the primary action within the Terror itself while exploring what led up to the story's events in characters' much younger nights. Look for nuggets of conflict, shared origins, and unexplored backstory to use as starting points. When you introduce a new Storyteller character, a flashback depicting the first time they met the newcomer decades ago could determine whether she'll help them willingly, or whether they've already made an enemy. (See **Thousand Years of Night**, p. 63, for vampire-appropriate flashback scene kits.)

Sources and Inspiration

The 1790s were horrifying for the French people, producing a plethora of fiction depicting both the noble side of Revolution and true accounts of the bloodshed that wracked France for a decade.

One of the strongest dramas set in the period is Andrzej Wajda's 1983 movie, *Danton*. Starring Gérard Depardieu as the early Revolution figurehead who ultimately loses his head for his moderate stance compared to Robespierre's fanaticism, this movie uses the era's complexities to send viewers on an exciting journey that never loses sight of the Revolution's details. Though not truly accurate (critics point out how the movie is an attack on communism), the passion of the piece is enough to inspire any period chronicle.

Another vibrant movie set during this period, though little-known, is Jean Renoir's *La Marseillaise*. Set during the early years of Revolution, the movie focuses on the humanist aspect of the events to come, painting monarch and peasants alike with empathy. This movie will help any Storyteller provide reason and compassion behind every action and event, grounding them in the tragedy of the Chronicles of Darkness.

Chronicles of Darkness in the Reign of Terror

The seasonal courts' golden age comes to a bloody end as even **changeling** monarchs become synonymous with the Gentry during the Terror. Nascent Bridge-Burners, rabid students of the Enlightenment and supporters of the Cult of Reason, are ascendant in Revolutionary Paris, tearing down courts with extreme prejudice to elevate Committees to freehold leadership instead. Rather than rely on Bargains with old gods, changeling sans culottes draft constitutions and work to eradicate Hedgeways. They outlaw entitlements and Mantles, a final straw sparking a changeling civil war in the middle of the Terror. French freeholds become hotbeds of messy, passionate conflict, as both sides insist the other has forgotten what it means to be Lost.

The first hints of the coming **Awakened** Nameless War that rumbled through France's colonies in the Americas badly ruptured the French *Diamant*. While Nassau's pirate mages are gone and those fences are mended, ideas don't die — and the Revolution is a war of ideas. Here in Paris, the starting pistol truly fires, prompting disparate unaffiliated mages to rise in defiance of Diamond and Seers both. The Parisian Consilium — half holed up with nobles and clergy, half trying to rein in Sleeping Revolutionary peers without getting pegged for the guillotine — reaches out for aid in formally engaging the rebellious Nameless with a concerted counteroffensive. With so much blood literally in the streets, all any mage need do to get her hands on powerful sympathetic Yantras (and thus, leverage) is step outside.

Hunters join fewer angry mobs than monsters expect, learning that it's more efficient to use paranoia and tyranny to root out and expose foes who maintain human facades. With so many factions at each other's throats, though, some cells make alliances with one sect of the night's denizens to take down another; the Legion of Amazons, a small and practical-minded compact in Paris formed from the remnants of the failed women's militia in 1792 and named after Theroigne de Mericourt's famous speech, makes a point of coercing, bribing, or forcing at gunpoint any creatures they can to help them take on more dangerous hunts than they could alone.

The **Created** of the Revolution go largely unnoticed by Robespierre's ilk, but death enough to fill the Catacombs makes for many desperate people falling into unhealthy obsessions. Legendary alchemist Nicolas Flamel achieved immortality right here in Paris — or so the alchemy arm of the *Compagnons du Devoir* believes. The guild of traveling artisans regularly tours France to apprentice under various masters; its alchemists revere Flamel, seeking to emulate his Great Work. Though the Chapelier Law banned guilds in 1791, the alchemists continue to meet in secret. They compete with their Saint-Germain rivals for resources and wear identical masks to stay anonymous.

In the Lozère region of France, a cross-tribe **werewolf** lodge called *Les Enfants Mercuriels* has begun to hunt for the *idigam* they believe is the true Uratha ancestor, after a series of vicious killings by the Beast of Gévaudan in the 1760s. When they hear about the High Cromlech in Paris, they suspect the *idigam* might move around; after all, Soissons, just northeast of Paris, also suffered savage wolf attacks around the same time. Meanwhile, the French Temple of Apollo abandons its traditional place as puppetmasters of the high aristocracy to carefully sink its claws into the Cult of Reason, hoping to appropriate one of its factions for its own purposes.

The 1992 novel *A Place of Greater Safety*, by Hilary Mantel, provides insight into the lives, childhoods, and motivations of agitators such as Georges Danton, Camille Desmoulins, and Maximilien Robespierre. Using many of these power players' own words over the course of the fiction, you can adapt the story for any vampire's past, demon's Cover, or mummy's cultist.

The Revolutions Podcast found at www.revolutionspodcast.com is a deep, informative exploration of revolutions, not restricted to France. This audio documentation of the drama and terror of the time is a must-listen, as discovering the facts behind revolts beyond this one helps provide context for Robespierre's lists of the condemned, the paranoia gripping the people, the giddy enthusiasm of public disgrace and execution, and the positive and negative outcomes revolution can bring.

For music, the florid Baroque style of Vivaldi and Bach evoke the pre-Revolutionary king's court, while the classical Viennese style of Mozart, Beethoven, and Haydn reflect the counter-Revolutionary forces threatening the Terror from without. Mozart died just a few years before this era's start, so his famous (and infamous) *Requiem* does wonders. From the Revolutionary forces themselves comes a shift from complex orchestral pieces of the privileged to an elevation of the people's music, with militaristic themes and lyrics that reflect the political realities of the day, like *"Ça Ira"* and *"La Marseillaise."*

THE TENTH CHOIR

The Enlightened

"If Reason is the enemy of faith, then I am the enemy of God."

"The Invictus rule the city, the Jacobins are outside, and you want me to fight God's messenger with a stick?"

Fouché is still more Revolutionary than true believer, and he's been tense since the siege of Lyons began. I offer him the driftwood stake and grin. "If we're lucky enough to draw this thing out, that's the plan. Saltwater driftwood, then we take its blood and we'll have the power to take on the Invictus *and* the Jacobins."

"*Merde*, this is a terrible plan."

I lead the way into the silk mill. "You want to be one of us? This is what it takes." The factory floor is still, but the threads wound around the great wheels and looms gleam too brightly, as if they are the moonlight's source instead of the dusty windows. I slit my hand open with my knife and spit out fervent curses while my Vitae hits the floor, sizzling. When the angel appears in all its glory, it's already enraged. Glowing silk threads wind from its fingers to the machines and blaze like the sun at noon. It shrieks like an untamed mob of one, sensing what I've done to its holy place, and I can see blood leaking from Fouché's ears at the sound as he struggles to tamp down his terrified Beast.

But I face the angel and bare my fangs. "I will drag you to the earth, cut off your wings, and piss down your neck. Your death will light the fire that brings down the rest of your sanctimonious kind. *Vive la Révolution!*"

You want to join the Tenth Choir because: You fought against the Church's corruption before your Embrace, and the fight didn't end with your life. You didn't ask to be a vampire, and you want to make God pay for Damning you. Pamphlets and guillotines alone aren't enough to sate your spite. Being more sacrilegious than demons appeals to your perverted sense of faith and propriety. Your thirst for vengeance is more important to you than the Tradition of Masquerade.

The big picture: Our goals are simple: We will murder God. Many Chorists were deeply faithful as mortals and considered the Embrace God's betrayal. For all our piety and good works, death brought eternal damnation on Earth instead of eternal reward. If God is willing to damn innocents, we cannot rely on divine justice or mercy, and therefore owe Him nothing.

Theocracy is a debased path to power. In God's place, we celebrate Reason and vampirism as weapons to turn against our creator. God's abandonment freed us from any obligation to follow divine commandments — and from fear of divine retribution. We embrace a vrykocentrist philosophy: to eject us from the proper path of souls, God must fear vampires; if God fears vampires, we must be destined to bring His downfall. So, we refuse to hide from humanity in shame. We feed and perform our Sacrileges in front of mortals whenever we emerge from secrecy to make a statement. We are the Lancea et Sanctum's aggressive, rebellious cousins; if the Sanctified are the devil tempting humanity to blasphemy as part of God's plan, the Enlightened are the army of heretic fallen angels rising up to destroy Heaven's tyranny.

Where we came from: This is the story we tell.

A young man strove to serve God. He was not perfect, but he repented of his sins and became a monk. One evening, he stopped to help an injured traveler by the roadside. In return for his charity, the traveler murdered and Embraced him.

Decades later, an angel appeared to this vampire while he prayed in a sacred place. He asked what he could do to earn salvation from his Damnation, but the angel declared he would always be an abomination. In his grief and fury, the young Kindred declared God himself a hypocrite and fell into frenzy. He struck the angel down and feasted on its blood. When he came to his senses and saw what he had done, he tried to share his Vitae to make of the angel a servant, the first soldier in his war against God, but it couldn't be Embraced and lay dying. The vampire cut open the angel's chest to find the heart beating within. He thrust the heart between his own ribs. It beat there beside his dead one, and they became one. He took the name Lucifer and set out to learn how to sire a divine childe; he failed, but developed Therion in his failure, and used the promise of passing it on to recruit an army that would destroy all nine choirs of God's angels, taking their place as the Tenth.

The Choir grew slowly and steadily in the eastern Adriatic region. Over the centuries, Lucifer shared his blasphemous power with those he deemed worthy to join his crusade against God. We spread around the edges of the Lancea et Sanctum's dominance into Alexandria, northward into the Germanies, and from there throughout Europe.

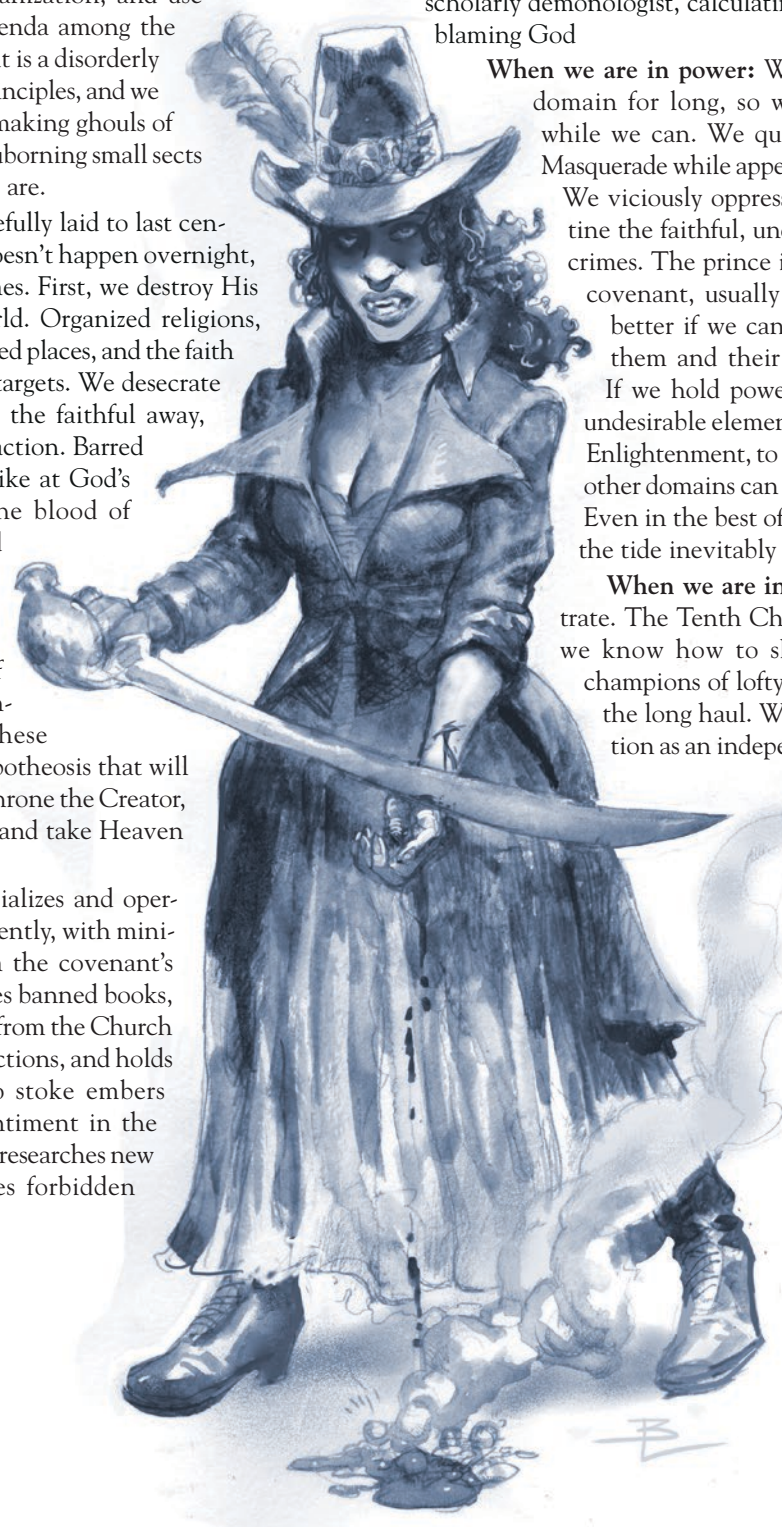
Our practices: We will overthrow both God in his Heaven and the demons of Hell; though demons are sometimes allies, spite and jealousy push Chorists to destroy anything with a spark of the divine in it, Fallen though it may be. Cast out even from Purgatory, with no opportunity to make up for our sin of existence, we tear apart the paradigm that rejected us. To survive in the face of organized opposition, we act covertly to subvert and sabotage the mortal church, the Sanctified, the God-Machine, and anything else we don't like.

We are small, operating as localized cells fighting a guerrilla revolution against the religious status quo. We ally

with or infiltrate larger covenants and other supernatural organizations in positions to enact change. We form heretical cults and gather mortal followers. Our ghouls preach religious reform on street corners and our printing presses are always busy. It's usually rare for a prince's court to connect mortal rabble-rousers with the secretive Tenth Choir, but in Revolutionary France, we possess unprecedented influence. We openly support the mortal Cult of Reason, belligerently working at dechristianization, and use it to advance our agenda among the kine. That atheist cult is a disorderly morass of ideas and principles, and we take full advantage, making ghouls of its local leaders and suborning small sects by revealing what we are.

Our plans are carefully laid to last centuries. Killing God doesn't happen overnight, or in complacent times. First, we destroy His influence in the world. Organized religions, pious communes, sacred places, and the faith of the masses are all targets. We desecrate the holy and seduce the faithful away, to provoke divine reaction. Barred from Heaven, we strike at God's agents on Earth. The blood of that first angel paved the way, birthing the bloody rituals needed to wage our war. We seek places of power to profane, consume, or destroy. These steps lead to a true apotheosis that will finally allow us to dethrone the Creator, free Hell's prisoners, and take Heaven for ourselves.

Each coterie specializes and operates mostly independently, with minimal instruction from the covenant's leaders. One publishes banned books, steals texts and relics from the Church Eternal's Black Collections, and holds subversive salons to stoke embers of anti-Christian sentiment in the bourgeoisie. Another researches new Sacrileges and trades forbidden knowledge with other supernatural communities, and a third recruits Kindred and kine by playing the role of angelic rebel, rousing hearts already burning with vengeance. The one thing all Chorists do, night to night, is hunt the divine.



Nicknames: Chorists (formally), sacrilegists (informally), the Legion (informally), the Enlightened (Europe, recent), al-Marid (localized southern Mediterranean)

Concepts: Fallen priest, revolutionary zealot, cult leader, scholarly demonologist, calculating general, noble émigré blaming God

When we are in power: We know we can't hold a domain for long, so we take advantage of it while we can. We quietly fail to enforce the Masquerade while appearing to punish violators. We viciously oppress, blood bond, or guillotine the faithful, under the auspices of other crimes. The prince is a puppet from another covenant, usually the Invictus — all the better if we can drive a wedge between them and their Second Estate lapdogs. If we hold power long enough to purge undesirable elements, we rebuild havens for Enlightenment, to which sister Legions from other domains can fall back when necessary. Even in the best of times, we plan for when the tide inevitably turns against us.

When we are in trouble: Ally and infiltrate. The Tenth Choir has survived because we know how to show false faces. We're champions of lofty ideas and we're in it for the long haul. When numerous, we function as an independent covenant and ally with whoever is in a position to get us what we want. When sparse, we infiltrate existing covenants and sway them to our purpose, poach members from their ranks, or destroy them from within.



Willa'd been nursing her drink for an hour, near on, only taking sips when a new patron carried the dust in on their heels. It'd been two weeks since the last rain, and grit coated everything: the tables, the bar, the back of her throat. Nell was late as always. Usually it was the dawdling-on-the-trail kind of tardy, but now, as the town clock struck two, Willa couldn't help but worry.

One more minute, then I go after her. She dipped her finger in the whiskey and drew a pattern on the dusty bar top, the one the miner's wife had shown her.

"Awful waste of whiskey," said Nell, dropping heavily onto the stool beside Willa. The saloon doors swung, back and forth and back again, but no dust swirled in behind her. Instead, Willa caught the scent of green, growing things, and a breeze that carried a hint of the sea.

"It's little better than swill," Willa said. She pushed the glass toward the Darkling girl. "You're late."

"Had to take a shortcut." She knocked the booze back in one gulp and didn't even grimace at the taste.

"That's not how shortcuts…." But Willa knew better than to argue semantics with Nell, not if she wanted to get anywhere useful. "What did you find out?"

Nell motioned for another glass, and at Willa's nod, the barkeep left the bottle. Two more slugs and Nell found her courage. "Some of our traitors working with a passel of yours. Some poor fool miner hit a vein last week, only it wasn't really an ore deposit." She traced the pattern Willa'd drawn. To her credit, her finger only trembled a little. "Figure, the gold had been used to seal something *inside* the mountain, and that right there's its name."

"What kind of something?" Willa told herself it was the rotgut whiskey making her belly flutter, not the thrill of a Mystery within her reach.

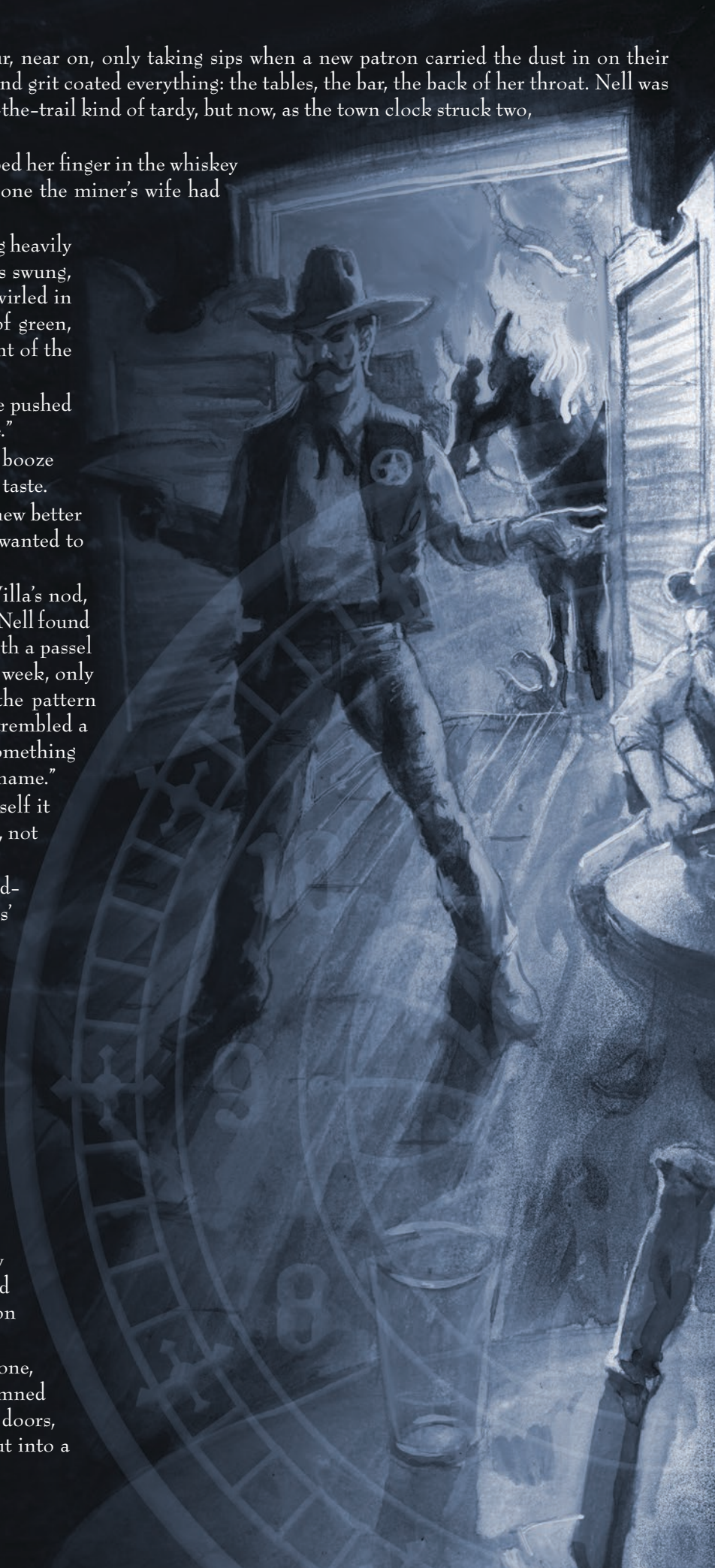
Nell shook her head. "Dunno. You're the head-witch. Can't you just pluck it from those fellas' thoughts?"

"That's not exactly how it…" *No. Nope.* "Do you think you could take me there? I'd like to get a look myself." *Before the Guardians get there and shut it away again.* Whatever it was, it probably *needed* shutting away, but Willa wanted a look first.

Nell licked her lips. "I *could,* but—" She froze, her eyes flicking over Willa's shoulder. The girl was off her stool in a shot, picking it up and swinging mightily.

Willa scarcely had time to duck, or register the thud as the man behind her dropped. By the time she saw the glint of his badge, Nell had her by the wrist, dragging her toward the saloon doors. "Did you just…?"

"He ain't a lawman," Nell said. "Not a real one, anyhow. Now, don't let go of me, not for a damned *second."* Then they were through the swinging doors, not into the dust of an Arizona afternoon, but into a riot of green.





Mysterious Frontiers
1874 CE

"There is no law, no restraint in this seething cauldron of vice and depravity."

– The *New York Tribune* describing Abilene, KS

In the last half century, American settlers have swept westward across the plains, over the Rocky Mountains, all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Dreams of a new beginning — of exploration, adventure, and discovery — inspire thousands of pioneers to pack up their lives back east and join wagon trains bound for points unknown. Homesteaders break ground and coax crops out of prairie sod. Gold miners spend small fortunes trying to earn bigger ones, often to their own financial ruin.

By 1874, the United States officially owns all the land from coast to coast, bounded by Canada to the north and Mexico to the south. Native American tribes still control much of the land west of the Mississippi, though the federal government steadily chips away at their sovereignty. The road here has been a bloody one, marked not only by wars with European powers but by the American Civil War. The Reconstruction era comes to a close, but some wounds are barely scabbed over. U.S. troops and indigenous people clash in bloody battles, a pattern of violence that will continue for several decades.

The Transcontinental Railroad and the telegraph opened up travel and communications in ways the country's never seen before. Everything feels a little faster, a little more urgent. Train tracks and telegraph wires tie the nation together.

The law takes its time getting to new towns, if any authority arrives at all, and often citizens have to mete out their own justice or hire people to help them pursue it. It's a wild time and a dangerous time. People quick on the draw become outlaws and legends, their stories traveling ahead of them while the blood they've spilled has yet to dry.

The west gives rise to tales of changelings defying their Keepers beneath the desert sun, riddling posses of Huntsmen with bullets. Privateers don Pinkerton badges and track down Lost seeking refuge in Kansas cow towns. In the middle of the prairie, a portal cobbled from barrel staves and bowstrings opens onto sagebrush Hedge. It leads to a trod that lets out on the other side of the Rockies. Hobgoblins set up markets where they'll sell you pickaxes sure to find ore, rings that bring you luck at cards, and water in the desert. You can have anything, long as you're willing to pay the price.

The Awakened chase Mysteries across the west, catching wind of places of power and strange occurrences out on the prairie. The Diamond Orders on the East Coast send envoys to shore up relationships with indigenous mages, and to bring the many Nameless and apostates back into the fold before they decide to organize and ignite the Nameless Wars on American soil, as they rage already in Europe and elsewhere. But the sheer potential of the wild blue yonder means a bounty of Mysteries so abundant, most willworkers who come to stay see no need for proper Consilia playing arbiter and gatekeeper for Supernal wonders — and every one of them has a reason for running west, whether west is *toward* or *away*, and has no intention of letting the Diamond get in their way. Seers of the Throne vie for influence over these unaligned mages as well, making enticing offers or outright threats to convince them to join up.

The Wild West offers Storytellers an abundance of settings from which to choose: desert towns and lone prairie waystations; the path of a buffalo hunt;

Manifest Destiny Is Bullshit

Some people believe it's America's fate to swarm across the country and, along the way, "enlighten" people they consider inferior. They think it's a divine right, an order from God, an undeniable prophecy telling them to take whatever they want — it's their *duty*.

It's also racist as hell.

Manifest Destiny isn't destiny at all, as some mages and changelings can definitively confirm. It's a narrative cherry-picked from any number of possible futures, spread by those in power to support their own agendas.

treacherous, snow-covered mountain passes; San Francisco's docks and dark alleys. Historical fact often vastly differs from the Old West presented in books and movies. Not everyone toted a gun — in fact, many towns prohibited them. Even the true stories of gunfights tend to get larger in the telling, and in peoples' collective imaginations: The famous gunfight at the O.K. Corral lasted all of 30 seconds. This chapter sets out to portray the truths of the era honestly and respectfully, while leaving room for troupes to tell stories of gritty adventure and magical shootouts, and for Awakened and Lost characters to become legends of their own.

Theme

It's a coyote-eat-coyote world. Nothing's guaranteed out here. Not your fortune, not your honor, certainly not your life. Everything's a gamble, from the flip of a coin to how many bullets are left in your Colt. You do what you have to, to swing those odds in your favor. To live another day. Maybe you break the law.

Maybe you pin on a shiny sheriff's badge and *make* the law.

Because out here, where the world's still a little unshaped, you can do damn near anything you put your mind to. Your future's as wide open as the sky and twice as big. *There's gold in them thar hills.* All you have to do is dip your hand in the river and close your fingers around a hunk of it.

But it's a violent time, too. Plenty of tragedy to go around, enough to make the world dim a bit. Maybe it's your own fault. Maybe it's your bloody-minded nemesis'.

Mood

Competition and bravado. Everything's a competition in the west: who's got the biggest swagger, who's got the fastest horse. You've got to be the first to stake the claim, or someone else'll get your gold. When the biggest, meanest cowboy threatens your friends, you go boot to boot and stare him down.

Maybe you're not the fastest draw in town, but you'd die before saying that aloud. Might be dying anyhow, since you opened your fool mouth and now you're both waiting for noon to strike. But if you're gonna go, you'll do it with a smirk on your lips, a secret in your eyes, and defiance in your dying breath.

Freedom. It's worth it. All the risks, all the hardship, everything you've lost or sacrificed to be here, now. Living on *your* terms.

Tone

This era's tones are as varied as the sunset after a storm. Life in the Wild West is gritty and mysterious. It's adventurous and exhilarating. Sometimes it's merely strange. Other times, it goes way beyond strange and lands deep in the land of *goddamned weird* — even for Lost who've served as candle flames in Faerie and mages who've scaled a Watchtower's walls. Danger's always lurking, but so's the joy of a whiskey-warmed belly and a sky full of stars.

Embrace them all.

What Has Come Before

Before 1803, the United States owned only the land east of the Mississippi River and north of New Orleans. The city changed hands between France and Spain several times, making U.S. access to this crucial port unstable and costly. As France geared up for war with the United Kingdom, Thomas Jefferson seized the opportunity. He offered to buy New Orleans for $10 million, and was astounded when Napoleon's counter-offer proposed the whole territory for a mere $15 million. Despite some congressional controversy, Jefferson quickly sealed the deal. The U.S. gained 828,000 square miles of land, extending its western border as far as the Rocky Mountains. Native American tribes had already settled much of that territory. Nearly half of the 60,000 non-Native inhabitants were slaves.

Jefferson commissioned the Corps of Discovery, an army team led by Captain Meriwether Lewis and his Second Lieutenant William Clark, to explore the new territory. Their primary objectives were to find a water route to the Pacific Northwest and establish U.S. sovereignty over the lands along the Missouri River held by Native American tribes. The expedition lasted from 1804 to 1806, during which they met with and received aid from many different nations along the way, including the Sioux, the Mandans and Hidastas, the Shoshone, and the Nez Perce. Sacagawea, a Lemhi Shoshone woman, accompanied the expedition and served a diplomatic role. She acted as an interpreter, met with chiefs, and presented their mission as a peaceful one.

While Lewis and Clark's expedition was on its return journey, Lieutenant Zebulon Pike set out to explore the southwestern Louisiana territory. Pike's mission included informing the Native American tribes he encountered that the United

States now owned and protected their lands. His path led him across the Great Plains and into the Rocky Mountains in present-day Colorado. Pike ventured outside the bounds of his assignment, into Spanish-controlled territory. Spanish forces arrested him, bringing Pike and his explorers through New Mexico and Texas before returning them to Louisiana. Though the United States insisted it was not a military expedition, Pike gleaned useful information about the Spanish presence in the territory, including their military strength.

Westward Expansion

The United States pressed farther into the Northwest Territory, intent on acquiring land with little regard for the indigenous people who lived there. In 1808, Shawnee warrior and chief Tecumseh led a confederation of tribes to resist further American and European expansionism. The British encouraged the tribes to raid settlements on the American frontier. In 1811, Indiana Governor William Henry Harrison defeated forces led by Tecumseh's brother, Tenskwatawa, at the Battle of Tippecanoe. The loss struck a blow to the tribal confederacy, but did not destroy it.

Hostilities in the Napoleonic Wars between Britain and France spilled into U.S. waters. While Britain's naval blockade impeded U.S. trade, British ships pressed American sailors into service. These actions, combined with Britain supporting and supplying Native American raids, spurred President James Madison to declare war. The War of 1812 lasted for two years, and though neither nation ceded or gained new territory, both suffered heavy economic losses. The Treaty of Ghent ended hostilities, and while many historians agree that neither the British nor the Americans truly "won" the war, it was the Native Americans who lost. British losses in the northwest weakened and ultimately dashed the hope of an Indian state. U.S. policy going forward continued to strip the tribes of their land.

At the end of 1823, when most Latin-American colonies had gained or would soon gain independence from Spain and Portugal, President James Monroe issued what would later be known as the Monroe Doctrine. It stated the New World was no longer open for colonization by European powers, and the U.S. would view attempts to interfere with nations in the Western Hemisphere as hostile acts. Four decades later, President James K. Polk directed Congress to strictly enforce the doctrine and aggressively settle the west, invoking its importance to the concept of Manifest Destiny. The tenets of the Monroe Doctrine became one of the strongest driving forces of United States policy, lasting well into the 21st century.

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 granted President Andrew Jackson permission to negotiate with Native American tribes, offering them federal land west of the Mississippi River in exchange for territory they owned in the eastern United States. "Negotiate" was a disingenuous term, when in fact state and federal officials used the act to support expelling Native tribes from their lands. Many tribes resisted, including the Cherokee, who launched petitions and speaking tours in protest. Despite the Supreme Court declaring them a sovereign nation, Jackson and his successor Martin Van Buren ordered 13,000 Cherokee removed from their homes. More than 4,000 — possibly as many as 8,000 — died during the 1,000-mile march from Georgia to Oklahoma, which became known as the Trail of Tears.

Beginning in the late 1830s, settlers crossed the Oregon Trail in covered wagons, though the borders between the U.S. and British holdings remained in dispute until the Oregon Treaty split the territory at the 49th parallel. The Republic of Texas declared independence from Mexico in 1836; nine years later, it became the 28th state — even though Mexico still considered it Mexican territory. Disputes over the U.S.-Mexico border dissolved into the Mexican-American War. During this time, a group of California rebels declared their own independence from Mexico in the Bear Flag Revolt, briefly creating the Republic of California. This gave American troops reason to invade northern California. The war ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, granting land that would become California, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, and Utah to the United States. The Gadsden Purchase in 1853 completed the southern border of the continental U.S. with lands that would later be parts of Arizona and New Mexico.

Gold!

Less than two weeks before the Mexican-American War ended, James W. Marshall discovered gold at Sutter's Mill in Coloma, California. Word of his find spread far and wide, drawing fortune-seekers westward. Nearly 300,000 people flocked to

Respecting Native-American Culture

The United States' treatment of Native American peoples was often shameful and bloody. Westward expansion caused much knowledge to be lost, and wiped out entire societies. While conflict between white settlers and Native tribes is a very real part of the era, and shouldn't be erased, we want to provide opportunities for stories to include Native-American characters and encourage interactions that aren't reenactments of real atrocities.

It's worthwhile, when you're preparing to run a game set in this era, to research more deeply into the tribes local to your setting. Native cultures are not a monolith. Traditions, folklore, languages, and ways of life differ among the tribes. Many modern indigenous writers address the harmful stereotypes they see in the media. Seek out their words, and keep them in mind as you explore this era.

California over the next few years, many arriving in 1849 after President Polk confirmed the discovery before Congress. Many 49ers died before ever reaching California, felled by hardship and disease on the long routes over land and sea. San Francisco quickly became a boomtown, its population ballooning from 1,000 residents in 1848 to over 25,000 by 1850.

White greed for gold took its toll on Native Americans and foreigners. Miners drove tribes from the lands on which they relied for hunting and gathering food. Contaminants from prospecting killed off fish. When tribes attacked in defense of their lands, the miners often retaliated with a massacre. Chinese gold miners suffered brutal attacks from white miners, and the Foreign Miners' Tax Act imposed exorbitant monthly taxes on non-white miners.

The Pinkertons

Allen Pinkerton was a Scottish detective and a spy. In 1850, he formed what would soon become the Pinkerton National Detective Agency, based out of Chicago. The agency, whose motto was "We Never Sleep," acted as security guards, spies, investigators, and private military contractors. They specialized in thwarting counterfeiters and train robbers; railroads and stagecoach companies often hired them to protect passengers and valuables.

Kate Warne, America's first female detective, was a Pinkerton agent. In her job interview, she informed Allen Pinkerton that women would be able to get into places where men weren't allowed, and could befriend the wives, girlfriends, and female servants in households, thereby gathering intelligence on the men in their lives. Women, she said, were excellent observers. Together with Pinkerton, Warne had a hand in preventing an assassination attempt on Abraham Lincoln in 1861, although the legitimacy of that attempt was disputed.

The Civil War Era

As new states entered the union, tensions over free states and pro-slavery states grew thick. Several times, the government struck compromises to keep the representation between the north and the south equal. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 split the Louisiana Purchase territory in half: New states north of the 36°30' parallel would be free states. New states south of the line would be slave states. In 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act allowed new states to vote on whether or not to permit slavery. Voters from Missouri snuck in and tipped the results, making Kansas a slave state. This sparked years of brutal conflicts between abolitionists and proponents of slavery. Known as "Bleeding Kansas," these clashes were a precursor of the war to come.

With its borders established, the United States needed people to fill in the territories it had acquired. In 1862, Congress passed the Homestead Act, offering land west of the Mississippi River to those willing to settle it. The requirements were simple: Anyone could apply, provided they had never taken up arms against the U.S., including women and immigrants. All they had to do was stay on the land for five years and farm it. The bill met with opposition from southern politicians, whose constituents were wealthy landowners hoping to purchase the lands and develop them via slave labor. It wasn't until the south seceded that Congress had the votes to pass the act.

Westward expansion slowed immensely during the Civil War and Reconstruction period, but improvements in transportation soon revived settlers' fervor.

Communication and Transportation

Before roads were built through the territories, the post office shipped mail along rivers in steamboats, facilitating communication throughout the United States. Then came the railroads. In 1832, Congress declared all railroads postal routes. As settlers and stations spread westward, mail allowed people to communicate with families back east, businesses to expand, and news to pass quickly across the country.

Where railroads had yet to reach, the Pony Express got the mail through. Between 1860 and 1861, riders delivered letters and packages between St. Joseph, Missouri and Sacramento, California. Many thought it impossible to traverse the route in a mere 10 days, but the company hired nimble riders and hardy horses and got the job done. Well before he became a legend, Buffalo Bill Cody rode for the Pony Express.

Two days after the First Transcontinental Telegraph began operating in October 1861, the Pony Express shut down, rendered obsolete.

On May 10, 1869, in Promontory, Utah, Leland Stanford drove the Golden Spike into the rails joining the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroad lines. The Transcontinental Railroad was finished at last. Once, travel between the East and West Coasts took months. Now, it only took a week. The railroad dramatically increased the number of people traveling to and settling in the West.

Where We Are

A year ago, Colt's Patent Firearms Manufacturing Company issued their Single Action Army Revolver. Now everyone wants a Peacemaker, or totes one, or is *talking* about toting one. The west's not won, not yet, but that's the gun that's gonna do it, for sure.

In July, General George Armstrong Custer leads 1,000 people into South Dakota's Black Hills, investigating rumors of gold in the area. They move ever northward, seeking bigger and bigger deposits. The Black Hills Gold Rush, like the California Gold Rush before it, draws thousands more to the area over the next few years. The land, however, does not belong to the United States. The Treaty of Laramie in



1868 recognized it as Lakota territory. Prospectors have little regard for who owns the land, further straining relations with the Sioux. Towns like Deadwood spring up quickly, and lawlessness reigns.

Across the Great Plains, settlers' demand for bison meat and skins continues to deplete the numbers of wild bison. Their slaughter is also an aggressive tactic, a government ploy to deny Native American people a crucial food source, and force the tribes onto reservations. Railroads hire hunters to kill bison, both to cull the herd so their migration doesn't damage tracks, and to feed their laborers — a job that earns "Buffalo" Bill Cody his nickname. At the end of 1874, 1,800 Shoshone set out from the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming on one of the last great buffalo hunts.

Law in a Lawless Time

The rapid increase of westward expansion, brought on by gold rushes and transcontinental trains, means towns grow faster than law enforcement can keep up with. People in smaller settlements mostly take care of their own and resolve matters peacefully. Officially appointed sheriffs are few and far between — some protect territories covering thousands of square miles, rendering timely aid impossible.

Wagon trains often draw up their own constitutions before setting out, and ostracize rule-breakers or leave them behind. Mining camps form contractual agreements among the miners, and hire enforcement specialists to act as arbitrators when disputes arise. When the government fails to stop cattle rustlers, ranchers band together to create cattlemen's associations. The hired guns they bring in likely come from (and occasionally return to) criminal backgrounds, but they're effective in curbing cattle thieves. Cattle ranchers also embroil themselves in range wars, disputing who has grazing rights or water rights out on the open range. Some feuds develop over the cattle themselves. Others have little to do with land and everything to do with personal slights and vendettas, some of which stem from Civil-War-era disputes.

Though official law enforcement is spread thin, U.S. Marshals serve in areas where no local government holds sway. Marshals carry official documents and presidential proclamations to frontier towns. They serve warrants, protect witnesses, capture fugitives, and transport prisoners. Marshals have the power to appoint civilians as deputies and form posses to help keep the peace. Bass Reeves, the first black deputy marshal west of the Mississippi, arrests over 3,000 felons throughout his career.

The Pinkerton Agency is still going strong in 1874. Companies and railroads hire their agents as bounty hunters, and the sight of their badge with its all-seeing eye is enough to make criminals sweat…or start shooting. They've recently turned that watchful gaze on such notorious figures as Jesse James, The Reno Gang, and the Wild Bunch. Large businesses with a vested interest in paying their employees as little as possible are also increasingly hiring the agency for infiltrating and manipulating labor unions to end strikes or head them off at the pass, coerce workers into ceasing their demands, and promote strikebreaking.

A Wide-Ranging Culture

Contrary to dominant modern Hollywood portrayals, cowboys and cowgirls aren't overwhelmingly white. The word *buckaroo* is likely an anglicization of *vaquero*, the name for Mexican long-haul cattle drivers and horse trainers. Many vaqueros were people of mestizo or Native origin. As Americans fill in the West, vaqueros who worked the land when it was under Spanish control help herders and ranchers learn the territory. Nearly a third of all cowboys are vaqueros. Many others are black men and women.

Not everyone out on the frontier leads a life of danger and adventure. Homesteaders eke out lives on land that's not always suitable for agriculture. It's a hard life, and often an exhausting one. Water rights lead to disputes between farmers and ranchers, with many farmers erecting fences to keep herds out, and angry drovers cutting them down. Farmers and ranchers both have to contend with mining companies and railroad corporations laying claim to good land and building upon it, or diverting or contaminating the rivers that sustain both crops and cattle. Courts are slow to settle cases, if they're ever heard at all.

Though the series of conflicts known as the Indian Wars rage almost into the 20th century, Native tribes and settlers often live peacefully together on the frontier. Indigenous people act as guides, providing supplies and establishing trading relationships with the pioneers. Some Native Americans, like Sarah Winnemucca, serve as interpreters between the U.S. government and the various tribes. Winnemucca is also an advocate for Native American rights, traveling across the country delivering lectures to heighten awareness.

Though the United States pushes for more Native land every year, some tribes in the 1870s hold on to their ancestral territories. Since the Spanish brought horses to North America in the 1500s, many nomadic Plains tribes keep their own herds to provide faster mobility on hunts and make travel along trade routes easier. The Comanche are especially renowned (and, among white settlers, feared) for their prowess fighting on horseback.

With boomtowns flourishing, savvy entrepreneurs follow the money. Suppliers race to set up shop and provide miners with essential tools and provisions. Saloons, gambling dens, and brothels make tidy profits, especially in towns where the law doesn't reach. The Barbary Coast, a red-light district in San Francisco, is full of concert halls, clubs, and variety shows in addition to the bars and brothels. It's a dangerous place — murders and robberies happen on the regular, and few perpetrators ever come to trial. What justice exists is of the vigilante kind. Yet, it's a district full of art and music, and in years to come will be home to San Francisco's first jazz clubs.

All the wealth crisscrossing the country is an awfully tempting target for outlaws and bandits. Why plan a bank robbery, with witnesses and do-gooders within shouting

distance, when you can lie in wait on a long, lonely stretch of road and ambush a passing stagecoach?

Other bandits aim for bigger prizes. Last summer, Jesse James and the James-Younger Gang robbed a train in Iowa. They made off with $3,000 collected from passengers and the safe, enough to make several families very comfortable for a good long stretch. Rumor has it that, when the gang robs a train in Gads Mill, Missouri this January, they examine the men's hands and refuse to take money from passengers with callouses — they won't steal from the working class. Later this year, they hit a train outside of Muncie, Kansas, and make off with *10 times* their first score. They do it without John Younger, who assaults a couple of undercover detectives in March. They're Pinkertons. John doesn't make it.

Iconic Figures

Some of the most legendary and infamous characters in United States history lived their lives in the Wild West: lawmakers and lawbreakers, adventurers and activists.

James Butler "Wild Bill" Hickok has done a little bit of everything. He's been a drover, a soldier, a lawman, a gunfighter, a gambler, and a showman. By 1874, he's done stints as marshal and sheriff in several cities and has most recently been fired from Buffalo Bill Cody's play, *Scouts of the Plains*, due to his penchant for hiding behind the scenery and shooting at spotlights.

Belle Starr prefers to commit robberies in style. She's a member of the James-Younger Gang, known for riding sidesaddle in her black velvet dress and plumed hat, with cartridges for her two six-guns slung across her hips. The guns aren't for show; Belle's a damned good shot.

In the southwest, the Apache-Mexican and Apache-American conflicts have been carrying out for decades. Geronimo, a Chiricahua Apache leader and medicine man, is one of the fiercest fighters. Over the years, he's led his people to safety and helped them escape from pursuing American troops. Some believe he has supernatural powers, including the ability to see the future and keep the dawn from rising.

Among the many stagecoach drivers transporting goods and passengers across the West, Charley Parkhurst stands out. Parkhurst, known as Six-Horse Charley or One-Eyed Charley after he lost the use of an eye due to a kick from a horse, followed the gold rush to California in 1848. He's a transgender man whose peers consider him one of the top drivers of the era. He has a reputation for thwarting bandits' attempts at robbing his passengers; in at least one story, he lies in wait for an outlaw who stole from him in the past and exacts revenge.





Up in the Wyoming Territory, the outlaw Ned Huddleston is known as "The Black Fox" and "The Calico Cowboy." Huddleston, a former slave, became a stunt rider in a rodeo on the Texas border after the war. He joined up with a Mexican bandit named Terresa, and together the two became cattle rustlers. Sometime after he and Terresa came northward, his partner cheated him out of what he'd earned mining for gold. Now he's up near Brown's Hole, back to his old rustling ways. In a few years, he'll train horses for Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch.

Locations

The Wild West is huge, composed of tiny settlements and crowded boomtowns. It spans grassy plains, snowy mountaintops, and dusty deserts. The below locations evoke different aesthetics of the era. Hawk's Rest is a fictional town, ready for the Storyteller to situate it wherever she needs it to be.

Dodge City, KS

Dodge City's a cow town. It's a railroad town. It's a boomtown. It sits on the Santa Fe Trail, and a few years back, Henry Sitler built his sod house just outside Fort Dodge. Travelers stopped there to rest before setting back out on the trail, and as the railroad approached, a town grew to receive it.

Once, people traded hides and buffalo bones. Now, drovers herd Texas Longhorns up from the south. Dodge City's cattle trade's suffered the last few years, as a quarantine line's pushing business westward. The first saloon was one man serving soldiers out of a tent, but nowadays the city's full of bars and brothels, and all kinds of trouble. Some of the most famous guns in the west work here, whether they're on the right side of the law or the wrong one.

On certain nights, a phantom train whistle wails across the prairie. Sometimes, strange travelers arrive at the station in the dead of night, clad in peculiar garments and unsure just how long they've been aboard.

The Long Branch Saloon

The Long Branch Saloon came about because of a bet between cowboys and soldiers. Losers had to build a bar. It's only just opened. You can still smell the paint and varnish. Chalkey Beeson and his orchestra play every night, and if you glance around, you might catch sight of Doc Holliday, Wyatt Earp, or the Masterson brothers.

Sitler's House

Henry Sitler's three-room sod house still stands on the outskirts of Dodge City. It's quieter there now, and some nights you can still hear the nearby Arkansas River over the noise of the town. The rancher himself isn't always there, making the house a good refuge for Lost in need of a place to hide, or for the Awakened to conduct business away from Sleeper eyes.

The Rider

Lainie and her husband were homesteaders. Five years, that's the requirement, then the land's all yours. But John died three years in, and in the fourth year the crops (which, if she's honest, were never very abundant) failed. Lainie left most everything she owned behind. She took work as a ranch hand, and it turned out she loved it. She doesn't quite trust her boss, Tall Dan Carruthers, and keeps an ear out for other opportunities. She's a Sleeper, so she doesn't know the first thing about Seers of the Throne. All she knows is he's bad news and she wants out, no matter how good the pay is. **Animal Ken 3, Medicine 1, Ride 3**

The Rustler

Tom took off from Rhode Island with his father's fortune two years ago, and blew through the money by Missouri. He didn't mean to become good at stealing, but a meandering, cattle-rustling, small-time robbery route carried him to Dodge City. At the Long Branch, he sits himself near the gunslingers but never gets up the nerve to talk to one. When money runs low, he ponders turning himself in — to Wyatt Earp, maybe, or Bat Masterson. But those are the nights he wins a respectable pot at the poker table or lifts a fat wallet. He can't explain his luck, but it keeps him here in town. **Firearms 2, Larceny (Pickpocketing) 3, Streetwise 1.**

The Barbary Coast

Only nine blocks all told, the San Francisco red-light district known as the Barbary Coast is where entertainment-seekers head for a drink or game of cards, or a tumble with a sex worker. Opium dens, melodeons, bars, and brothels crowd into the Coast, and they're always packed. The cheapest drinks flow in deadfalls, which are hardly more than crude benches and sawdust-covered floors. Sailors christened this nine-block area after the North African coast of the same name, whose towns and vessels were once prime targets for pirates.

Corruption riddles San Francisco at every level: politicians, administrators — everyone's on the take. Thieves and murderers rarely meet justice from official channels; the city only has 100 police officers, and more than a few of those are crooked. This isn't to say all crimes go unpunished; vigilantes operate with near impunity.

Music lovers speak of a concert hall they found while exploring the Coast's alleys, where the entertainers glow with ethereal light and sing songs that induce vivid waking dreams. Visitors stumble out several hours — or days — later, into the morning light. When they turn to look back, the club's doorway is gone. No one who's been has been able to find it a second time.

The Blue Canary

It's always bright at the Blue Canary honky-tonk, whether from the lamps and candelabras, or the brilliant azures adorning the wait staff's garb. Every night's a show.

The sheer, bald emotion here provides ample Glamour for changelings seeking sustenance, making it a common meeting place for motleys.

Janson's General Store

What *can't* you find at Janson's General? It's part grocery, part mining supply, and part drugstore. In the back, Janson keeps the rarer goods under lock and key. You'd think a place like this would be a prime target for stickup artists, but they give Janson's a wide berth. Awful things happened to the last person who tried stealing here.

Jenny Two-Step

Jenny's been dancing at the Blue Canary since she was 18. She's learned to measure with a glance who's a good tipper and who's just there to stare, but she's welcoming across the board — someone down on his luck today might strike it rich tomorrow. Jenny doesn't drink anything stronger than tea; the later it gets, the sharper she wants to be.

Recently, Jenny's noticed several of her regulars have disappeared. None of them mentioned leaving town and, in fact, they were excited by a rumor about a new gold vein some farmer discovered on her land. **Athletics 3, Expression (Dancing) 2, Politics (Corrupt Politicians) 2**

The Officer

Sam Danforth's been on the police force for a decade. He's in his late 50s now, and watches with dawning dread as the population increases and the number of his fellows stays static. The corruption in the city's spread to the force, and Sam doesn't know which of his colleagues he can trust. They've had to buddy up to patrol the Barbary Coast, and he's got no read on whether the person at his side will shoot the criminals or shoot him if guns start blazing.

Problem is, *Sam* killed his companion a few nights ago, and now he's afraid someone's going to find out. **Firearms 2, Intimidation 3, Investigation 2**

Hopi Territory

The Hopi people live on their ancestral land in northern Arizona, many of them in villages uniting three mesas. Their multistory, apartment-like homes are made from adobe, with ladders to reach the second floor. The Hopi, whose name means "peaceful ones," are an agricultural society.

Hopi creation myths say spirits called *kachinas* accompanied them from the underworld and help the people with their everyday lives. Men dress in costumes and don masks to dance as kachinas in ceremonies throughout the year. Children receive carved and painted dolls that help them learn to recognize the kachinas in their villages.

Oraibi

Oraibi is one of the most influential Hopi settlements; nearly half the tribe's people live here. Located on Third Mesa, it's been inhabited since around 1100 CE, making it the oldest continuously inhabited town in United States territory. In 1629, Spanish missionaries established a mission in Oraibi, but the people tore it down and drove the Spanish off in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Its ruins still stand within the village.

Walpi

Walpi is on the First Mesa. The pueblo homes here perch 300 feet above the canyon floor. By positioning their dwellings atop mesas, the Hopi were able to keep a defensive watch against Navajo raiders, invading Spanish troops, and now, encroaching American settlers. Homes pass down through the matrilineal clan, and some have remained in a single family for hundreds of years.

The Elder

Kasa's days are full of planning. She tracks plantings and harvests, considers what seeds her family will sow next year, and decides whether they need to trade for more. She taught her sons the clan's ceremonies, and prepares her house for her eldest's impending wedding. The clan relies on Kasa's leadership, trusting her judgments and carrying out her wishes. She's a quiet force in the Hopi village, one even those outside her immediate family turn to for guidance. **Crafts 2, Politics (Tribal) 3, Socialize 3**

The Hunter

Kasa, the Elder, has a son named Tocho who uses his bow to hunt deer and small game from horseback. When the Navajo raided the village a few years back, Tocho was one of the first warriors in the fray. He suspects he'll have to raise his bow in battle again soon, against the American settlers' hunger for land. A month ago, he sheltered in an abandoned one-room hut during a fierce storm. Inside was a library far larger than the hut's dimensions. He took one book as proof. The stories within change depending on the reader, reflecting their strengths and fears. **Academics 3, Athletics (Bows) 2, Survival 2**

Hawk's Rest

Fifteen years ago, Hawk's Rest was booming. Within six months of Jed Hallet finding gold in the hills, everyone with a pickaxe and a dream came rolling in. What had been a cluster of one-room shacks and a trading post became an honest-to-God town with bars and a hotel and, eventually, a railroad stop. Some days, the main street was so busy the dust never fully settled. Then the mine ran out, and the people who'd come seeking their fortunes sought them right on out of town.

Nowadays, only a few old holdovers still live here. Trains rarely stop, chugging past the depot in the dead of night. Give it another two years, and Hawk's Rest's only inhabitants will be the crows.

Plenty of blood spilled here when things were lively, from barroom brawls to gunfights. Stories say all that red seeping into the dust and the boards woke something up.



The Hawly Inn

Room keys still hang on the peg board behind the Hawly Inn's front desk. The last guest on the register stayed here in September 1872, though Jack Hawly wiped his hands of the business in May of that year.

Crawford Mine

The mine's about a mile outside Hawk's Rest, tucked away in the hills. Where miners cut down swaths of trees to make room for their carts and horses, now the forest grows back, obscuring the road and covering over abandoned tools. The mine entrance used to be boarded up, but someone — or something — knocked the planks out from the inside.

The Last Bartender

Clara Delisle lives above the Hawk's Rest saloon. She never worked there when the town had people in it. But she's poured shots before, and she does it now when the occasional passerby stops in. She keeps a loaded Winchester under the bar in case patrons get unruly, but she prides herself on deescalating before it gets to that. Her gossip's usually a few months out of date, but she doesn't care much for current events. The tidbits she collects tend toward the strange and unusual — the more unlikely the tale, the better. **Empathy (Calming Presence) 3, Occult 1, Socialize 2**

The Fugitive

Ernest Vale came to Hawk's Rest to hide. It was out of the way, nowhere the marshals or Pinkertons would ever come looking. Then the gold rush happened, and maybe he ought to have skipped town then, but he'd made a life here and was too stubborn to leave. He knows every inch of the territory. Though he's gruff and blunt, he makes a damned fine guide. **Firearms 2, Medicine 1, Survival (Foraging) 3**

Grand Canyon

The Grand Canyon cuts a 277-mile-long chasm across northern Arizona. At its deepest point, the distance from the rim to the bottom is a mile straight down. Indigenous tribes have lived in and around the canyon for centuries, including the Hualapai people, the Southern Paiutes, and the Navajo. Five years ago, Major John Wesley Powell completed his exploration of the canyon via the Colorado River. White settlers operate steamboats on parts of the river, their captains tasked with navigating dangerous shallows and unpredictable currents.

Pahreah Crossing

Mormon leader John D. Lee established a settlement at one of the few points on the Colorado River where travelers can access the water from both sides. He began operating a ferry from this point last years, to help Mormon settlers cross into Arizona from Utah. Lee's hiding from the law, avoiding arrest for his part in the Mountain Meadows Massacre, which killed over 120 people in Utah in 1857.

Angels Window

Along the Grand Canyon's North Rim, a narrow trail juts out into the gorge. Partway down the promontory, the limestone opens up into a natural arch explorers dubbed the Angels Window. It's a breathtaking view even to mundane travelers. To the Lost, the arch looks an awful lot like a door: one big, natural portal to the Hedge. Some shudder to think what might come through. Others are keen to find out.

The Entrepreneur

Gerald Beene's got an eye for business. He's started a dozen of them in his 30 years on Earth, and learned something every time. Never mind that most of them have failed; that's part of business, too. He heard about the canyon and the river from an explorer friend and left his cozy New York home to come see what the fuss is about. Beene took one look over the North Rim and saw dollar signs. He's drawing up plans for a hotel, keen to sign up investors. **Academics 2, Persuasion (Fast Talk) 3, Politics 2.**

The Guide

Tish Monroe grew up a slave in Kentucky. After the Civil War, she headed west and took jobs on riverboats. She's worked on the waters of the Mississippi and the Missouri, and when the opportunity came to be part of a crew on the Colorado, Tish snapped it up. She's been up and down the river plenty of times these last few years, but it always has its surprises — which is precisely what she loves about it. **Academics 2, Persuasion 1, Sail (Rapids) 3.**

What Is to Come

In November 1875, inspector E. C. Watkins reports that the Sioux and Cheyenne, led by Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, are hostile to the United States. His report spurs the government to order all Native Americans forced onto reservations. In June 1876, Lt. General Custer leads the 7th Cavalry in an attack on the Sioux and Cheyenne, known as the Battle of Little Big Horn. The battle is a complete loss; Custer and the entirety of the 7th Cavalry perish. The U.S. adopts a policy of "sell or starve" from that point on, forcing the Sioux to cede their lands.

Other tribes resist placement on reservations. In 1877, the Nez Perce, under the leadership of Chief Joseph, surrender after four months. Conflicts between Natives and U.S. troops continue for nearly a decade, until Geronimo and his band of Apaches surrender in 1886. The Dawes Act of 1887 ends communal ownership of indigenous lands and forces the sale and redistribution of nearly 90 million acres to white settlers.

Wild Bill Hickok dies in 1876, shot in the back during a poker game in Deadwood. Rumor has it he's holding aces and eights, which becomes known as the Dead Man's Hand. In 1881, the gunfight at the O.K. Corral in Tombstone, Arizona cements Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday's place in

Old West legend. The next year, Jesse James dies, shot by a member of his own gang. Toward the end of the century, Butch Cassidy and his Wild Bunch become the most successful train robbers in U.S. history.

Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows begin in 1883 and continue well into the 1900s. Annie Oakley and Calamity Jane tour with the show, as do Chief Sitting Bull, Chief Joseph, and Geronimo. The performances feature marksmanship displays, rodeo events, and reenactments of significant battles.

In response to pressure from the California legislature over Chinese laborers taking low-wage jobs in the railroad and mining industries, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 bans immigration from China for 10 years. Lawmakers renew it twice. A Massachusetts senator calls the act "nothing less than the legalization of racial discrimination."

A new gold rush begins in 1896 after explorers find gold in the Klondike region of the Yukon. The city of Seattle booms as prospectors pass through on their way north.

In Awakened society, word of Hegemony's global efforts to tempt the Nameless Orders into allying with them against the Diamond between 1894 and 1899 trickles back to the American West by telegraph and wagon. By the time the idea of Assembly begins to pick up steam here — particularly in California — columns in Paris and elsewhere are already gathering support to retaliate against the Seers. The American Nameless have no wish to help the Throne's servants drive the west's myriad Mysteries deeper underground; in 1899, they take part in the Great Refusal, if mostly only in name and spirit.

Afterward, in Los Angeles, Goetia possess weak-minded Sleepers, causing them to commit strange acts while they're deeply asleep. The fledgling Assembly in California sets up shop here, drawn by the Mystery, and gains a foothold before the Diamond Orders swoop in.

Changeling: Gumption, Glamour, and Grit

"Mounted on my favorite horse, my…lariat near my hand, and my trusty guns in my belt… I felt I could defy the world."
— The Life and Adventures of Nat Love

The west represents a fresh start for many Lost. It's full of open sky and roads that could lead anywhere. It's full of places with no roads at all, and the chance to blaze new trails. Changelings among the indigenous peoples recognize they share a common enemy with those among the settlers, and often stand with the newly arrived Lost, offering shelter and aid when Huntsmen's horns sound.

For all Lost, the American frontier is both opportunity and escape, but the same lawlessness and anonymity that shield them also protect those who hunt them.

The Wild Hunt

It seems like a good idea: change your name, settle in a new town where no one knows your story and everyone's too busy looking for gold or protecting their herd to scrutinize your particulars. No one recognizes your face. Everyone's got their problems, kid, have a slug of rotgut. But who'll have your back when the Huntsman claiming to be a U.S. Marshal shows your sketch around the saloon?

Minions of the True Fae take advantage of the authority a badge and a gun confer, pitting the Lost's community against her. It's a gamble: Some towns rally behind the Beast who tirelessly helped dig wells and raise barns. Yet it only takes one person tempted by a hefty reward to bring in the law. Huntsmen deputize townsfolk to help track down their prey. A whisper in the right ear spreads suspicion like fire on the dry prairie: *He's never really been one of us; what do we know about him, anyway?* It's easy to make the Lost look like villains, to call attention to the outsiders they are. Out here, a Huntsman's panoply differs little from those of a mundane lawkeeper: a Colt at his hip, a hat with its brim pulled low to keep the sun out of his eyes, and that damned badge, polished 'til it shines. Privateers form posses of their own, riding down changelings who run, dragging them through the dust to where the Hedge grows brittle and sere out of the scrub.

Hobgoblin establishments pepper western towns. Hedge denizens run saloons and gambling houses in boomtowns and desert outposts alike. At least a dozen businesses on the Barbary Coast are theirs, including an opium den and a dance hall. Some hobgoblin barkeeps are in the Gentry's employ, entrapping changelings and funneling them back to Faerie; some western Lost call it Yonder, fearing to use any of its truer names. Others emerged from the Hedge for reasons not unlike gold fever: If people sink themselves into debt to pry rocks out of other rocks, why *shouldn't* hobgoblins be the ones holding the contracts?

The Fae themselves make bold moves to abduct new servants. Inspired by a Nightsinger's ballad, the Brushland Duchess turns her court into a bandit gang and spreads her cloak of night across the mouth of a railroad tunnel. The 5:58 train comes through on schedule, but never comes out the other side. Instead, the tracks carry it through the Hedge into Faerie, where the Dry Grass Court waits at the depot for its charges to disembark.

The Defiant

The Wild Hunt's not just some ghost story you tell around a campfire on the trail, but if there's one thing you learned over the course of your durance, it's that you're bigger than your fear. You did what you needed to in order to survive, then to get out, and anyone who tries to take you back's gonna need a whole herd of mustangs to drag you.

Being Lost in the Wild West requires gumption. Facing off against the Fae, drawing that line in the dirt and saying

"come get me, then," it takes a whole lot of guts. Courts pass along stories of changelings who've done just that, earning their place as folk heroes. The tales grow larger in the telling, gaining embellishments as they wend their way from motley to motley. A Cheyenne Wizened kills a Huntsman with a well-aimed shot from horseback. By the time the tale reaches the coast, she's taken out seven verderers with one currant-wood arrow. The stories about Breakaway Billy's escape from his pursuers could fill a book. They run the gamut from daring shootouts and midnight chases to amusing romps where Billy makes a pack of hobgoblins look the fool. The tales are both a morale boost and a how-to guide for dealing with the Wild Hunt.

BONNIE REED, WARDEN PATHFINDER

"Run if you want, I'll cover you. But I'm not moving a damned inch."

Background: Bonnie Reed was born in Boston, the daughter of a tailor and a journalist. In 1848, 21-year-old Bonnie joined a company headed for California to try their luck in the gold rush. She promised to write her sister every week. One night, on the Missouri border, a pale man riding a silver horse stopped to share their cookfire. When Bonnie woke, her companions were gone, and a silver thread led from her middle to the strange man's wrist. Three years she was in his charge, sent to spy for his court. By the time she snapped her thread and returned to Boston, nearly 20 years had passed.

Her family hadn't even missed her. She found stacks of letters her sister saved, all in Bonnie's own hand, detailing a life in California she'd never lived. 20 years' worth. Unable to bear it, Bonnie headed west again.

She travels the frontier with her posse, aiding Lost who've escaped their durances, helping them find freeholds or dodge Huntsmen. Someday, she thinks, she'll find her Keeper and strangle him with the silver thread she keeps in her pocket.

Description: Bonnie's a black woman in her early 30s. She's square-shouldered and stocky. She keeps her hair shorn close to the scalp, though few ever see it beneath the wide-brimmed hat she wears. Bonnie prefers pants to skirts, but she keeps one plain, dark gray dress in her saddlebags. Too many funerals in her line of work *not* to.

Storytelling Hints: Bonnie is a busy woman. She's compassionate, especially to other Lost, but has little patience for people who repeat their own mistakes. When she makes a plan, she expects her companions to follow it to the letter. The story goes that once, a settler questioned her orders and pointed a finger in her face. Bonnie calmly reached up and broke his hand, crushing all the bones, then continued laying out her scheme. She won't confirm or deny its truth; it sure makes people inclined to shut up and listen, though.



Seeming: Ogre
Kith: Helldiver
Court: Bay City Marshals **(p. 384)**
Needle: Protector
Thread: Memory
Aspiration: Save other Lost from the Wild Hunt
Touchstones: Her sister Susan
Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Resolve 4; Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 2
Skills: Academics 1, Investigation 2, Medicine (First Aid) 2, Occult 2; Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Firearms (Rifles) 4, Ride 3, Stealth (Shadowing) 2, Survival 4, Weaponry 1; Empathy 2, Intimidation 5, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2
Merits: Acute Senses, Danger Sense, Fame 1, Firebrand, Multilingual (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 46) (Navajo, Spanish), Mantle (Summer) 3
Current/Maximum Clarity: 4/6
Willpower: 6
Initiative: 6
Defense: 6
Armor: 1/0 (reinforced clothing)
Size: 5

Speed: 11

Health: 8

Wyrd: 4

Glamour/per Turn: 13/4

Frailties: Can't approach a campfire while people are singing (minor taboo); rowan wood (minor bane)

Favored Regalia: Crown, Shield

Contracts: Cloak of Night, Fortifying Presence, High Summer's Zeal, Paralyzing Presence, Trivial Reworking, Trapdoor Spider's Trick, Tumult, Vigilance of Ares, Vow of No Compromise

Weapons/Attacks:

Attack	Damage	Range	Clip	Init.	Dice Pool
Unarmed	0B	Melee	—	−0	5
Rifle	4L	200/400/800	5+1	−5	9
Colt Peacemaker	2	35/70/140	6	−2	8

Hedge Travel

Mundane travelers rely on stagecoaches and railroads to carry them across the west. They ride horses along rough-hewn roads. But the maps are reliable, long as you know how to read one, and if you catch yourself on some brambles, you patch up the tears and move on. Lost sometimes choose another path, one that's riskier, one that threatens to keep a piece of their souls if it snags their skin, but whose roads are full of wonders well worth the danger.

The Dreaming Roads here are often gold-tinged, reflecting the fortunes miners envision awaiting them when they strike it rich. Some roads have been trampled smooth by the herds Native hunters chase in their sleep, the dream-buffalo still plentiful even though real-world herds dwindle every year. Music echoes along others: dance hall songs, a lone guitar, the rhythm of a kachina dance.

Instead of crossing treacherous terrain, or venturing along roads where bandits are known to lie in wait, some Lost enter the Hedge and navigate trods to reach their final destination. Safety's a relative concept, but at least the trod trolls who hold you up are willing to haggle with you. In places where gunfighter boots jingle on rough wooden boards, the Hedge's Thorns are made of spurs.

Ghost towns spring up in the Hedge, echoing abandoned places in the mundane world. A motley based in northern New Mexico has made such a place into a Hollow, while others are the sites of Goblin Markets; but these towns are primarily Hedge ghost territory, where echoes left behind challenge Lost to gunfights at the drop of a 10-gallon hat, and it's always high noon.

Even the Hedge, often as lawless as desert nowhere-towns, has rules. The one unimpeachable requirement for entering or exiting the Hedge is this: You must have a closeable portal to enter or leave. That's easy enough in a town where every building has a door, or a settlement where tipi flaps can close out the world. But out in the great empty? How do you slip into the Hedge when you're 100 miles from the nearest door?

You build your own.

Anything will do, so long as it's got the right shape and can open and close. Wizened are particularly skilled at lashing sticks and tentpoles together, and turning scraps of hide into steel on hinges. These makeshift portals appear all across the wilderness, proof of a changeling's passage. Leaving that evidence behind runs the risk of tipping off Huntsmen or privateers, but generally the Lost who create those portals consider them one-time affairs. They leave the dormant Hedgeways standing for others passing by who might need them. In a few rare cases, a motley or freehold integrates the doorway into a more permanent structure: a rain shelter here, a one-room cabin there.

Trodblazers

Traversing the Hedge is difficult enough for Lost in settled areas. Out on the frontier, changelings who know where hidden Hedgeways are make a solid living as guides. They escort other Lost not only to Hedge entrances far outside of towns, but also into the Hedge itself. A Hatter prepares for expeditions the same way her mundane counterparts prepare to bring city folk out into the wilderness, laying in supplies, considering contingencies, and keeping an ear out for anything that might threaten the travelers.

Most of these guides set up shop at Goblin Markets, where they're available for hire. Some even organize into tidy businesses, enlisting Chatelaines to keep the books and Bright Ones to persuade prospective clients that *their* company is the surest bet. As always, towns remain the simplest places to access the Hedge, and hobgoblins take advantage of that. They've got a presence everywhere, with markets at trading posts, and in cities next to mining supply outfits.

A Chance of Scenery

Lost who head west tend to be individuals seeking a new start, or a motley out for adventure — they're often members of seasonal courts, but rarely do the monarchs themselves abdicate their thrones. This makes the courts' influences uneven — or sometimes completely absent — in new settlements. Freeholds are small and scattered, consisting of whichever handful of courtiers bands together. You pick who's present, or no one at all.

In some cases, smaller courts with new Bargains fill in the gaps. In Tombstone, for example, the Court of Cunning holds the Leaden Mirror's traditional seat. There's no room for fear out here, but a canny eye toward who might be ready to draw a gun and try to take you in? Ah, *that's* what keeps you alive. When the Court of Cunning reigns, the Others must challenge their targets to a duel, one on one.



Non-traditional Bargains that result not in courts but in traveling bands and other one-off groups are common, too.

The Summer Court dominates in places where the seasons hold sway. Wrath and defiance are essential for survival in lawless towns, where thieves and murderers look for weakness and pounce. Maybe the type of people who move west are predisposed to be Iron Spears. Maybe the West transforms them. Either way, the Crimson Court reigns.

Some Lost never get pitched by a court at all. No one waits with a welcome packet in their tiny one-horse towns because no one's been taken before. These solitary Lost, along with those who choose not to join a court, mean the courtless make up a significant percentage of changeling society. Some Lost reject the obligations being part of a court imposes: Who has time for endless rituals when the horses need watering and the law's on the way? Others deny they'll need a court's protection once they get their old lives back. It leaves them more vulnerable, without Bargains to thwart Fae flunkies, but that independent streak runs deep. Monarchs have to factor in opinions from the courtless when making decisions for the freehold — where the courts present their views as a consensus, the courtless don't wish to be lumped together as one group.

Courts among Native changelings vary widely. Some are seasonal, similar to those of the settlers. A tribe's hunting grounds might inform their court structures, or the waters that sustain their people throughout the year, or the spirits who aid the tribe. As time passes, western freeholds gain Lost from among both the Natives and the settlers. Syncretism is common in these courts; seasonal ones are the easiest to adapt to their members' varied traditions, but the Lost find common ground in the smaller courts as well, and work together to stand against the Wild Hunt. This can cause problems for changelings whose mortal families come into conflict. How do you reclaim your place when your brothers, accompanied by your fetch, lead attacks against your freehold? Do you even want to, anymore?

Bridge-Burners have a hefty presence in the west. They sign on to help build new towns, pushing for perfunctory, no-frills structures and a dearth of fancy entertainment establishments. Officially, the Bridge-Burner architect suggests he's working with the scarcity of materials: Fewer embellishments mean less money spent on shipping in supplies. Unofficially, he wants the Gentry to see a row of silent, drab-fronted buildings and move on.

Bridge-Burners seek out those same makeshift Hedgeways other Lost have built and tear or burn them down. It's of no concern to them if they've trapped a changeling on the other side; to a Bridge-Burner, no one should traverse the Hedge in the first place, True Fae *or* Lost. They're bold enough to organize openly. A passel of Bridge-Burners descends on the Barbary Coast, intent on shutting down the dance halls whose bright colors and boisterous music are a sure draw for Keepers in search of prey. Opium dens are a particular target, where the drug holds users in a dream-filled thrall.

Life in the West

A Beast rides alongside stagecoaches and on railcars, protecting people and their belongings from those who'd do them harm. A Darkling Helldiver slips in and out of towns, gathering information on the Loyalists plotting to sell out the freehold. She knows the unsavory types; heck, she *is* one, sometimes. She's rustled her share of cattle. The Elemental ensures his tribe's crops grow plentiful and strong, and when they move with the seasons, he helps lead the herd to water. The Fairest Nightsinger's voice draws customers into the concert hall, and she basks in the adoration. Her motley benefits, too, from all the abundant Glamour. The shiny star on the Ogre's chest feels strange, like maybe she doesn't really deserve it, but the townsfolk pinned it on her and now the duty's hers. She drove off a pack of bandits last week, but she knows they'll come back soon, with reinforcements. The Wizened's elbows-deep in the train engine's guts, grease streaking every inch of her. She'll get it running again soon enough, even smoother than before.

Some Lost come from homesteading families, or are the children and grandchildren of settlers who headed west in wagon trains. Native changelings still live among their people on ancestral lands. The Maudlin King snatches a drover from her bedroll and forces her to play campfire songs to entertain his hobgoblin retainers. She keeps strumming even though her blood runs down the guitar's strings. A miner squeezes into a tight crevice to snatch a glint of gold, only to find himself clutching a Keeper's ring. He spends 10 years digging ethereal metals out of Faerie mines to pay for his thievery. They escape through a Hedge made of tumbleweeds and cactus thorns. Maybe the place they left has blossomed into a boomtown by the time they return. Maybe they come back to a ghost town.

New Kith: Cleverquick

"You told me not to fight the monster, but I've already gone and defeated it for you."

Many Plains tribes tell stories of twin heroes. A monster murdered their mother, and they grew up to be monster slayers, fighting the beings their father warned them to stay clear of. The Gentry noticed their prowess in hunting fae creatures and malevolent spirits and stole the twins away to serve Yonder. After many trials, the clever duo escaped.

Today, the True Fae look for quick-witted servants to aid them in destroying their foes, taking them in pairs or pairing them up after the fact. The Cleverquick spends her durance teasing out the weaknesses in her Keeper's enemies. Many become hunters, killing those who displease their Keepers. Others enact elaborate intrigues, ruining an adversary's reputation or standing in Faerie's courts. In both cases, the pair turns their target's flaws into the very weapon that brings him down.

Darkling: The force of his owl-eyed gaze is unsettling. He tracks every movement, tucks away every morsel of information for use later. He's so still you'd hardly notice



he's there. Once you catch movement, it's already too late.

Ogre: The changeling resembles the very monsters she battles. She wears the scars from her near-misses as a mark of pride; they prove she *survived*.

Kith Blessing: When the Cleverquick uses Occult to outsmart his enemy, achieving three successes counts as an exceptional success.

Know Your Enemy: Spend a point of Glamour to learn one of the target's frailties, banes, or bans, if they possess any. For three points, the changeling may instead impose a temporary frailty, bane, or ban upon her enemy that lasts for the chapter, but must also accept it herself for the same duration. If two Cleverquicks work together, they both benefit from these effects (and suffer the drawback), and may split the Glamour cost of inflicting a weakness between them in any combination.

Known Hedgeways

The Empty Saloon: In a narrow gap in a rocky trail outside Tucson, someone bolted a pair of swinging saloon doors into the stone. Glass shards litter the ground, a hint to the Hedgeway's Key: Smash a bottle of whiskey against the rock, and step on through.

Lalla's Arch: An arch rises out of the tallgrass plains in eastern Nebraska. The Wizened who made it wove together branches and vines, and her Elemental lover made it take root in the earth. Flowers bloom year round, and hanging vines create a curtain over its opening. Pluck some blossoms and crush them in your hand, make a promise to someone you love, and you've found the Key.

Tokens

The Rosewood Revolver (•): A changeling ditched her gun in the Hedge after shooting the Huntsman on her trail, and briars grew around it. To mundane eyes, scratches mar the barrel and grip of this rusted six-shooter; activated, the gun is made all of wood and fires razor-sharp thorns, and it leaps into the hand, eager to taste blood once more. The wielder may draw the Rosewood Revolver as a reflexive action, and it gains armor piercing 2 against Huntsmen.

Catch: The wielder must load only one bullet and take a gamble that she won't fire from an empty chamber; roll one die before the attack. On success, the chamber is loaded when she shoots.

Drawback: The Fae recognize the thunderous crack of this particular gun. Firing it alerts the nearest Huntsman,



hobgoblin, or other Gentry servant to its wielder's location, giving her the Hunted Condition (**Changeling**, p. 342).

Pouch of Winds (••): Blackfoot mythology tells the story of Napioa, who wished to possess two bags containing summer and winter, and make the seasons equal. He sent a small animal to steal them, and although it grabbed the summer bag, the bag's guardian chased the animal and decapitated it. The bag burst in the struggle and released a strong wind.

The pouch's Mask resembles a plain burlap sack, but those who can see its true form behold a sturdy, pale leather bag that appears full. When a changeling unties the bag as an instant action, wind gusts out for one turn and topples her opponent, imposing the Knocked Down Tilt (**Changeling**, p. 330) and sending the foe flying back five yards/meters as long as he's Size 6 or smaller. If it's a summer bag, it also creates the Extreme Heat environmental Tilt for the scene; if it's winter, it creates Extreme Cold instead.

Catch: The user lets the unfettered wind carry something important to her away with it, whether it's a favorite hat, a wanted poster bearing her quarry's likeness, or an object over which she and her opponent were grappling.

Drawback: The bags were originally stolen from the seasons themselves, who still want them back. Each time a user activates the pouch, she gains the Notoriety Condition among all changelings bearing a Mantle of the seasonal court that matches its season or any court with a related patron (such as Heat or Winds).

Mage: Diamond in the Rough

"Anyone who limits her vision to memories of yesterday is already dead."
— Lillie Langtry

Mages feel the same wanderlust as anyone else, striking out from the safe and comfortable arms of their home Consilia for Mysteries unknown or Awakening out among the mountains and prairies under the open sky. While the era's Sleepers expand their worlds and explore new horizons with innovations like the First Transcontinental Railroad and the telegraph, willworkers find stranger trails to blaze and limitations to reach beyond. With so much opportunity and promise awaiting any mage with the guts to chase them, a plague of restlessness infects the Awakened of the west. It's hard to resist the pull of Mysteries no European sorcerer has ever laid eyes on; it's hard to stay put when there's always so much more frontier to see.

The Diamond as a whole does move west, but relatively slowly. Their Seer counterparts are in a similar boat, but the Iron Pyramid takes full advantage of all the myriad ways to get in on the ground floor of new settlements and industries. The west is lousy with apostates and Nameless, staking their claims and daring the Awakened establishment to contest them. For all that, though, they engage in a haphazard series of skirmishes and duels rather than any kind of Nameless War, mostly instigated by Diamond mages trying to bring the unaffiliated into the fold (or, failing that, marginalize them); by and large, western sorcerers just want to be left to do whatever they damn well please, and the Diamond's small numbers compounded with the huge distances between its territories make for an intermittent, if dedicated, clash. Unfortunately for Sleepers, no Consilium adjudicating Awakened conflict or restricting access to dangerous Mysteries means organized attempts to mitigate collateral damage and unwise behavior are sporadic — and often ineffective.

Adamantine Arrow

Even before white settlers arrived, the Order Europeans call the Adamantine Arrow had a strong presence in the west among Native communities with warrior traditions, such as the Comanche of the Great Plains and the Apaches of the southwest, whose Awakened tribal guardians served their own communities as well as neighboring ones without any Wise. The Order's reforms forbidding them from serving Sleeper causes are still most of a century away, so Arrows gather in roaming gangs of marshals and deputies, or local posses of mages and Sleepwalkers dedicated to protecting a town in lieu of Sleeper law. The Arrow isn't the first Diamond Order to push for expansion west, but once it arrives, it thrives and recruits heavily; its numbers include quite a few Awakened soldiers, Union and Confederate alike, who went west looking for new opportunities once the Mexican-American and Civil Wars ended. Its Caucuses here are the largest, though they sometimes split into multiple Caucuses overseeing the same territory, with relationships ranging from uneasy peace to open rivalry over who planted their flag first.

Guardians of the Veil

Eastern Guardian Caucuses largely regard the west as enemy territory, or filled with rogue agents at best. Although the Diamond's recruitment efforts bear some fruit, the majority of mages here are apostates or Nameless; the Guardians work quickly to establish the Labyrinth among local parishes and businesses, and quietly sabotage any Libertine columns they find to manipulate them into joining (or rejoining) the Diamond. The Nameless deal harshly with Guardian spies they catch. Few in number, the Order sends lone members undercover wherever Seer Ministries hold sway or rogue Nameless set up shop, trying to dismantle them from the inside.

The Guardians of the Veil cannot do their work in the west except by leveraging other organizations' resources. To that end, they've embedded themselves in the Pinkerton

Detective Agency and use it as cover for Order business — unaware that a small but ambitious cult of the Eye, the Iron Seal of Space, has infiltrated both the Pinkertons *and* their Order. The Guardians likewise form alliances with supernatural creatures who share their uneasy familiarity with occult hazards.

MOLLY COOK, KITCHEN ALCHEMIST

"I want to hear about what it is you saw on that mountain. You talk, and I'll get dinner started."

Background: Molly Smith-Menendez endured prejudice and worse for her mixed-race heritage, but she loved her school in Pittsburgh and feared the unknown, so for her sake her parents stayed despite the hardships. They stayed until a gang of local teens set fire to their home and bakery. Molly was the only survivor. With nowhere left to go at the age of 16, Molly conquered her terrors to set out along the long trail to Santa Fe, where a distant relative supposedly lived. Her weeks-long journey took her high into the mountains, where a wise-eyed vulture bid her follow with rasping cries she could almost understand as words. Her guide led her through a forbidding pass into an abandoned mine, where she carved her name into an untapped vein of lead ore.

Stumbling into town half dead, Molly took work in a local bakery, and abandoned the search for her relative when a Moros from a Nameless cabal using everyday Sleeper trades as metaphors for the Mysteries took her in. She joined one of their signature Legacies, as well as their scouting parties and mining expeditions as cook and apprentice, in hopes of finding that vulture again and discovering more of its secrets buried under the Rocky Mountains.

On one such expedition, investigating rumors of a mining camp whose inhabitants vanished overnight, she found the vulture with the knowing eyes and followed it into the caves. There, she ran into several Awakened Pinkerton detectives looking into the same Mystery, and impressed them with her insights. They recruited her into their agency and, ultimately, into the Guardians of the Veil.

Description: Molly is a white and Mexican woman in her early 40s, tall and heavyset. She dresses in unassuming clothes, posing as a cook or other laborer, and always sports large pockets — the better to disguise her use of magic to conjure up whatever tool or small object she happens to need at the moment.

Her Immediate Nimbus manifests as hunger or a craving for a favorite food, while her Signature Nimbus feels like satiation and satisfaction at the end of a full meal. Her Long-Term Nimbus makes cooking fires light too easily and intensify too quickly; cooking meat chars before it should and water boils at too low a temperature.

Storytelling Hints: Among Sleepers, Molly avoids drawing attention to herself, acting the part of the humble widow who has no idea how big the world really is. Even among Guardians, she's content to play supporting roles, and her history of learning "a little bit about this and that" serves her well. Molly talks about alchemical concepts in terms of baking and cooking — a reflection of her Nameless days and Legacy. She can't resist offering food to people, whether a piece of candy to a child or an elaborate meal for a surprise guest.

Molly's work for the Pinkertons carries her anywhere the Guardians need an unobtrusive spy or undercover agent. She infiltrates Seer-controlled mining camps on reconnaissance missions, poses as a harmless traveler on trains carrying Diamond relics vulnerable to theft, and deploys the Attainments of her Legacy to facilitate delicate exchanges of sensitive information between parties with little reason to trust one another.

Path: Moros

Order: Guardian of the Veil

Legacy: Kitchen Alchemists

Virtue: Humble

Vice: Indulgent

Obsessions: The Rocky Mountains' buried Mysteries; Everyday alchemy; Weak Quiescence **(p. 375)**

Aspirations: Visit Napa Valley; Cook the perfect meal





Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 2; Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Skills: Crafts (Cooking) 4, Enigmas 3, Investigation 5, Occult 3; Athletics 1, Firearms 3, Ride 2, Stealth 2, Survival (Desert, Mountains) 5; Empathy 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Subterfuge (Playing Dumb) 4

Merits: Allies (Autumn Court) 2, High Speech, Occultation 3, Order Status (Guardians of the Veil) 3, Language (Comanche, Spanish) 2, Mentor 3, Status (Pinkerton Detective Agency) 1

Wisdom: 6

Willpower: 5

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Armor: 0/0

Speed: 9

Health: 8

Gnosis: 5

Mana/per Turn: 15/5

Nimbus Tilt: Imposes −1 on Composure and Stamina rolls; grants +1 to Resolve rolls.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Pewter bowl

Arcana: Death 2, Fate 3, Matter 5

Attainments: Counterspell (Death, Fate, Matter); Eyes of the Dead; Conditional Duration; Permanence; Mage Armor (Death, Fate, Matter); Targeted Summoning (Fate, Matter); Durability Control; Create Rote (Matter); Kitchen Alchemists — Comfort Food, Abuela's Home Cooking, Table of Fellowship

Praxes: Discern Composition (Matter 1); Find the Balance (Matter 1); Hidden Hoard (Matter 2); Wonderful Machine (Matter 3); Transubstantiation (Matter 4); Ex Nihilo (Matter 5)

Rotes: Speak with the Dead (Death 1, Investigation); Oaths Fulfilled (Fate 1, Investigation); Shifting the Odds (Fate 2, Subterfuge); Sworn Oaths (Fate 3, Occult); Strings of Fate (Fate 4, Persuasion); Shaping (Matter 2, Crafts)

Rote Skills: Investigation, Stealth, Subterfuge

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Clip	Init.	Size	Dice Pool
Winchester Model 1866 "Yellow Boy"	3L	200/400/800	13	−4	2	4

Notes: The Kitchen Alchemists give Molly Fate as a third Ruling Arcanum.

Kitchen Alchemists

(Moros; Fate)

A handful of chefs, bakers, and campsite cooks make up this small Legacy that believes the Mystery of alchemy lives in the simple act of transforming raw materials into not only food that nourishes the body, but into happiness, energy, and community. If Sleeper cooking can perform a miracle like that, they say, what could willworkers do by applying its principles to the Supernal?

Yantras: cooking utensils (+1); eating something the mage made herself (+1 per turn it takes to eat, to a maximum of +3); succeeding on a Crafts roll to make food relevant to the spell (+2); raw ingredients (+1)

Oblations: spending at least an hour preparing food for others; eating until the mage's appetite is completely satisfied; partaking in a ritual meal; serving food the mage made herself at a public event dedicated to something other than eating

First Attainment: Comfort Food

Prerequisites: Initiation (Fate 2, Crafts 2, a Specialty in Cooking or Baking)

The Chef loses herself in the act of preparing food for a scene while meditating on a problem or goal, turning raw ingredients into victuals and answers. Once the food is ready, she experiences a revelation regarding an action that will bring her closer to overcoming the problem or achieving the goal. This mimics the Fate 1 spell "Serendipity" (**Mage**, p. 135) with Potency equal to the mage's Fate dots, allocating its Reach to the spell's +1 Reach effect.

Optional: Matter 1

The mage may instead infuse the food she prepares with the effect above, which affects the first person who eats it within an hour of its preparation. The Storyteller determines which problem or goal the recipient's revelation addresses, usually based on one of that character's Aspirations or Obsessions. The Chef herself derives no benefit from this version of the Attainment, and it doesn't carry the +1 Reach effect, as it allocates its Reach to advanced Duration.

Second Attainment: Abuela's Home Cooking

Prerequisites: Crafts 3, Matter 1

The Chef pours her love into a meal she prepares over the course of a scene. The first person who eats it receives a boon of the mage's choice, as the Fate 2 spell "Exceptional Luck" (**Mage**, p. 135); the boon lasts for one day, whether anyone has accepted it by eating the food or not. This Attainment has Potency equal to the mage's Fate dots and allocates its Reach to advanced Duration; it can't be used to inflict a hex.

Third Attainment: Table of Fellowship

Prerequisites: Fate 3, Socialize 2

The Chef's food binds her community together in harmony. She prepares a meal over the course of a scene,

which she must serve to not more than 10 people within one hour of its preparation. Immediately before the meal, she or someone who intends to partake must say grace, make a toast, or give a speech, urging peace and fellowship while condemning conflict and violence. While the meal lasts and for an advanced Duration afterward based on the mage's Fate dots, Social Maneuvering rolls between those partaking enjoy a one-step improvement to impression levels and a one-die bonus. For the same duration, anyone who partakes of the meal and then performs an act of violence against anyone who shared it with them suffers the grave Sick Tilt.

Optional: Matter 3

The food the mage prepares tastes different to each guest who eats it, always exactly the flavor he most desires at that moment. Consuming the meal counts as fulfilling his Vice, replenishing a point of Willpower unless the character has already fulfilled his Vice during the current scene.

Mysterium

Lured by a vast mystical landscape and Native Awakened lore wholly unknown to European mages, Mystagogues lead the charge west with enthusiasm, often giving up perfectly respectable positions in eastern Caucuses and Consilia to prospect on the frontier. The Mysterium, in conjunction with the Ladder, works alongside Native mages to help preserve their languages and magical traditions. This often works out amiably, although sometimes the Natives rebuff their attempts, caring little about these interlopers' offers of help. But of all the Orders, the Mysterium is the most immediately successful at syncretizing with their Native counterparts, and they establish an Awakened answer to the Pony Express — a regulated system of mobile stagecoach libraries, bolstered by magic and circulating all over the West — to help foster cooperative magical scholarship.

Despite getting here first, the Order has difficulty establishing Athenaea out here, partially due to the erratic behavior of Space portals **(p. 375)**. Outbreaks of violence and raids in retaliation for trying to coerce Nameless mages into sharing their knowledge don't help. The only current fully functional Athenaeum west of the Mississippi River sets up shop in Independence, Missouri, where travelers congregate to embark upon three major trails westward.

Silver Ladder

The Silver Ladder has a limited presence in the west. The Order takes more time to fully commit to the expansion, not because it's reluctant, but because its Eastern Caucuses have their hands full involving themselves heavily in Reconstruction — not just for the Sleepers' sake, but because the war had a dramatic impact on southern Consilia and, especially, those near the Mason-Dixon line.

The few théarchs that *do* move west now work to build up frontier towns and missions, extend invitations of friendship and cooperation to Native and Mexican Awakened — thus bolstering their numbers, not coincidentally, to counteract the Libertines — and encourage long-distance trade and communications to speed establishment of the Lex Magica and other Diamond institutions. As a result, the western Caucuses mostly comprise mages of indigenous and Spanish descent, and their numbers are too small to adequately oversee the sheer square mileages involved. The Ladder's general absence makes the Guardians' task all the more difficult and contributes to the widespread abandonment of Diamond precepts.

The Order holds a Convocation in Sacramento — the only place in California with a true Consilium — in October of this year to address the "Nameless Problem," and although it's originally intended to focus on the American west, it attracts worldwide attention among théarchs dealing with actual Nameless Wars elsewhere.

Seers of the Throne

Dependent as they are on Sleeper infrastructure to thrive, the Seers' influence in the west is narrower in scope and more localized than it will be in a decade or two, but it's no less insidious and their numbers grow rapidly once railroads become more common. Like the Ladder, the Iron Pyramid latches onto trade and transportation. The west is full of wealthy Seer cattle barons and railroad tycoons, as well as local figures of influence, such as corrupt politicians and marshals, ruthless saloon owners, and overzealous preachers; each Pylon plants its roots deep into a settlement just as it's getting off the ground, dominating it from the beginning so they can develop it as they like without interference from Diamond mages.

The Seers also increasingly dedicate resources to provoking and exacerbating conflicts between Natives and settlers, among Sleepers and Awakened alike, and between the Diamond and the Nameless in a steady campaign to persuade mages who have rejected the Diamond to join them. In less than 30 years, a majority of those Nameless will band together to collectively reject this campaign in a Great Refusal.

Ministries in the Wild West

Slavery's abolishment delivered a significant setback to the Seers as a whole in the east, so many Pylons move west to try their luck elsewhere.

Geryon has trouble consolidating power here; the widespread rise of personality cults where individual fame is considered a virtue and even train robbers want to be on the newspaper's front page limits what the Ministry can accomplish. Its Seers focus on espionage and supporting the Pinkertons' more ruthless activities; it takes them a while to realize they're accidentally in cahoots with the slowly growing cult of the Eye. Geryon never really stakes a claim in this region, preferring to throw its lot in with rifle clubs and other anonymous hate groups emerging in the American



south; the later rise of Panopticon will swiftly subsume its western arm even before the younger Ministry becomes a true power. Similarly, although the Greater Ministry of **Hegemony** is ascendant in many other parts of the world during this era, its influence here is not nearly so impressive.

The Lesser Ministry of **Mammon** has an unusually robust presence in the American West. Servants of the Chancellor haunt places where they know a prospector will soon strike silver or gold, spreading rumors to encourage fierce competition over the riches and firmly ensconcing themselves as influential figures in the boomtown that rises. They own more saloons and brothels than any other Order, Seer or Diamond, and they quietly back efforts to run Natives off their ancestral land, then try to sell it back to them.

As a minor Ministry, **Panopticon** is little more than a handful of spy networks and rumormongers operating in more densely populated parts of the world, and it will be at least a century before the Ministry emerges as a real player on the global stage; when it does rise to supremacy here in America's west, it's the successors to the Pinkerton cult who will make it happen.

Paternoster is strong here and rising higher daily, as Sleeper churches in the east grow unduly concerned about "corruption" out west and send increasingly more ministers to "civilize" frontier towns and evangelize to Native tribes. Some of Paternoster's Pylons have operated missions since the Spaniards first landed in the New World. Others are new arrivals, missionaries and small town preachers using positions of trust in the community to frame their detractors and outsiders (including foreigners, people of color, Mormons, and city slickers freshly arrived from the East Coast) for the abuses they perpetrate on their loyal and unsuspecting flocks.

The **Praetorians** dominate the west. The Ministry regularly pits Natives against settlers, encourages both vigilante violence and gang banditry, and heartily supports gun manufacturing and distribution. This constant incitement extends to fanning the flames of resentment among the Nameless, manipulating the Diamond into provoking unaffiliated mages and vice versa.

Nameless and Apostates

Although the indigenous mages of the west have had their own versions of the Diamond Orders for millennia, their societies never resembled European-style Consilia. At most, sorcerers of neighboring tribes with similar occult traditions exchange lore or make temporary alliances to deal with a mutual problem. These tiny, localized Caucuses have little impetus to build complex social structures with fixed laws and practices.

As the Mysterium explores the indigenous traditions, it comes to recognize the Native mages as brethren who are already a part of the Diamond — even if they don't regard themselves that way — and set out to formalize that relationship, with varying levels of success.

Meanwhile, East-Coast mages frequently strike west and sever ties with their old Orders. These rogue mages' complaints range from insufficient access to Mysteries and resources, to frustration with what they perceive as a too-rigid hierarchy, to anger at the Diamond's positions on the Mexican-American and Civil Wars; some think it involved itself too much, and others think it should have worked to bring these wars to a swifter or different conclusion. Apostates need allies and the kinds of resources only other mages can provide, such as Grimoires, Legacy lore, and mentors. Having turned their backs on the Diamond, they turn to one another instead, forming renegade cabals and a few Nameless Orders. Many find like-minded comrades in those indigenous mages who don't syncretize with the Diamond.

The Nameless Orders dotting the west tend to be loosely organized. Often, a mage can belong to two or more at a time — a practice not only tolerated but actively encouraged, as it gives these small Orders a network and allows them to share resources through their common member. A complex spiderweb of mages with multiple affiliations spreads along the frontier. Despite the benefits, these alliances make the Nameless Orders vulnerable to infiltration and subversion by Guardians of the Veil, Seers of the Throne, and Left-Handed saboteurs. Those Nameless who prize Wisdom highly learn that being *too* free with the Mysteries too often places advantages in the hands of willworkers who exploit them for unwise ends. Nameless Orders need a way to protect their knowledge — and their members — from abuse. To that end, many adopt informal, homegrown codes of conduct.

Prospecting

Mages flock west in pursuit of new Mysteries the way Sleepers do for gold rushes.

The Infinite Mine

A Seer Pylon operates a silver mine near the site of the Sand Creek Massacre in the Colorado Territory. When the moon wanes, workers draw up an abundance of virgin metals, including small quantities of naturally occurring lunargent. As it waxes, the silver in the mines "regrows" like a salamander's tail, filling in gaps left by the previous weeks' mining. During each new moon, a terrible accident claims dozens of miners' lives, even with precautions. Rumors claim the west hides other infinite mines producing other precious minerals, but so far these remain unconfirmed.

Ghost Towns

The Apache maintain a custom of burning the homes and possessions of their dead, while the Navajo perform elaborate purification rituals whenever they come into contact with a corpse. Both guard against the same phenomenon, which is more frightful than a mere haunting. Ghosts in the southwest sometimes pull their Anchors into



Twilight with them, leaving behind only a ghostly echo in the material world. In some cases, the dead draw in entire cities along with their inhabitants, leaving behind ghost towns that look centuries abandoned, with Twilight echoes still bustling with people who don't realize what's happened.

Erratic Portals

Travel across long distances via Space magic is particularly fraught anywhere west of the Mississippi River. Just ask the Mysterium's New England Caucus, which lost an entire Athenaeum's worth of treasures it tried to transport to Arizona. Even seemingly stable Distortions often deliver passengers and cargo miles from their intended destinations, or lead to the wrong point in time or another world entirely. Only westbound travel appears affected. The nomadic Heptasophic cabal hypothesizes that the frequency and intensity of the phenomenon's manifestations may have some connection to celestial alignments.

Weak Quiescence

As if the Guardians of the Veil weren't spread thinly enough, they've discovered that proximity to the Rocky Mountains prevents some Sleepers from fully succumbing to Quiescence. They don't always remember their encounter with Awakened magic accurately, but they know something clearly supernatural took place. Scouts, stagecoaches, or entire wagon trains arrive in town telling wild stories of angels, devils, and stranger things. The Order cannot prevent, much less predict, such encounters, given the vast territories involved; they can only hope to stop the stories from spreading, lest they draw more Sleepers into danger. The Pinkerton Guardians agitate for a thorough investigation of the root cause, but so far no one has the resources to devote.

Mana Farming

The Napa Valley in northern California is a jackpot of mystical power. Its hot springs and rich soil contain dissolved tass, infusing plants that grow there. Bread, wine, and other products of the area's vegetation hold their Mana supplies even after the processes that transform them from living plants to consumable fare. The Nameless who live here have never discovered where all the tass comes from or why its Mana persists so stubbornly, but they protect their cache fiercely and kill anyone who finds out about it to prevent word from spreading; they fear the arrival of powerful Orders with the resources to eject them from their paradise, who may very well destroy it in their inevitable warring over it.



Playing the Game

Both mages and changelings are aware of insidious and alien forces keeping humanity docile by means of all-encompassing lies, and both deal with owning perceptions and experiences that ordinary people by necessity or design just can't share. Mages offer powerful protection from the Wild Hunt; those with knowledge of Fate and Mind can help their Lost companions cheat the rules in ways even the Wyrd can't punish. Changelings, meanwhile, make excellent guides to surreal locales, possessing familiarity with the Hedge that would take a mage years of dangerous exploration to rival. In many ways, the Hedge is the wild frontier that Western movies only pretend the Old West was, and the Awakened want to see it all.

Unique Contracts

Most changelings don't have the option of establishing one-off Contracts with entities other than hobgoblins, because the Wyrd has no jurisdiction over beings such as Supernal entities or ghosts and can't adjudicate pacts or debt. But friendly Awakened can temporarily forge an ersatz Wyrd connection to allow a changeling to make deals with these beings for unique Contracts.

Masking the False Fae (Fate •••• + Mind •)

Practice: Patterning
Primary Factor: Duration
Withstand: Resolve
Suggested Rote Skills: Empathy, Larceny, Socialize

The mage forges a connection between a Supernal entity and the Wyrd, making that entity count as a hobgoblin for purposes of changelings learning unique Contracts. A changeling may make deals with the entity to learn unique "Goblin" Contracts based on its nature, Arcana, and other traits. This spell doesn't replace any price the changeling may need to pay or convincing she may need to do to learn the Contract, nor does it negate the Contract's cost in Experiences; it simply makes the process possible.

Each time a changeling uses a Contract she learned through this spell, she becomes indebted to the entity as though it were a hobgoblin. This Supernal Debt functions identically to Goblin Debt, except that the Storyteller may spend it to impose stranger effects or Conditions based on the entity's nature. Track each type of Debt separately. A changeling can't have more than nine points of Supernal Debt; each time she uses the Contract again while she has nine, she automatically suffers one point of severe Clarity damage, as for an infinitesimal moment she confronts the greatest Lie of all.

Magic that identifies a supernatural creature's nature reads the subject as both Supernal and fae for the spell's duration.

This spell also enables changelings to make court Bargains with sufficiently powerful Supernal entities (Rank 6+), as long as its duration encompasses the entire usual Bargaining process.

If casting this spell results in any released Paradox, and if the spell roll dramatically fails or the Paradox roll achieves exceptional success, it forges a Wyrd connection with an Abyssal entity instead. Each use of an Abyssal Contract after accumulating nine points of Abyssal Debt inflicts *two* automatic points of severe Clarity damage, and unleashes a Paradox Anomaly with a number of effective Paradox successes equal to the changeling's Wyrd. If using Abyssal Contracts reduces the changeling to Clarity 0, the Abyss consumes her soul.

Add Death, Mind, or Spirit ••••: The mage may also allow changelings to learn Contracts from ghosts, Goetia, or spirits, respectively. Using these Contracts after accumulating nine points of Goetic Debt (or similar) doesn't inflict Clarity damage; instead, the changeling gains the Open Condition appropriate to the debtor until she repays at least one Debt point.

Awakened Magic and the Wyrd

Awakened magic can interact with most fae phenomena through a combination of Fate and Mind. Fate governs the Wyrd's reciprocity and ability to enforce oaths and promises. Mind governs Glamour and the Wyrd's nature as a manifestation of emotion and desire. Neither alone can manipulate fae magic.

Mages accrue Goblin Debt the same way other mortals do. A mage who becomes a Hedge Denizen or Goblin Queen retains her Obsessions.

Mages and the Hedge

The Hedge is a frontier unto itself — wilder and filled with more dangerous denizens than any bandit lair or den of iniquity, more wondrous and tempting than rolling hills and open sky. It contains countless Mysteries, and knows exactly which ones will lure a mage in.

As a psychoactive domain, the Hedge shares some commonalities with the Astral realms. Mages who experience the Hedge describe it as the barrier they spend Mana to painfully cross when they meditate into the Astral. Mages can break into Bastions from the Dreaming Roads, either physically or in dream form, with the Mind 2 spell "Dream Reaching" (**Mage**, p. 160), and they treat eidolons as weak Goetia. Unlike the Astral realms, however, the Hedge is more attuned to Fate than Mind.

Systems

- Mages who indulge their Vices near a Hedgeway (**Changeling**, p. 199) suffer a penalty equal to half their Gnosis (rounded up) on the roll to resist the temptation, as the Hedge plays on their Obsessions. Mages can open existing Hedgeways (which are

Irises, in mage parlance) with Fate 3 + Mind 1, and can create new ones with Fate 5 + Mind 2.

- The Hedge's self-shaping is a nigh-constant tickle to Peripheral Mage Sight. Active Mage Sight functions normally, but once per scene the player may accept an Arcane Beat for one piece of information it presents to be inaccurate somehow — distorted, hidden, or fabricated from whole cloth.
- The Hedge reduces the successes it needs to win a navigation chase (**Changeling**, p. 200) by one per total Obsession among all mages present.
- The act of seeing and knowing via Focused Mage Sight triggers the Hedge's psychoactive response; every Scrutiny roll counts as an action that prompts the Hedge to shape itself, per **Changeling** p. 204.
- Acts of Hubris in the Hedge suffer a penalty, as it supports the mage in his delusions of grandeur: −1 on a trod, −3 in the Thorns, and −2 elsewhere.
- Fate spells benefit from a −2 penalty to Paradox rolls in the Hedge and Faerie.
- Paradox in the Hedge is insidious. Anomalies usually manifest in the environment as Hedgespinning shifts instead of warping the spell, creating a subtle shift as a 1-Reach effect or a paradigm shift as a 3-Reach effect. Mages who release Paradoxes in the Hedge gain one point of Goblin Debt per Anomaly.

Malleable Thorns (Fate •• ⊹ Mind ••)

Practice: Ruling

Primary Factor: Potency

Suggested Rote Skills: Crafts, Empathy, Survival

The mage shapes the Hedge according to his desires. He gains (Potency) Hedgespinning successes that he may spend in any combination to enact subtle shifts at any time; unused successes vanish when the spell ends. The mage doesn't choose these shifts directly. Instead, he states a goal and the Hedge shapes itself in a way that fulfills that goal somehow, chosen by the Storyteller; this often has unintended side effects.

+1 Reach: The mage may also enact paradigm shifts.

New Weapon: Lasso

While the Colt Peacemaker is the most popular weapon in the west, the lasso is a common non-lethal option.

Type	Damage	Range	Init.	Strength	Size	Availability	Special
Lasso	n/a	Thrown	−3	1	2	•	See below

The lasso uses Dexterity + Athletics − Defense to attack; a successful attack acts as a grab instead of inflicting damage. A lasso's grapple follows special rules:

- The victim's contested grappling rolls subtract successes equal to the lasso's Durability (typically 1).
- The attacker cannot initiate the control weapon move, but the defender can use it to pull the lasso from the attacker's grip, immediately ending the grapple.
- The drop prone move only causes the defender to fall prone, not the attacker.
- A lasso counts as equipment suitable for restraining held targets.

New Merit: Gunslinger (•, •••, or •••••)

Prerequisites: Wits •••, Firearms •••, Firearms (Revolvers) Specialty

Effect: Your character squeezes the trigger with incredible speed or uses fanning techniques popular among trick shooters to put lead in the air quickly and with minimal loss of accuracy.

At one dot, she can perform a short burst with a revolver as though it were an automatic weapon.

At three dots, she can adjust her aim between shots, performing a medium burst with a revolver that requires only three rounds of ammunition. She gains no attack bonus, but still suffers a penalty for multiple targets. She cannot make multiple attacks against one target in the same turn, and she uses three rounds of ammunition regardless of the number of targets.

At five dots, if your character wields two revolvers, she may attack multiple targets that are *not* close together as long as both are within short range. This is otherwise identical to the three-dot effect, but the penalty for attacking multiple targets increases by two.

High Noon

At a time when medical help by no means assures a complete recovery from a bullet wound — especially in sparsely populated areas where trained doctors are a rare sight — drawing a gun to resolve a dispute is dicey. Although a skilled gunslinger carries a reputation that tends to discourage challengers, even the fastest and most accurate gunfighter only needs to miss or be slower on the draw once to find himself in a shallow grave at the edge of some nameless town. The gunslinger may not seek out violence, but he must be prepared to deliver it at need.

The Standoff

A standoff is an optional system for pistol duels and other tense showdowns. It occurs when two or more sets of combatants come into conflict but have not yet committed to open violence.



The standoff is a series of special Social Maneuvers representing the potential combatants' posturing. A standoff works the same way regardless of the parties' impressions of one another.

Step One: The Setup

Each side in the conflict declares its goal for the scene and decides who will be its primary actor — usually the character with the most Doors or best relevant dice pools. Only the primary actor's Doors open when an opposing side's Maneuver is successful.

The characters converse, attitudinize, taunt each other, make threats, etc. The primary actor need not do all the talking, and may not even be the obvious spokesperson. He could hang back, glaring daggers while his talkative companion tries to calm everyone down before someone gets hurt.

Step Two: The Showdown

Each turn, every character in the scene, including the primary actor, takes one of the following actions; all of them occur simultaneously, so players should write down their intended actions and pass them to the Storyteller in secret for her to reveal all at once.

- **Back Down (primary actor only):** The character holds up his hands or otherwise signals his side's desire to avoid a violent showdown. He and all his allies gain the Beaten Down Tilt and end their participation in the standoff.
- **Participate Socially (secondary actor only):** The character assists the primary actor's forthcoming Social Maneuver, following the usual rules for teamwork actions. The dice pool can be different than the one the primary actor uses. Up to two participants can contribute this way per turn.
- **Make Ready:** The character takes some small action to make himself a little quicker, such as shrugging off a coat or moving a hand a little closer to his gun belt. If the standoff ends in violence, his player rolls an additional die for Initiative and adds the value to his total. Repeated Make Ready actions are cumulative but cannot exceed three bonus dice.
- **Take Aim:** The character calculates the best line of attack against his opponent. If the standoff ends in violence, the first attack he makes enjoys a one-die bonus. Repeated Take Aim actions are cumulative, but the bonus cannot exceed three dice.
- **Break the Standoff:** The character makes a sudden move, invokes a Contract, casts a spell, launches an attack, or readies a weapon. Given everyone's twitchy state, this immediately cascades into violence.

Once these actions have all been described, each group's primary actor takes a contested Social Maneuvering action with a dice pool appropriate to his approach. Presence or Manipulation + Intimidation is common. The group whose primary actor rolls the most successes wins the turn, opening one of each other group's Doors, or two each on an exceptional success.

This continues until only one side has Doors remaining and has yet not backed down, or until someone breaks the standoff.

Step Three: The Standoff Ends

A standoff ends in one of two ways for each side:

- If the primary actor has no Doors remaining or if he backed down, he and his allies suffer the Beaten Down Tilt and surrender, giving their opponents whatever they wanted in the current scene; each player gains a Willpower and a Beat, as normal.
- If any character breaks the standoff, handle the fallout as a normal action scene, but apply any bonuses gained from Make Ready and Take Aim actions.

The Art of the Duel

Formal duels first developed as a means of settling disputes between European aristocrats over matters of honor. While some disputes in the Wild West that end in quick-draw duels arise this way, alcohol and short tempers are more commonly to blame. The era's revolvers are much more accurate than the muzzle-loaded pistols of the previous century, so the combatant who draws and fires first usually emerges victorious.

Ritual duels have long been a staple of Lost society, providing the most common way of resolving hostile oaths and forming the backbone of changeling oneiromachy traditions. Those less sure of their skills with a pistol push for dueling in dreams or in the Hedge, where they can use the environment to their advantage. Courts in the west each have their own rules for ritual dueling, but the plethora of courtless out here means the ritual part often gets tossed out the window in favor of merciless showdowns with iron bullets. Changelings on the frontier have less patience than most for loyalists of all stripes, and generally follow a policy of shooting them on sight.

Open, direct conflicts between the Wise resemble quick-draw duels even when they don't involve guns, for often the mage who strikes first strikes last. Many Nameless count on exactly that, and bank on the Diamond's reluctance to let things get that far, pushing their luck because they know the Orders would rather cede ground than let outright magical violence erupt in the middle of Sleeper towns. Diamond mages give the Duel Arcane a place of enormous importance as a result, pushing to make it the default means of settling Awakened conflict in the west to discourage these coercive Nameless tactics. The Bay City Marshals (p. 384) and their copycat Orders also prize the Duel Arcane highly, viewing it as the primary way to pass

judgment on a miscreant whose guilt can't be proven or whose case they feel ambiguous enough about to leave the verdict in the hands of gnosis.

Changelings and the Duel Arcane

The Court of the Leafless Tree has perfected methods to allow the Lost to participate in Duels Arcane alongside their Awakened partners, and for willworkers to participate in Wyrd oaths. Thus, the marshals can formally ritualize nonlethal magical duels as hostile oaths, and the Wyrd will back them.

- The Prime 3 spell "Display of Power" with a conjunctional Fate 1 effect makes the clauses of fae Contracts visible, stripping the Mask away from the pacts behind them to show what they can do when invoked; thus, a changeling can participate in the Duel Arcane using her Contracts as sword and shield. Notary changelings enjoy a +1 bonus to all Duel Arcane rolls.
- Use a changeling's Mantle rating as an Arcanum for Court Contracts. For Arcadian Contracts, her effective Arcanum rating is 2 in any Regalia in which she knows only Common Contracts, and 4 in any Regalia in which she knows at least one Royal Contract. Treat her Mantle as one higher if she wears a court Crown.
- Changelings do not need to spend Glamour in the Duel Arcane.
- A changeling with the Triumphant Condition enjoys its benefits among both changelings and mages, and a sorcerer who defeats a Lost duelist enjoys the same. A victorious changeling can use Contracts against the loser of a Duel Arcane without spending Glamour, as though successfully performing a Loophole, until Triumphant resolves.

Wyrdbound Oaths (Fate ••• + Mind ••)

Practice: Weaving

Primary Factor: Duration

Suggested Rote Skills: Expression, Politics, Socialize

The mage grants the Wyrd authority over her words and desires. She becomes a valid participant in Wyrd-backed oaths (**Changeling**, p. 212), although she can't initiate them. If the spell ends before she upholds her end of the oath, or if she breaks it normally, she gains the Oathbreaker Condition (**Changeling**, p. 343); subjects of her Fate spells gain +1 Withstand until it resolves. If the spell isn't Lasting and doesn't have indefinite Duration, this outcome is likely unless the oath is a hostile one and the mage defeats her opponent in a timely fashion (or she uses other magic to get around these consequences); the Wyrd doesn't accept "this magic is temporary" as an excuse for backing out of a long-term promise.

+2 Reach: The effect is Lasting.

Storytelling Mysterious Frontiers

The Western genre has been a foundation of action movies for close to a century. It features visually interesting landscapes, colorful casts of larger-than-life characters, and a reliance on violence as a means of achieving goals. Some Westerns present a clear conflict between good and evil. The genre gave us the whole concept of "black hats" and "white hats," after all. But in many cases, the protagonists are flawed, morally gray, or downright scoundrels.

The historical reality of the period is less romanticized. A gunslinger's greatest asset isn't his ability to win gunfights; rather, it's his reputation as someone who came out ahead in one or two previous duels discourages future challengers. The absence of manufacturing centers in most Western towns and the difficulty in moving supplies between far-flung points frequently creates scarcities. Coupled with limited police presence, these embolden those willing to use force to get what they need or want.

Horror in a Wild West chronicle arises in part from the separation of its characters from the niceties of civilization we take for granted.

- **Scarcity:** Characters often don't have everything they need, and any crisis only exacerbates these shortages. In game terms, the Availability of many goods and services varies widely from place to place, and sometimes they aren't available for purchase at any price. This applies to supernatural resources, too. It's difficult to harvest Glamour on a trek across the desert, or to lay hands on a Grimoire when the nearest Order repository is a few hundred miles away. Not every chapter needs to be an exercise in resource management, but some stories benefit from focusing on how the characters husband their scarce assets and what they're willing to do to get more.
- **Anarchy:** The law's long arm needs a backscratcher to reach most of the places Wild West chronicles feature. Most sheriffs and U.S. Marshals have no backing beyond a handful of untrained deputies drawn from the locals — and those are the *good* law-keepers. The bad ones uphold themselves as sole arbiters of the law and use their position to benefit themselves at their communities' expense. In between are those who permit criminal behavior because they fear its perpetrators. When an outlaw gang comes to town, murders the sheriff, and declares they're in charge, anyone who resists is liable to wind up dead. It's a



similar experience when a cavalry company arrives telling Natives they must abandon ancestral homes to make way for a railroad or mining operation. When the gang or company contains Seers, Scelesti, privateers, or Huntsmen, changelings and mages alike must decide whether to make a stand — without backup — or flee.

- **Wilderness:** Harsh landscapes mean hundreds of miles lie between permanent settlements. These wildernesses teem with unknown dangers and hide treasures — a silver mine, arable land, or a mountain pass that shaves weeks off a known trade route. For the Awakened, this includes new Mysteries, but seldom do these wonders lie uncontested by alien entities, dangerous monsters, or the Seers who found them first. Changelings view these isolated stretches with dread, as the Gentry pluck fresh victims there without anyone questioning the disappearances. The Lost have little choice but to brave them, though, whether to conduct reconnaissance, rescue a Huntsman's quarry before it's too late, or simply travel from one town to another. The Hedge, the Astral, and other realms serve as different kinds of wildernesses to explore, civilize, or die in.

Western Antagonists

Ordinary Reprobates: The Wild West gives people plenty of opportunities to make villains of themselves. Outlaws rob those who can't defend themselves. Corrupt officials line their pockets with protection money. Military officers, displaced in postbellum America, brutalize Natives to advance their careers.

Rival Mages: The Diamond wants Libertines and apostates to toe the line, while the Nameless want to do whatever the hell they want, and damn anyone who gets in their way. In the wide swaths of territory without established Consilia, hot wars between rival mages are frequent and often deadly.

Seers of the Throne: The Seers consider the west ripe for conquest, and that sometimes includes its Hedge. Although some regard **hobgoblins** with their Goblin Markets and Hedge encroachment as unwanted competition, others — especially Mammonites — maintain partnerships with faerie creatures and changeling privateers. Who better to put a price on everything under the sun than the fae?

Privateers: Some changelings, friendless in a strange, barren place, resort to banditry or cattle rustling to survive. A sizeable number of desperados become privateers. Hedge denizens and Huntsmen are not the only ones who pay good prices for their victims; Awakened **Reapers** need a steady supply of souls, and some **Guardians of the Veil** aren't too picky about who collects their bounty for bringing in a particularly troublesome apostate.

True Fae: The Gentry typically stay in their Faerie palaces. Rarely, however, the Others resolve disputes with proxy wars fought in the mortal world. The West's open and varied landscapes make tempting battlefields for these faerie wars. Some are contests over whose minions can occupy a town for an agreed-upon number of consecutive days. Others decide the loser based on whose army is annihilated to the last hobgoblin first. Some only end with a Title's capture. Such war zones usually spell disaster for anyone living there; mages and changelings can become worse than collateral damage.

Story Hooks

Each of the following story hooks assumes a default tier of play, but the Storyteller can scale each scenario up or down to fit into her chronicle as she likes.

The Bounty (Local)

The Bay City Marshals, or a copycat Order elsewhere, imposes on the characters to capture a fugitive mage and bring him back alive to stand trial. He stands accused of murdering a marshal just beyond the boundaries of the freehold, which means he doesn't bear the brand of his crime. After a harrowing chase and potential misadventures, the characters catch up to him. During the journey back to the freehold, the murderer claims that although he killed the marshal in question, it was not an act of murder. He says the decedent was a True Loyalist, hiding her crimes by committing them only outside the freehold's reach under the guise of bounty hunting. He knows the court won't be interested in his reasons before subjecting him to show trial and ritual execution. But he also knows the identity of the loyalist's accomplice, whose confession might be enough to convince the marshals to spare his life.

Exploitation in the Wild West

This era is one of larger-than-life heroes and truly contemptible villains. Playing up the crimes of these lowlifes is an important part of the Storyteller's job. That said, some players may be uncomfortable with certain kinds of behavior — even in fictional characters the posse plans to kill in a shootout. Storytellers, check with players to determine what themes and atrocities are over the line, and respect those restrictions. Also, bear in mind that not everyone knows their limit until they exceed it, and if a player asks the troupe to back away from an upsetting description or theme, everyone at the table should respect that.

See **Changeling**, p. 302, for suggestions and techniques to support player safety at the table.

The Great Athenaeum Robbery (Regional)

The first coast-to-coast track opened in 1870, a boon to trade and travel for Awakened as well as Sleepers. The Mysterium's Sacramento and New Jersey Caucuses negotiate an unprecedented joint effort to establish a new Athenaeum in Denver. Due to the erratic behavior of westbound Space magic, the Grimoires and other collections must travel by train from St. Louis, and the characters must escort them.

En route, a passenger strikes up a running game of poker with anyone who'll ante up. As the game goes on, anyone who wins even a penny gradually becomes obsessed with acquiring more wealth and valuables of any kind, eventually getting desperate enough to steal, manipulate, or fight to get them. If the characters don't get to the bottom of it soon, all these "winners" converge on the hidden car where the would-be Athenaeum's treasures are stowed, seeming to sense their presence. The gambler himself is elusive, and has an uncanny ability to take the characters by surprise. He never lets anyone else shuffle his deck of cards — a fae token, if the characters get their hands on it to examine it.

The Wagon Train (Regional)

A team-up between Seers and changeling privateers kidnaps an entire wagon train several days out of Independence, Missouri, redirecting it into the Hedge at a wild gallop. But the trail is relatively easy to follow, if the Hedge and its goblins can be tamed enough to allow passage. Catching the kidnappers allows the characters to learn the location of the hidden Goblin Market where many local privateers operate, and where Seers have established their own outpost to horn in on the Gentry slave trade in the absence of a human one. In the immediate term, though, the characters must escort a few dozen frightened people through the Hedge and back into the mortal world, avoiding all the varied threats that would love to get their hands on a bunch of confused humans far from home.

The Hedge Ruin (Epic)

A pair of True Fae stages a grand duel to the death in Napa Valley, placing the region's inhabitants and Mysteries in grave jeopardy as the Kindly Ones' armies pour out of the Hedge to do battle. Both Titles are powerful, and the





Nameless mages who call the valley home plan an attack likely to result in catastrophic collateral damage. As the characters explore options, they learn that one of the combatants' banes is a strange plant that only grows in a ruin from the Time Before, somewhere within the Hedge. The rumor of the ruin is an old one, one that always sounded like yet another trick of the Hedge's to tempt mages into wandering deep into fae territory. But a hobgoblin assures the characters it's real, and she can take them there.

The characters face a dangerous journey through the Hedge along with the defenses and guardians of the ruin to find the Fae's bane. On the trip back, they contend with both combatants' servants, who by now have discovered what the characters are up to. Finally, they must enter a hobgoblin battlefield, reach their target, and deploy the bane, all while preventing as much damage to the surrounding community as possible and potentially dealing with Nameless rivals once the battle is done.

Sources and Inspiration

The Wild West has inspired countless works across every media and genre. Each region has its own vast expanse of tales. Here are just a few of the best inspirations for this Dark Era.

Television

Deadwood — an acclaimed HBO series, set in the gold-mining town of Deadwood, South Dakota. Historical figures abound, including Seth Bullock, Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane, and Wyatt Earp. Ian McShane's Al Swearengen steals the show, and is the perfect example of a Wild West Seer of the Throne.

Westworld — another HBO series, this one based on a Michael Crichton novel. The idle rich visit a technological marvel, an Old West recreation manned by artificial humans that lets them act out their wildest fantasies and explore their darker sides. As the plot unfolds, it becomes clear much more is happening behind the scenes; it has strong **Mage** overtones.

The West — Ken Burns' eight-part historical miniseries covers westward expansion from 1806 through 1914. Episode segments focus on specific incidents in history, areas of the country, and the stories of both white settlers and indigenous people.

Film

The Prestige (2006, dir. Christopher Nolan) — set in London and Colorado, this mesmerizing film is the perfect dark tale of obsession, revenge, and magic in the 1890s. It features Hugh Jackman and Christian Bale as stage magicians, David Bowie as a mysterious Nikola Tesla, and the culture of showmanship that pervaded the late 1800s. Are you watching closely?

Unforgiven (1992, dir. Clint Eastwood) and *Hostiles* (2017, dir. Scott Cooper) — two modern Western films that confront the darker, uglier side of the Old West and explore what a culture of violence does to the people who live in it.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly (1966, dir. Sergio Leone) — Three ruthless gunslingers race to find a fortune in gold, alternately working together and betraying one another. A spaghetti-Western classic.

The Magnificent Seven (2016, dir. Antoine Fuqua) — A frontier town's desperate folk hire seven mercenaries to protect them from a merciless mining boss and his small army of thugs. A modern remake of a classic (itself based on the Akira Kurosawa film *Seven Samurai*), the movie features unlikely allies facing impossible odds more for redemption than for money.

Tombstone (1993, dir. Cosmatos and Jarre) — A lawman's retirement plans hit a snag as he and his companions make enemies out of a local outlaw gang. Val Kilmer as Doc Holliday steals the show in this entertaining account of true events leading up to the famous shootout at the OK Corral.

3:10 to Yuma (2007, dir. James Mangold): A small-time rancher agrees to help escort a captured outlaw across dangerous country to face justice. Another remake, the film is a story of standing on principle in the face of increasingly hopeless odds.

Books

The Dark Tower (book series) by Stephen King — King's epic fantasy Western follows Roland of Gilead, the last gunslinger, on the trail of the wizard who killed his father. The eponymous tower is both literal and metaphorical.

Golgotha (book series), by R. S. Belcher — the perfect blend of Western and supernatural horror for our era, well-suited to crossover. The first two books are entitled *The Six-Gun Tarot* and *The Shotgun Arcana*.

Frog Music (novel), by Emma Donoghue — set in 1876 San Francisco and based on a true unsolved murder case. Burlesque dancer Blanche Beunon tries to track down the murderer of her friend Jenny Bonnet, who broke the law on the daily by dressing in men's clothes.

Six-Gun Snow White (novella), by Catherynne M. Valente — This fairytale retelling features a half-Crow, half-white narrator. Valente weaves fairytale elements into the Old West. The Huntsman charged with bringing Snow back to her father fits right in with our era.

An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States (book) by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz covers 400 years of American expansion through Native American eyes. Dunbar-Ortiz challenges the United States' founding myths, with an unflinching look at the devastating effect American policy had on the country's indigenous peoples.

Chronicles of Darkness in the Wild West

Sacramento, the western terminus of the Transcontinental Railroad, is a popular Pilgrimage destination for **Prometheans** trying their luck at their own "rush" for Gold. The city's sprawling railyard boasts hidden Rambles scratched into tracks and train car corners. But something disturbs the Divine Fire here. A series of major floods in the 1850s and '60s led to a construction project that raised the street level of the whole city, creating a layer of converted basements, abandoned rooms, and buried planked pavement running underneath. Azothic radiance excites a dissonant symphony of rattling sounds under the streets and floorboards, and the Created wonder what really might have caused the flooding.

The late 19th century sees both massive leaps in electrical engineering and a glut of circuses and open-air entertainment. Innovations in direct-current generation spark more than just power, triggering a cascade of conspiracies creating **Deviants** with the new advances. One of these, a massive traveling sideshow and vaudeville troupe called the Sidewinder Circus, carts its Devoted around the country to display them as so-called "freaks." The first few to go Renegade form the Colorado Rose Gang, named for its leader — and now infamous for its brutal takedowns of exploitative sideshow managers, ringleaders, and impresarios.

Many **Sin-Eaters** of the American West are found among the Native peoples, not the white settlers, and they work tirelessly to fight injustice and brutality. Others found literal ghost towns wherever settlers abandon mines or flee for established cities where natural or unnatural hazards prove too much for burgeoning municipalities to handle, attending to the dead left behind and bringing others in from the wilderness to give them community. Krewes of Furies and Pilgrims are especially numerous out here.

In 1872, two rival paleontologists started a heated, still-ongoing competition over unearthing dinosaur fossils in the west. One expedition unearthed something *else*: pieces of a massive clock, ancient enough to be anachronistic, which suggested the size of the whole to be at least 100 miles in diameter. Reports of the strange find trickle back to **demons** on the East Coast, tickling their memories with vague impressions of familiarity. They set out in small groups to investigate, hoping to find defunct Infrastructure or evidence of the God-Machine's plans. The more they dig, the more the Unchained believe this isn't the only such clock; rumor places another one under the Alaskan tundra. Humans say the loss of 12 days in 1867 in Alaska was due to moving the International Date Line when the U.S. purchased the territory from Russia, but demons suspect it was more than a simple calendar shift.

BAY CITY MARSHALS

The Court of the Leafless Tree; Justice Is Magical

Here's the cold, hard truth, kid. All those addle-headed fools up on their high horses, looking for Atlantis or quibbling season to season over the finer points of atrocity, they're playing right into everything that's wrong with this world. "That's just the way it is," they tell you. "The world is Fallen. The Hunt is coming. Just accept it."

But you don't have to. I know, because I don't. Yeah, the world is Fallen and the Hunt is coming, but it's no done deal. It's somebody's fault — a whole heap of somebodies. And the nice thing about it being somebody's fault is you can pay 'em back for it.

Listen, kid, you can take the easy way out if you want, I won't stop you. Play by their rules, stick your head in the sand till trouble passes you by for one more day. Or, you can pick up that six-shooter and come with me. Earn your gnosis. Earn your freedom. Justice ain't blind: she sees with Awakened Sight, with true Clarity. When enough unrighteous blood whets the blades of our souls, we'll pierce the Lie and settle the score once and for all.

As the **Marshals** see it, the west is full of callous, selfish people taking advantage of anyone they can. More than that, the Lie is a fundamental injustice, a wrong the Exarchs visited upon all of humanity that's perpetuated in a thousand ways. The Gentry are robber barons of the worst caliber, doing as they please and getting away with it no matter who they grind beneath their heels along the way. Simple escape is not enough: Someone needs to take these devils down a peg, and the buck stops with the Hangmen.

Above all, the Marshals are vigilantes. While the occasional legitimate lawman might join up, the sheriff of a little cow town in Kansas has no jurisdiction over the cosmic forces this group considers its duty to punish. More often, they are no kind of authority in any recognized sense, but they take it upon themselves to make, adjudicate, and implement their own law.

Mages and changelings join the Bay City Marshals when they suffer or witness terrible wrongs that need avenging, they want to bring order to a lawless place, they're driven to take matters into their own hands and don't submit well to authority, or they seek to destroy all who propagate Lies and enable the enemies of humanity.

Core Beliefs: Lex Talionis

Lex Talionis, or "the law of talion," is the principle of retaliation in kind. The Marshals punish wrongdoers according to their crimes, natures, and victims, thus paying back what's owed. If the miscreant survives, they teach him the error of his ways, so the scales don't get unbalanced again. In the Hangmen's eyes, whatever sentence they carry out is not only a fate the judged deserves, but a mystical imperative.

Crimes Must Not Go Unanswered

Changeling Marshals see poetic justice as a necessary expression of the Wyrd, and they've made a Bargain with Retaliation itself. "An eye for an eye" is as reciprocal as any pledge, so they swear never to let a wrong go unpunished. While the Summer Court lashes out in wrath, these Lost believe noble vengeance is a dish best served cold, preferably with an oath sworn on a magic bullet. They plan to take the fight to the Fae, but not in anger on the battlefield; that's wasteful. They do it in surgical strikes and challenges to call the enemy out one by one. They aim to see every Huntsman hang high from the gallows, and every loyalist in irons until they learn who their real friends are.

For mages among the Hangmen, the pursuit of payback against the Exarchs, the Abyss, and anybody who perpetuates the Lie is itself a path to enlightenment; but it's not about the struggle, as the Arrow espouses. No, it's about clarity of vision and purity of devotion, about honing the soul to a razor-sharp edge one judgment at a time and using it to cut through the Lie. They believe that only in the act of personal retaliation for crimes against the Supernal can they reach their gnostic potential and ensure justice for the Fallen World is served.

The Marshals consider Huntsmen, fae privateers and loyalists, Scelesti, and Seers of the Throne especial sworn enemies, but they act to punish anyone exploiting others for their own selfish gain — human or otherwise. Pistol duels are a staple of their practices, and they've refined supernatural dueling traditions to serve their brand of vigilante justice.

The Punishment Must Fit the Criminal

Not everyone who commits the same crime deserves the same punishment. The Awakened must be held accountable to the demands of Wisdom to temper their power, a higher standard than the one to which they hold Sleepers; accordingly, their punishments for committing crimes against Sleepers are more severe. The Lost tailor punishments to specific crimes as part of their Bargain and to satisfy the Wyrd, balancing the ledger as accurately as they're able.

The kinds of people who join up are those who don't yet understand the weight of bloodshed but soon will, and those who understand it all too well; in both cases, the lesson is that

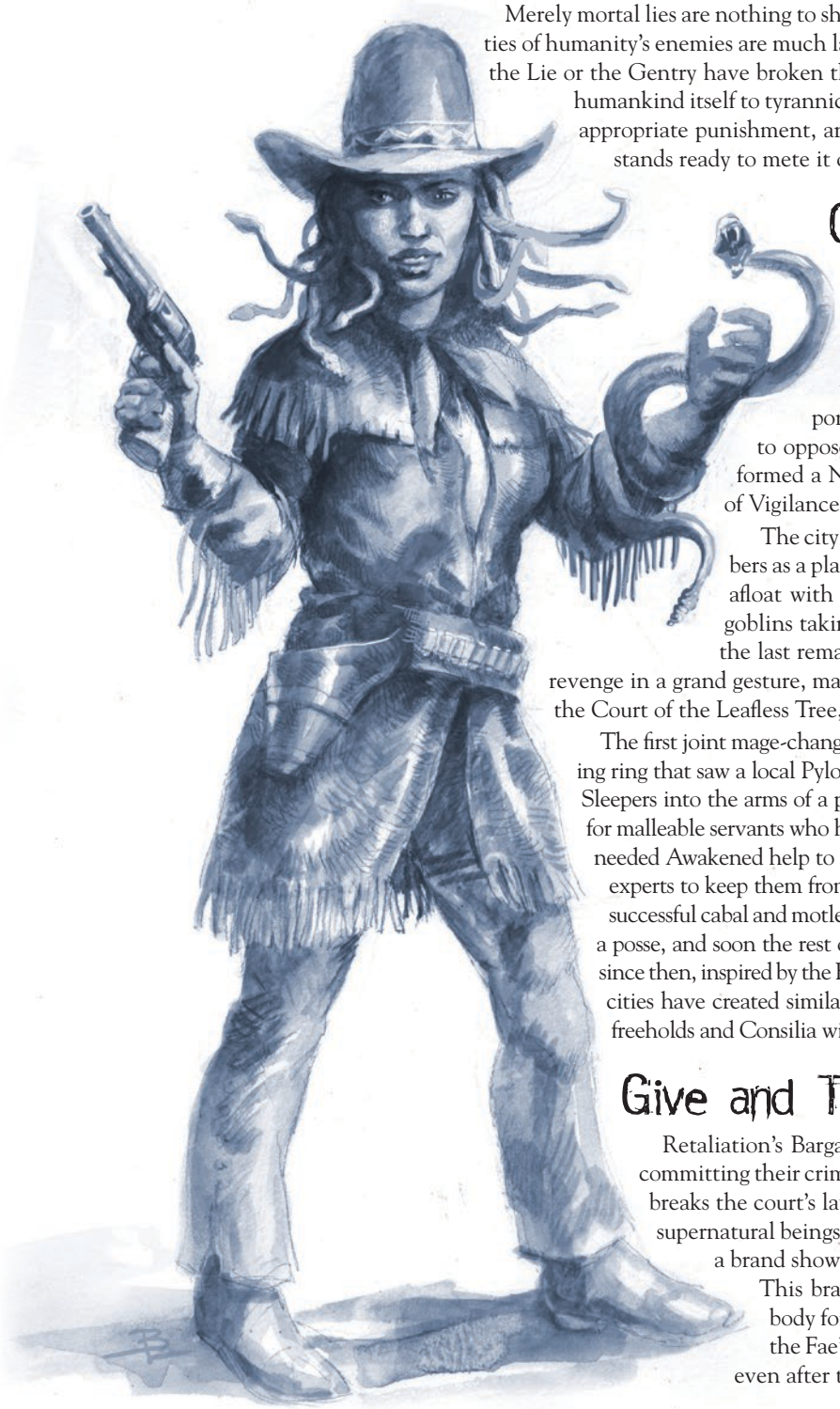
"I'm taking you in for kidnapping, murder, and treason against humanity."

punishment is sacred, but murder is tragic. Yes, some who trespass deserve to die, in accordance with their crimes; but killing *everyone* who crosses you is a good way to end up just like your enemy. A pistol duel doesn't need to end in death for those who can magically close wounds, hold Duels Arcane without actually hurting anyone, and fight in dreams. Being skilled enough with a revolver *not* to kill a target is an emphasis in training, as is being creative in sentencing the guilty — changelings and mages collectively have a plethora of options, and can *always* find alternatives to killing if they try hard enough.

Of course, in practice, people get emotional, drastic times call for drastic measures, and accidents happen. Sometimes, the ledger gets unbalanced in the other direction. Then, another Marshal might have to square things.

Traitors Must Hang; Liars Betray Humanity

Merely mortal lies are nothing to shake a stick at; the deceptions that enable the atrocities of humanity's enemies are much larger and more sinister. Those who knowingly serve the Lie or the Gentry have broken the most sacred and universal compact by betraying humankind itself to tyrannical gods and mad, alien worlds. Execution is the only appropriate punishment, and every Marshal — mage and changeling alike — stands ready to mete it out.



Origins

The 1848–49 gold rush sparked a population explosion in San Francisco. The press of unfamiliar faces and general lawlessness made it an easy hunting ground for supernatural predators, and mages with autocratic ambitions found no shortage of opportunities to exercise their tyranny with no Consilium to oppose them. Sorcerers disgusted by their peers' excesses formed a Nameless Order inspired by the Sleeper Committee of Vigilance to protect the defenseless from magical predation.

The city's Lost, initially drawn to San Francisco in large numbers as a place to find themselves anew, couldn't keep a freehold afloat with the glut of loyalists, Huntsmen, and opportunistic goblins taking advantage of the same anonymity. In the 1850s, the last remaining free changeling of a decimated motley swore revenge in a grand gesture, making a Bargain with Retaliation itself and founding the Court of the Leafless Tree, named after western slang for the gallows.

The first joint mage-changeling operation in San Francisco shut down a trafficking ring that saw a local Pylon of the Ministry of Mammon whisking unsuspecting Sleepers into the arms of a privateer gang operating out of a Hollow in exchange for malleable servants who had lost their souls and minds to the Thorns. The Lost needed Awakened help to stand against the Seers, and the mages needed Hedge experts to keep them from wandering into the Gentry's parlors. Afterward, the successful cabal and motley decided to form a permanent partnership they called a posse, and soon the rest of their Order and court followed suit. Over the years since then, inspired by the Bay City Marshals' success, Lost and Awakened in other cities have created similar organizations, much to the consternation of extant freeholds and Consilia with footholds there.

Give and Take

Retaliation's Bargain doesn't prevent the Fae and their hounds from committing their crimes, but it marks them for future justice. Anyone who breaks the court's law within the freehold's territory — including other supernatural beings, ephemeral entities, and ordinary humans — suffers a brand showing the Marshals' sigil, visible to supernatural sight. This brand appears in a discreet place on the perpetrator's body for small crimes, while those who kidnap or murder in the Fae's Names find it writ plain upon their faces. It persists even after they leave the freehold's boundaries.



The Court of the Leafless Tree upholds the Bargain with regular rituals of retribution, usually bringing a wanted criminal back to the court alive and subjecting him to an elaborate show trial before publicly hanging him. Sometimes the ritual features a trial by combat or ordeal, but it never changes the verdict, for Retaliation never allows the guilty to go free. If the time for the court's obligations comes around and no guilty party is readily available, the changelings are forced to go to great lengths to find — or, in desperate cases, create — one.

Since the freehold only has one court, the Leafless Tree cycles power between Lost and Awakened by turns. When a changeling wears the crown, justice verges more on vengeance; when a mage is in power, the pendulum swings more toward protection of the innocent. Individual rulers may disagree with these roles, but they must oblige to keep the Bargain. The crown passes from changeling to mage upon any member's completion of a major manhunt and execution of a powerful foe (whether truly guilty or not); it passes from mage to changeling when any member proves to the monarch beyond a doubt the innocence of one thought guilty and already marked for the gallows. The mage or changeling (depending on whose turn is up) most responsible for the deed gains the crown.

Mantle Effects: the jingle of spurs, the click of the revolver's hammer. The smell of gunsmoke, sweat, and leather. The taste of gun oil, trail dust, and blood. The Leafless Tree Mantle kicks up dust devils in the Marshal's wake. At its most powerful, small animals scurry for shelter and tumbleweeds flee her approach. Bystanders — especially those who bear the court's brand — feel their throats tighten as though encircled by a noose.

Yantras: Awakened Marshals rely on symbolism appropriate for roaming lawkeepers, buckaroos, the gallows, and pistol duels at high noon (and in fact, high noon is a common environmental Yantra). Their tools include six-shooters, wanted posters, nooses, jail cell keys, and 10-gallon hats.

No Rest for the Wicked

Mages among the Hangmen succumb to hubris when they allow personal grudges and emotions in the heat of the moment to usurp justice in their judgments; when they elevate their own judgment above that of Sleeper law enforcement not for any practical or ethical reason but simply because they believe they know better; or when they deliver punishments that outstrip the crimes out of anger or bloodthirst, or as shows of dominance.

Changelings who let Retaliation slip into bloody vengeance find it difficult to escape the slippery slope, for vengeance is a natural cycle like the seasons or the moon's phases, and it can feel like a visceral comfort to those with so much to pay back. It takes discipline, courage, and sacrifice to stay noble. It takes true Clarity to see the spiral, and it takes true friends to pull a changeling back from its edge. Lost Marshals who isolate themselves from their posses often end up turning privateer.

The two sides of frontier justice's coin — the mage and the changeling, the passive protector and the prowling punisher — are meant to balance each other out, but retribution is an intensely personal business, and it doesn't take much to tip a posse too far over one edge or the other.

Bay City Marshal Systems

The Marshals' Brand: Changelings and anyone under the effects of the Fate 1 spell "Interconnections" with the +2 Reach effect can see the marks of criminals against the freehold, which proclaims the crime to those who know how to interpret it. The mark cannot be permanently erased without redemption, even for the Gentry. An act of sincere atonement followed by a Wyrd-based oath of absolution can wash it away, as can the personal pardon of the court's sovereign or the Fate 4 "Atonement" spell.

Associated Bedlam Emotions: Guilt (Guilty Condition) or dread (Paranoid Condition).

Leafless Tree Mantle Merit (• to •••••)

Prerequisite: Changeling

Effect: A courtier of the Bay City Marshals (p. 384) gains a Glamour point whenever he metes out justice to a party he genuinely believes is guilty.

- • Gain a bonus to Initiative equal to your character's Mantle dots in a one-on-one duel.
- •• Gain bonus dice equal to your character's Mantle dots to mundane rolls to track someone down, either a specific target or the unknown perpetrator of some deed.
- ••• Gain a bonus to Speed equal to your character's Mantle dots whenever he's the pursuer in a chase.
- •••• If an enemy deals damage to your character, one of his motley-mates or fellow Marshals, or an innocent, his physical attacks against that enemy gain 8-again for the rest of the scene.
- ••••• Once per scene, you may spend a Willpower to gain the rote quality on a roll that would further or resolve an Aspiration related to meting out punishment your character deems earned.

Mystery Cult Initiation Merit: Bay City Marshals (• to •••••)

Prerequisites: Awakened or Sleepwalker

Effect: Your character is a member of the Bay City Marshals (p. 384), a Nameless Order dedicated to vigilante justice and righteous punishment. Each dot in this Merit also acts as Status in the Order.

- • Your character gains the Empathy (Motives) Specialty.
- •• Your character gains one dot of the Fame Merit (**Mage**, p. 105), having successfully proven herself to her posse and made a local name for herself.
- ••• Your character gains Empathy, Firearms, and Investigation as Rote Skills.
- •••• Your character gains +3 Doors in a Duel Arcane.
- ••••• Your character gains either the additional Virtue of Just or the additional Vice of Vengeful. Whenever she gains Willpower from this additional anchor, she also regains a point of Mana.

Contracts of Retaliation

Retaliation is about righteous punishment, compensating crime victims, and repaying deeds done in-kind.

Draw Likeness (Royal)

The changeling speaks aloud, naming a branded criminal, a specific crime ("the man who robbed this train"), or a general crime ("train robbery") when invoking this Contract.

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation + Mantle vs. Composure + Wyrd

Action: Contested

Duration: Instant

Roll Results

Success: The changeling renders a likeness of the target on any flat surface a piece of graphite could mark, though it appears in a shimmering, ethereal ink; her finger works as well as any pencil. The likeness isn't perfect and may even be a crude drawing, but it highlights just the right details to make matching the face to the image much easier, granting rolls to that end the rote quality for anyone who sees the drawing. Further, it grants one free Clue (**Changeling**, p. 194) about the target's whereabouts or recent activity to anyone examining the likeness for the first time.

If the changeling named a general crime, the target is the closest person to the changeling who committed it within the last lunar month. If no such target exists, the Contract fails.

Exceptional Success: Anyone looking upon the likeness immediately remembers when and where they last saw the perpetrator; this provokes a Clash of Wills against powers that would prevent them from remembering. The likeness also hints at the target's *future* whereabouts or activity, granting the viewer the Informed Condition (**Changeling**, p. 342) regarding the criminal.

Dramatic Failure: The intended target knows the changeling is after him, and gains information about her as though she were the Contract's target and it achieved exceptional success.

Failure: The Contract fails.

Loophole: A victim of one of the target's crimes described him to the changeling during this scene.

Peacemaker's Draw (Common)

The changeling may invoke this Contract at any point during the initiative order, including to interrupt another character's turn. If she doesn't have a ranged weapon readied (whether thrown or fired), she may draw one reflexively; if she doesn't have one at all, the Contract creates one out of Glamour and spit, with standard traits.

The changeling can invoke this Contract multiple times in the same turn — even against the same opponent — limited only by ammunition and her ability to spend Glamour. Each attempt, successful or not, counts as an attack with the readied weapon, using up ammunition as appropriate, and the target must be within the weapon's range. This attack ignores cover, ricocheting impossibly from objects in the environment if need be.

The Contract's invocation roll uses the Skill appropriate to the weapon used.

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: Dexterity + (Firearms or Athletics) + Mantle vs. Stamina + Wyrd

Action: Reflexive and contested

Duration: Instant

Roll Results

Success: The changeling strikes an item in the target's hand (including a weapon) or on their person, sending it flying without inflicting any damage. Retrieving a fallen item requires an instant action.

Alternatively, the changeling may impose an appropriate Personal Tilt on the target. An arrow or knife through a sleeve might pin the victim's arm, imposing Arm Wrack; a broken belt might slide target's pants down to his ankles as he runs for cover, imposing Knocked Down. In all cases, the target can end the Tilt with an instant action to remedy it — rubbing the dust out of his eyes, pulling up his pants, pulling the sleeve free, etc. The Storyteller is the final arbiter of which Tilts are appropriate.

The target also gains the Leveraged Condition (**Changeling**, p. 342) regarding any witnesses to this Contract's effects other than the changeling herself, as his reputation takes a dive.

Exceptional Success: The changeling chooses where fallen objects land, which could be in her own hand. The Tilts she imposes last for the scene, as uncanny ill fortune conspires against the target.

Failure: The Contract fails.

Dramatic Failure: The Contract fails, and the changeling cannot use it again this scene.

Loophole: The target broke a standoff with the changeling within the last turn.

Judgment of the Leafless Tree

The Crown of Retaliation is a pale hat with a broad brim, decorated with a band of silver and gold bullets that suggest a more traditional crown. Once per chapter, the queen can spend a Willpower to declare a bounty on any target currently within the freehold's territory, branding them as the Bargain would (p. 384). The target can be a particular named fugitive or the perpetrator of a crime as broad as "petty theft" or as specific as "Red Leaf's murder." If she chose a broad crime, the brand affects the nearest perpetrator of that crime within the last lunar month.

The monarch may also, separately, spend a Willpower once per chapter to activate all currently extant brands. Until the sun next rises or sets, everyone with at least one dot of the court's Mantle or the Order's Mystery Cult Initiation knows the next major step they must take to find and reach the closest branded quarry. The revealed path isn't necessarily the shortest one in distance, or the safest — only the one that gains the most ground on the fugitive.





Otto's hands were shaking again, the rattle of the small tin of curios he collected from the British trench last week sounding around the cramped dug-out he called home for the moment. It seemed that every time they took one step forward they had to turn around and take it right back again.

Musketier Otto Meyer was a survivor. Some of his comrades, those still alive, had joked that Otto could become the German word for "lucky" if he made it back home. He had survived explosions that wiped out regiments, been found wandering the wasteland, dazed after machine-gun fire ripped apart his wave in the last push. When he was brought into the captured trench by the following troops, he started picking up random effects from the British dugouts like he was perusing a shop, placing each within the empty tobacco tin that once caught some shrapnel destined for his heart during the Marne offensive. Of course, the Germans had no word for "lucky," and Otto felt now he understood why. Surely, only a man who had seen what he had seen and experienced these sorts of horrors could truly be called lucky. That the litany of agony and terror passing before his eyes should be laughed at like a comedy as black as the hearts of their uncaring commanders.

Hugging himself, he stumbled out into the rain. Perhaps the feeling of that imperishable cold would invigorate his torpid body and break the nightmare he found himself in. All was quiet in the trench that night. Otto could see a small group of engineers were taking advantage of this time to lengthen the line, their shovels tirelessly slinging black mud up onto the lip of the trench, obscuring the horizon from view. For a moment, he allowed his eyes to close and let the water wash over him, perhaps he could drown here, a victim of mere nature. Not the steel and chlorine fires of industry that had taken each and every other fool who had signed up with him.

A thud behind him jarred him awake. Otto turned to look, seeing only one of the night watchmen looming beside the door to his dugout.

"All is well." intoned the night watchman in a voice that was like the landing of an unburst shell in thick earth.

"On that we can definitely disagree." retorted Otto, shivering in the chilling blast of the autumn rain. He regarded the night watchman, he'd seen his sort around before. His skin was so caked in mud he looked more like a golem than a man. His stature was broad and slab-like. He stood silently, offering no reply.

Otto turned again as an animal howling echoed over the drumming of the rain hitting the corrugated iron roof of the dugout. He glanced back at the night watchman, watching Otto watching him.

"What's your name anyway friend?" asked Otto.

After a long pause, "Faceless."

"Aren't we all?" hissed Otto, with a rueful chuckle. Herr Faceless simply stared back, in quiet contemplation.



The Great War
1914-1918 CE

"In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below."
– John McCrae, "In Flanders Fields"

A pair of gunshots rings out on a clear day in Sarajevo. Gavrilo Princip, a young Bosnian Serb student, smears his name onto the pages of history in blood. Can he have known the significance of the bullets that took the lives of Franz Ferdinand, the Archduke of Austria-Hungary and his wife, the Duchess Sophie Chotek? He wished to become a martyr for the freedom of his homeland from Austro-Hungarian rule, instead he fired the starter pistol on a conflict that would decimate nations.

The very concept of "total war" was unheard of in a time when a veneer of gentlemanly conduct covered the harsh realities of battles, where the technology of killing was becoming all-too efficient. Napoleon and the French Revolution taught a harsh lesson to the powers of Europe; that a nation brought entirely into war would always defeat a small but professional army. It was a recipe for human death and suffering on a scale unimagined, prompting the Great War to be called "the war to end all wars."

Such tumult and atrocity send their ripples across the full spectrum of the world. Truly, this was the first global war where humanity itself, and those who hide within it, were unable to escape the bounds of its battles. Conscripts and forces were called up from across a British Empire that covered one third of the world, and upon the lands of which it was said the sun never set. Old alliances were called upon to be honored and opportunistic leaders saw a chance to settle old scores or simply bring more lands under their sway.

There is no race, color, or creed untouched by the Great War. The monstrous creatures of the world were no different.

Uratha could not fail to hear the clarion call to battle. As blood flows and the land falls corrupted, spirits of brook, stream, and field are poisoned by the fetid, yellow clouds of chlorine gas and the seeping filth of over a million corpses. While some disenfranchised spirits cry out for aid or seek succor in the starved and thirsting flesh of the refugee and soldier alike, those who feed on the resonance of corruption and death thrive and grow more powerful than any stratagem could have foreseen. The scars of the war bleed across boundaries and give rise to creatures grotesque and frightful, a stain in the sight of the Great Wolf's children.

As bodies fall in the mud and the imperatives rise for more fresh meat to be placed in the grinder, it is only natural that many Prometheans are given their divine spark at this time. After all, there were trenches to dig, enemies to scout, and a war to fight. Why risk the lives of a single Frenchman, or German, whose weeping mothers dent the morale of the people back at home? Why spend the future of your nation when there is cheaper labor at hand? Amid the horrors of the trenches, rattle of machine guns, and deafening blasts of shells, Prometheans seek out the glimmers of humanity piercing the clouds of war. This crucible that melts away all pretension from its participants leaves the souls of each human bare to the eyes of the lost Lineage of the Faceless alongside the others of their kind.

In the aftermath of such mindless death, Sin-Eaters are inevitably born. The ghastly fate of the uncountable dead and their untold suffering are such that the battlefields of the Great War are rich fruit for the picking of

established and newfound Krewes alike. Only the hardiest of the Sin-Eaters can hope to withstand the sights, smells and ear-splitting sounds of this harshest of environments and put the restless souls of thousands to their final rest.

The whole world is watching, listening, reading each day the news of a front line that barely moves an inch. Each day, families dread the fateful letter from the War Office, informing them that a son, father, daughter, or sister has been taken by the hail of lead that fills the air of the barren wastelands that were once farms and homesteads. The Great War is a scar that changes the face of the world forever.

Themes and Moods

The Great War changes the world, pulling it out of an earlier era and plunging it into modern warfare over the course of mere months. The optimism of a golden age for Europe is quickly shattered, making way for distrust, fear, and a growing desperation as the war that would be "over by Christmas" stretches on and on and on.

Sacrifice

The Great War is filled with sacrifices. Whole armies are thrown into slaughter by their generals, all in hopes of taking a few more feet of territory. Individually, people choose to sacrifice for their friends, their loved ones, their country, leaving countless tales of heartbreaking heroism. Soldiers throw themselves into live fire to save the wounded, or risk court martial by ceasing fire to let their enemies do the same. Starving refugees give up their food and shelter to the young, the sick, the even more desperate. The home front bands together, cutting every corner to send what they can to "the boys in the trenches." Sacrifice shines a beacon on the best of humanity, the capacity for utter selflessness, but it also begs the question: Is it worth it? How many people are dying pointlessly, and could there be a better way?

Patriotism turns to Distrust

In 1914, years of general prosperity have encouraged nationalism and trust in many European countries. As the war begins, patriotism is among the casualties. Most of the great powers are either monarchies, or have vast pools of noble blood among their leadership. The men who die, and the civilians who suffer most on the home front, are more likely to be of common stock. Some soldiers lose all sense of purpose, others begin to think that maybe they have more in common with those fighting on the other side than they do with their commanding officers. The supernatural are hardly immune to this division, torn between loyalty to kin and loyalty to country and wondering if either can remain important among such tragedy. Either way, old allegiances are lost, and sometimes new ones are formed in their place.

Desperation

Certainly, the war brings fear, but sustained fear requires action, adrenaline, some certainty of ending. By the time the trenches are dug, heart-pounding fear has become interlaced with a dull, deadening desperation. For many, this eternal despair breeds hopelessness: If the entire world has decided to be here, doing this, how can anything ever be right again? In others, it brings about rash action: If only this battle can be won, this new weapon can be perfected, this one civilian can be saved, maybe the war will end and this will all finally be over.

Relentlessness

The Great War keeps coming, and coming. Grand plans and gunfire are one thing, but it's the horrible, day-to-day monotony of life that can drive one mad. Four years seems as though it should be a short time to supernatural creatures, especially those who live for centuries, but it is four years in which thousands and thousands of people are living among corpses and dying like animals. One death is a tragedy, but the relentlessness of the Great War turns the horrific into the mundane, leaving the people who are living through it numb.

The Illusion of Peace

In the spring of 1914, Sarajevo was a city marked by death. Spirits and ghosts walked its cobblestone alleyways at night, and Avernian Gates opened and closed like maws in unexpected doorways. The walking dead saw reflections of its mosques and cathedrals in the rivers of the Underworld, even from thousands of miles away. The city was no stranger to tragedy, from wars and plagues to fire and revolution, but there was no great and recent event that could be easily fingered as the source of Sarajevo's deathly disquiet. Yet still, the Underworld of the city was hungry and wakeful, as if in anticipation of some great storm to come.

On the 28th of June, 1914, one death in Sarajevo would mark the beginning of the greatest mass slaughter the world had ever seen.

A Century of Progress

In Europe, the 1800s had seen technological innovation at an unprecedented rate. The Victorian era marked the rise of industrialization in Britain, with new understandings in medicine and engineering that changed how people lived and worked. The world was becoming smaller, too; imperialist states in Europe, Japan, and the United States conquered any territory they could claim, growing rich on the steady supply of trade goods taken from their colonies.

At the turn of the century, everyday people could listen to records in the comfort of their homes, or take pictures of their loved ones with a portable camera. The first Zeppelin was taking off, and the Wright brothers were experimenting with kites and manned gliders. In the coming decade,



Ford would invent his Model T, the Curies would discover radioactivity, wireless radio transmissions would be sent and received, and the United States would get its first movie theater. Progress marched forwards and profits followed, trailed by waves of social change.

Of course, there were still wars. Colonial states disagreed with their imperialist leaders, and great powers clashed over territory and independence. Still, it seemed to many that the world was becoming a better place with every passing year, with no end in sight.

A Penchant for the Supernatural

Despite, or perhaps because of, the embracing of scientific progress, the mid-to-late 19th century was also a time when belief in the supernatural flourished. Spiritualism and seances, imported from the United States, grew in popularity in Britain as Queen Victoria took an interest. The Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck was published in 1910, inspired by gnostic Catholicism and the earlier tarot tradition. Not just whispered rumors, in the 19th century the supernatural was being documented and categorized as neatly as any natural phenomenon. Publications frequently found only hyperbole and charlatans, but real insight in contemporary books is far from impossible, and is often recorded with unprecedented attention to the less-than-poetic details.

For the creatures that hide in the shadows, progress and supernatural belief make for a dangerous combination. Just when it seemed that old folk wisdom about the supernatural was beginning to fade from the public consciousness, sightings that would once have been dismissed as mad ramblings can now be photographed by any child with a camera, or recorded and aired on a radio broadcast. It's a time of caution, and a time of questions: Is science about to discover a way to bring back the dead? Can Disquiet be spread through photographs? Are lighter-than-air crafts by nature a violation of the natural order, or merely a new part of it, and what will their spirits look like? There are no elders with experience to draw on for answers, no guidelines in the Prometheans' Azothic memory, only the discoveries and decisions made by the people living through this time of change.

Death in Sarajevo

In the summer of 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary visited Bosnia-Herzegovina, a province his country had recently annexed from Serbia. Despite the tumultuous political situation and numerous suggestions to cancel the trip, Ferdinand arrived in late June to observe a series of military exercises, while his wife visited schools and orphanages. Meanwhile, a handful of students under the banner of the Young Bosnia revolutionary group had come together, armed with guns and grenades and plotting assassination. The archduke's motorcade route had been published well in advance, and so the would-be killers lined up along a major avenue and waited. At least two of them lost their nerve, others failed to find an angle. One threw a grenade and missed, striking the next car down. The archduke was completely unharmed, and resolved to continue with the day's planned itinerary.

But death had other plans.

After failing to kill Ferdinand, one of the revolutionaries had retired to a cafe near his appointed spot along the motorcade route, cursing his luck at the Young Bosnian's botched attempt. Later that day, the archduke and his wife resolved to visit those injured in the failed assassination. A different route was planned, but some accident of communication meant their driver was never informed of the change. On this error, the first three cars of the motorcade turned down a side street. When informed of the mistake, the drivers stopped and stalled out in the process of reversing, all right in front of the little cafe where the failed assassin had been spending his afternoon. Gavrilo Princip, only 19 years old, walked up to Ferdinand and shot him point-blank, killing both the archduke and his wife.

The maws of Sarajevo's Underworld grinned widely, welcoming the first course of its expected feast. The death of the archduke had set in motion a chain of political events that would plunge the world into a war bloodier than anyone had yet imagined, much less seen.

The Great Powers

Europe in 1914 was a tangled web of alliances built on national pride, old grudges, and new trade agreements. For the death of the heir to their throne, Austria-Hungary prepared for war against Serbia, whom they suspected of arming the assassins. Germany agreed to uphold its alliance with Austria-Hungary against Russia, whose close diplomatic ties to Serbia made defending them a matter of pride to the country. France was also allied with Russia, leaving Germany trapped between two hostile states who had already begun to mobilize for war. The soldiers had barely begun to march, and already a regional conflict in the Balkans was reaching its tendrils up into northern Europe.

To survive against both France and Russia, Germany had a plan: Swing through the south of France and claim Paris quickly, then turn about to face the slower-moving Russian troops after France's swift defeat. But to get to Paris, German soldiers needed to move through Belgium, a neutral territory that had no part in the conflict. What they did have was an agreement with Great Britain, who had promised to protect the smaller country's neutrality in times of war.

From there, things only escalated. The Ottoman Empire joined with the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary to protect its financial interests. Japan declared war on Germany when the country failed to remove armed merchant ships from their waters. The Allied powers, especially Great Britain, brought in soldiers from their colonies around the world, turning the conflict into a truly global war.

The Schlieffen Hunt

Named after WWI ended, the Schlieffen Plan was Germany's plan to invade France through Belgium. To some Uratha in Germany, especially the Iron Masters, it was a call to action: Rise, hunt, destroy the wave of foreign humanity who would like nothing better than to invade their sovereign territory from all sides. Traveling with the German army was simple enough, but their scent did little to endear the foreign army to the wolves of Belgium.

It is Noble and Befitting

War was never much fun for the soldiers living through it, but as the Great War began it was still seen as an honorable pursuit, full of glory and adventure. The last major conflict that Europe had seen was the Napoleonic wars, now nearly a century in the past and immortalized in paintings and ballads. Other recent wars had been fought overseas, where the most modern European military technology gunned down native residents who were far less well equipped, leaving veterans highly confident in their fighting prowess. Young men from every country involved rushed to sign up and fight, sold on stories of medals and heroism. France would send its soldiers out into battle in colorful red trousers and crisp blue coats, the Russians wore tidy brimmed hats, picture-perfect and professional. People were ready to fight, even die, for the cause. No one expected to be slaughtered.

For the inhuman, too, there was plenty to attract excitement over the coming conflict. For the Created, the thrum of human energy was enough to turn heads. War means passion and triumph, struggle and bravery, a chance to forge real bonds of brotherhood with fellow soldiers while staying on the move and avoiding Wasteland. Wolf-Blooded, anchored to humanity but hungry for the rush of conflict, enlisted in droves, often hiding age or gender to do so. Many brought packmates along for the ride, unwilling to let their siblings fight alone. The Uratha might not recognize the political borders of humanity, but they could understand the need to defend territory, and of course the thrill of a good hunt.

There were not many Bound before the war began, only small pockets left over from past tragedies, but they were among the most prone to foreseeing the disaster that the Great War would become. It was death that binds them, after all, and something about the Underworld seemed to know that tragedy loomed. Some Sin-Eaters, those left over from past wars, were in the position to put the pieces together: the relentless killing power of new machinery, the tight web of alliances that would make surrender so difficult, the financial stockpiles that could sustain the war for years. The clues painted a picture of the slaughter to come, but to a continent of nations set on war the Bound were Cassandras, prophesying truths that were dismissed as folly. Some headed straight for the front lines anyways, knowing that their help would soon be needed, or simply anxious to find more people like them.

Above all, soldiers were brought to arms by patriotism, and a trust that the war will be both brief and righteous. These was a sense of optimism as things began, and an expectation that those in charge knew what they were doing. Young men raised on stories of glorious warfare marched off on the adventure of a lifetime, ready to be welcomed home as heroes.

Welcome to the Meatgrinder

The Western Front is a blood-soaked wound carved across France and Belgium, reaching from the sea to the border of Switzerland. It is a nightmare gap between the belligerents, thick scar tissue of trenches and military fortifications bulging around the shattered reality of no-man's land. That gap seems impossibly wide, even when scarcely 200 yards across. For the soldier mired in mud, weary from the hammering thud of shells and numbed to the cracked-open flesh of comrades, it is an all-consuming maw glutting itself on carnage. For the civilian, it is a dam splitting apart existence, country, and hope.

Millions drown in the brutality of that interstitial place, their death soaking into the ground until it is so saturated with suffering that it cannot help but burst forth. Ghosts weep. Spirits howl. Abominations forged from the concentration of madness and slaughter stalk through muck and smog. It seems this nightmare will never end, this hell made real in earth and blood.

Although the enormity of the desolation leaves many with the sense it was preordained, unavoidable, this engine of death was not planned. It wasn't supposed to be this way.

The Western Front erupts from the cooling corpse of lofty military ambitions. As war breaks out, German forces are a hammer swinging through Belgium, directed down in a lethal blow toward the heart of France. Belgium is not as trivial a conquest as the Germans expect, but the hammer-blow continues on its inexorable path, and its wake is cruel. Civilians executed, villages razed; people call it the "Rape of Belgium." The strike crashes down into the armies of the *Entente*; they buckle, break, fall back before its onslaught. This is war, nightmarish war fought with terrible weapons reaping monstrous casualties, but thus far it is still comprehensible to those who perpetrate it. It can be understood in continuity with past strategies. That is about to change.



The defenders rally. Joseph Joffre, commander-in-chief of the French, stiffens the resolve of the British and gives his own armies new purpose. Soldiers, though exhausted by defeat and retreat, turn and find new vigor, new determination. The Germans are but a few dozen miles from Paris. In this new paradigm of war, the sky has become a cruel traitor, home to the machine-scrying of aircraft crew. A gap in the German armies is spotted from aloft. They call what follows the battle of the Marne but "battle" scarce seems adequate a word for a bitter clash that costs half a million lives. The German armies falter, then retreat. The victors are too exhausted to turn it to a rout.

The German forces are granted a moment's breathing space and dig in. Now the wound truly begins to form. The front spreads, cracking the ground through battle after battle. Armies race to find the other's flank, onward and onward, chewing and tearing and barking with bullet and shell until the blood-slick line between them reaches all the way to the sea.

The wound is cut. The belligerents begin to gnarl and scar its edges with their trenches and their barbed wire and all the grinding gears of a vast edifice of war that has stalled. The engine of battle chokes on the blood of the dead and the relentless hunger of the guns. This is the birth of the Western Front, in mud and gore and loss of life so vast as to be unimaginable.

The shadows crawl with slithering things sensitive to the weight of sheer death. As humans march and dig and die, the spiritual bow-wave of the war pushes scurrying insects out from under their rocks; mediums tormented by nightmare dreams, decadent parasites deprived of their luxuries and their herds, dream-things that can find no sustenance in an expanse of shattered earth and dread. Others, though, are drawn to it like flies to blood.

The war stagnates, suppurates, turns gangrenous. Gas washes battlefields in choking finality. Endless battalions of soldiers are thrown in as fuel, ground into meat and churned into mud. Ambitions for swift victory are throttled and devoured by a new and grim determination to slowly, cruelly, bleed the foe dry. Battle after battle splits the ground with artillery and tears the air with bullets; the battle lines spasm and shift, but there is no triumphant breaking point. Men learn to be monsters. The trenches have murdered any belief in the glories of warfare, murdered it and buried it deep. Commanders must learn this new way of war, and each lesson is painted in the blood of the dead. Darker things lurk in the margins, drawing from the same black well. There is so much to discover for the monstrous wardens of this slaughter, every morbid prize hauled from the muck and the screams of the fallen.

This is the new reality for one year, then another. The war has spread to far-flung fronts, where distant powers grapple and gouge at each other, but here on the Western Front the world has become calcified, rendered down, narrowed into the endless and relentless rhythm of barrage and wound. The hunger of the war is never sated. Tides of conscripts and volunteers march into that existence. Industry and artifice are bent entirely to the front's need for more bullets, more shells, more supplies of every kind in service to the cycle of annihilation. Alchemists and wolf-witches delight in the ingenuity of these great rites of death that give birth to new opportunities, new ideas, and new ways to slaughter. Leviathan beasts stalk the world of Flesh — tanks, monsters of steel and fire. The Shadow bursts with a threshing frenzy of insanity matching the madness gripping humanity. The dead are harvested so brutally, so efficiently, that Twilight chokes with ghosts and the Underworld is flooded by the tide of lost souls.

In 1917, the United States joins the war, stung into anger by the sinking of the *Lusitania*. They join the patchwork of peoples already caught in the carnage — Canadians, Indians, Senegalese, Moroccan, and many more besides. Everyone is the same under the mud and the smoke.

On and on it grinds. No one is home by Christmas. No one is home before the leaves fall. There are always new offensives, always new battles to be fought. In 1918, finally, it is enough. The wound is so soaked in blood that it can drink no more. The war drowns in its own crimson excess. The second battle of the Marne marks the beginning of the end. The bones of Germany crack and break — too many dead soldiers, the fires of industry quelled to but an ember by the ravenous demands of endless battle, and the will to fight snuffed out. And just like that, it ends; revolution grips the German government and, on the 11th of November, an armistice is signed.

The artillery is muzzled. The bullets cease their howl. The killing stops. Too much has already been given to this war, though. Those who walk away from the trenches, those whose lives have been touched by the relentless thirst of the Western Front, bear its scar in their souls. Its darkness, that all-engulfing distance between the lines of battle, lives on as a wound within the very peoples who fed it and gave it life, even as the shattered earth is reclaimed.

Wounded Lives

The war is everything. It is all-encompassing. The Western Front reaches far beyond the immediate brutality of the trenches. It is a cancer worming its way through the lives of millions whose existence is warped by the sheer weight of its hunger.

The Western Front drains huge reserves of manpower into its grim embrace. Able-bodied men pour into battle until, as the years drag on, entire nations are bled dry. Several of the nations practice conscription, raising vast numbers of troops in months or even weeks — but troops who are poorly trained and have no way to understand the scope of the nightmare they march into. Britain's small, elite Expeditionary Force is soon nothing by comparison to the wave of patriotic fervor that drives millions of volunteers to sign up. They march into a new existence of boredom, waiting, poor supplies, random death and brief, intense periods of terror and adrenaline.



At home, families and entire communities are torn by the gaping absence of loved ones, men and women traveling to serve as soldiers or in support of such. Many do not return. Swathes of society are erased in the mire. Pessimism, optimism and fatalism war with each other in the minds of those left behind. Churches hold little comfort — too many bodies are lost forever to the trenches' mouths, and there is nothing to bury. Some turn to other forms of spiritualism to keep their sanity, to mediums and occultists in the hope of closure with their departed. Cultures built around the role of men face a dire lack thereof. Old structures crumble. Women step boldly into the gap.

Machinery hammers and stamps and roars to spew forth the teeth with which the front consumes its victims — armor, armaments, ammunition. Society's produce is bent to the front's needs. The war is not some distant, vague notion — its demands are directly imprinted into daily life. Rationing and the need for foreign aid imposes itself at different rates in different places. As the war progresses, its weight grows more oppressive. Each passing year brings greater restrictions. America, bloated with resources and people, floods a relieving stream of materiel into the wound when it lurches into the fight.

The wound of the front reveals the maggots slithering beneath the surface, dragging things into the light that would prefer not to be seen. For the humans in the trenches, in the streets, each glimpse of the darkness finds fertile ground in their thoughts. There are so many stories of ghosts, of ghouls crawling through no-man's land to eat the dead, of living fire in the sky and hungry rumblings under the earth. People gird themselves with superstition, desperate for any edge to save them or a loved one from a bullet or a shell or whatever other random, callous end the front has in mind for them.

Ypres

Ypres is a cancerous lump in the scar tissue of the Western Front. It forms as the German armies roll through much of Belgium, the advance stymied by Belgian determination and sacrifices as they flood their own ground with

Thumbs Up

Soldiers in particular keep trinkets and lucky charms: fragments of wood, polished smooth by nervous fingers, 'fumbsup' charms, and anything that might have played a part in stopping a bullet or piece of shrapnel. There's no inherent occult power to these things, but that doesn't mean they are without effect — the churning flesh of the front gives birth to a constant stream of new spirits and ghosts, many malicious, whose Bans and Banes sometimes coincide with a protective charm by lucky chance.



seawater. Ypres becomes a stronghold, its flanks a graveyard of German dead. Over the years to come, it faces the worst the war has to offer, scoured by poison gas and hammered by artillery. In 1917 the battle of Passchendaele alone claims half a million souls at the city's edge. By the end of the war, Ypres is little more than rubble.

The Western Front has no respect for the history of Ypres. It is an ancient settlement, and has long prospered as a center in the trade of fabric and linen. It has a strange, dark history with witches and cats. Now, on the surface, it is reduced to a strategic asset, a place of import only in its role in the killing of men. Beneath that surface, Ypres' secrets still bubble and seethe.

In the first year, many of the town's inhabitants remain, unwilling to give up on their home. Cafes and shops throng with soldiers, and some glimmer of prosperity remains — a facade of normality. The days grow more fraught from the hammer of gunfire and the fear of shelling. People hide in their cellars. The physical flesh of the settlement falls apart; buildings turn to ruins. Ypres fills with shadows and vermin and carrion crows. Men and women struggle on for as long as they can, but the community teeters toward collapse.

The spiritual scarring in the city stems from more than just the all-too-immediate presence of the war. The Belgians here are culturally dismembered. On the far side of the trenches, much of the rest of Belgium lies in German hands despite the costly sacrifices paid by the country's troops. There, in occupied Belgium, further back from the trenches, life goes on but the weight of German rule is a souring, needling thing. The Belgians endure, because they must.

Over there, resistance against the Germans draws collective reprisal, atrocities visited on the civilian population as whole villages are razed and victims executed for supposed defiance. A surge of new patriotism wars for dominance with pessimism. The occupiers mandate that the factories and farms must produce, but passive resistance is easy — workers are purposefully slow or inept to throw grit in the gears of the German war machine. For many, it is a long, dull stretch of nothing — a time they must endure.

Life in the occupied regions remains tense despite the boredom. Suspicion carves a line, separating the Flemish from the rest. Flemish frustrations with French-speaking majorities are encouraged by German *Flamenpolitik*. Belgian resentment grows, seeing Flemish nationalists as collaborators with the invaders. Many Belgians still seek to flee, but crossing the trenches would be madness. A great number perish trying to cross into the Netherlands, caught in electric slaughter by the Wire of Death.

Back in Ypres, many are determined to stay despite the shelling, but drains and sewers are hammered into ruin. Sickness begins to spread.

Then the Germans use poison gas.

Until now, villages and farms close to the front line are still inhabited — the war has stumbled to a grim wrestling match where gains are measured in yards rather than miles.

The Wire of Death

The *Dodendraad* is an electric fence between Belgium and the Netherlands. It kills thousands of refugees attempting to flee into the Netherlands. Some are just trying to escape the Germans, some seek to join friends and family, some want to join the armies that might liberate their homelands. The Wire takes a grim toll on them all.

Twilight around the Wire is a ghastly sight. Lightning-ghosts howl and twist through the air. Hungry spirits crawl and slither. More than ephemera is caught in the Wire's orbit; some shambling thing hauls itself out of the dirt to seize the fence and drink deep of its electric currents.

Artillery can only reach so far. Gas, though, obeys no such constraints. It rolls on until its poisonous grasp is exhausted. Farmers run through their fields, gasp, claw at their own faces. Both sides remove their civilian populations from the area of the battle.

In May 1915, the remaining civilians of Ypres are evacuated. They depart on lorries and trains. The last to leave officially is the mayor. Only a few hardy or desperate souls remain behind, clinging to their lives amid the tumbling ruins of their home.

Ypres now exists only as a place of defiance; a military installation of barracks and stores built on the carcass of the town, surrounded by knots of breastworks and fortifications. The soldiers become as rats, hiding away. The beauty of Ypres vanishes over the cruel years. By the end of 1918, almost nothing stands. Even the cellars and basements have been beaten until they collapse. Over a score of British troops are buried alive in the collapse of the cathedral vaults.

The Supplier

Agnezia Peeters is a young Flemish woman with a talent for seizing opportunities. When the French and British troops begin to pour into Ypres and fill the cafes, she quickly cottons on to the potential profits to be made. She supplies comforts and luxuries to the troops — cigarettes, tobacco, alcohol, gloves, scarves, and sweet things. It's mostly legal, as long as you don't ask where exactly she got them from.

Miss Peeters is also a Wolf-Blooded. She stays because her pack has gone to the front, drawn to the call of death emanating from no-man's land. She hopes, desperately, they will return. She has nowhere else to go. Agnezia clings on defiantly in Ypres, even when the gas comes, even when the shells fall. She ignores the evacuation order, keeps supplying the troops with contraband. She's half torn apart by shrapnel, but her flesh knits itself back together. The troops she deals with marvel at her continued survival. **Persuasion 2, Larceny 3, Streetwise (Ypres) 3.**

The Censor

Lieutenant Jonathan Rutherford is bored. The tangled trenches are ghastly enough — grim sludge when it rains, vile stench in the heat — and on top of that, Rutherford is censor to his troops. He must read every letter they write home — and they write a great many. Much is dull or inane, especially after he is done with it — no criticism of superiors, no giveaway details of troop formations, just the chattering of lads to their mothers.

Bored by the monotony, Rutherford's curiosity is snagged by any oddity. He keeps a private diary, notes the muttered rumors and whispered stories. In its pages are phantasmal bloodhounds spotted running to the trenches before battle, luminescent green flames that dance through the clouds, grim-faced recitals of men saved from random death by ghostly visions. Rutherford hungers for the strange now. After all, back home in Somerset, the Rutherford estate holds its own secrets. **Investigation 3, Politics 2, Occult 1**

The Shell-Shocked

Henri Bernard, *soldat 2.eme*, is a conscript. He is 20 years old as the war starts, drafted in for his compulsory three years of service. He is given a uniform and a weapon, and then driven into hell on a taxi, part of the reinforcement of the front from Paris where the soldiers are transported with civilian vehicles, briefly becoming the first motorized infantry. He is stationed at Ypres, and it breaks him. Henri is a sensitive soul, a poet, writing to try and cope with the immensity of the slaughter all around.

Henri struggles with survivor's guilt. His comrades keep dying yet he, somehow, survives. One day, stumbling through the broken town after the last of its residents have left, he comes across a cat. To his shock, it speaks to him. The townsfolk used to throw cats from the roof of the Cloth Hall in sacrifice. Now there are no townsfolk, and the Cloth Hall is a shattered wreck. The pandemonium of the front leaves something as minor as a possessed cat almost humdrum by comparison. Henri takes up the old duty of Ypres, killing felines to feed something dark and old beneath the stone. **Firearms 1, Stealth 2, Expression (Poetry) 3**

The Somme

The Somme is the ultimate expression of the Western Front's thirst for death. In July 1916, this stretch of trenches plays witness to a meatgrinder of such colossal scale that over a million perish. The horror grinds on for months without respite. Aircraft stalk the skies and tanks thunder through the mud. The sheer focused intensity of the slaughter calls the attention of a wolf-god and briefly unleashes beings of death that should never be able to walk the living world.

For all the mud, blood, and futility, the allies seize a mere six miles from the Germans.

This is war through attrition.

The big push of the Somme is fixed in the communal memories of the cultures involved thereafter. It is industrialized carnage, war rendered impersonal through sheer scope but intensely, personally horrific through experience. It is a strategy trading innumerable lives for breathing space elsewhere on the front. For his part in the plan, Field Marshal Haig of the British forces will be vilified by later generations.

The German trenches are reinforced before the battle begins — thicker wire, deeper lines, more dugouts. Unlike Ypres, where the ground is too boggy for trenches, the earth of the Somme is easily dug. The sides of trenches are reinforced with wood and sandbags to prevent collapse. Allied attacks are presaged by storms of artillery fire, but the Germans are so well dug in that the great, gouging bites the shells gnaw from the landscape are not enough to root them out. The barrage of thunder drives some of the victims entirely mad, but too many advances find the teeth of the defenses still intact despite the rain of fire.

The Somme encompasses more than a dozen battles across five months. The Germans, their reserves committed elsewhere at the battle of Verdun, remain on the defensive. For the French and British soldiers in the trenches, life is boredom strung out between brief, intense bouts of terror and flame during the advance. When they go over the top into no-man's land, troops are often instructed to march in formation to maintain order and cohesion. The German machine guns reap a grisly harvest. Things creep amid the fallen when darkness falls, whispering last rites or plucking bodies away.

All those soldiers funneled into the brief few miles of the Somme have to eat. The officers complain of their lack of food privileges, as the supply chain prioritizes that other great hunger of war — ammunition — over luxuries. Even senior officers share the simpler rations of the common troops. Tins of bully beef, hard biscuits, and tea are sometimes bolstered by rations of rum. Water often tastes foul from the containers used. Shortages mean men take from the fallen, who after all have no further need of it. Sinister rumors twist and coil — tales of deserters driven to desperation in tunnels under no-man's land, gorging themselves on corpses. Sometimes they don't wait for a soldier's last breath before they begin to feed.

Back from the lines, the field hospitals are choked with the dying. Nurses are run ragged, no time for rest in the face of a constant stream of soldiers ruined by the front. It takes a price from its victims in meat and blood — limbs gnawed off by shrapnel, viscera pierced by bullets, eyes torn out. Amid the monotonous treadmill of gore and hollow-eyed patients, there are seeming miracles — soldiers who manage incredible recoveries, flesh knitted back together and bones reset. An exhausted medic rarely wants to question such a gift. Yet with the miracles come the tragedies, as shadows slink through tents of groaning, twitching wounded in search of easy prey.

The Cavalryman

Edward Sallow's dreams of glory in the field of battle have been quashed in this new era of trench warfare. Even the cavalry units have machine guns these days. Still, he has his sword and his courage, and waits obediently for his

time to come. Field Marshal Haig believes the cavalry will be vital to success in the Somme, charging through the breach that surely must open.

That day never comes. Edward waits in the back lines as the infantry are ground to meat. The whole Somme sees a single such charge on horseback, by Indian troops at Bazentin Ridge. The cavalryman sits disconsolately, watches tanks rumble past, and mires himself in gambling and whatever alcohol he can get his hands on. The Somme makes a mockery of his delusions of glory. **Firearms 2, Survival 1, Weaponry 3.**

The Ratter

Unteroffizer Klaus Fischer has found a new enemy to fight — the rats. Rats, hundreds of thousands of them, scurry through the trenches and no-man's land. They eat the flesh of the dead, steal or befoul food, and swarm as carpets of fur and teeth. Klaus, though, is very good at killing rats.

Klaus is a flamethrower operator — a nightmarish weapon, just like the flame projectors the British use in the Somme. From time to time, Klaus uses sprayed fuel to burn infested trenches clean of rats; his fellow soldiers celebrate his talents, even if the rats always come back eventually. The Unteroffizer takes a grim pride in his work with the rats; he is disgusted by the slaughter that he and his fellows inflict on the enemy troops, where even the fires of patriotism cannot drown out the reality of such a human cost, but at least he can kill the rats without moral qualms. Unfortunately, some of the rats are less than impressed. Cankerous Beshilu see the German soldier as their enemy and bane, and plan a vile fate for him. **Craft (Incendiaries) 3, Firearms 2, Survival 2.**

The Nurse

Chloé Moreau's day begins at dusk; she works the night shift in a hospital filled with the groaning wounded. It is a real hospital, a sturdy building, although one never intended to deal with the tidal wave of bloodied victims that wash through its doors. She is always tired, so tired. The tasks never end. She fills pails with oozing, blood-crusted dressings. She struggles to get anguished, tormented men to lie still and take their medicine. She treats the infections of flesh as best she can, but there is little she can do for the nightmare wounds carved through their psyche.

Chloé knows the long shadows of the corridors hide a multitude of sins. She's glimpsed… shapes, leaning over wounded who whimper in their sleep. She has learned to get out of the way of scarred, lean men and women who ignore ghastly wounds and stalk among the fallen in search of particular faces; they, at least, are looking for their friends. She's watched as the doctors let a gaunt young lady in strangely old-fashioned clothes sit in reverence over a dying man. Chloé focuses on the people she *can* save, but remembers everything she sees. **Medicine 3, Empathy 3, Persuasion 2**

Ghouls of the Somme

A German watch officer stares in horror as a recon party, quietly pacing over the night-shrouded space of no-man's land, is dragged into the earth. A British soldier stumbles through bullet fire and tumbles into the blessed protection of a crater; he comes face to face with a wild-eyed man chewing on a severed arm. Many soldiers see ghosts, but the ghouls of the desolation truly terrify them.

Some are Hosts, their corpses puppeteered by the Beshilu who squirm through a tangle of tunnels under no-man's land. Some are humans fallen to madness and possessed by ghosts, driven to a hunger for lingering vitality. Some, a rare few, are simply werewolves pausing in the hunt to take Essence from carrion.

London

A far cry indeed from the Western Front's horrors, London is the heart of an empire — and an empire that will draw on all its far-flung fiefdoms to fuel the war in Europe. During these years, London serves as the hub of a colossal international military effort, the nexus of a flow of resources and manpower to defend its possessions across the globe. Its halls of power play a crucial part in how the conflict plays out. For the person on the street, of course, there are more pressing concerns — especially when the war brings itself to London.

Leviathans of the sky glide among the clouds with their payloads of fire and death. The German zeppelins vomit destruction down upon the land. Winds buffet at the soaring beasts and their navigation is poor at best; where the bombs fall, who dies, is a roll of the dice. The notion of striking at military targets with such lack of precision is absurd, so they do not bother to try. This is supposed to break the spirit of the British — to let them know the Western Front reaches even here, that they are not safe from its hunger, to grind down their determination to keep in the fight. In this, the German effort fails spectacularly. The blind, wanton cruelty of civilian casualties triggers outrage.

The zeppelins are impressive, but far from effective. They fly above the reach of the British defenses, but they cannot escape the aircraft and, after 1916, the incendiary bullets such craft use. From time to time, a zeppelin crashes down from the sky in graceful immolation. The crew often jump, rather than burn to death.

In 1917, a new breed of aerial predator is unleashed. At first, they mostly come during the day, these Gotha bombers, though eventually they turn to the cover of night for safety. The bombers are vastly superior. In just half as many sorties as the bloated, lumbering zeppelins, these aircraft kill more and wreak far greater damage. The grueling demands of the Western Front sap the German capacity to sustain the



campaign of terror, though. In the end, an insane scheme is hatched — the *feuerplan*, the sacrifice of the entirety of the bomber fleet to AA guns and to exhaustion in the process of dousing London and Paris in so many incendiaries as to annihilate them by fire, and thus force surrender. The plan is never carried out.

On the ground, the air raids become part of life. Civilians pack into underground shelters for protection. The thunder of bombs is simply one element of the nerve-breaking strain that suffuses the capital city. German influence is eradicated from a formerly cosmopolitan existence — German-born Londoners are dismissed from jobs, and change their names to Anglicized pretenses; German shops are looted; and when the *Lusitania* sinks, the police stand between Germans and a furious crowd.

The hunger for labor is unquenchable as volunteers pour to the Western Front. Hostels and workhouses for the poor empty as their inhabitants sign up or set to work in the factories feeding the war's hunger for materiel. The prison population collapses in the face of full employment being available to all. Women demand to play their part as much as any man might, stirred by the same patriotism and the same sense of duty. So too do they value a new chance for independence, and higher wages that grant a greater share of what prosperity the war has to spare. There is work, work for all, and above all else in the manufactories of thunder and fire, the production of ammunition.

The Medium

Lingering Victorian fascinations with spirits and the dead flourish anew, as **Irene Wilkins** is well aware. She is a medium, a speaker with ghosts, serving as an intermediary between the living and the dead. So many families face the sucking void of loved ones lost to thirsting trenches or bombs, and the church holds little solace; no body to bury, no ashes to scatter, just a cold, echoing hall of muttered lip service to grieving hearts.

Irene is a charlatan with no real power, though she honestly believes in ghosts and understands the grief of her customers. She gives them comfort and a sense of closure as best she can, dressing it all up in suitably convincing trappings of ceremony and mysticism. She's also perceptive enough to know there are other mediums in London with a real spark, people who she fears — but she can point to them for the right price. **Occult 1, Empathy 2, Subterfuge 3**

The German

Meinhard Geissler sticks out like a sore thumb, a German academic in a city of suspicion. He resents his treatment, proud of his learning and angry at the situation that has befallen him due to being in the wrong country at the wrong time. Ironically, Meinhard really does belong to a secret society — he is a member of the *Germanenorden*, who teach occult and magical philosophies and will later provide founding members of the Thule Society.

The British authorities are content Geissler poses no real danger. They see him as a professor with delusions of

grandeur, not an *agent provocateur*. For now they're right, but that may one day change. He's found some embers of German patriotism in his soul, ignited by the prejudices of those around him. **Academics 4, Occult 2, Expression 2**

The Air-Raid Warden

Thomas Upwold isn't a Londoner — he's from Somerset — but duty calls, and Thomas answers. He has a bloated sense of self-importance from serving the city's air defenses. To Thomas' disappointment, he doesn't man the anti-aircraft weaponry, nor does he fly sorties against the raiders — he works on the administration of the underground stations as shelters from the bombs.

Someone probably thought Thomas couldn't do too much damage in the role. The problem is, he's paranoid. He actively encourages people to spill stories of suspicion to him, of neighbors whose lights flash in patterns that are surely signaling to the zeppelins. He's had three Londoners hauled before the courts so far, each cleared by the magistrates. He's now investigating a fourth, but this time he's in too deep. The flashing lights in that house are not the work of any mortal hand. **Investigation 1, Politics 1, Streetwise 2.**

The World is Scarred

The Great War doesn't just erode human life by the millions, it crumbles the foundations of empires. The seeds of revolution that took root in Russia find fertile soil across the globe. The romantic notions surrounding monarchs and emperors drown in a tide of blood, mud and resentment.

The attitudes of the common people sour on all sides of the conflict. Gone is the greatness of the nation as the grim realities of warfare in the 20th century find their way into the public consciousness. Armies are no longer tens of thousands of trained volunteers, they are millions of untrained, unprepared conscripts. The role of women was irrevocably changed. With the men off fighting at the front, women were pressed into roles previously denied to them, pouring fuel on the revolutionary fire.

Economies change forever. States on all sides can see the imperatives of superior production, enabling the supply of more and more massive forces. The advent of the air force and mechanized warfare shift the balance of power from aristocratic landowners to the factory-owning industrialist and the spread of democracy provides opportunity for popular community leaders to rise to seats of power.

In Berlin, it is a fall from grace. The collapse of the imperial state and the stringent nature of the enforced armistice throws the morale of the nation into a downward spiral. The Weimar Republic is set in place of old Prussian glory, opening the door to communists who wish to follow the example of their Russian counterparts to tear down all vestiges of their imperial past.

For the Entente Allies it is not much better. The fruits of victory are bitter indeed. A generation is devastated and its untold potential in other fields purged in the trenches. The balance of power in the west shifts from the old world to the new. The American industrial juggernaut, primed from the exertions of their civil war, explodes onto the world stage, eclipsing their former colonial overlords in might. British and French imperial subjects in the far east, India and Africa, far greater than those of Germany, stir and talk of freedom and independence.

Sin-Eaters around the world are left with the aftermath of conflict on an unprecedented scale. The souls of the restless dead cry out in pain and anger. Resonance hums across the plains of Belgium and France and bubbles beneath the waters of the North Sea. It lies beneath the dirt in Poland and Ukraine. The full extent of the damage done is not resolved even into the modern era.

Prometheans who had found use and purpose, as well as some lamplights of humanity, find that purpose stripped from them as they are abandoned by their creators, fit only to be decommissioned like obsolete machinery. The Lineage of the Faceless descends to the Wasteland wholesale as their alchemical pacts are challenged and sundered in their confusion and no new fields of fire exist to replace those who crumble in the Firestorms called down to cleanse their former homes on the front. Ultimately, some are killed by their creators, some turn weapons on themselves or simply walk into the sea, and what remains of the Lineage lingers silently among the ranks of their brethren as Extempore. Their very name is consigned to history, few Prometheans wishing to even speak it due to the memory it raises among them.

The spirit world is driven to madness by the reflections of the Great War's horror. Werewolves seeking to protect the realm of flesh come in huge numbers to calm the tempests and quell the spirits that rise in the tide of death and destruction. Plagues of Azlu erupt to firm up the Gauntlet around those sites of chaos and death, while Beshilu feast on the corruption and decay it has wrought. Long after the humans have laid down their arms and returned home, the Uratha continue their battle, stretched thin as packs travel from far and wide to troublesome areas, leaving other persistent threats lightly guarded. The packs are shorn of numbers by the conflict almost as much as the participating human nations, making their situation ever more urgent and desperate. For the Uratha, the end of the Great War is just the beginning of another phase and they must battle harder than ever to bring the peace of the Great Wolf to war torn regions.

Like any crisis, the Great War also provides opportunities to monsters as well as to mortals. For example, the changing of the established order threatens the stranglehold of the Invictus and Lancea et Sanctum on the old nations of Europe and gives greater impetus to the Carthian Movement as it spreads from its beginnings in revolutionary France. Fledgling Kindred see their overlords, both religious and political, as the same hoary old establishment brought down by the mortals in France and Russia. Only the most

well-established and secure strongholds are unaffected by the revolutionary fire erupting in 1918.

The world is re-forged in the fires of the Great War. New regimes form in every facet of society. The old rulebooks have been torn asunder and new ones are being written with the blood of a lost generation. Only one thing is certain: such tumult and chaos foments change. Those who have the influence can try to shape that change. The "war to end all wars" is just the prelude to one far deadlier and the peaks of the military industrial complex have not yet been scaled. Already, human and monster alike search for greater powers and weapons to make safe their future and the specter of the Great Depression looms.

Werewolf: Death Howl

The Great War is a tide of change. The Forsaken cannot ignore it. In France and Belgium, the Western Front inexorably carves a new boundary through old territories. It desecrates ancient places of power, and shatters binding rites with its storm of blood and fire. Hunting grounds vanish in churning mud and belching flame.

Once, the wolves here slunk through woodland shadows and sought their prey through rolling fields and dilapidated farmhouses. They revered Luna at sacred places nestled in verdant splendor. That is all gone. Now they stalk among tangled trenches, and drag shrieking soldiers away into the night.

The terrifying truth of the carnage of the Western Front is that it does not repulse the Uratha. It *calls* to them. The immense weight of the slaughter fans the flames of fury in each werewolf's heart. It is a catastrophe yet exerts an allure that draws more Forsaken in, to feed and kill and revel and die among the flames and the screams. They come from across Europe, pilgrims to the madness. Hundreds of werewolves perish.

No-man's land is a wound in the world so deep it bubbles up with spiritual gangrene. Legions of Lunes descend, shrieking clarion calls to war. Ancient horrors stir beneath the mire; new blasphemies are forged in the crucible of battle. Secrets spill out of the death-saturated dirt.

Looming over it all is the shadow of Death Wolf herself. After the first battle of the Marne, Bone Shadows across Europe hear a shrieking howl echo through the *Hisil*. Many of the Tribe rally to their patron's call. A god now bestrides the battlefield, a queen of death. Empowered by the slaughter, Kamduis-Ur stalks her greatest prey.

Carrion Call

A ghost of incredible power gibbers and twists through no-man's land, lured by the sheer concentration of death. Where it passes, battalions of moaning ghosts are yanked into its orbit, marionettes forced into servitude. It hunts out gateways to the hollow, empty realm of the dead, tearing them open to let more lifeless horrors spill into the world. It is trapped here, for now — the labyrinth of trenches flanking no-man's land area a metaphysical maze it cannot pass, anointed in the blood of the dead. It forges vile hekatonchieres from pulsating, ruined meat, and waits for its sister to come.

This is Death Wolf's ghost. Torn from her spirit when she died, it is malevolent and hateful. It craves her divine power, and rages at her for abandoning it to the endless, winding tunnels that took it long ages to escape. She, for her part, desires to consume and reabsorb her shade. She lusts after the secrets it found in those plutonic depths, beyond even her reach.

Time and again, the two have hunted each other through the world. Here, at the Western Front, the behemoths clash once more.

Their deathly hunt races through the Deep Shadow and brief emergence into Twilight. Werewolves catch brief glimpses of vast, lupine presences as the Shadow's Essence effervesces away to feed divine hunger. Hundreds of wounded soldiers have their lives snuffed out in the wake of the dueling entities, their souls sucked into the icy clash. The conflict will span years, until the front finally breaks and the loser of the struggle can flee to lick their wounds.

The Bone Shadows of the front seek to aid their patron. Spirits of death deliver instructions for grand rites that harness the trench networks in miles-long occult patterns, draining Essence from ghosts. Forsaken barghests tear some shades to pieces or seek to protect others. Sin-Eaters are initially mistaken for another blasphemy unleashed by the Firstborn ghost; later, the Bone Shadows reach out in search of understanding and alliance. In the face of this dead fury, the tribe needs all the help it can get.

Waking Horrors

The Western Front is new, but it is carved across something old. France has been here long before the front becomes the battleground of god and ghost, and will be

Death Wolf's Ghost

The ghost of a Firstborn is an impossibility. Spirits don't leave ghosts in their wake. Yet Death Wolf *has*, and hers is colossally powerful. It is a phantasmal thing of lupine aspect, all white fur and ice-blue eyes and snapping jaws. It retains much of its progenitor's intelligence but is easily driven to cold fury. Like Death Wolf, the ghost is a Rank 7 entity — too powerful to attack directly. Rites, ceremonies, and the destruction of its most powerful ghostly minions might weaken it enough to be vulnerable, or at least to stop the creation of more of its nightmares.

here long after. The Western Front mutilates France, but is shaped in turn.

France has always had a surfeit of werewolves. So many Change here, too many, particularly in the country's southern reaches. Primal power surges strong in the Uratha of France, and some are so overwhelmed by it they never escape the fury of their First Change. Perhaps Father Wolf made its lair here. Perhaps something else stirs that deep fury, infecting the soil with so much rage that it has to bleed out into the People.

The overpopulation leads to regular violence. Pure and Forsaken clash constantly. Sects of Ghost Wolf witches fall into delusions of the Devil, gathering in the shadows. The Western Front pulls them all in and makes a mockery of their feuds and rivalries even as it gives them a new battlefield to kill one another in. Such carnage only stokes the rate of First Changes even further. Innumerable Wolf-Blooded, conscripts and volunteers and civilians alike, spasm with the Warden Moon's power as all around the shells fall. So many die in their first hours of new existence, breathing their last atop piles of corpses. The *nusuzul* kill friend and foe alike in their madness.

It is a rich harvest of new werewolves, and the Forsaken and Pure compete with each other and with death for who will be the reaper. The casualty rate among the People is horrendous but the sheer rate of new Changes threatens to outpace it. Whatever force stirs this mad fecundity of fury, werewolves scramble to keep up. Grim-faced teams of werewolves secure survivors of the First Change on the front. In no-man's land, skirmishes break out between Pure and Forsaken over precious *nusuzul*. These clashes pay no heed to human nationality; German Forsaken fight against German Pure. Baffled trench watchmen stare as notionally friendly patrols tear into each other among the barbed wire, strange shapes flitting through the dark.

Something ancient lurks under Paris — an *idigam*, an earth-bound that evaded the jaws of the Great Predator in times past. It sleeps under a nexus of ley-lines that thread out to ancient dolmens across France, a network of cromlechs that channel the resonance of death to feed its eternal hunger. The High Cromlech lies in a chrysalis of itself, a domain in the Shadow beneath the city, and lies dormant. Now, though, the Western Front floods cromlech lines with so much death that the spirit is not merely fed, but glutted. It begins to wake, threatening a catastrophe upon the Shadow of Paris.

A monstrosity of Flesh worms its way under the trenches. The *lou carcohl* is a leviathan of mucus-slick meat and hollow hunger, larger than a zeppelin, writhing through mud like a fish through water. Long, slimy tentacles lie in ropy tangles, waiting for victims to stumble upon them. Soldiers watch in horror as their comrades are dragged screaming into the ground to be devoured. Even Beshilu gibber and flee from its coming. It is a manifestation of sins long past, and something about the Uratha stirs dim memories in its bestial mind; it craves their flesh most of all.

The High Cromlech

The High Cromlech is a Rank 6 idigam with an unusual Essence Shaping power. It has turned itself into a pocket of deep Shadow beneath Paris, accessible through some of the winding tunnels of the catacombs. Within it is an impossible domain of deathly temples and tombs, where ghosts the idigam has trapped within itself are forced into bizarre and nonsensical rites of veneration. If the idigam wakes, it will emerge from the cocoon of this form, but what shape it will take is impossible to predict.

Leashed Hounds and Wild Beasts

The Western Front is a local calamity. Territories are reduced to crater-blasted wastelands of trenches and gunfire. Packs whose hunting grounds are not directly wrecked still have to deal with the spiritual filth the front vomits forth. They firefight, trying to stem the tide and hold back the worst of this nightmare.

These werewolves venture into no-man's land. The guise of civilian life makes open access to the battlefront difficult, but such barriers of law and authority are little obstacle to shapeshifters who can move through the Shadow. The physical barriers are trickier — the teeth of barbed wire, the sting of bullets, the utter chaos that has consumed the Shadow. Few packs let this deter them. They hunt dangerous new

Lou Carcohl Tendrils

The oozing monstrosity usually remains too deep to be attacked directly; its long tentacles are a threat by themselves. A tentacle is treated as a Size 8 character, and will attempt to grapple targets with a dice pool of 16. Anyone injured must succeed at a Stamina roll or suffer the grave Poisoned Tilt; if the tentacle manages to restrain a victim, it will try to drag them underground over the following two turns. Each tentacle has 15 health and a defense of 3; once 'killed' the tentacle is rendered useless or severed. The nauseating, oozing flesh of the *lou carcohl* quickly dissolves into foul slime after being cut off.

spirits, stalk Beshilu Shards whose power is growing out of control, drain Loci poisoned with tainted energy, and hunt for Wounds that retch hate and contagion into the Shadow. Most avoid the humans bent on murdering each other.

Old support networks break. Families and pack members are evacuated away to safer places or, worse, conscripted and sent elsewhere on the front. Loci grow toxic from the slaughter. Simple things like food and clean water grow scarce. Too many Uratha turn to eating the meat of the dead for sustenance. Some are entirely broken by disconnection from their old lives and the endless hammering of the shells; they lose themselves to the desolation, never leaving no-man's land, becoming wild and living off the corpses of soldiers.

The locals must contend with newcomers, the werewolves who march with the armies — Pure and Forsaken alike. Some are genuine patriots, wanting to serve their country as any other warrior might. Many are conscripts, called up by unwitting authorities and unable or unwilling to breach the cover of their human lives. They aren't all soldiers, though. Wolves in sheep's clothing stalk the hospitals, tearing Shard-infested husks apart to protect the troops sleeping all around. Canny opportunists thrive in the supply lines, quietly diverting resources to packs and tribe-mates in need.

This is a disjointed, strange life for werewolves. Many have left territory and pack far behind. Sometimes several members of a pack end up on the front but scattered across a wide area. Loneliness and isolation are massive problems; werewolves quickly forge strong bonds of camaraderie with the human soldiers around them, becoming dangerously committed to the well-being of their new friends. Pack totems react poorly. Some are infuriated, demanding their werewolves gather together again to preserve the bond of unity. Others panic, or plead, or become obsessed with somehow keeping their favorite Uratha alive in the meat-grinder. Placating totems often involves strange taboos and bans, offerings of food or blood; other soldiers often write these off as superstitious good-luck practices.

Worst of all is the rage. When a werewolf loses control, he butchers friend and foe alike. The trenches are an endless source of frustrations — idiots getting their heads blown off, the drumming of shells, the adrenaline of close shaves with bullets, the repulsion of rats everywhere, the mud, the lack of sleep, the shitty food, the utter stench that fills every one of a werewolf's finely honed senses and can never, ever, be entirely blocked out. When it's too much, when the fury surges, some werewolves throw themselves into no-man's land in the hope of death, or at least venting their anger far from their allies.

The werewolf who can control his anger is a figure of terror on the battlefield. Mere humans break with trivial ease, while the werewolf shrugs off horrendous wounds. Guns choke, soldiers tear each other apart, and fortified bunkers crack open like eggs before the spirit magic of the People. Sometimes, rarely, a soldier-wolf takes the risk of the killing form, reducing entire trenches to channels of blood. This is always a terrible gamble. Lunacy does not discriminate between targets.

It is an existence of conflict — not just physical, but mental and spiritual. The werewolf needs to hunt. He has loyalties and duty to tribe, pack, and comrades. A human officer gives one set of orders; a werewolf officer gives clashing instructions that very definitely have not come down from Joffre and Haig. The fires of conflict between Pure and Forsaken burn so hot that even the enormity of the human war cannot drown them out; packs meet in quiet battles of their own, ambushing each other in the back trenches or out in no-man's land. The friends and comrades of a werewolf soldier as just as valid targets as he is; breaking a victim's spirit is the first step toward their defeat, after all.

The clashes aren't always direct confrontations. Ivory Claw officers arrange the execution of a Forsaken's allies for desertion. A Hunter in Darkness directs artillery crew to strike a ruined woodland where the Predator Kings have built a ritual focus. Packs find their trenches deprived of basic supplies as rivals put pressure on quartermasters and supply lines. Humans die as a result, humans who aren't even involved. Yet in the face of hundreds of thousands of deaths on the front, few werewolves care about such collateral damage.

Killing Grounds

In the Shadow, spirits are caught up in the frenzy of war. Broods and choirs rip and tear at one another. Clouds light up in duels among spirits of fire and air. The earth bursts open in eruptions of blood and ephemera. Brief ceasefires leave the spirits glowering at each other. The peace never lasts.

Werewolves traversing the Shadow have to avoid being caught up in the brawling spirits. Spindly things of brass and sinew chatter bullets from their long muzzles; lumbering beasts with shells of steel grind along on many massive legs; figures of mud and blood wind and slither on the hunt. Most are too caught up in killing one another to care about the Uratha, but the spirits of gas gleefully murder anything too slow to flee.

From time to time, though, a grim silence descends. Lesser spirits flee in terror, all thoughts of war forgotten. Vast choirs of spirits of death gather, and the sky is awash with silver light from the Moon's descending legions. Often, ranks of werewolves gather to join the clashes that follow. Here, battles are fought between Pure and Forsaken, between Death Wolf and the spirits loyal to her followers, between the Lunes and the grotesque tides of warped horrors that flow from the fresh Wounds in the Shadow. Immense totems of the Pure writhe through the clouds or under the earth, the *Anshega* howling in their wake. Every ancient feud, every great rivalry among the spirit courts, is indulged in these scenes of pure, open war.

The disarray of battle throws old spirit courts and loyalties into chaos. Two great courts maintain their grip on



vassals and spiritual fiefs, though; indeed, they flourish. The first is the court of the White Reaper, a great alliance of death and emotion. Groaning spirit lords oversee a network of vassals who drain the eruption of death-resonant Loci welling up in no-man's land, and the broods who tend to the fields of the dying. Many of the Reapers resent the Uratha, but are willing to make deals with the Forsaken — the court seeks to establish order amid the chaos. The second court offers no such compromise, a coalition of spirits of war, terror, pain, and technology. Atop its hierarchy squats the embodiment of the Western Front itself, the war spirit Fields-of-Crimson. Fields-of-Crimson wants this war to never end, and spits fury at the interference of Death Wolf in what it considers to be its own hunting ground.

Predators

In the face of the Western Front's callous enormity and grinding monotony, the tribes offer Uratha some overarching sense of purpose and sanity.

The **Blood Talons'** nature resonates with this war. At the urging of Fenris-Ur's servants, they treat it as a spiritual journey, a chance to understand the purity and horror of conflict at its most intense. The tribe still persecutes its war against the Pure wherever it can, but the practicalities of reaching the far trenches mean the Blood Talons mostly hunt Pure on their own side. They maneuver against Ivory Claws in the politics of the German officer ranks, and root Fire-Touched infiltrators out of French trenches.

The **Bone Shadows** answer Death Wolf's call, creating occult confluences to aid their patron in her titanic battle. Elders issue orders to reshape trench formations, anoint salients with the blood of dozens or hundreds of human dead, or kill particular ghosts in no-man's land. Few ever see Death Wolf, but they can feel her presence all the same. They struggle between duty to their patron and the more traditional duties of the tribe — many feel they should focus on cleansing Wounds and learning about the new spirits that the war gives birth to.

Black Wolf howls in the minds of the **Hunters in Darkness**, outraged by the ruination wreaked by the war. Some give in to despair, seeing no way to protect the few surviving sacred places from the grinding march of war. Others look to new approaches. *Mennina* infiltrate the ranks of sappers, fortification corps, and planners. They rework the flow of trenches and advances, diverting pushes away from ancient Loci. They hunt, exhausting themselves against a seemingly endless tide of Hosts; the Beshilu seem empowered by the war, rat kings emerging from the muck to spawn more of their kind. The Hunters in Darkness use fire and spirit magic to purge ruined areas anew and prepare the way for rejuvenation once this nightmare is over. The elders plan how the desolation might be sculpted into new territories once the wound has finally sealed.

The **Iron Masters** revel in the opportunities of the front. Prey abounds. Human officers feed the growth of Wounds by throwing their men into the slaughter, cruel sadists indulge themselves in the shadows of trenches and nearby villages,

and men are reduced to mad ghouls in no-man's land. Some seek to cull the flow of human despair and hatred to protect the Shadow; others just want to experience the challenge and triumph of facing down a tank, or striding through machine-gun fire. Red Wolf watches how her children face down human prey armed with such terrible weapons of war, and Red Wolf *learns*.

For the **Storm Lords**, the Front is the ultimate crucible to prove their endurance. Simple survival is the goal, for the *Iminir* who takes on the Western Front and emerges intact is a champion indeed. The Tribe faces no shortage of Claimed, as spirits find humans easy prey with their minds fractured from the war's relentless pressure. The Tribe hunts men who have become one with the blood and mud of the trenches, ghastly agglomerations of flesh and metal that are the ruinous union of a tank and its crew, and shambling figures whose breath is stinging gas.

The Pure pursue their own terrible schemes. The **Fire-Touched** brew up new poxes to pour into the trenches, and offer up the deaths of thousands of human soldiers to the Shadow as a sacrament of tainted Essence; their totems, empowered, seek to snare and bind Death Wolf. Through torture and spilled gore, the **Ivory Claws** harvest the strength and prowess of human and werewolf soldiers alike. Canisters of seething blood, filled with the spiritual puissance of the slaughtered, give the Tribe's champions brief surges of twisted power. The **Predator Kings** drag screaming soldiers away as blood sacrifices to ancient forest spirits in spaces beneath no-man's land; the spirits, Claiming blood-slicked tangles of living wood, reach their tendrils beneath the battlegrounds to pull humanity's steel engines of war under, and writhe through the walls of dugouts to drip maddening, gory sap into the eyes and mouths of sleeping troops.

HEKATONCHIERES

The hekatonchieres are blasphemous, spasming creations of Death Wolf's malevolent ghost. They have no name in the First Tongue. The Shadow reviles them. Each is a mass formed from the dying, mutilated carcasses of werewolves whose last breaths are throttled in the grasp of a slave-ghost. Under the ghost's baleful will, their flesh knits back together into an amalgamation of meat and muscle and bone. They become gnashing, wailing abominations, war engines mimicking mortal weaponry in cartilage and muscle. The sweet release of death is denied to the tormented soul of the Uratha, and they are instead forced into service.

The British Forsaken call hekatonchieres 'limbjacks' for their many, twisted legs and arms. The things are huge, tottering along on a forest of twisted wolf-limbs, their warped bodies snapping with angry mouths. Some limbjacks are made from several werewolf and human corpses knotted together; others are just one werewolf, their regeneration gone cancerous and insane. The things lurch along in service to the Firstborn ghost, rising out of the muck on dark nights to stalk their former fellows. Where they fall upon the trenches, men are slaughtered or driven mad.

It is a mercy to kill a hekatonchiere. They are creations of this blighted war, and surely have no hope of existence beyond it.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 6, Resolve 3; Strength 13, Dexterity 3, Stamina 15; Presence 4, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Firearms 3, Stealth 2

Primal Urge: 5

Willpower: 5

Essence: 15

Size: 11

Health: 26

Initiative: 5

Defense: 7

Speed: 22

Death Rage: A hekatonchiere is constantly locked in hard Death Rage, but is prevented from acting on it due to the influence of a possessing ghost. If the ghost is somehow removed, the hekatonchiere mindlessly rages until it perishes.

Flesh Armory: A hekatonchiere sprouts ghastly imitations of the Front's weapons among its limbs, wrought in cartilage and meat and spitting teeth as bullets. These organic armaments are damage 5, have a range of 100/200/400, an Initiative modifier of −1, and armor piercing 3; they are not only capable of autofire, but are always fired at full burst. The ammunition simply regenerates out of their flesh.

Living Carcass: A hekatonchiere is a werewolf, but is unable to change form, even due to Death Rage. It loses all Renown and Gifts, but gains 3 points of armor. It also gains the Juggernaut, Monstrous Resilience, Swift, and Wall Climb Dread Powers. To restore its Essence, a hekatonchiere must consume human flesh.

Forest of Limbs: A hekatonchiere is immune to the Arm Wrack and Leg Wrack Tilts due to its sheer number of limbs. The hekatonchiere can attack with claws or teeth that deal +4L, have a −1 Initiative modifier, and armor piercing 3.

Poison Miasma: Lethal gas flows from a hekatonchiere's many mouths, shrouding it in deadly vapor. Characters approaching it must succeed on a Stamina + Primal Urge roll or suffer the moderate Poisoned Tilt for the remainder of the scene.



Geist: A Crisis of Death

In a century, the Great War will be celebrated as the time and place where global Sin-Eater culture is born. The Bound had spawned in numbers before, following in the wake of tragedy, but such proliferations were confined to small geographical regions. Groups would form, history would be recorded, but as members passed on and the local death toll was not high enough to bring in replacements, such cultures would gradually fade away. Elsewhere, single Bound accepted their deathly pacts alone, faintly aware of others like them through Underworld stories and perhaps their geist's nebulous memories, but unable to connect with them.

The war changes everything. The Bound are created in unprecedented numbers, not just by gunfire and gas, but by the disease and famine following in their wake. The human masses in the trenches learn to live with death, and Sin-Eaters can hardly help but try to find some way to make it bearable.

It's not just the quantity of Bound that's new, it's their diversity. The trenches bring together British colonial troops from Australia, Canada, India, South Africa and New Zealand. The French brought people from their Southeast Asian colonies, West Africa, and more. European racism meant not everyone was allowed to fight, but everyone was allowed to die. Trapped on foreign soil, thousands of miles away from their loved ones, the international dead are as likely as any to rise again with unfinished business. For Sin-Eaters, learning how to respect spiritual beliefs and practices other than their own became an immediate priority. The Bound who fail to adapt often become part of the problem, turning ghost against ghost even on the same side of the trenches.

Burdens in War

In war, as in peace, people die with business left unfinished. When the dead rise with help of a geist, they are trapped by their Burdens, roaming the fields of the Western Front in hope of some resolution.

The Abiding have always sought to leave a mark, but in this endless war real change and progress seem almost hopeless. Some forge plans for victory, determined to see the Allies or the Central Powers triumphant, to feel like all these deaths mean something. Others want to turn the war around, standing defiant against the callous generals who send men to die and building a new world where such atrocities can never be repeated. Still others just want the horrors of the war to be remembered, writing poems, articles, and stories that will be censored by the government when they're sent back to the home front.

He never thought much of his general, and then the man went and got him killed. The remaining men were amazed when their dead officer walked back into the trenches unharmed. They couldn't see the Revolutionary who hovered behind him, tricolored flag sewn into its skin with thread that still bleeds. Now the geist is helping him plan for victory, though first they will need to rise a few rungs in the chain of command.

The Bereaved are almost numberless in the trenches. Some were made there, many are parents, siblings, or lovers who stole their way across countries and continents to search for a soldier who never came back from the war. All of them have reason to roam the Western Front and plumb the depths of the Trenches Beneath, committed to the impossible task of finding one ghost among millions.

Her husband left to fight a continent away, and they couldn't even send her back his corpse. She traveled to Meerut by herself and found passage to the fields of France. The Burning Bride followed her, a red-clad geist with feet facing backward, and offered the Bargain when she died of hunger. They're both still searching for their husbands, taking names and messages from the Indian dead to bring back home when the war is over.

The Hungry just want to get home. They are dead and wanting for the memory of long walks down country roads, for white Christmases, trips to the market, brand-new bicycles they never even got to ride. For many, the homes they long for don't even exist anymore, torn apart by invading soldiers or bombed from above. Some cling to what little they have left, others give everything they have in hopes that someone, anyone can lead a good life after all of this. In a bar of chocolate or a half-smoked cigarette, the Hungry can lose themselves for a few minutes in longing for a happiness that might be as dead as they are.

They called the battle where he died the Massacre of the Innocents, where thousands of newly recruited German soldiers were sent to their deaths before even learning how to fight. He'd lied about his age to enlist, and spent the whole battle crying. The Murdered Angel took pity on the boy, standing above him in an old-fashioned nurse's dress with bullet holes instead of eyes. Now, as one of the Bound, at least he can live to see his sixteenth birthday.

The Kindly have found it easy to commit atrocities. Many of them are soldiers who left home as boys and grew into men in the trenches. Now they see the faces of the people they've killed at night, and find only innocents dragged into war. Others were beastly long before they made it into battle, and look back on misspent youths as petty bullies wishing they could have left a better legacy. Many of the Kindly become staunch pacifists, smuggling the living and the dead away from the trenches, or searching for some nonviolent means of ending the war.

He's the first to admit, he was a bit of a cad back in university. He cheated on tests and on women, made sport of his roommates, and lounged in the certainty of his parents' money. A bombing raid killed him anyway, zeppelins didn't care if you were rich or poor. The Parisian Mistress is a whisper of a woman made of shadow and smoke, a mocking match to his own wickedness. With her in his heart, he volunteered for British Intelligence, where his businessman father's public neutrality serves as the perfect cover for spy work.

The Vengeful have a plethora of people to blame for their deaths: the enemy, their own generals, the person who talked them into enlisting, the triage nurse who let them die. Some just come to despise death itself, and the Underworld that defines it. Many weren't even soldiers; doctors, journalists, and ordinary men and women are caught up in the fighting, raging at an unfair and unexpected demise. The Vengeful find no shortage of allies in the trenches, with the living and the dead alike eager to hurt someone in recompense for what they have suffered.

They killed her daughter. German soldiers, invading her home in neutral Belgium for no good reason at all, they killed her daughter just for standing in their way. They killed her next, but she wouldn't stay down. The Boy in the Well has eyes like puddles, endlessly leaking down his bloated face. He wants revenge, too, though he can't remember why, and she promises him they'll both have it as he brings her back.

A Haunting of Sin-Eaters

In New Orleans, small coalitions of Sin-Eaters have been using the word "krewe" to describe themselves for about half a century, though the most famous krewe has yet to be founded. When they finally enter the Great War, black Americans will bring the term with them, but in 1914 it's largely unheard of, and new Sin-Eaters have no historical precedents to fall back on for names and terminology. Some British Sin-Eaters are calling their groups "hauntings" or "seances," a wry nod to Victorian spiritualism. German groups often call themselves "regiments," and "régiment" is popular among the French as well, while civilians from all countries often prefer "church" or "parish" to describe those who share their syncretic beliefs. Territorial troops bring their own vocabulary to the field, complicating things further. In mixed company, simple terms like "group" or "gathering" are usually safe.

Like the terminology, the types of krewes that develop are hardly uniform yet, but patterns are emerging. Sin-Eaters can hardly help but meet along the Western Front, so great are their numbers, and when they come together and bond over a shared need or philosophy, krewes begin to form by instinct, if not by design.

Furies

The greatest injustice of the era is plain to see, but what to do about it is a lot more confusing. Patriots on both sides of the conflict form congregations devoted to striking down the enemy, discovering new ways to use the dead to win the war. Others are more interested in going up against their own governments, the real perpetrators in the eyes of many average soldiers. The rise of the Soviet Union sparks a rise in the latter midway through the war, turning trench proselytizers into undead revolutionaries. Most Furies are more than happy to welcome other supernatural creatures to their cause, especially as the line between "violence" and "justice" becomes blurred by the dust and mud of endless trench warfare.

Mourners

There is so, so much to mourn in the Great War. Sin-Eaters gather lists of the dead, or help the departed write one last letter to the people back home. Groups form out of necessity: One soldier going on leave takes home the tangible memories gathered by all his Bound friends, another does the same a few months later. In teams, they venture more safely into the Trenches Beneath, bringing back the history of places and people the war has destroyed. With so much to do, the Mourners of the Great War need all the help they can get: human, ghost, or otherwise.

Necropolitans

Some Sin-Eaters look into the eyes of despair and decide to grin, holding onto every last shred of joy that much tighter. The Necropolitans build communities in the trenches, spreading gallows humor and what few creature comforts they can find: smuggled French wine, a cigarette, a box of candies sent from home. Many are shockingly open-minded, welcoming colonial troops into their fold and swapping stories in pidgin languages. They're just as happy to drink with the poor sods on the other side of the battlefield, living or dead, and even other supernatural creatures aren't alien enough to make them blink.

Pilgrims

The Great War causes many people to reject organized religion entirely, but some people cling to it. To the Pilgrims on

Living with the Dead

In the trenches, everyone has a ghost over their shoulder. Along the front lines there's no easy way to dispose of the dead, or sometimes even to reach them. Bodies are left to rot in no-man's land, or buried in shallow, muddy graves. The trenches are lined with corpses and, incredibly, people get used to it. One soldier famously recounts a hand sticking out of a wall that everyone would stop and shake for luck. Ghost stories are hardly the most interesting thing to happen to anyone lately, and many soldiers have seen things far more frightening than the specter of a dead friend.

In such conditions, pockets of the Western Front acknowledge the dead openly. Not everyone can see them, but everyone knows they're real, and trust their Sin-Eaters to convey messages back and forth. The humans among such krewes are often quite welcoming of other supernatural phenomena: if ghosts are real, and they're friendly, then sure, why not werewolves?



the front lines, the Trenches Beneath seem more enticing than the trenches above. Sure, there's danger, but there's also order, law, clear paths to take and goals to reach. Groups of Pilgrims form basic religions or philosophies around their exploration, to justify and to reassure. The Underworld, and guiding the dead, gives them purpose amid the desperate monotony of the war. At their best, they become welcoming guides and doctors to the dead, at their worst they claim ownership over parts of the Trenches Beneath and force rules upon those who would trespass with as much zeal as any Kerberos.

Undertakers

The first global war is a mire of cultures and religions. Soldiers are Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, Sikh, raised in the traditions of myriad Canadian Aboriginal or African beliefs, or endless other options from countries, cities, and villages with their own syncretic quirks. Undertakers try to reconcile these differences, or get together to help people move on in countless different ways. Sin-Eaters from around the world begin to share notes, and take them, learning new ways to perceive and understand death. Making death painless and kind is still a pipe dream for most, but some ambitious groups of Undertakers are already imagining how the lessons of the Great War can make way for a better world when the fighting finally ends.

Power from Death

The dead are more than just casualties in the Great War, they're a source of power. The boundless deathly energy of the front lines creates Mementos, easily spotted by the Bound but so numerous that some inevitably fall into the hands of the uninitiated. Elsewhere, not every living general and commander is ignorant of the supernatural, even if none of them understand its full extent. Human necromancers delve deep into the history books for Rituals that could give their country an advantage, or enlist the Bound to create new ways to weaponize death.

The Last Letters

Key: Chance

Description: A rusted cigar tin filled with letters from the front, the Last Letters became a Memento after every soldier who wrote for it died in one assault. A krewe of French Mourners guards it fiercely for its effect but might be talked into loaning it out to someone in need.

Effect: A letter taken at random from the tin will always be from a deceased loved one of the person who pulled it, written shortly before their death. The letter is addressed to the person who used the tin, and the writer often seems to have some sense of their own mortality, and takes a minute to include thoughts they'd otherwise regret never putting into words.

The First Tank

Key: Blood

Description: In 1915, the Landship Committee was formed in Britain, with the goal of developing armored fighting vehicles for use on the Western Front. By September, they had Little Willie, the first working tank prototype. It wasn't until the Mark I tanks were sent into combat at Battle of Flers–Courcelette that Little Willie became a Memento, a symbol of the newly unleashed tool of slaughter. Little Willie is still in England; no Bound has yet gotten close enough to recognize its exceptional properties.

Effect: Despite being a prototype missing some of its engine parts, anyone dead (including the Bound, and some Prometheans) can operate the tank as if it were fully functional. Like all Mementos, Little Willie is impossibly durable, and exists simultaneously in the living world and in Twilight. Its wheels, walls, and any guns mounted onto it work just as well on ghosts and other spirits as they do on living beings.

The Gas-Bone Plague (Ceremony ••••)

The Great War marks the first large scale use of chemical weapons. In Germany, a chemist who fell to one of his own experiments rose again as one of the Bound. Away from the prying eyes of his commanders, he began experimenting with new ways to use chemicals and the dead in war.

The Ceremony he invented turns a ghost into a weapon, allowing it to animate its old corpse and melting its bones into a potent gas weapon. The gas-bone corpse is usually commanded to run toward the enemy immediately, as once the ritual is complete it's a matter of minutes before its effects render movement impossible. As it runs, the gas flows out of its open wounds and orifices, noxious green and clearly chthonic to anyone who can sense deathly energy.

Subject: One willing ghost, killed by a chemical weapon, and its corpse.

Duration: Until the corpse is destroyed, usually one scene.

Symbols: A used gas mask, an expired chemical weapon canister, a copper needle, thread treated with chlorine and sulfur.

Ritual: Sew the gas mask onto the corpse's face while the ghost watches, cut new wounds along its arms. Embed the canister in its stomach and sew the opening shut, ending the Ceremony by cutting the thread.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Medicine

Success: The ghost is pulled into the corpse, able to move freely until its bones are completely dissolved. Gas begins seeping out after one minute, causing the grave Poisoned Tilt (see **Chronicles of Darkness** p. 286) upon exposure, or Toxicity 3 repeated once per minute if outside of combat. Once the ceremony ends, the ghost may no longer use any portion of its corpse as an Anchor.



The Trenches Beneath the World

Along the Western Front, the Upper Reaches of the Underworld are filled with fresh ruins, battlefields, and mazes of trenches and shell holes that stretch up and out with no end in sight. Avernian Gates abound, called forth by battlefield and burial ground alike, some with keys any poor soldier could stumble across by accident. Sin-Eaters of the Great War often call their local Underworld the Trenches Beneath, a euphemistic reminder that the war has its talons in the realm of the dead as well as that of the living.

Bound Demiurge?

Disgusted Sin-Eaters would love to get their hands on the gas-bone chemist, but so would the Faceless Prometheans. His work with the corpses of those who died to chemical warfare is hauntingly familiar, and not broadly shared. Could he be their Lineage's true demiurge, accidentally creating new life out of his experiments with death? Or perhaps he merely shared his work with someone else, who became inspired by the Divine Fire to take it in a different direction. Whatever the case, most Faceless who hear about the German chemist and his work would like to ask him a few questions.

The Bridge Gate

When Germany invaded Belgium, civilians retaliated by destroying their own country's infrastructure before the enemy army could arrive and conquer it. In frustration and rage, junior officers would sometimes react by rounding up and shooting the civilians they thought responsible, and anyone else who got in the way. On the site of one such slaughter, the broken bridge that prompted it remains in Twilight, an unusually large Avernian Gate that arcs above a small stream. Its key is a piece of brick from the original bridge, much of which was carted away to make fortifications. Its guardian geist is the Defiant Innocent, a featureless woman in a blood-soaked Flemish dress who is fiercely distrustful of outsiders. Perhaps because of its size, or the flow of water, the Bridge Gate opens unusually deep in the Underworld and can be used to reach the Acheron river without the need for a navigation roll to avoid getting lost.

The Noël Gate

In the winter of 1914, something miraculous happened: troops from both sides of the Great War laid down their arms and celebrated Christmas together. Such truces occurred sporadically along the Western Front, allowing soldiers a chance to celebrate, exchange gifts, and bury their dead. In Hauts-de-France, one such Christmas graveyard spawned an Avernian Gate between the trench lines. To those who can see it, the gate is made of interwoven fir branches and human

bones, decorated with spent cartridge shells and candles. Its key is the blood of two soldiers from opposite sides of a conflict, willingly spilled at its doorstep. Beyond it lies an eerily silent, snow-covered field, one of the most peaceful spots on the Western Front on either side of the veil. Many ghosts still linger here, forming a rough community that shares sustenance and companionship as they await the end of the war. No Dominion or Upper Reaches settlement has yet made contact with the field, but as dead soldiers venture further into the Underworld in search of Essence, it's only a matter of time until the Noël community is dragged into River City politics. Strangely, no geist guards this gate, making it an unusually tempting place for Reapers to pass through.

La Terre Des Héros

From the Avernian Gates of France, finding this relatively new Dominion is not difficult, just a quick trip down the river. La Terre is set out like a Napoleonic army camp, with tents and barracks and training fields. Most of its citizens are soldiers from that war and are convinced the Kerberos who rules them is some very important general, or even Napoleon himself.

Aside from its population of loyal French soldiers, La Terre collects the ghosts of great military minds like other Dominions collect treasures and secrets. The prison camp at its center contains dozens of captured officers, from the first casualties of the Great War back as far as the crusades. The highest ranked of La Terre's soldiers interrogate these prisoners with inventive tortures, demanding military secrets from the newest and assaulting the oldest purely for the amusement of watching them scream.

Laws

Rules governing La Terre are strict and numerous. Each citizen has a copy of *Les Reglements*, a military-style handbook that details the Old Laws of the Dominion, and the Gatekeeper ghost offers a copy to travelers as well. Residents must walk in specific formations based on rank, and obey any order given in the correct format. Training drills are mandatory, and talk of sedition is prohibited. Any visitor without a well-maintained Napoleonic-era French military uniform is already in violation of La Terre's Old Laws, and will be dealt with accordingly.

L'Empereur

The Kerberos who rules La Terre is a shifting mass of medals and armaments topped with a crowned helmet. He rules from a tent made of gold cloth on a hill at the back of the Dominion, but patrols regularly for the "morale" of his citizens. L'Empereur does not wage war against other Dominions, but he keeps his troops in a state of constant readiness for some future conflict he refuses to discuss. Lawbreakers are chased down with the assistance of his loyal troops, then confined to the prison camps to be tortured until they can provide at least one new piece of military intelligence to the Dominion.

LE GENERAL

Quote: *"To arms, citizens!"*

Background: Guillaume Bessières was a colonel in the Napoleonic army, competent but not exceptional in his position. He was shot in combat, and died slowly from infection over the next several weeks. As he contemplated death, he found solace in patriotism, and died with the very concept of a free France as an Anchor.

Once pulled into the Underworld, Bessières formed a makeshift battalion out of other French soldiers, insisting they maintain proper military order despite the inconvenient setback of death. The whole group eventually found their way to the newly founded La Terre, which Bessières had imagined as some sort of promised land the moment he heard rumors of it. The Dominion treated him well, and L'Empereur himself presented the man with the rank of general and the old knight's helmet that would serve as his Deathmask.

Description: Bessières is a short man in his 30s, still wearing his officer's uniform from his time with the Napoleonic army. His shoulder and left arm are gangrenous, and the rest of his complexion is dull and pale. Wearing his Deathmask, the Knight's Crown, transforms him into Le Général: ornately armored and carried by a black stallion that is a part of his ghostly corpus. Engulfed ghosts are bound head to toe in steel chain, which is then dragged behind the steed as he returns to the Underworld.

Storytelling Hints: Bessières is deeply loyal to the Kerberos he serves, and believes he is following L'Empereur's wishes in guiding the troops of La Terre to torture and collect. He is at least partially mistaken: L'Empereur isn't human enough to care what happens to the military minds he hoards, and Bessières' obsessive need for military order influenced La Terre's current situation just as much as the Kerberos' nature.

Virtue: Loyal (Bessières would never willingly betray the Kerberos, even if faced with the possibility of absolute destruction.)

Vice: Cruel (This spirit has a sadistic nature and enjoys watching his master's enemies suffer.)

Aspiration: Make La Terre the most respected Dominion in the Underworld.

Rank: 2/4

Attributes: Power 6/12, Finesse 5/8, Resistance 3/10

Influence: French Patriotism 2, *Blood 2*

Corpus: 8/15

Willpower: 8/18

Size: 5

Speed: 16/25

Defense: 5/8

Initiative: 8/18

Numina: Awe, Blast, Drain, Implant Mission, Seek, Rapture, *Engulf, Descend*

Manifestations: Twilight Form, Image, Materialize, Avernian Gateway

Essence: 15/25

Ban: Bessières cannot disobey a legal order from a currently serving French army officer. As Le Général, he is banished to the Underworld if he spills the blood of a French national who has never done him harm.

Bane: Musket balls. As Le Général, the sound of a field trumpet that was present at the Battle of Waterloo.

Promethean: Conscripts of Clay

In the Great War, the imperatives of life change for everyone. Supply and manpower become the vital lifeblood of nations who are throwing everything they possibly can at their enemies. World-spanning empires are stripped of their resources both natural and human to feed the leviathan of war wrapping itself around the world. The belligerents in this conflict seek any advantage they can find.

It is unsurprising so many of the Created were drawn like moths to the lamplights of the trenches. Within that vile space, the subtle masks of humanity strip away. The gentle mien of society and everyday life tears asunder in a world of extremes and the color of human experience boils down to the black and white of life and death. The Western Front plays host to many a Promethean seeking out the truth on her Pilgrimage.

Though it's rare and wildly difficult, some scientists are able to create new lives to feed into the grinder. The prospect of constructed soldiers is attractive to the states of the time. Imagine, fresh troops who will never tire and, in the hopes of some scientists, will never rebel or know fear. Imagine, an inexhaustible supply of manpower forged from the flesh of the fallen and the mud in which they are, nameless, buried. Of course, creating such lives is easier said than done, and almost all turn out to be autonomous.

Among those Created born into this hell is the lost Lineage of the Faceless. They are tragedy given form and purpose, animated amalgams of caked mud, chemical ruin, and the mottled remains of the dead. Their identities lost amid a sea of conflicting memories from the many dead within them and the everlasting pain of their chemically burning hearts, they rejoin the fray with untold vigor.

All the while, Muses spur their charges on to ever more grand creation. Large numbers of Unfleshed and Tammuz are brought to being in this time, another way for war to be waged, supplies to be delivered and trenches to be dug.

Fate of the Faceless

As the Great War winds down, the conditions of the Faceless' creation come to an end. Not only that, but the purpose for which they were created does the same. The Torment created by this abandonment drives many of them mad and turns the former battlefields into a Wasteland.

In the ensuing Firestorm, many Faceless allow themselves to be destroyed or walk into the roiling sea to be eroded by time and tide. A scant few forsake the name of their Lineage and go into solitude. The shame of the acts they carry out in their time on the Western Front are consigned to history with their name. Most that remain identify themselves as Extempore.

The Firestorm that consumes the main bulk of the Lineage seems like a vile gas attack, since Faceless are forged not from elements of nature but the cruel, factory-created humours of death-dealing machines. The earthquakes that come are the rumbling of exploding shells. Several of the Faceless themselves burst in angry clouds of smoke and chlorine, swamping any who stand near and burning any vegetation in their passing. Those who remain hurl themselves into the sea, making it unclear if they survive or not. Like the prophesied end to all wars, the Faceless wish to be forgotten. To become as inert and obsolete as the bombs and guns that birthed them. They come to the collective belief that in an era of peace there is simply no need for them to exist, and they cannot deny that somewhere in their agonized and burning hearts they can't stand the thought of the war coming to a close. They are tied to the constant struggle, the theater of death and decay in which their heinous acts and monstrous drives seem human and realistic. The thought of men returning to their farms and sowing crops, of women departing the bloody surgeries and sewing fabric instead of flesh, it brings their own disgusting nature into sharp focus. They are not like the others, not created to be like man in any other aspect other than violence, war, and destruction. That era must now end and end forever.

Their sacrifice could be said to be noble. Perhaps some even found fulfilment in that last, terrifying moment when they resolved to give up their mockery of life for a greater good. Is that the humanity they were forced to seek after all? That when the weapons of war themselves rebel and put themselves beyond use, therein is the lesson for mankind? Such philosophical discussions are for the history books. Even if a Faceless exists in modern times, he would simply speak as did one of their number to Otto. They are merely another face in the crowd. They are merely one of millions.

Rampaging Faceless

Exploding from the trenches opposite, a line of soldiers rises in a charge. As machine-gun fire cuts down men left and right, one huge soldier holds his stride. As the shape bears down on the protagonists' position, they can see clearly it is a bizarre, golem-like created in the throes of fury.



Morale Points

Soldiers around the protagonists have a total of up to 10 morale points at the start of a chronicle set in the Great War. Created can work to increase or decrease them in any way they wish, the more creative, the better. However, if the number reaches zero, the men desert their position en masse, succumb to shell shock, or run to greet the hail of machine-gun fire. Drops in morale lead to executions for desertion and, likely, an imminent push from the enemy as word spreads of the dissent among the soldiery. This forms the backdrop to any chronicle on the frontlines.

Morale can be tracked using this scale and has the following effects on the mortal soldiery:

10 — Spirits are high and the soldiery are filled with national pride. They regularly can be heard calling to each other, extolling the virtues of their cause. **Composure-based rolls gain one extra die and have one automatic success.**

9 — Despite exposure to some of the terrors of the war, the soldiers remain upbeat and positive about their chances. They know that victory is just one push away. **Add one die to Composure based rolls.**

8/7 — The hard slog in the trenches is beginning to take its toll. These soldiers keep their spirits up by talking about their home life and what they have to look forward to after triumph. Occasionally, they can be heard crying when they think nobody else can hear. **No mechanical benefit.**

6 — The initial signs of shell shock and fatigue show on the pale faces of these battle-hardened soldiers. They tend to avoid conversation with those fresh-faced recruits who they have seen die on many occasions. **Subtract one die from Social rolls.**

5/4 — Months of fighting and horrific conditions have tested the minds of these soldiers to the limit. They occasionally laugh at nothing and offer only black humor to their comrades as comfort. **Subtract two dice from Social rolls.**

3/2 — Mad-eyed and with a tendency to snap at those who try to boost their spirits, the veterans of the trench often find themselves sapped of morale, with only the grim hope of survival to sustain them. They are malnourished, psychologically broken, and desperate. **Subtract two dice from Social rolls, −1 to Physical Attributes due to starvation.**

1 — Soldiers at this level are at their wits' end. They are suicidal and their courage hangs by a thread. They speak of attacking the enemy trenches, not with determination, but with hope that their enemies will end their suffering with a merciful bullet. **Subtract two dice from Social rolls, −2 to Physical Attributes, −1 to Composure.**

0 — This soldier is a mere shell, shattered both mentally and physically. Desertion is a certainty, the firing squad that awaits those deserters who are caught is almost as welcome to them as freedom. **All Social Attributes and Composure reduced to 0, the soldier will simply attempt to flee by any means necessary and kill anyone who tries to stop them.**

Balefire burns behind its eyes as it cries tears of chemical yellow. Its battle cry shrinks even the toughest men in the trench who recoil, watching their fire glance ineffectively off its hide of rock-hard mud. With a glance to the other members of the throng, it is clear to see if this Created cannot be calmed it must be brought down.

With immense strength, it lifts the first man it encounters clean off the ground, impaled on its bayoneted rifle which seems laughably small in its oversized hands. Tossing him aside, it turns to the first member of the throng and roars a challenge, barreling forward with its fists clenched to strike.

FRENZIED FACELESS

The Faceless is overwhelmed by the pain inside it and driven to go down in a blaze of glorious, alchemical fire. It has the following stats:

Lineage: Faceless

Refinement: Stannum

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4; Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Firearms 1, Weaponry 2; Intimidation 4

Willpower: 7

Pilgrimage: 2

Elpis: Fury

Torment: Obsession

Initiative: 6

Defense: 6

Size: 6

Speed: 12

Health: 10

Azoth: 3

Pyros/Turn: 12/3

Bestowment: Living Wall

Transmutations: Assault (Disquiet), Shock (Electrification)

If the protagonists successfully bring down the Faceless, they will be visited the next night by another of their number, calmer and more withdrawn. She apologizes to them for being unable to prevent her compatriot from bursting toward them and advises them she is leaving the trenches to find what more there is to life than this. If they ask for her Lineage, she will say she is Extempore.

Spoils of War

The protagonists encounter a German Osiran called Gerda who is trying to salvage an artifact from a church in no-man's land. She claims to have the means to extract them from the front should they wish at a later time and can also smuggle in rations and supplies to their position with which they can barter. For this service, she enlists their aid in getting her to the church and back safely with whatever it is she is to find there.

When questioned about the nature of the artifact she only reveals snippets of information, repeatedly informing the protagonists, whatever it is, it is far too important to her to risk telling them about. If pushed, she becomes frustrated and indicates she is prepared to go without their help, though she'd much rather not.

Gerda leads them through the cratered remains of the front. Water-filled holes dot the landscape and clouds of poisoned gas hang in the air. Here and there, soldiers of either side can be seen trying vainly to crawl back to their trench in random directions, most with grievous, mortal wounds. This provides an opportunity for Created with a bent toward humanity to offer what aid they can and potentially save a life. For her part, Gerda is keen to hurry on but looks upon the wounded with compassion and genuine sadness at their situation.

The village is occupied by a small group of French fanatics who are awaiting God's judgment on the people who destroyed their home. When spying any of the Created in uniform, they immediately attack them with hodgepodge weapons they have scavenged from fallen soldiers. Once they are overcome, Gerda moves immediately into the basement of the church to claim her prize and returns carrying a young girl in her arms. She informs the party this is Marion du Trouelles, a chess prodigy and mathematical genius. When she heard her village had been caught in the front, she allocated all of her resources to tracking her down. Though rumors from prisoners of war, as well as patrols who had come near the village and been fired upon, a young girl matching her description had been seen with the men holed up in the village.

During this explanation, the shelling of the area around the village will resume. Protagonists have the choice to evacuate and flee back to the trench line or try to hunker down in the village. Gerda's choice will be to flee across the field and toward the German line which, she hopes, is the source of the shelling.

Roll a die for each turn as the throng retreats, on a roll of 1, a shell bursts near them and everyone must make Stamina + Resolve rolls. Gerda rolls five dice and has a Health of 7, Marion rolls three dice and has a Health of 4. If Marion dies, Gerda immediately descends into Torment, which the throng can attempt to counter.

If the party succeeds in bringing Marion into the German lines, Gerda makes good on her word to either transport them from the front or provide them with frequent smuggled shipments of rations and supplies over the course of the next few weeks. This includes ammunition and other sundry materials, such as books or even records Gerda could feasibly acquire in Germany. Specialist weapons cannot be provided by her. A newspaper article comes through in the next few weeks indicating Marion has won a chess tournament in Berlin.

DR. HEINRICH FUCHS

The research into chemical weapons conducted by both sides in the war brings many who would have been drummed out of the scientific community in more rational times to the fore. One such man is Dr. Heinrich Fuchs.

Dr. Fuchs is a bizarre mix of occultist and chemist. In his younger years he put his mind to discovering the secret of eternal life. After traveling far, gaining the knowledge of many mystics and seers, and gathering the proper ingredients, Dr. Fuchs tested his potions on vagrants, desperate for quick, easy money.

Unfortunately, those he "treated" had a habit of dying shortly afterward. If they were lucky, their deaths would be quick and painless. However, word quickly spread about the man's heinous experiments and the supply of willing volunteers quickly dried up, as did academic interest. Indeed, only the authorities grew truly interested in him.



Before his arrest, Dr. Fuchs tested his last formula on himself. He was certain this was the one that would grant him immortality and, if not, he was prepared to die rather than spend years locked away from his precious work. Although he believes the potion did award him with immortality, it also aged him physically, leaving him wizened and gnarled like an old tree stump, with wiry, pure white hair jutting from his balding scalp. Though only in his 40s, Fuchs appears to be a much older man.

His jailing did not last long as his reputation with chemicals brought him to the attention of some of the more unscrupulous elements in the Reich. With the discovery of the Faceless Prometheans, Dr. Fuchs now thinks he has found not only the perfect ingredient for weapons of war in Pyros, but that he has finally discovered the key to his own immortality.

Fuchs put out notice to capture as many Created as can be found for him to continue his work and, with enough Prometheans on his slab, he can uncover the secrets to harness the power of Azoth into unstoppable weaponry.

To that end, he develops a new gas, one that affects man and Created alike.

"I envy you, creature. If only all the world could be as you are."

Virtue: Driven (Dr. Fuchs is a man with a goal, and nothing will stop him from achieving it.)

Vice: Immoral (Heinrich has little regard for what is ethical, if it advances his plots.)

Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2, Presence: 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Skills: Academics (Military Tactics) 4, Crafts (Metalwork) 3, Investigation (Research) 4, Medicine (Human Anatomy) 4, Occult (Promethean Alchemy) 2, Science (Chemistry) 4; Brawl 1, Firearms 1, Weaponry 1, Stealth (Hide) 2; Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 3, Socialize 1

Merits: Contacts (State Employed Chemists) 3, Language (Latin, English, Chinese, Greek), Resources 1, Status (German Reich) 2

Magnitude: 3

Willpower: 7

Integrity: 7

Torment: Obsession

Initiative: 8

Defense: 3

Size: 5

Speed: 6

Health: 7

Pyros/Turn: 7/1

Distillations: Alchemicus (Stone), Aqua Regia (Decay), Mesmerism (Lure)

Dread Powers: The Fog

The Fog: Dr. Fuchs smashes a glass cylinder on the floor releasing the fog, which expands to a cloud 30 feet in diameter. Fuchs has immunized himself against its effects.

The mad doctor's design rots and decays any object with which it comes into contact. Metal rusts, leather corrodes, wood splinters and falls to ash. This allows it to kill through gas masks, but it also allows it to penetrate to the heart of a Promethean. Mortal victims suffer 1 point of aggravated damage per turn and gain the Grave Poisoned Tilt (see **Chronicles of Darkness** p. 93) until treated with the antidote, which only Fuchs possesses. The fog not only asphyxiates them but corrodes their skin and if they are killed by the fog, it destroys their cadaver, leaving only a sizzling pool of chemicals behind.

Prometheans caught in the fog must make a Stamina + Resolve roll. If they fail, the chemical reacts with their Pyros and they become Poisoned (Grave) for the remainder of the scene.

Ageless Elixir: If taking heavy damage (reduced to 1 or 2 Health), Dr. Fuchs may quaff a phial of the Ageless Elixir, even during another player's turn. When he does so, roll a die and consult the following table:

Result	Effect
1	Dr. Fuchs ages so rapidly his body rapidly decomposes, and he falls to ash
2	Dr. Fuchs regains 1 Health but loses 1 dot from each Physical Attribute and appears to age rapidly
3	Dr. Fuchs regains 1 Health and ages rapidly, his Speed is halved
4	Dr. Fuchs regains 2 Health and ages rapidly, his Speed is halved
5	Dr. Fuchs regains 2 Health and his hair falls out leaving him completely bald
6	Dr. Fuchs regains 2 Health
7	Dr. Fuchs regains 2 Health and gains 1 dot in Stamina
8	Dr. Fuchs regains 3 Health and gains 1 dot in Stamina
9	Dr. Fuchs regains 3 Health and gains 1 dot in each Physical Attribute
10	Dr. Fuchs regains all lost Health and grows young and vital. He gains 1 dot in each Physical Attribute and a point in Presence

Storytelling Hints: Dr. Fuchs is maniacal beyond repair, a truly tragic creature in the Shakespearean mode. He is consumed with nothing but his work, which is his justification to disregard any moral safeguard or reprimand of his

lack of humanity. He cannot be reasoned with. When it appears he is listening it will simply be to take advantage over an unwitting mark. To his mind, the all-consuming conquest of death is the greatest honor mankind can achieve. If death is banished, how then can there even be war? What use then for weapons?

When confronted with overwhelming physical force, Dr. Fuchs instantly deploys the Fog. He has immunized himself to it but will sacrifice even those working for or with him if he feels it will save his own skin from being captured. This, to a fault, is his character. He mocks the idea of obsession with saving humans from their slow march to death but it is himself he truly wishes to save.

Any Prometheans he captures will be immediately taken for study. Be sure to describe his religious reverence of them. He truly desires for humans to be more like them, to shed the weakness of their frail flesh and embrace the wonders that science unbound can bestow upon them. He carves at them as nonchalantly as carving a roast. He sees them at once as a great achievement and as automatons lacking the vital spark of humanity. Only by combining their anima, the essence of their machinery, with his genius will they be truly whole, and he whole in them. It is unlikely he will outright kill a Promethean deliberately, but his understanding of their unique physiology is limited. Storytellers should take discretion with how much damage he might inflict upon them while experimenting and give other protagonists a chance to ride to the rescue before killing off someone captured. Giving the character of Fuchs the chance to exposit his bizarre manifesto to a helpless Promethean could form a strange step forward in their own Pilgrimage if played correctly, though suffering bears no guarantee of leading to enlightenment.

Created Conscripts

The Lineages take differing views of the slaughter that is the Great War, each seeking to add it to their Pilgrimages in the best way they can.

The **Frankensteins** seek to test the limits of not only their bodies, but their minds. More than any other Lineage, they embrace the madness of the frontlines. Those pursuing the refinements of Ferrum and Stannum are drawn in to the carnage. Fighting for their national cause, the unit of men who they signed up with, to protect the land of the family who took them in, or possibly to protect the family themselves as they flee the destruction of their livelihood.

Galateids find this time to be one of incredible opportunity and exploration. The limits of human science are pushed as belligerent nations look for efficient ways to destroy each other. Meanwhile, stars of stage and screen are flown in from all over the world to entertain the troops and keep up fractured morale, inspiring the Muses to seek out those who need solace in the trenches and in the field hospitals.

Osirans are not drawn to the conflict in the same way as other Created. The disruption the Great War causes among academia and high society all but confounds their efforts across the globe. With all thought bent toward winning the war, it leaves little time or funding for more cerebral pursuits. However, it does provide those with an alchemical leaning a chance to experiment with their latest concoctions. Osirans following the Refinement of Mercurius are among those who bring the advent of chemical warfare to the Western Front and continue to refine their methods both to penetrate contemporary gas masks and to produce healing potions that they can use to recruit the worthy wounded to their aid.

The trench lines are a second home to the **Tammuz** and they find joy in the endless work on the front and elsewhere. The Named can be found running messages from post to post, digging new fortifications or lugging heavy crates of ammunition through seemingly impassable terrain. The endless grind is a strange joy to them and gives them the purpose they so crave. Many throngs are formed through chance meetings in the trenches and any alchemical pact formed in this hellscape will contain at least one Tammuz.

Ulgan find interest in the passing of so many souls and those studying the Refinement of Argentum will be drawn to those who seem so interested in interacting with them as such. The sheer amount of death is a spiritual stain crossing the divides and thresholds separating worlds, and the Riven sense this more than any other as the ectoplasm in their hearts resonates with each new atrocity. If there is anywhere a Created could come to understand the spiritual it is here.

Built for purpose, **Unfleshed** form elite units within both armies, designed to seek out priority targets or gather intelligence. Exposure to so much naked human experience causes them to question the orders of their creators time and again, leading their creators to question their own genius in creating something so… "alive." While most of the Manufactured in this era are newly constructed, it is an era of great discovery for them and can be marked as the genesis of many Pilgrimages for their number. Their cold, callous nature is also found as the thinking machines behind many of the bloodthirsty tactics and strategies employed by the command of the armies.

While **Faceless** will go on to adopt the title themselves, **Extempore** of other kinds are not rare among the front lines. Some hardy sorts seeking adventure and swept up in the nationalistic pride of the occasion are first to arrive, followed by those seeking a grim and stark reality of human experience. When encountering other Created, the Extempore often attempt to conceal their nature if they can. Most seem content to avoid contact and pursue their personal Pilgrimage. However, those following the Refinement of Argentum are highly interested in talking with other Created in attempts to confirm rumors they've heard of supernatural sights in the trenches and the villages around them.



Playing the Game

The enemy of my enemy is my friend. In wartime you take what allies you can get and sort the rest out later. As troops are moved into new territory, or killed in droves, the supernatural rarely have the chance to cling to their own kin and ignore the rest of the world. They make friends with whoever they can find that shares something close to the same goals. Such arrangements bring forth new insight for all parties, or raise uncomfortable questions that none of them can answer.

Strange Bedfellows

Sin-Eaters are already used to mingling between two worlds, so adding a third or fourth isn't drastically out of place. Bone Shadows and Osirans can make exceptionally useful companions when traversing the Underworld, though the former have a disturbing tendency to treat every ghost like a potential enemy, and the latter have some equally disturbing stories of creation by the god of death. Krewes of Furies welcome Ghost Wolves as celebrants, offering companionship and something almost like the passion of the *Siskur-Dah*. They might even choose to follow Death Wolf themselves, respecting her as a powerful ghost to be celebrated and protected. For Mourners, the Azothic memory offers a tantalizing new way to comb the past for answers, cooperating with Originists in a shared need for knowledge.

Werewolves do not hunt alone. Cut off from their pack by distance or death, some turn to whatever allies they can find. Prometheans are disconcerting; walking corpses or animated objects, an unnatural mix, but the Uratha respect rage. Likewise, a Sin-Eater can look like one of the Spirit-Ridden, prey to be hunted, but werewolves willing to look closer can find a kindred spirit standing at the crossroads between this world and the spirit world. The Ithaeur are those most likely to treat Sin-Eaters as packmates, while Prometheans under the refinements of Iron, Tin, and even Cobalt can find the Iron Wolves eager to share an understanding of the worst humanity has to offer.

Prometheans have a hard time making friends, but that hardly stops them from trying. Any of the Created born from corpses, especially the Riven, might mistake a Sin-Eater for something too good to be true: some sort of kin born without the alchemical imbalance that separates them from humanity, maybe even kin enough to be immune to Disquiet. The Uratha, too, present tantalizing hope to the Ulgan, masters of the spirit and the flesh who could give them great insight on their Pilgrimage, or simply scare away the spirits troubling them. Fresh Extempore formed from the massive conflict of the war seek kinship with anyone who will take them, latching onto another group's history to fill the hole left by their vacant Lineage.

Pack, Krewe, Throng

Sin-Eaters and Werewolves are used to mixed company. A krewe involves both living and dead celebrants, while packs are open to just about anything the Uratha invite in. In a mixed

Dead Totem

The Forsaken are meant to make packs under the auspice of one of the *Hisil*, a totem spirit to guide and protect them. But as the land of the living and the land of the dead become intertwined amid the carnage, the Shadow and the Underworld intermingle and rules are broken. A pack with a geist as its totem is a strange thing, cut off from the spirit world of Father Wolf, but it gives its members a profound connection to the Bound who walk among the trenches. A geist serving as a totem can still make a pact with a human, and such Bound are connected to the pack as deeply as they are their new ghostly companion.

game, Storytellers are encouraged to treat Sin-Eaters and Prometheans as formidable supernatural creatures if they join a pack, on par with werewolf members. Likewise, werewolves and Prometheans can purchase the Mystery Cult Initiation Merit to reflect joining a krewe, and access Krewe Ceremonies as normal. Over time, a pack and krewe can meld into a single organization, offering all members the benefits of both.

Throngs are less formal in their arrangement, and the Promethean nature makes mingling with other creatures difficult. To facilitate a mixed game, the Storyteller may allow a pack or krewe to count as a special type of throng if the correct alchemical ritual of sharing Pyros and lifegiving fluids is practiced, like a chemical form of blood pact. The result enables other non-Created members of the throng two additional dice when resisting the effects of Disquiet. The Storyteller may also allow new ways for other characters to resolve the Disquieted Condition appropriate to their connection with the Promethean causing it, such as sharing a hunt or venturing into the Underworld.

Stranger Enemies

The war has plenty of horrors to go around, and stuck together everyone present has good reason to fight against them. Bone Shadows who find a Reaper in their territory team up with the local krewe to follow it into the Underworld for revenge, and the two stay together to deal with the mortal necromancy cult disturbing the spirits of the region. A Storm Lord, upon discovering how a Promethean can attract the cannibalistic, near-dead creature they've been stalking across battlefields, invites the Created into their pack to help hunt the Pandoran.

But they aren't the only ones who can mingle. A pack of Fire-Touched Pure learns a ceremony from a rogue geist, forming open gates to the Underworld to bring the Shadow closer. A wolf-born alchemist seeks to use Pyros to force out his own First Change, slaughtering Werewolf and Promethean alike for blood to fuel the experiments. A Centimani forms a symbiotic relationship with a Reaper, one to kill horrifically and the other to collect the resulting ghosts, each becoming the closest thing the other has to a loved one.

The monsters of the Western Front have plenty of reasons to fight each other, too. Krewes of all sorts have reasons to claim the local Avernian Gates, but a pack's totem might have other ideas, leading to a territorial clash. The Created are abominations against the natural order, prey for the Hunters in Darkness or the Iron Wolves picking up the mess after killing their human progenitor. A Sin-Eater hunts down a Frankenstein on behalf of the six ghosts who need their corpses laid to rest, valuing the needs of the dead over the half-alive creature made from their stolen flesh. One group's righteous cause becomes another's cruel slaughter, as vicious and pointless as the war itself.

Playing with Mixed Company

When creating characters for a mixed game, it's a good idea to pick out a few ideas that interest all the players before you begin, and build characters that will interact with those parts of the setting. If no one but the group's one Sin-Eater has any investment in the Underworld, then playing around in the Trenches Beneath won't feel as exciting to everyone else. Likewise, if no one but the Promethean cares about their Pilgrimage, or the werewolf wants to stay put and claim territory while everyone else wants to travel, your chronicle will feel like several separate stories that happen to be centered around a group of acquaintances, or even fall apart altogether. In a mixed game where most of the characters are one type of creature with only one outsider, the latter should make sure to play to the ideas that are most important to the former, since the majority of the group will probably want to get involved with those.

For a Great War game, consider the themes of sacrifice and distrust, and how those can help bring a mixed group together. A Sin-Eater whose death saves a pack of Uratha might earn an honorary membership. A Promethean could be made from parts of soldiers from two different sides, the other characters friends of the corpses from both armies. Sacrifice breeds loyalty and camaraderie between strangers, while distrust can create a need to learn someone else's motivations and secrets. Either, or both, means a group of people all invested in what everyone else is doing with their lives.

From a more mechanical standpoint, remember that different creatures will have an easier time accomplishing certain tasks. Sin-Eaters can open Avernian Gates with ease, and are adept at interacting with ghosts of all sorts. Werewolves are quick to heal, and instinctive hunters and trackers. Prometheans are immune to pain and electricity, and can push themselves past human limits for a short period in nearly any area. Other creatures might mimic these skills, but only with practice and experience. As a player, consider the role your character will have in the chronicle you're playing, and what sort of problems you'd like them



The War that Devoured the World

It stands to reason that **vampires** might enjoy the carnage of the Great War. Blood runs thick and fast, and what's another lost soldier? Meals are easy to come by. The moral implications are handwaved by members of the Lancea et Sanctum and Ordo Dracul who reason "these boys will be dead soon anyway." Only a foolish vampire makes their haven near the frontline, however. No matter how deep you've dug into the earth, a well-placed shell could expose you to the sunlight. A Mekhet bloodline named the Brothers of Ypres arises at this time, known for their toxic Vitae.

Mages are sometimes taught that they can perform miracles. No number of miracles, no power through incantation or rote, is enough to mitigate the relentless horror of the war. It's enough to drive mages to despair. They are not so different from the young men dying every day, and indeed, sometimes those young men are mages who volunteered, were called up, or pressganged into service. Magic cannot save you from the combination of barbed wire, gas, machine-gun fire, and explosions. Many mages fall from their paths in this period, due to injury, death, or a hollow recognition of life's futility. They never to recover.

Changelings tell a tale of True Fae who target brave young boys going to war, luring them through the maze of barbed wire and trench networks into world entire made of warring soldiers from all time periods. When the Gentry tire of their toy soldiers, they return them to the conflict, usually within seconds of destruction by mundane means. The Lost fear no-man's land for the creatures that might lurk on the other side of all that mud and blood. Changelings among the ranks do everything to avoid going over the top.

A compact of **hunters** known as Third Light emerges, comprising individuals from all sides of the conflict. Their Vigil is an odd one given the destructive backdrop of war: They are nurses, civilians, priests, and conscientious objectors. Third Light knows they cannot stop the killing, but they can attempt to stop monsters from feeding on the pain and suffering in the trenches. Third Light exists to keep mortal horror trapped in the mortal realm, eliminating any creatures (they call most unnatural critters "lice") that prey on the conflict.

Mummies have seen and experienced it all, but never before have they witnessed such wholesale slaughter. At least, not since they became Deathless. To the mummies with Memory to realize it, the millions of dead may even exceed the number sacrificed to bring about their immortality. Sesha-Hebsu and Su-Menent search for a reason — there has to be one! A god or powerful entity commanding this sacrifice for a grand ritual. But there is not. This is just humankind at work.

Beasts make Lairs close to the action of the Great War, keen to sap the nightmares of newly arrived soldiers unprepared for the front's relentless horror. In a surprise to many Primordials, their nightmarish powers are less potent in an arena of war where nightmares are real and experienced every day. The people here are suffering, but any exacerbation on a Beast's part is trivial compared months of nothing but gunfire, explosions, and seeing your friends die.

Some **demons** construct Covers to avoid serving in the war, while others do so specifically to involve themselves. Integrators and Destroyers find a special home at this time, the former believing the machinery of war has advanced so fast due to the God-Machine's will, the latter craving the opportunity to turn the God-Machine's weapons against It. Some Unchained are convinced the Great War is some mass deletion event under the God-Machine's direction, while others consider it a rewrite. The rewriter demons just can't agree on who the angels are backing to win.

to solve. If another character's supernatural nature makes them naturally better at that niche than yours, you may feel disappointed by the breadth of action your character is able to take in the game.

Running the Game

To most effectively capture the mood and themes of the Great War, it is best to consider the timing. How long have the protagonists been on the front? In what state is the morale of their unit? An interesting transition could be time hops between different periods and deployments. From the initial themes of patriotism, backed by inspiring music and interactions with characters who scream "For King and Country!" at the slightest invitation, slowly and deliberately introduce darker tones. Utilize reoccurring characters to demonstrate how the people who the protagonists have become familiar with are changing and being scarred like the landscape around them.

Music could be a good way to achieve this. Starting out with the upbeat, morale-boosting Music Hall vibe of turn-of-the-century Britain, into the melodramatic rousing crescendos of Wagner and the 1812 Overture, into the melancholy sound of lone pipers and the bugling of the Last Post.

To preface each session, try reciting a poem to set the tone. Again, contemplate the journey the characters are taking in the session. The loss of faith in the primacy of their nation and the inherent good of its aims and goals.

Don't be afraid to go with the protagonists on a journey that may end up rewriting the history of the period. Do your players want to sneak into the officers' manor and put an end to the infamous Field Marshal Haig? Contemplate what that might mean. Who will replace him? Could it be someone worse than him? Throwing in a character to warn the players of such an outcome might give them pause to think. Perhaps Haig's tactics prove to have been the difference between loss and defeat in a crunch situation that turns the war in another direction.

On top of that, most of the monstrous characters in the game will be loath to expose themselves to Princip levels of attention. Gavrilo Princip is one of the most important names in the history books for firing two shots whereas most soldiers that fought, killed, and died in the Great War fired several thousand and their names are not writ large on its pages. Profile matters and killing someone important will bring with it a form of celebrity that many monsters would prefer to avoid.

Give thought to the three tiers of gameplay when running your scenes, local, regional and global effects can all bring something different to your sessions. From deep personal discoveries to huge outcomes that affect the fate of nations.

Tier One: Trench Level

Hekatonchieres are rampaging across the Western Front and creating a salient in the German line in an important section. Werewolves must choose between slaying the creatures or waiting until they have done enough damage to swing the tide of battle in this area.

A collective of Sin-Eaters is calling for vengeance against its former unit commander, Oberleutnant von Glau, who ordered it to attack a French fort. The handful of their regiment that survived took the fort while he took the credit. He has spread a story that he took the fort singlehandedly after rapping on the door with his sword.

A group of Tammuz who have been working on the trenches for a few years have decided to turn their talents to digging a tunnel to ferry refugees back into France. They are approached by a lieutenant who asks them to help he and his friends escape to Brittany using their tunnel. The leader of the Tammuz throng says it's an affront to their sense of duty.

Tier Two: No-Man's Land

The collapse of the salient was a great victory, but the army took huge casualties in seizing the town from the Spirit-Ridden regiment that held it. As the men bivouac down for the night, shadowy shapes begin moving. Beshilu, feasting on the many corpses and filth of the past days' carnage spawn in massive numbers. In the aftermath of the bloody battle, they could roll up the German line like a carpet, but that would only increase the threat they pose. The Uratha must stand with their former enemies against a common foe in a desperate last stand or risk the world being overrun by the pestilent rat Hosts.

Humiliating von Glau has seen him removed from his command, but the Sin-Eaters of the angry dead are not satisfied. They ask for the krewe to begin working their way up the command structure. Someone gave von Glau the order to attack that position, heedless of the cost. The search leads to a director of strategy, living well behind the line in a palatial French manor. But there's something different about this man. He is surrounded by a strange cult and seems to be worshipping something they call the High Cromlech.

After taking control of the Tammuz tunnel, the protagonists' throng goes to rescue the brother of one of the deserters. He is stationed in a field hospital near Ypres. Upon arrival, the brother curses the throng for giving those men an easy way out and indicates that several of the walking wounded had been sent back to the front to cover the gaps left by those able-bodied men using the tunnel to escape. He charges them to bring those troops to face the firing squad. However, the throng soon discovers that the deserters are werewolves and have been claimed for an even darker purpose in the laboratory of the Alchemist, Dr. Fuchs, and he has been waiting for the throng to come looking for its quarry.

Tier Three: The War Room

The Beshilu were nothing more than opportunists, preying upon the decay and destruction around them, they are only a symptom of something greater. The Uratha encounter a group of seeming mortals who have heard tales of a cult worshipping something by the name of the High Cromlech. While the Sin-Eaters deal with the mortal cult above, only the Uratha can face the horror of the dreaded idigam and perhaps put an end to this destructive conflict at last.

The death of Director Hoffmann has been a massive blow to the German offensive. The Sin-Eaters wail as they watch the enemy, with renewed vigor, counterattacking and recapturing the positions they died to seize. However, there is something bigger at play here and it crosses the divide between the two opposing forces. The High Cromlech is feeding upon the vast bloodshed of the Western front, supported by its pawns on both commands. The trail of the evil cult leads them to the office of Joseph Joffre himself and a bizarre lair deep underground, beneath the blood-soaked earth.

The armistice should have brought a surcease to the constant destruction, but instead it seems to have brought despair and madness to the Faceless Lineage. Created who had seemed stoic and controlled in the crucible of war, suddenly descend, en masse, into a brutal Firestorm. At its center, a huge hillock rises from the mud, covered in



huge, roaring, laughing and screaming faces and spewing fire, ash, and chemical death all around itself, growing by the day. An arch-qashmallim, dread servant of the Divine Principle, has come to bring an end to the Faceless Lineage on Earth in a tide of wanton destruction that threatens to shatter the fragile peace on the front. When all hope seems to be lost in view of the unstoppable force, the pack of werewolves the Throng liberated from Dr. Fuchs comes to them with a proposal. If the godlike being wishes to eradicate Faceless on Earth, perhaps the werewolves can assist by sending the last of the Lineage into the Shadow. Others suggest they help the arch-qashmallim by joining the killing spree and hastening the Firestorm's end. The choice rests with the throng.

Considering Crossover

The Great War brings all kinds of monsters together in one hellish struggle. It is vitally important to consider how the different creatures can interact. How do the Sin-Eaters' dead interplay with the spirit world of the Uratha? Can the Faceless be the stalwart force needed to hold back the onslaught of a Fire-Touched pack? Most importantly, how do these monsters view each other in the context of the horror they are all going through together? Does this lend a useful bridge between them or drive differences even further?

If your game is focusing mostly on one line for protagonists, consider using **Chronicles of Darkness** to use the others as helpful allies or deadly antagonists. Focus on the Dread Powers section and think what sort of terrifying abilities might be useful to transplant onto the monsters you create from these lines to make them a useful friend or dangerous foe to your players.

Geist: Henrietta's Letter (Tier One)

The krewe has based itself in Ypres to avail itself of the ready stores of resonance. There are many wrongs to be righted here and it is impossible to tell which cries in the night are from soldiers lost in no-man's land or geists haunting the barren field. One piercing sob catches the attention of a young, inexperienced member of the krewe.

Henrietta Covington didn't stand a chance when the gas cloud swept through the Field Hospital 18. Even so, she couldn't leave those poor soldiers to die like that, even had she known. But the news of the death toll is being suppressed to keep the men's morale up.

The shade of Henrietta tells the protagonists of a letter she stored in the old site. She is unsure if it's truly safe to go there yet, or if it has been overrun by Germans. The protagonists must find it and bear it north to her beloved who is serving in one of the hospitals covering the extreme flank of the army.

Discretion is key for several reasons. Not only is the news of the devastation of the gas attack at Ypres to be kept quiet from the general rank and file lest their morale falter (tier two consideration), but the name on the letter, when found, reads "Priscilla."

At this time, her relationship with Henrietta is illegal and could lead to her being imprisoned. Though, in truth, it would also see her taken from the front and danger. Sin-Eaters must search their souls and question the morality of their position. Even here in hell, can love truly flourish despite all odds?

Storyteller Advice: The mood of fear should be palpable throughout this story. The gas attacks kill at random and are harder to avoid than even the hail of bullets. Rolling a die to determine the direction of the wind could give an interesting aside as the protagonists watch the deadly cloud loom ominously nearer until being blown in another direction.

In crossover terms, juxtapose this with the inclusion of Prometheans on Pilgrimage. The grappling with complex morality offers them a window to unforeseen and unconsidered possibilities. The love of these two women has kept one clinging on beyond the grave to pass on one final message of affection before parting. Should they deliver it at all? Is the risk to the morale of the troops too high?

Promethean: Flying Circus (Tier Two)

Equipped with a biplane, the Galateid throng led by the Algerian Madame Gazala Le Clerc is the hottest ticket in the trenches. Created for the sole purpose of entertaining the troops with displays of acrobatic brilliance as well as song and dance, the troupe is a hit and its creator, Ava St. Joan, is ensuring that their fame is spread far and wide, as long as nobody asks where these talented girls really came from. Then again, the mystique behind the "Hell's Belles" Cabaret adds to its legend.

When a sniper's bullet takes down Ava on the eve of a big performance for the top brass, the Created are thrown into a muddle. How did a single bullet take out one of their own? They have always been organized by their creator and their inspiration came from her courage. What can they do now that she is gone? Who murdered her and to what end?

Morale is all important and acts like Hell's Belles do much just to keep armed men in their dugouts for another night. Each night they stand watch is another in which the enemy can be ground down. The loss of the act may seem small potatoes but it could be catastrophic for the prospects of the troops.

Storyteller's Advice: This is an exploration of not only the core mechanic of warfare, morale, but of the role these women find themselves playing as they strive to find their feet in a world unknown to them until now. The Great War was the first true exposure of the world to warfare on an industrial scale. And yet, humans continued to use their

humor and their ability to laugh in the face of adversity to try to conquer their fears.

Monitor the Morale score of the troops on the front line and challenge the Muses to come up with new and exciting performances each week. Intersperse that with encounters on their travels with other Prometheans, perhaps they encounter the Faceless.

How would they react when faced with a Sin-Eater, haunted by his murdered brother? Would they aid his quest for vengeance on the sniper who took the fatal shot? Did he really take a shortcut and drive the car closer to the line than he was supposed to? Is he responsible for their mentor's death? These are the dilemmas with which to confront these protagonists. It is a story of fun and laughter amid slaughter and despair. No matter how much they suffer, Hell's Belles will go out and give the boys a show to keep them fighting and maybe they'll discover the truth about themselves and their creation along the way.

Werewolf: Follow the Leader (Tier Three)

Erich von Falkenhayn is missing.

For the Bone Shadows, that hardly seems like a pressing matter, given their totem is engaged in mortal battle with the forces of hekatonchieres and the blasted ghost of Death Wolf. However, it quickly becomes clear that these phenomena are linked. The Chief of the German General Staff has been seized by Death Wolf's spiritual followers and taken beyond into a realm of Shadow into which even the Uratha seem unable to traverse.

As they research this bizarre occurrence. The Bone Shadows come across the Sin-Eaters of the Harvard's Soul krewe from Boston, USA. They say they're tracking the appearance of strange ghosts within the realm of the dead. It seems unlikely that these things are coincidence.

The two join forces and head out into the field to both seek the power of Death Wolf's totem and the knowledge of the ways of the geists that will enable the Bone Shadows to be sent into the realm of the dead to chase the hekatonchieres from that plane in a strange extension of the duty of Father Wolf.

Storyteller's Advice: The mixture of Sin-Eaters and Uratha is one that interests both parties. Both have responsibility, in part, for policing the denizens of another plane of existence. What happens then when the carnage of the Great War blurs the lines between the dead realm and the spirit realm?

The only recourse is for the aloof groups to work together to preserve the sanctity of all. The backdrop to this is very serious indeed of course. By placing the werewolf pack on the German side of the struggle and the Sin-Eaters as American, you start from a position of distrust. Further, perhaps the Sin-Eaters would prefer to be rid of von Falkenhayn rather than rescue him.

With intrigue at every step between protagonists who have partially common goals, this makes for a more advanced story with potentially huge ramifications. The longer von Falkenhayn is missing, the lower German morale will drop. Consider alternative timelines where perhaps a replacement can step in who is superior to the man he is replacing. All of this against a backdrop of national distrust but supernatural necessity is the theme for this story.

Sources and Inspiration

The Great War is a richly detailed period of history, accessible via a plethora of books, movies, television shows, plays, poems, and podcasts. There are too many sources to mention, so we provide one each from a selection of mediums while encouraging you to cast a wider net in your own research.

The First World War, John Keegan (2014): John Keegan's work could be considered the definitive historical account of the Great War. An active, enthralling text covering the horror, chaos, and futility of the First World War, this book hammers home the absolute tragedy of the period. This book also contains maps and photographs that help paint a vivid picture of the conflict's reality.

Regeneration, Pat Barker (1991): This novel adds an air of fiction to the real-life experiences of famed war poets, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, among other characters, as they strive to cope with shell shock and come to terms with the horrors they must face on the Western Front. A fantastic story with many elements of truth, and great launching point from which to find some of the strongest war poems ever written.

They Shall Not Grow Old, Peter Jackson (2018): Peter Jackson's new documentary movie about the Great War takes silent black-and-white footage of the era, colorizes it, and, using lip readers, fills in the dialogue being spoken. The efforts to which the production team on this work went were immense, including matching the accents of voice actors to the regions denoted by regimental badges on soldiers' uniforms. This film will become a modern classic, timely for the centenary of the First World War's conclusion.

Hardcore History: Blueprint for Armageddon, Dan Carlin (2013): This series of podcasts is one of the finest resources you will ever find on the Great War. Listen to it while you work, while you drive, and while you walk. The quotes from the time, spoken with passion by amateur historian Carlin, along with the depth of detail the host goes in to, are quite astounding. For the person who prefers to digest information via audio instead of text, we strongly recommend you find this podcast.



THE FACELESS

(Tortured Ones)

Pain is one of the great motivators in human history. Make someone uncomfortable and they will constantly strive to improve their position. Light a fire under anything living and it will instantly run, jump, crawl, climb, do whatever it can to get away. The Faceless may have been among the worst experiments conducted in the name of warfare, but within their statuesque countenance they bear pain with the stoicism of sheer rock.

As much as constant agony is certainly something that can drive a soul deeper and deeper into Torment, it is also eternal and incontrovertible proof you are alive. The singing of nerves gives proof to a Promethean's place among humanity, a common feeling which is in great supply in the trenches of the Western Front.

The Faceless seem outwardly to be the very model of calm and placid contemplation. Inside, they are eternally burning and experiencing the death throes of thousands of undying nerves. This constant grief drives the Faceless to seek solitude, even from each other. Faceless tend to avoid throngs where they can, preferring to observe humanity's path in unobstructed contemplation. They are obsessed with understanding the reason for their suffering through understanding the suffering of others. While this can express itself in a Tortured One being moved by those who show selflessness and courage in the face of personal agony, it can also drive them to inflict great pain upon others in search of surcease to their constant suffering.

Their name is well earned as the Faceless' features are those of stern mud golems. Their outward shell is hardened and blackened mud which cakes the internal tangle of limbs constantly burning in a putrid, self-contained vat of deadly chemicals. They are hulking and square in stature. The eyes of a Tortured One are deep-set holes that they have personally bored into the cracked lines of their faces during their agonizing creation with their thick fingers, their mouths are thin, fissured slits that are painful to move. They can show no expression as their hardened surface does not lend itself to great movements of the face, they cover this up by donning large gas masks that cover their entire head, giving them their title.

The first Faceless was brought into being by accident. A lightning storm in France struck the ground where a mass of bodies, killed by chlorine gas, lay buried in the mud. The resulting reaction caused vaguely human shapes to rise, roaring in agony, from the ground. Those who witnessed it whispered among their ranks and word soon reached their superiors of the Entente and Central Powers alike. While the officers dismissed these tales as the rantings of fear-addled minds, mortal alchemists working in the research and development labs of both sides pushed for these techniques to be refined and used, creating an army of new soldiers to take the place of those who lay dismembered on the scarred earth, their bodies killed by the gas, blown apart by shelling and churned among the mud.

By slowing the circulation of gas masks to frontline troops, the alchemists ensure an ample supply of sites to create the Faceless and bolster their ranks. The alarming convergence of death and chemicals lead to staggering numbers of these Faceless appearing in even greater numbers than other Lineages. Their numbers trigger Firestorms across the various battlefields, and though some are seen as unnatural instances of devastation, most are assumed to be part and parcel of the Great War's seemingly endless bombardment of artillery fire and chemical death.

The first of the Faceless are deployed to the trenches in Ypres where they had fallen. As more are created, they appear on various fronts. Sometimes, Faceless are deployed on opposite sides of the same battle line and tales circulate of hulking figures storming across no-man's land, able to withstand huge amounts of fire without stopping their maddening charge. Only artillery and highly concentrated fire can stop them in their tracks.

Though they do not often speak, Tortured Ones are often fluent in multiple languages, from English, French, and German to Algerian and Hindi. To the eyes of a shell-shocked soldier, they appear to be immensely large, dirt-caked men, but the more inquisitive immediately realize that these Created are not one of them, leading the Faceless to regularly move from trench to trench to avoid difficult questions, often switching sides to try their luck elsewhere. What the Faceless know for sure is that this is the one place where they can roam with any sort of freedom. In a city or small village, they would be instantly recognizable.

Faceless regularly possess ragged scraps of uniforms of both sides that they mend into a hodge-podge covering. As one of the few beings able to move between the opposing trenches of the war, they can be turned to the purpose of spying or spreading rumor and misinformation among an enemy trench, a feat from which either side could benefit.

Given their multiple perspectives, they often suffer from confused loyalties, it is not uncommon for German and Austrian dead to mingle with British and French in the mud of the Western Front. In the dirt, all are equal. Their differing points of view can give Faceless a bizarre and unique perspective on their plight, though they may not deign to share it with their comrades in the trench.

Faceless have a special disdain toward Frankensteins. Not so strong as a hatred, just a general distaste. Their prattle of suffering and their misfit, outcast state would wrinkle the noses of most Faceless if they bore noses beneath their masks.



Not only do most of them have trouble relating to anyone who simply talks so much about themselves, the idea that so many of the Wretched chose to be here of their own volition, seeking some sort of bloody awakening or epiphany is anathema to their pain. What the Frankensteins truly suffer, so far as the Faceless are concerned, is an ugliness in scarring that dominates their life. This is not nobility, but narcissism.

Of all Created, they identify most closely with the Tammuz, particularly as many of their number may have been dug out of their birthing mud by the shovels of Tammuz engineers. The Faceless have a strange respect for people who quietly get on with their job and lack pretention. The Tammuz do not assign station and rank upon themselves, they find their truth in labor and a hard day's work. They appreciate the simple beauty of a job well done. When a team of Tammuz is lengthening a trench or laying barbed wire, you will often find a Faceless watching over them. It is not clear if they have taken to guard them or if they simply find a strange catharsis in their toil.

Creations

The Mascot

Filthy Hamish is a regimental mascot. He has been adopted by the men of the 1st Lanark Militia due to saving their captain's life simply by walking in front of him during an attempted advance. The men huddled behind him all the way back to the trench.

"He's so dirty the bullets can't pierce him!" they joke. What they don't know is he's the one who keeps ripping the legs, wings, and heads off of the messenger pigeons sent to their trench. He doesn't say much, but he watches the other lads very closely.

The Carer

Fraulein Marta is the den mother of her dugout. She was found by the German army in the remains of a medical outpost. Some of the men say they didn't have the heart to shoot her, others say shooting her didn't work. One oversized uniform and pickelhaube helm custom made by Oberjager Christoph Feldstein was enough to secure her place as an enlisted man. She has been known to treat the wounded though her care can often be a bit rough.

The Refugee

After wandering from the field, Grand Pierre joined a refugee train heading west. His observation of the families dispossessed from lands they cultivated for generations unnerved the others at first, but he was invaluable in warding off the vultures who preyed on the homeless



and starving people fleeing the French countryside. After helping a family pull their dead child from the ruin of their farmhouse, he not only carved out a burial site himself but stood vigil during the modest ceremony the poor girl could be afforded. The family noticed him shedding yellow tears, which escaped from his gas mask and sizzled and smoked on the exposed, blackened mud of his chest.

The Homesick

Rajesh is not sure where he's supposed to be, but it isn't here. A voice in his head is calling him to head east; east through the German line and off to a home he only understands from flashes in his mind and memory of a language he doesn't remember learning. He gathers a small team of men and women and listens to their stories of home. The blistering, humid summers of India. He feels he remembers with clarity his muddy flesh baking in the midday sun as he tended to a small herd of animals, one of whom could fit inside his hand. What he remembers most of all is the peace of it all. He promises to return these people home safely and concocts a plan to do it. They can call it desertion all they like. What are they fighting for if not to save home from this horror? And what is home without these people in it?

The Equestrian

Horses seem to have lost their place in war. Now they don't carry soldiers, they carry crates. Phyllis, on the other hand, is more than capable of carrying horses. She sees those poor beasts left to die in craters. Discarded by their owners, shot even. She sees herself in the tragicomic reflections cast by their long, humorless faces. She sees a beast of burden staring back at her from every deep puddle. The others of her kind carry supplies now. They dig trenches and soak up fire. How long will it be before their masters ride them into battle? Well, all she can do is try to save something from this mess and it seems to her that the horses are the only innocents in this field.

Humour: Chlorine. The humour of the Faceless guarantees them internal torment as much as their exterior ensures they can never fully express that suffering. It imbues them with inner fury and almost insane, thoughtless bravery but can make them prone to acts of self-sacrifice. The fastest way to cease their torture is to end their existence, after all. While this is one of the traits that ensures their Lineage's temporary nature, it is not the only one. Their pain drives them to seek out the focus of their Pilgrimage with incredible, single-minded dedication.

As much as their lack of physical expression makes them seem almost emotionless as statues, the internal burning of their humour also gives them a brooding, gruff aspect. Most Tortured Ones speak only when spoken to or, even then, at the uttermost end of need. They use words sparingly but observe and contemplate.

Their large size and formidable strength and toughness makes them physically intimidating and their rivals often shrink from them when confronted. Even the hardiest of Uratha would think twice before rushing headlong at a Tortured One without knowing what he was or what he might do. Most of the time, their quiet, brooding nature sees them easily confused for large, dirty soldiers. It is when they are found among the civilian population they truly stand out.

When falling into Torment, the Faceless begin experiencing unbearable physical pain coming from within their body. Their outer shell becomes itchy and uncomfortable then flares into a horrific burning of the mangled nerves within their form. In the throes of this pain, Faceless may become furious, rampaging juggernauts. Slamming themselves into objects and destroying equipment and furniture all around them to set free whatever it is that claws at them from the inside. Many run screaming toward opposing trenches, the shower of machine gun fire a sweet release from their suffering, whether it kills them or not. Others simply fall, helpless, to the ground, weeping and wailing, unresponsive to any attempt to communicate. Either way, these conditions are neither unusual or strange to those around them in the Great War.

Disquiet: Faceless evoke the guilt and sorrow of the Western Front. Their mockery of a face may remind a victim of a lost love or of an act of barbarity they performed themselves, or reek of the perceived cowardice of one who avoided service. It quickly becomes clear the Tortured One is the root cause of those feelings, a living reminder

Faceless Bestowments

Living Wall: Your outer layer is hardened like stone; bullets and blades alike ricochet off of your hide. Any that penetrate often simply become lodged within as part of your monstrous structure. All Faceless have a natural Armor rating of 2.

Chem Shell: Channeling their inner rage, the Faceless can sacrifice part of themselves to create a hardened, explosive shell, fused with Pyros and deadly chemicals. The Faceless spends 1 Pyros and loses 1 Health dot as it uses part of its own body to create this shell. It can then project the shell to a point it can see up to 100 feet away and detonate it. Alternatively, it can be placed somewhere like a conventional explosive. The blast destroys objects and structures caught within it and inflicts 4 aggravated damage on anyone within a 20-foot radius. Anyone who survives the blast suffers from the Poisoned Tilt (see **Chronicles of Darkness** p. 286).

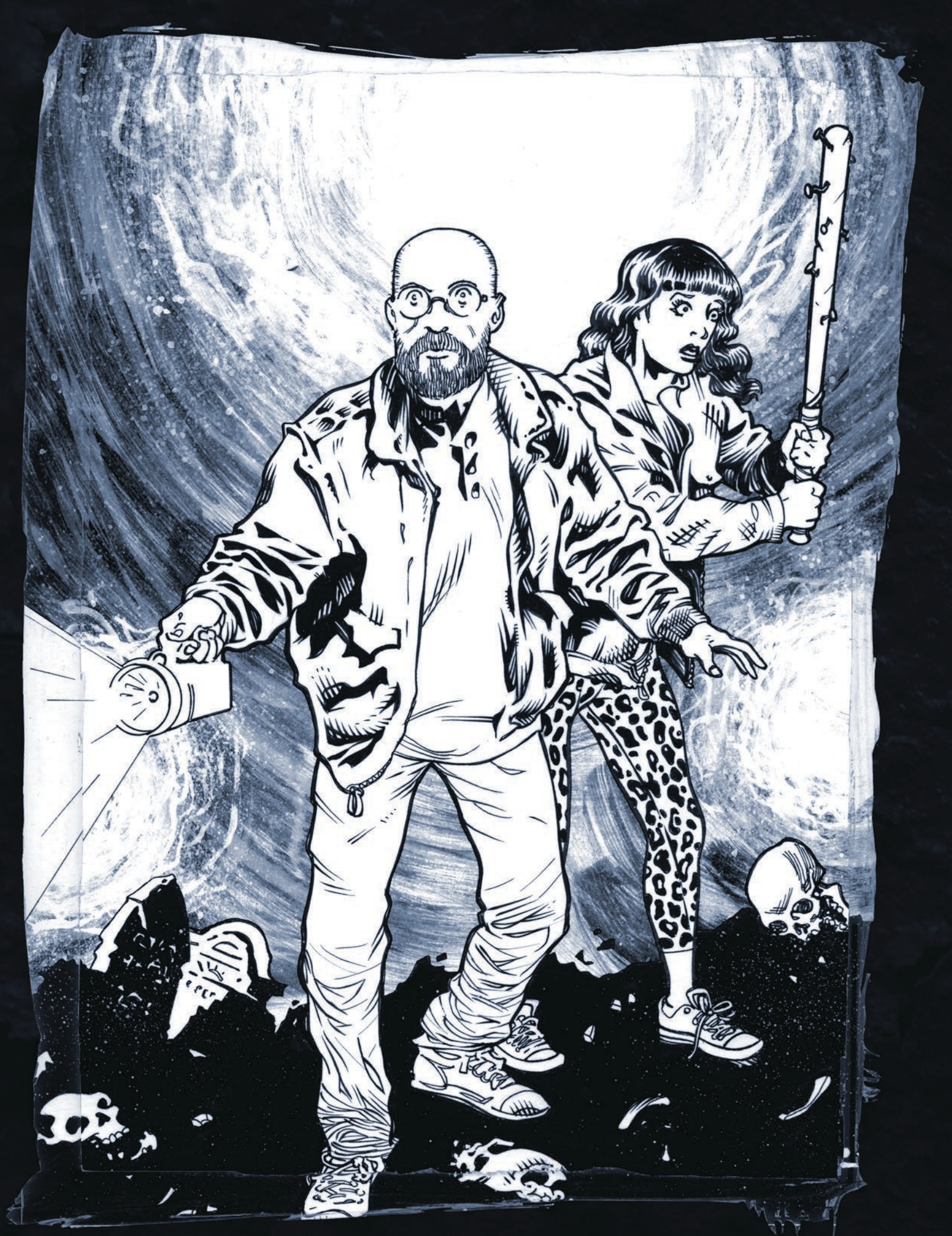
of the dark memories they've tried so hard to forget. Like those memories, the Tortured One must be eliminated and consigned to history.

Wasteland: Faceless cause a heady cocktail of remorse and terror to grip those caught in their Wastelands. Victims jump at the slightest noise or imagine they hear the thundering of guns in a silent room. Some even claim to feel a tangible burning on their skin as though exposed to the chlorine within the Tortured Ones.

Bestowments: Living Wall, Chem-Shell

Stereotypes

Frankensteins	They do not understand suffering.
Galateids	At least they know themselves.
Osirans	All knowledge, no drive.
Tammuz	Kindred spirits, tools of another kind.
Ulgans	Proof there is more than flesh and pain.
Unfleshed	If only these had been more numerous, we may have been left in peace.
Extempore	A place to hide the shame of your life.



Hey, science-fiction fans! Boy, do we have a review for you. Remember our old pal E. J. White? Well, one of our favorite contributors is back with a movie critique. Check out White's take on The Attack of the Giant Electropus *and let us know what you think! Futurix Press loves hearing from you. Thanks for checking out the latest issue of* Atomic Quarterly!

The Attack of the Giant Electropus: Science Fact or Science Fantasy?

By E. J. White

The Attack of the Giant Electropus is a movie about three high-school friends, Marta, Jess, and Franklin, who are tracking down a spirit that possessed their cousin. Despite its B-movie-sounding name, the film attempts to highlight the existence of spirits that operate outside human understanding. In many ways, the screenwriters assume the audience believes in ghosts and spiritual possession. Though neither have been scientifically proven, it is true many Americans believe ghosts are real. Some young wives have reported feeling faint, for example, and it wasn't until days afterward they realized that was the moment their husbands died heroically on the fields of battle. Lost loves are strong motivators to "see" a ghost, but -- just as Houdini proved back in the 20s, most mediums are con artists trying to make a quick buck. Still, science hasn't outright disproved the existence of ghosts, and the concept of a hostile spirit is easier for an audience member to grasp (and less expensive to film) than a shapeshifting animal.

Over the course of the film, Marta, Jess, and Franklin track the spirit responsible to a laboratory just outside of town. It seems the lead scientist, Doctor Stillman, was designing weapons for the war. In the process of engineering a city-killing device, Stillman accidentally opened a portal to the spirit world and a deadly, sentient electropus -- half electricity, half ghostly octopus -- was unleashed. At one point, the trio enters a large room in the laboratory to face the creature. The electropus has slid down between two giant, partially melted coils. Its tentacles crackle with electricity, and it appears to be feeding off of the dynamos.

The trio's plan is to kill the creature which, according to them, will save their cousin's life. To do so, they design glass-studded clubs to hack off its tentacles -- which eventually kills the creature, turning it into an inky-black ooze. Now, there's not a lot of science to this film, and it's not one I'd recommend. My issue with the story starts and ends with this: The scientist has gone too far, and never considered the consequences of his actions. Why is science always depicted as bad? Why are scientists *villains*? Yes, we can all agree we have mixed feelings about the rumors coming out of Washington, but depicting a lone scientist as an evil, moustache-twirling villain is beyond the pale. And, glass clubs? Really? Where, I ask you, are the rubber boots and gloves, the dry chemical extinguishers, the means to cut the power? How were they not killed instantly by those glowing, electric orbs?

Rating: F. What could have been a wonderful way to help viewers learn about the power of electricity and the real threat spirits pose has turned into a feeble attack on scientific breakthroughs. *Attack of the Giant Electropus* is neither science fact nor science fantasy. While it does touch on cultural commentary, heartfelt performances aren't enough to warrant the cost of a ticket.

Fear and the Golden Promise of Tomorrow
1938-1946 CE



"You can't destroy knowledge. You can stamp it under and burn it up and forbid it to be, but somewhere it will survive."

– Leigh Brackett, *The Long Tomorrow*

Many terrified WWII-era Americans dealt with their fears by writing and consuming science fiction. The hope- and wonder-filled genre gave creators and fans a vehicle to envision a better future during a dangerous and deadly chapter in world history. Tens of thousands of young American men and women fought and died to halt the hatred spreading across Europe. At home, many people used storytelling as a vehicle to explore possible futures, to help them deal with the horrors of war and look to a brighter tomorrow. It's no wonder that stories of the era were popular with engineers, scientists, and technologically inclined young people who were desperate for a vision they could help create.

Countless tales that gave readers the chance to discover other planets and star systems offered a better future. The rapid onset of scientific and technical advances provided a wondrous vision of not only what those inventions would look like, but how they'd be created and used to better the future of humanity in the cosmos. Notable authors and publishers, like John W. Campbell, worked at small presses, expanding the genre's foundation until mainstream publishers began publishing science fiction in the 1950s.

While most futuristic science-fiction stories of the era did not refer directly to the threat of Nazi aggression or the horrors of war, some did explore overtly political themes of fascism and racism. Murderously authoritarian gangs feature prominently in E. E. "Doc" Smith's *Lensman* series, and in A. E. van Vogt's *Slan* (1940) the protagonists were members of marginalized groups who were unjustly

Stereotypes and Science Fiction

The stereotypical science-fiction author and fans are cisgender, white, Christian (or Christian-raised) men. While segregation, sexism, and other forms of prejudice affected science-fiction communities and publishers along with the rest of American society, marginalized authors did participate in the golden age of science fiction. Science-fiction writers were also black, queer, disabled, etc. and several were Jewish; these include Isaac Asimov, Alfred Bester, H. L. Gold, Henry Kuttner, Stanley G. Weinbaum, and many others. Women also penned stories; notable authors included C.L. Moore, Leigh Brackett, and Judith Merril, who was also Jewish. Though many science-fiction authors were openly liberal, issues with sexism and racism did exist. Segregation had a significant impact on publishing; science-fiction magazines of the time, where many aspiring authors got their start, were largely closed to black Americans. George S. Schuyler published several works of science fiction in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, a weekly African-American newspaper, but almost no work by black American authors appeared in science-fiction magazines until the 1950s.

Despite the barriers to publication, many authors submitted under a pseudonym or used their initials hoping to avoid prejudice. Their lack of visibility, both as authors and readers, has led to erroneous stereotypes that remain to this day.

hunted and exterminated solely because their existence was considered anathema to proponents of racial purity. Other stories, like Robert A. Heinlein's *If This Goes On*— (1940) warned about the dangers of theocracy and fundamentalist Christianity, problems that few people in the United States dared to openly criticize.

Some historians call these years the "Golden Age of Science Fiction" because this decade was crucial to the formation of "hard" science fiction, or narratives that presented problems solved by scientifically plausible technology. Others interpret the words "golden age" as the hope early readers felt when they celebrated human ingenuity saving the day again and again. In the Chronicles of Darkness, that hope is a fading light the Forsaken and Remade strive to grasp.

The Forsaken

This era is one of conflict, optimism, and discovery for the Forsaken. The world's changing rapidly, cities are growing with incredible speed, industry is booming, and the Uratha need to adapt and discover the ways this new world has altered the Shadow and has created a host of new industrial spirits. Werewolves are noticing that city-adjacent portions of the *Hisil* are rapidly changing and are discovering new types of spirits associated with machines and electricity. None of the Forsaken are sure how these changes will affect their tribes, their prey, and their hunting grounds, setting many of the Uratha on edge.

WWII-era America introduces challenges for the Forsaken. Many young Uratha were drafted and went to war to preserve their freedom. Those left behind must figure out how to deal with the anxious and afraid; some werewolves use science fiction as a tool to help them navigate the push for modernization, what they're becoming, and to dissuade mortals from believing in the supernatural. Middle-aged and older Uratha remember a United States where electricity, and often running water, was confined to cities and large towns. In this era, the U.S. changes rapidly in response to growing technological needs for war and New Deal programs that sought to modernize rural areas.

The Uratha overseas send word they are losing hope; they see no end to the Wounds caused by the atrocious evils of mass murder and genocide. In the States, some packs are anxious that Wounds will open on American soil and do what they can to prevent that from happening. Science-fiction stories are a beacon for them, encouraging readers to turn away from brutal authoritarianism at home only to fight it overseas.

From the vast interstellar battles against space Nazis, like E. E. "Doc" Smith's *Galactic Patrol* (1938), to numerous stories by Isaac Asimov and many others, the Uratha recognize science fiction is strongly anti-authoritarian and pro-democracy. Several packs believe protecting authors and their publishers is vital to protecting their territories in both the mortal world and the *Hisil*; other Forsaken are keenly interested in visions of a utopian future, for its rumored several werewolves have been suffering from prophetic nightmares filled with surgeons performing arcane human experiments — and they cannot explain why.

Despite tribal calls to internalize science fiction as good for the Uratha, the Forsaken are not united. Some packs are openly hostile to the futuristic visions that embrace science as the only solution while spurning superstitious and spiritual beliefs. Others fixate on depictions of sprawling cities and are horrified the natural world is depicted as an inconvenience. For now, some Uratha understand that stories are just that — stories — but will wait to see what happens next.

For other Forsaken who've remained in the States, they hunt and secure their hunting grounds, just as they did before, until they're forced to face the truth: the world they grew accustomed to is changing, and not always for the better. When the Uratha discover corporations are mutating and reshaping humans into terrifying creatures calling themselves the Remade, they must decide whether to hunt the corporations or murder their creations.

The Remade

Early on, emboldened by public appreciation for the plight of those scientific progress leaves changed and tormented in its wake, some Renegades anonymously share their stories with open-minded authors, with the vague expectation of winning some acceptance and easing their isolation. Reality is not so kind, though, and they soon realize their attempts to reach out to Baselines only whet the appetites and ignite the imaginations of existing and would-be conspirators. As the genre's writers deliberately try to predict how rapidly advancing technologies will evolve and impact society, those unfortunates caught in the wave of human experimentation they inspire become the new Deviants of science-fiction's Golden Age: victims of America's newfound boundless optimism about the future science will bring.

The Second World War prompts huge leaps forward in technological progress for practical military purposes, spurring researchers to work overtime trying to preempt the other side gaining the advantage. For years leading up to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, science-fiction authors publish stories exploring the potential implications of atomic energy. Renegades dare to dream of achieving Catharsis in one fell swoop, seeing themselves no longer as desperate cohorts fighting against impossibly vast, faceless enemies, but as contestants in a race for inventions they believe they can use to take back their lives in decisive acts of vengeance. They engage not only in acts of violence and destruction against their Progenitors and other conspiracies that pursue them, but heists and raids to steal the very science that made them and turn it against its creators, and frenzied experimentation of their own — sometimes in labs, sometimes on themselves — to beat conspirators to the punch.





Only after the war's end do the Remade fully understand the ramifications of what atomic energy can do in the hands of ruthless conspiracies with far more resources than qualms about ethics. Nuclear power is so much more than calamitous explosions. It becomes, for a time, the conspiracies' new favorite way to create mutant super soldiers and walking radioactive hazards. Grossly misshapen Chimera arise wherever conspiracies test their greedy new ideas; both Renegades and Devoted spend their time cleaning up these horrific messes to protect people from stray radiation and gibbering monsters (or, in some cases, to protect the conspiracy from exposure). Cribbing from well-meaning science-fiction publications and applying the fruits of war to stranger ambitions, the Web of Pain transforms into an atomic nightmare by the end of this era.

Themes and Mood

"Humanity has the stars in its future, and that future is too important to be lost under the burden of juvenile folly and ignorant superstition."

— Isaac Asimov

The primary theme of this era is *discovery*, while the moods are *optimism* and *hope*, combined with *fear of change*. Science-fiction stories and movies from this era inspire the Forsaken and the Remade when used in a chronicle, because they represent a tangible feeling both can draw upon to hunt, hide, run, and attack. Most, if any, stories should not be treated as factual; science fiction is a genre that readers turn to for hope and reassurance that a utopian, tech-filled future is possible.

Werewolves are struggling to accept the rapidly changes in technology, because they aren't sure how advancements affect the *Hisil* or why. When werewolves realize that corporations are including human experimentation in their definition of "innovation," they seek a new, all-powerful enemy — the corporation. Thanks to heroic science-fiction stories, the Forsaken believe they can win an impossible fight.

Stories move minds and hearts, and the Uratha are aware their enemies know this, too. While many people enjoy reading the latest science-fiction stories and watching the newest horror films, behind the scenes there is a secret battle for the minds and hearts of the populace. Unlike science-fiction books, movies have a broader reach and are more popular during this era. Although few understand how to influence actors, screenwriters, or directors, every spirit understands raw power, and the most important power in Hollywood is money. The lust for more money and power has always served as a powerful way to attract and create spirits and, as a result, several major Hollywood producers and their assistants are Ridden. The result has been to produce exceedingly popular horror films that depict the Forsaken as monsters to be killed; the Bale Hounds are chief among those using their powers to support these efforts.

For the Storyteller: Prejudice and Your Players

Running a chronicle in WWII-era America encompasses the wonders of science fiction, human ingenuity, and glamorous cinematography while touching on harmful prejudices, segregation, overt displays of sexism, and the atrocities of war. The dark underbelly of the era, which includes American Nazis, is often eclipsed by nostalgia pertaining to the golden ages of science fiction and Hollywood. Nazi sympathizers and segregation supporters are presented as antagonists and should be treated as such. Should you decide to incorporate the darker elements of this chapter into your chronicle, it is strongly recommended that you talk to your players first. Though segregation practices were common, players should indicate their feelings on how they'd prefer to deal with racial tension during this era and how they'd like to explore the intersections between era-appropriate social mores and their characters' identities. Together, you should agree on a safe and enjoyable approach for all involved without having to reinforce or perpetuate harm.

Their most obvious efforts to ensure mortals fear werewolves are *The Wolfman* (1941) and *Cat People* (1942); *The Wolfman* provided the first widely popular depiction of silver being used to harm werewolves. However, these films are not their only efforts to attack the Forsaken by revealing their existence to a public hungry for monster movies. Several horror films feature characters who use foul magics to summon spirits or the dead like *The Devil's Daughter* (1939) and *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943). Horror films of this era also include mad scientists like those in *The Walking Dead* (1936), *The Devil Commands* (1941), and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1941) whose "science" is either a horrific threat, or a mixture of foul magic and diabolical experiments. Some were made in this era, but unlike the masterful utopian vision of *Things to Come* (1936), most of the few actual golden-age science-fiction films were cheaply made, comedic, or both.

For the Remade, discovery and optimism manifest as opportunity, and conflict as determination to win personal battles that mirror those playing out on the global stage. From authors' typewriters comes a glut of stories exploring the lives of mutants with superhuman abilities, inspiring conspiracies and Deviants alike to push boundaries and take chances in their ongoing struggle. The war lifts America out of its lingering economic slump, providing new opportunities for Renegades flying too far under the newly invented radar to get caught draft dodging. New technologies give

conspiracies more fodder for inventive torments, but they also give Remade more avenues of escape and infiltration, and ideas for pushing their Variations beyond anything they'd thought possible.

In A. E. van Vogt's *Slan*, humanity hates and fears the brilliant, telepathic slans. Years of propaganda paint slans as monstrous foes who kidnap human infants and experiment on them with machines to make more slans. The truth is more mysterious, and in one orphaned slan's quest to learn it while living on the lam, he embodies the Renegades' struggle to dig further and further into the Web of Pain and earn lives of their own. The story's relatively upbeat ending reflects a sympathy for the mutants that few Deviants experience, and slans don't suffer much from the Scars of their mutations, making this tale an idealistic daydream for Remade in true Golden Age tradition.

Similarly, Wilmar Shiras' story "In Hiding" (which she later expands into the novel *Children of the Atom*) depicts a boy with maturity and intelligence beyond his years — a mutant with amazing mental powers, thanks to radiation from an accident at a nuclear plant. The story focuses on his loneliness as the only one of his kind, his need to hide his superhuman mind and adult activities to avoid backlash, and his journey toward trusting his secrets to his psychiatrist, who becomes his only friend. The Remade sees a more optimistic version of themselves that's closer to Baseline and draws upon that emotion to keep running.

Less idealistic but more galvanizing is the Mule, from Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* series. Another mutant telepath, this one with the power to influence emotions and force loyalty, the Mule is a disfigured outcast waging a vengeful war against a galactic empire to get back at those who cast him out and prove the inadequacy of an indolent society relying on long-dead prophecy to guide it. While he's ostensibly a villain, the Foundation itself is no better, and many Renegades take inspiration from the Mule's crafty plans and lofty goals to launch an attack on the corporations that made them.

Perhaps the closest in theme and mood to the Deviant experience is Gerald Heard's *Doppelgangers*. In a society under the thumb of tyranny disguised as a pleasant, carefree life, underground rebels go to drastic measures to get an agent close enough to assassinate the world's nigh-messianic leader. They kidnap and forcibly transform one of their operatives into a perfect physical likeness of that leader, using horrific, grueling surgical techniques that erase his identity entirely. He becomes the linchpin caught between two massive conspiracies and must decide whether to choose a side or determine his own fate.

What Has Come Before

The first western proto-science-fiction novels were written in the 19th century. These works included Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), and numerous novels by Jules Verne and H. G. Wells. Except for Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895), early novels were set exclusively in the era in which they were written. Setting stories in an imagined future had previously been limited to philosophical novels with a utopian bent like Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888).

Despite the prominence of early novels, short stories were key to the growth of the genre. The first pulp magazine that published science fiction was *Weird Tales*, which started in 1923. Then, in 1926, radio entrepreneur and science-fiction author Hugo Gernsback began publishing *Amazing Stories*. Four years later, a third magazine joined *Weird Tales* and *Amazing Stories* — *Astounding Stories of Super-Science*, which was rapidly regarded as the best of the three magazines; its prominence was cemented in 1937, when John W. Campbell became the editor, a job he held for the next 34 years. Campbell mentored dozens of young authors and was a major influence on the genre; part of the reason for this magazine's success was his insistence that the published stories be scientifically plausible.

View of the Forsaken

Pre-golden-age science fiction had an unusual and complex relationship with the Uratha. The cosmic horror stories written by authors like H. P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith, and published in *Weird Tales*, sat firmly on the border between horror and science fiction. They also contained imagery and ideas that were relatively close to the realities of the supernatural world, depicting a cosmos filled with different worlds and planes of existence, most of which were exceptionally hostile to humanity.

Instead of the personalized horror of Christian demons, cosmic horror posited a world not created to either aid or oppose humanity, but where humans were merely one of the less powerful and intelligent species who were at the mercy of more able sentients. None of the Uratha were certain where these images came from; some speculated that one of their number had related forbidden secrets to a few of these authors. Regardless of the reason, cosmic horror worried some Iron Masters, who feared it might lead humans into explorations or foolish quests for power that could open the mortal world up to invasion by denizens of the Shadow.

The Bone Shadows who read these stories attempted to compare them with their own explorations of the newly industrial sections of the Shadow, sometimes with surprisingly useful results. For example, the surreal Martian landscape of Stanley G. Weinbaum's "A Martian Odyssey" (1934) clearly seemed to describe one type of strange spirits living in inhuman hives. However, many of the creatures and landscapes found in this story corresponded with nothing any Uratha had encountered. Although some of these tales contained vivid descriptions of new types of spirits or portions of the Shadow, these tidbits were always mixed in with creatures and locations that seem to have solely come from the authors' imaginations. As a result, looking to these stories could be exceptionally frustrating, but a few



of the Bone Shadows who read them survived forays into the newer sections of the Shadow because some of the bits of truth proved to contain exceptionally valuable information that allowed them to defeat monstrosities that might otherwise have slain them.

Most of the older Uratha initially ignored the growing field of science fiction because it didn't stand out like werewolf-themed horror movies depicting them as monsters; some think of science fiction as juvenile or overly optimistic. Despite this, increasing numbers of Forsaken in the 1930s and 40s are reading science fiction both before and after their First Change.

To many Uratha, science fiction is a promise to help them make sense of their rapidly changing world where new technologies, such as automobiles and new forms of media like movies and radio, are reshaping the fabric of society. While the Forsaken have navigated these changes before, during the rise of the Industrial Age, inventions are being released faster than ever before — and some military advancements, like the atomic bomb, are more dangerous than any weapon they've seen before. Many Forsaken struggle to understand how new technology will impact the hunt and must find out for themselves what the explosive growth means not only for the Uratha, but also for the world of the supernatural.

Reflecting the Remade

The Great Depression of the 1930s didn't change a lot about American Renegades' isolated lives on the fringe, except that more Baselines joined them on society's bottom rung. These Remade found some acceptance — or at least, a few Loyalty Touchstones and a daily bowl of soup — in Hoovervilles across the country. Taking the fight to the conspiracies got harder, but the conspiracies themselves lost resources, too; they weren't about to starve in the streets, but laying off a few dozen employees and pulling out of key investments to cut costs limited the advantages they could claim over Renegades out for blood, weakening the Web of Pain.

The whimsical, swashbuckling science-fiction stories of the decades leading up to the Golden Age reflected little of Remade life, but American culture had only recently internalized the Darwinian theories that irrevocably reshaped the Deviant experience from the moment they touched paper, and much of the genre's futuristic outlook began with Darwin. Early 20th century conspiracies were still riding the high of meddling with mutation and genetics, adopting terminology and ideas from theories of evolution and natural selection. Their work was inspired not only by *On the Origin of Species* and its forebears, but by science-fiction writers such as H. G. Wells, Olaf Stapledon, and Edmond Hamilton, whose stories drew directly from them. This period saw an uptick in Devoted trying to "uplift" humanity as they had done to themselves, pushing the idea of a perfected species achievable within a Remade lifetime.

Wells, in particular, expanded public knowledge of Darwin's theories through his immensely influential science fiction, including *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, *The Time Machine*, and *The War of the Worlds*; he popularized the worry that humanity's evolutionary instincts would ultimately lead to society's downfall, even predicting World War II with decent accuracy in *The Shape of Things to Come*. His novel *The Invisible Man* was a textbook tale of an Autourgic Deviant gone wrong. Several conspiracies had it out for Wells, believing he had insider knowledge about the Remade and was trying to warn the public about their unscrupulous creators, but he consistently evaded their machinations — knowingly or not. Some Renegades made it their mission to protect authors like Wells, reasoning that even if they knew nothing, their work helped turn public opinion against conspirators' goals, and might make it harder for the Web of Pain to operate.

Where We Are

"Mighty little force is needed to control a man whose mind has been hoodwinked; contrariwise, no amount of force can control a free man, a man whose mind is free. No, not the rack, not fission bombs, not anything — you can't conquer a free man; the most you can do is kill him."

— Robert Heinlein, *If This Goes On—*

WWII-related fears dominate the entire era in direct and nuanced ways. Though the Great Depression ended, and many Americans noticed signs that growth and prosperity were returning, America is plunged into yet another war; the looming shadows of Nazi Germany followed by Imperial Japan pervade all aspects of American life. Despite the horrors happening abroad, the era is also prosperous for those who did not go off to fight — anyone who wanted a job could find one, provided they could overcome the barriers of segregation and sexism that were pervasive in this decade.

War, however, is also expensive. When WWII starts, Americans are subject to rationing of food, clothing, shoes, coffee, gasoline, tires, and fuel. Despite the economic shifts in American consumerism, more people — especially women — have jobs due to a labor shortage. A lack of filled positions in shipyards, munitions plants, and factories also causes thousands of southern black Americans to relocate north; looking for jobs but finding none because they were discriminated against. Though the science-fiction community yearns to create a utopian future; WWII-era America had its fair share of problems. For many, racial tension, gender inequality, and calls for equal rights are part of their daily lives.

The war changes life in many other ways. A quarter of American men, roughly half of men between the ages of 20 and 50, serve in a segregated military; more than one in 40 soldiers will die during the war. Many houses display banners signifying a loved one's military service; the banners adorned with blue stars recognize people in the military,

silver stars for the injured, and gold stars to honor those who died serving their country. Patriotism and pride are ingrained in every American and are omnipresent in communities across the country.

Though previously marginalized groups found well-paying work because workers were in short supply, these jobs were often given after the government outlawed discriminatory hiring practices, largely to end New Deal-era segregation practices. Many factory owners had no choice but to hire whomever they could find, knowing that their jobs were temporary for they'd planned to fire "temporary" workers to rehire war veterans once the war was won — or should a soldier come home with honors.

Despite their struggles, most Americans do have enough goods to fill their basic needs, but most luxuries are in short supply. The lack of consumer products did not dampen the need for entertainment. In fact, the movie industry boomed, ushering in a cheap means for Americans to escape their troubles, get important updates about the war, and watch heroes triumph over evil. While futuristic visions were being published in science-fiction magazines on the East Coast, Hollywood entered a gilded age and produced dozens of films starring Bing Crosby, Errol Flynn, Judy Garland, Hedy Lamarr, Lucille Ball, and many others.

Storytellers who wish to supplement this chapter with additional, era-specific material are encouraged to draw from "A Handful of Dust" on page 471 from **Dark Eras**.

Cultural Milestones

World War II-era history is fraught with cultural and political changes that impact mortals and supernaturals alike. Important milestones include the introduction of new technology and cultural phenomena that occur despite the onset of war and increasing racial tension domestically. This tension escalates due to several events including the seizure of personal property and placement of Japanese Americans into internment camps from 1942–1945, the Congress for Racial Inequality in 1942, and the Detroit Race Riots in 1943. Many changes were not made until after the war; the desegregation of the U.S. military forces didn't happen until 1948.

What the Forsaken and the Renegades draw upon from this era will depend upon what media they have access to. The science-fiction genre expands, shifts, and changes with every author, editor, and publisher that adds their voice. One of the most important pop culture phenomena that occurs in this era is the radio broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* by Orson Welles in 1938. The story is a 1930s adaptation of the 1898 publication by H.G. Wells that tapped into the public's anxiety about the threat of global war. The broadcast incorporates a "found footage" style of storytelling and was so effective many people believed a Martian invasion was imminent. A year later, President Roosevelt opens the 1939 New York World's Fair by presenting a speech that is broadcast on television.

Other cultural milestones include:

- The automatic transmission debuts in Oldsmobile-brand cars in 1940. Despite this advancement in automotive technology, car production ceases from 1942–1945 for private consumers.
- Penicillin is used to help cure diseases gifting Americans with better health.
- Color television was invented in 1940, and black-and-white, commercial-laden television broadcasts are offered regularly in 1941. Many Americans purchase a black-and-white TV to get updates about the war.
- The song "Rosie the Riveter" performed by the Four Vagabonds, a black American quartet, debuts in 1942.
- Jackie Robinson becomes the first black American to play in the MLB in 1947, ending segregation-era practices in professional baseball that date back to the 1880s.
- The Polaroid instant camera is available to consumers in 1948.

These milestones help shape what an American's life was like domestically. Other inventions debut in response to the war effort and include M&M's, the first Jeep, turboprop engine, electronic digital computer, transistor, and atomic bomb.

Locations

Labor shortages affect every major metropolis vested in the war effort. The need for affordable forms of entertainment skyrockets alongside the push for manufacturing and creates new job openings.

Los Angeles, California

The City of Angels is growing at an incredible pace and has a population that exceeds a million and a half people. It's also one of the newest large cities in the U.S., having grown by a factor of more than 15 between 1900 and 1940. In 40 years, L.A. evolved from a small city noted for its bountiful orange groves and abundant sunshine to a vast metropolis famed for its movies, real estate, tourism, and oil production.

In the absence of freeways, residents rely on a streetcar system, the Los Angeles Railway, which was expanding along with the city. The railway's size and usage peak during science-fiction's golden age, with more than 20 separate lines and 1,200 trolley cars in operation. Its success is not guaranteed, and rumors swirl that oil and gasoline



companies want the system to fail to usher in the age of the automobile.

Los Angeles is a condensed microcosm of the nation, and people from every city and state are flocking to this mythical, growing metropolis. Despite its growth, it's not as diverse as other cities. In 1940, the percentage of L.A.'s population that hails from foreign countries is 15 percent, which is higher than the national average of nine percent, but considerably lower than other large cities like New York, Chicago, or San Francisco. Primarily, white Americans or "Overlanders" are relocating to Los Angeles from the Midwestern and Southeastern parts of the United States, in part due to segregation. War also attracts workers who take jobs in the defense industry; Los Angeles is a center for wartime industry, producing more than a sixth of all American-made goods for the war effort. The defense industry is rife with discriminatory practices; factories refuse to hire black Americans until Roosevelt issues an executive order banning racial discrimination at defense plants in 1941.

Coinciding with the war and the golden age of science fiction, the golden age of Hollywood begins in Los Angeles. Five major studios (MGM, Paramount Pictures, RKO, Warner Bros, and 20th Century Fox) reign supreme and are controlled by individuals rather than boards of directors. These movie studios continue to profit during World War II because they control the distribution of their films and which movies are shown; many of their business practices will be deemed illegal before the end of the war. While the studios kept wages for screenwriters low, they were also one of the few places that aspiring authors could make a living. As such, several science-fiction authors living in Los Angeles also wrote for films, including Leigh Brackett (who co-wrote *The Big Sleep*) and Ray Bradbury.

Science fiction is an important part of Los Angeles' history. In 1934, local science-fiction fans founded one of the first science-fiction fandom organizations in the U.S., the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society (often abbreviated to LASFS). This organization holds monthly meetings and helps encourage many authors, including Ray Bradbury, to start writing science fiction. While L.A. was not a home to science-fiction publishers, beyond a few local fanzines, the local science-fiction community was tightly knit and growing fast.

Before war breaks out, L.A. is also home to one of the largest branches of the German American Bund, who were open supporters of Adolph Hitler, and whose efforts were endorsed by the Nazi regime. Additionally, Bund promoted anti-Semitism and other forms of racism. The dangers of anti-Semitism did not go unnoticed by Hollywood. In 1939, Warner Brothers released *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, about a fictional Nazi spy ring working in New York City and the heroic FBI agent who brings them to justice. It was the first openly anti-Nazi film produced by a major studio and earned Warner Brothers a warning by the House Un-American Activities Committee, for "slurring a 'friendly' country." Some of these same producers and studio owners

also paid private investigators to infiltrate L.A.-based pro-Nazi organizations, like the local branch of the German American Bund, and then reported their findings to the FBI, Congress, and the Justice Department.

Despite efforts to combat fascism, Los Angeles is also the site of many injustices; 80,000 of the 120,000 Japanese Americans placed in internment camps by the U.S. government are from the Los Angeles area. During the 1930s and 40s, both government and law enforcement in Los Angeles is exceptionally corrupt, and police brutality is more common here than it is elsewhere in the U.S. during this time.

Amoral Screenwriter

Dominic Morano is a failing screenwriter who has co-written several horror films. Dominic's true love is science fiction, and he dreams of writing a landmark science-fiction movie. The screenwriter is frustrated that Hollywood producers are far more interested in horror than science-fiction films. Despite his desire to work on the genre, Dominic has passed up opportunities to work on several science-fiction films that were doomed to fail; he knows he can't afford to be associated with flops if he wants to keep working in Hollywood. He occasionally goes to LASFS meetings, partly to spend time with other science-fiction fans and authors, but also to network and find new ways to boost his career. Dominic is not afraid to use gossip or innuendo when it suits him and has convinced two directors to hire him by mentioning that he knows about their deepest, darkest secrets. **Persuasion 2, Politics 2, Subterfuge 2.**

LASFS Organizer

Rosemary Stewart is an avid science-fiction fan who has written several stories inspired by her love of astronomy but hasn't sold anything yet under her own name. A fierce supporter of the utopian ideal science fiction provides, she's helping LASFS keep the lights on and makes sure its newsletter goes out on time. Rosemary is frustrated that many members of the LASFS community regard her as "the secretary" and assume she doesn't know much about science or the genre. What most fans don't realize is that Rosemary has been published under an alias, and her career as K. A. Stewart is growing by leaps and bounds. She can't help but wonder what will happen when her friends find out they've been reading her stories all along. **Expression 2, Politics 2, Science (Astronomy) 2.**

Movie Technician

Robinson King is a skilled engineer who works as a movie technician. Being a black engineer in the 1930s, he had trouble getting hired at engineering firms, but now most of the producers don't care or even notice who's building sets and designing special effects — provided the job's done quick and fast. Robinson loves science fiction and is happiest when he gets to design fantastic effects for genre films and has a reputation for being able to create striking effects on a minimal budget. Robinson's expertise is a hit with the LASFS and, since he's an engineer, a few authors have asked him for technical advice. While his sense of humor and science-positive attitude are important to the community, Robinson wants to create a new community of his own to inspire and encourage people of color to participate in the genre. **Crafts (Movies) 3, Socialize 2, Academics (Engineer) 2**

Flushing Meadows, New York

The 1939 World's Fair takes place in Flushing Meadows, New York and attracts 44 million people from April 30th, 1939 to October 27th, 1940. Millions more watch the event on newsreels or read about it in illustrated magazines. Originally billed as "The World of Tomorrow," the fair breathes life into the ideas and images found in much of this era's science fiction. The heart of this vision is the General Motors Futurama ride, which includes a detailed diorama of a city in the far-off year of 1960. This futuristic city was built around large, partially automated freeways filled with swift, uncongested traffic, made up of streamlined cars that drove past elegant skyscrapers with landing pads for private auto-gyros. Outside this miniature city are similarly modernized farms to reassure rural communities they had a place in the future, too.

The World's Fair is part carnival, part storefront exhibition; many pavilions are designed to sell or showcase everything from new cars or home appliances. Despite this, the technologies on display expose Americans to the truth: The world they know is changing rapidly, and technology will force them to rethink how they live and connect with one another. Several exhibits are accessible via electric escalators which are common for department stores found in big cities but are new to tourists who've never stepped foot in New York or Chicago. The fair also introduces new inventions that include color photography, air conditioning, nylon pantyhose, primitive fax machines that transmit documents via radio, the first television (which won't be commercially available until after WWII) as well as unusual devices like Elektro, the Westinghouse Moto-Man. Elektro

The World's First Science-Fiction Convention

Two months after the 1939 World's Fair opens, the first World Science Fiction Convention is held nearby in New York City at Caravan Hall. Dubbed "Worldcon," more than 200 fans are in attendance. Many of the genre's authors and artists gather to honor Frank R. Paul — the first guest of honor — talk about science fiction, watch films, and socialize with New York fans. Attendees include Isaac Asimov, L. Sprague de Camp, and Hannes Bok.

is a walking, talking electromechanical robot — an astounding sight for tourists.

Covering an area of more than 1,200 acres, the New York World's Fair incorporates exhibits from 33 countries in the Hall of Nations. Participating countries hail from every continent, and include Mexico, Canada, Ecuador, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Finland, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Morocco, the U.S.S.R., Australia, and others. Notably, Germany is not a participant in the exhibit, reminding tourists that the war in Europe casts a long shadow. The Polish pavilion is draped in black after Germany invades in late 1939, and the Czechoslovakian pavilion never opens. While visitors marvel at replicas of the Crown Jewels and an original copy of the Magna Carta in the British exhibit, Germany begins its nightly bombings of London. To encourage support, Britain's King George VI and Queen Elizabeth visit the World's Fair; their tour is highly publicized and well-received, for no reigning British monarch has ever set foot on American soil.

The juxtaposition of a glorious tomorrow and a brutal, hate-filled war with Germany becomes more jarring as the fair continues. Many Americans fear the war will spread to the U.S., and consumer anxiety was one of the reasons the fair was not as well attended and financially successful as exhibitions in years past. The start of World War II changes the fair's theme from "The World of Tomorrow" to "For Peace and Freedom" in 1940.

By the time the fair ends, Germany will have conquered most of mainland western Europe. Their lack of overt participation in the World's Fair condemns the event's international spirit of cooperation and peace. Germany seeks to infiltrate and subvert the World's Fair with propaganda planted by Nazi spies and sympathizers. Planned attacks include a small bomb that kills two police officers in July 1940, and investigators seek the public's help to identify anyone suspected of helping Nazi Germany.

Nazi Sympathizer

John Cranfield is an American private investigator and white supremacist who sympathizes with the Nazis. Cranfield identifies as a "fearless radical thinker." His goal is to convince people that America should side with Germany instead of fighting with them. Cranfield is obsessed with the 1939 World's Fair, because the event is a bawdy display of globalism; he's not afraid to tell his friends and neighbors what he thinks about the fair. He visits the exhibits multiple times to feed his hatred and to plot ways to persuade, harm, or destroy attendees. Cranfield claims he's a peaceful man who'd never plant a bomb or commit sabotage by himself, but it's only a matter of time before his hatred hurts someone. **Investigation 2, Larceny 2, Firearms 1**

Security Guard

Mateo Lopez loves being a security guard at the World's Fair. Like a growing number of Americans, he's worried the Nazis are planning an attack on American soil. He knows what fascism can do; one of his friends lost a cousin fighting fascists in the Spanish Civil War. Lopez takes his job seriously and takes extra shifts to ensure the fair remains safe. In exchange, he's been gifted with free passes for his family and friends. He loves hearing how his daughter wants to grow up to be a scientist one day and, after seeing the Futurama exhibit, he's curious what else he can do to inspire her. **Brawl 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise (World's Fair) 3.**

Young Science-Fiction Fan

Hilda Stein is a high-school student with a passion for science fiction. While her mother disapproves of her flights of fancy, her dad is thrilled; he was one of the engineers who helped build the Futurama exhibit, and supports his daughter's ambitions. Hilda has a free pass and visits the fair every weekend with her father. One day, she wants to build rockets that launch into space, and hopes to visit the moon one day. Hilda is also self-conscious about her ambitions, because she is German and has been accused of being a Nazi by her classmates; the teenager deals with her anxiety by keeping a sharp lookout for "the real Nazis." Hilda carries a notebook and writes down anything she deems suspicious; she's convinced it's only a matter of time before she finds and exposes the enemy. **Investigation 1, Science (Astronautics) 2, Socialize 2**

New York City, New York

New York City has its hands full dealing with European refugees and immigrants who've fled to Ellis Island for their lives. People worry about their loved ones overseas, and many suffer from the trauma of war. Thankfully, improved methods of transportation that include subways, buses, and cars allow more people to move to the boroughs, especially the Bronx. While immigration is slowing, almost a third of New York City residents were born in foreign countries; New York City has the distinction of being one of the largest and most diverse melting pots of peoples, languages, and cultures that has ever existed in the United States.

The city is in danger of overcrowding, and a palpable tension is felt throughout. New York is still suffering from the Great Depression. Breadlines and homeless camps, known as "Hoovervilles," can be found throughout the city until the U.S. enters World War II in 1941. Before America officially joins the war effort, New York City is also home to the first and one of the largest branches of the openly pro-Nazi and deeply racist German American Bund.

The onset of World War II significantly changes the Big Apple. In 1938, almost a quarter of the city's population was unemployed; by 1942, unemployment was reduced by a factor of four, and many immigrants and refugees were able to find new jobs. Despite this, many New Yorkers were anxious a Nazi sympathizer would hurt them or their families. The Bund did not disappear when war was declared. During World War II, Nazi spies actively target New York City to unlock U.S. military secrets and sabotage crucial military targets.

A Split in the Science-Fiction Community

The science-fiction community is not without its ideological disagreements, and unhappy fans often leave to form their own clubs. One of the most notable splits occurs when Frederick Pohl, Donald A. Wollheim, and others leave the Greater New York Science Fiction Club to form The Futurians. The Futurians believe that science-fiction fans and authors should, to quote author and fan Donald A. Wollheim, "actively work for the realization of the scientific world-state as the only genuine justification for their activities and existence." These fans leave the Greater New York Science Fiction Club because the sitting president, Sam Moskowitz, believes that science-fiction fandom should remain largely apolitical. The small number of fans who started the Futurians were soon joined by others, ranging from mainstream liberals like Isaac Asimov to avowed communists like Judith Merril.

Though the Greater New York Science Fiction Club (and its associated clubs) are significantly larger than other groups, the Futurians did leave their mark on the genre. By the early 1940s, Futurian members edit almost half of the science-fiction magazines in the U.S. Most publications had small circulations and minimal budgets that primarily showcased the work of other Futurians.

New York City is also the hub of science-fiction publishing and is home to *Amazing Stories*, *Astounding Stories of Super-Science*, *Weird Tales*, and *Wonder Stories*. Science-fiction authors Isaac Asimov, Alfred Bester, Hugo Gernsback, Judith Merril, and Donald A. Wollheim all live in New York City, and editor and author John W. Campbell lives in New Jersey and works in Manhattan. Magazine editors are building vibrant and lively communities of science-fiction editors, authors, and fans which spurs the creation of several science-fiction clubs, drawing fans who later become authors themselves, like Frederick Pohl.

Bigoted Fan

Eric Weber is an ardent science-fiction fan who thinks Adolf Hitler has some "good ideas." He prefers stories of powerful men who take what they want and kill any who oppose them. Eric knows his ideas are unpopular, and when he attends science-fiction club meetings, he keeps to himself unless he finds others who agree with him. Eric's brother, Frank, is a prominent member of the local German American Bund and has recently been asked to join the organization. Eric doesn't feel like he belongs to either group; most of Bund's members think science fiction is degenerate American trash, and most science-fiction fans recognize Nazis are monsters. If someone ever offered Eric a way to combine his two interests, he'd jump at the chance. **Academics (Science Fiction) 1, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 2**

Magazine Editor

John Gold is the editor of *Scientifiction Tales*, a regional science-fiction magazine that distributes issues all along the eastern seaboard. John struggles to maintain a neutral stance in the science-fiction community; recently, he published a letter condemning the feud between the Greater New York Science Fiction Club and the Futurians. Now, the editor worries upset fans will boycott his magazine and force it to fail. As a result, he's been attending meetings of both groups to reassure them *Scientifiction Tales* does not have a blacklist and won't judge an author based on their politics. John harbors his own opinions and will be careful to express them. While he is a staunch American patriot who hates Nazis, he also doesn't want to make people feel unwelcome, not realizing his wishy-washy stance is creating a stir. **Politics 2, Academics (Literature) 2, Socialize 2**

Radical Author

Rachel Bonham is a surgical nurse by day and a Futurian member by night. She's published three stories so far and is working on a novel. In her limited spare time between work, writing, and her activities with the Futurians, Rachel watches for updates about the war. She's a fervent supporter of FDR and his New Deal, but believes his reforms need to go further. Rachel is weighing her options and wonders if her time would be better spent volunteering overseas. She's a skilled medical professional who knows she can do some good, but fears she's being selfish by spending too much time telling stories. Rachel needs a reason to remain behind and seeks like-minded authors with whom to connect. **Science (Medicine) 3, Expression 2, Politics 2**

What's Yet to Come

"Stuff your eyes with wonder. Live as if you'd drop dead in ten seconds. See the world. It's more fantastic than any dream made or paid for in factories."

— Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*

World War II ends with the release of the atomic bomb and Japan's surrender in 1945. Approximately 200,000 people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are either killed by the bomb or suffered from radiation poisoning. The bomb's devastation forces people to reconsider what they thought of science. The result is a fascination with the power of nuclear energy. Many believe the atomic bomb's power is a controllable force that can be used for non-destructive purposes like manufacturing electricity. Others continue to build bombs, ushering in a new fear: nuclear war.

This seismic shift in zeitgeist affects science fiction as well. Readers who previously dismissed science fiction as "poorly written" or "unworthy" of critical attention reconsider their



tastes. Science fiction, thanks to the work of science-positive editors and authors, is widely considered educational and inspirational. The growing demand for science-fiction stories eclipses what magazines can provide, and larger publishers begin producing novels for a hungry audience.

While science fiction thrives, the dream of a glorious future may never be realized. Americans are becoming fearful of a nuclear apocalypse and grow increasingly suspicious of science. Geniuses and life-saving visionaries are replaced by chilling sociopaths who care more about their ego than how their scientific discoveries might be used. Increased racial tensions, urban decay, Cold War paranoia, and a blowback to women's rights affect everyday life, reminding Americans that all may be created equal — but they're not treated as such. The dream of a peaceful, intellectual technocracy is eroding thanks to profit-focused corporations, corrupt politicians, and brutal authoritarians.

Life in the 1950s is a stark and significant shift from the 1940s. Conformity is a survival tool for many, and anyone who stands out will suffer needlessly. Extreme nationalism mixed with paranoia is rampant, caused by the threat of nuclear war and tensions between American and the U.S.S.R. Many middle- and upper-class white people treat anyone of color as second-class citizens. Women who once performed vitally important work at home and overseas are watching their opportunities dry up, are told their opinions don't matter — or are accused of being communists. Both the Forsaken and Remade should avoid giving anyone the impression they don't fit in to avoid being branded as communists or radicals. Members of either group who are not in a position of power will incur problems if they're not sufficiently deferential. Even adolescents will be labeled problematic if they don't submit and obey.

Though the threat of annihilation, the Red Scare, and a civil rights backlash marks the 1950s, the dream of a utopia persists. Growing past its roots, science fiction will continue to be a beacon of hope and a balm; as technology improves so does public entertainment. Affordable color televisions, cameras, and new advances in filmmaking techniques allows filmmakers and storytellers to push boundaries and comment on current events. B-movies like *Them!* (1954) *Earth vs. The Flying Saucers* (1957), *The Blob* (1958), provide social commentary on the spread of communism using metaphor and allegory, much like previous films did during the war.

As the push for civil rights continues, science fiction acts as a beacon of hope that equality is possible. In 1968, *Star Trek* depicts one of the first on-air kisses between a white man, Captain Kirk, and a black American woman in a position of power, Lieutenant Uhura. As the genre's popularity expands and sexist and segregation barriers to publication erode well past the 1960s, a growing number of marginalized authors will write and publish science fiction, participate in fan communities, and attend conventions.

The future of science fiction depends upon a shared vision where all feel welcome. As Americans become more connected, the genre offers them a chance to see a bright future of which they can one day be a part.

Werewolf: New Enemies, Old Hunting Grounds

The golden age of science fiction draws genre fans seeking the means to escape the challenges of living in WWII-era America. For the Forsaken, their experiences in this era will be informed by what they feel about scientific and technological advancements, because those attitudes shape the hunt. While some Forsaken will be influenced by science-fiction stories, others will pass them off as fanciful and unimportant.

Storytellers and players should collaborate to discuss what the Forsaken feels about science and, by extension, science-fiction stories as a guide to create characters, antagonists, and chronicles. Some Uratha may treat science fiction as an escape to set aside their supernatural life for a short while, a place to find hints about the *Hisil* in these stories, or the map to a better world. Forsaken fascinated by electronics and other forms of technology might use science-fiction stories as a guide to devise futuristic inventions capable of affecting the supernatural world. One planned device might detect, trap, or destroy spirits while another could manipulate the fabric of the Gauntlet; though neither is plausible, science-fiction stories help the Forsaken push boundaries, experimenting with what they know about the supernatural and cutting-edge science. Part of the mystery in a Forsaken chronicle set in this era is figuring out what is possible and what isn't.

This era can also be inspired by science-fiction tropes that first debuted in this era to tell the story of a character's First Change. A serious and devoted science-fiction fan will see their First Change through the lens of their fandom. The *Hisil* is an extradimensional plane of existence, spirits are the inhabitants of this alien realm, and werewolves are creatures whose unique genetic heritage was somehow altered or enhanced when their ancestors fled to Earth. While more traditional Uratha might scoff attempts to reframe Forsaken lore through the lens of science fiction, others will understand that allegory is a powerful tool and coping mechanism.

Werewolves of this era may have a passing familiarity with science fiction; most will have seen popular horror films like *Nosferatu* (1922), *Son of Frankenstein* (1939), and *The Wolfman* (1941). Chronicles can be structured around an attempt to change or sway public opinion by targeting movie studios and screenwriters in Los Angeles. Most Uratha will recognize that movies can be dangerous because they have the power to expose their secrets and draw unwanted attention. For WWII-era Forsaken, this threat is new and strange — and the Uratha must figure out what that means.

Technology and the Forsaken

The Forsaken of this era will be caught between exploring the unknown, fighting dangerous threats, and defending what

they know. Rapid urbanization and continued industrialization are transforming the Shadow in unusual ways. In the 1910s, there was no more than a handful of minor spirits associated with automobiles, now they are exceptionally common and more powerful. As cities grow and change so do their reflections in the *Hisil*. Exploring and understanding these new regions of the Shadow (and the strange inhabitants who lurk there) could be interesting to players who enjoy heroic stories about characters exploring alien worlds.

Character identities play a role in this era because of the war overseas, segregation, and other prejudices omnipresent in day-to-day life. These struggles can be overcome by an emphasis on scientifically plausible stories, advanced weaponry, and the sudden shift in technology that impacts the Forsaken's way of life. Rapid changes affect the Uratha's perspective and are a source of conflict and great storytelling.

Questions to consider when building a character include:

- *Where does your character live?* The effects of the New Deal are underway, but rural areas are slow to modernize while urban centers incorporate technology quicker. Your character's lifestyle, including the availability of food, clothing, and entertainment, are directly impacted by your home life. Where your character lives is crucial to what jobs they take, their participation in the science-fiction genre, and how they're impacted by military maneuvers.

- *What technology does your character have access to?* Scientific achievements are often directly related to the war effort. Their effects on the Uratha are largely unknown in this era; partly what the Forsaken must deal with is how each invention impacts their pack. On the home front, Americans build ships and submarines, different types of aircraft and ground vehicles, and a variety of weaponry. Advances in medicine, transportation, media, and the preservation of food benefit Americans at home and abroad.

- *What is your character's profession?* Existing prejudices are occasionally set aside because there is a shortage of workers during this era. Jobs include factory workers, munitions experts, lab or research assistants, traveling salespeople, army recruiters, science-fiction authors, editors, and publishers, camera operators, filmmakers, scriptwriters, agents, singers, and actors. Your Forsaken's profession affects what technology they have access to and what future changes they can expect; these era-specific jobs can also be tied your role in Uratha society.

- *What are your views on scientific achievement?* Though science is neither good nor evil, many Forsaken will stereotype scientists because they don't trust them. Do you feel that scientific inventions should be monitored and controlled? Or do you think that some risks are necessary to advance our knowledge? Use these attitudes to shape what antagonists you're drawn to hunt.

- *How do you feel about advanced weaponry?* New weapons are being designed that will change the face of war forever and many Forsaken fear what will happen to the Gauntlet when these superpowered armaments are unleashed. Biological, chemical, and atomic weaponry threaten lives and have the potential to cause greater harm. Do you feel these destructive tools are necessary? Or, do you think the war can be won a different way? How does this affect the hunt?

In this era, anxieties about rapid inventions spurred by war shapes a character's beliefs and interactions with other Forsaken and antagonists. Devise motivations that directly tap into your views to help sharpen your role in a chronicle.

Choosing a Tribe

In this era, Bone Shadows are leading the efforts to explore and understand the changes in Shadow. More traditional werewolves fear the increasing rate of change, and some worry that newly formed spirits and the shifting fabric of the *Hisil* portends the end of all Forsaken. Other, more optimistic werewolves see these new spirits and undiscovered regions of Shadow as an opportunity to rework their alliances with various spirits and forge a better world, filled with spirits that'll help them patrol the Gauntlet.

Blood Talons: The Blood Talons who are not fighting overseas have waged war with any werewolves who threaten to expose them for what they are via burgeoning media. At the Iron Masters' urging, some have also united against those who sympathize with the Nazi cause at home, instead of simply hunting werewolves who trespass on their territory. Those who do recognize the Nazi party is still active on American soil — despite official organizations being shut down when the war began — and that some of their own might be taken in, while others don't see the point in restricting their prey based on politics.

Bone Shadows: While hunting ephemera, a few Bone Shadows have noticed similarities between their prey and what shows up on screen or in a story, leading them to wonder if science-fiction stories and B-movie films are prophetic and, if so, why. The Bone Shadows also wonder what the rapid increase in technological advancements portends for the spirit world. Some want to find out if there's a supernatural cause behind the ever-increasing rate of invention and if that will lead to a new type of spirit.

Hunters in Darkness: The Hunters in Darkness are focused on a different issue. The poverty and squalor produced by the Great Depression, combined with the continued rapid growth of cities, has resulted in an explosion of the Hosts. Without the efforts of this tribe, the Hosts might have already overrun entire cities and large towns, transforming them into monstrously inhuman hives. While most Hunters in Darkness care little about exploring the geography of the *Hisil* or the wonders that advanced mortal technology can produce, more



than a few find the futuristic visions of spotlessly clean cities appealing. Some younger members of the tribe are convinced these visions represents victory over the Hosts.

Iron Masters: If other Forsaken are skeptical about the future, the Iron Masters strive to embrace it by taking jobs in factories, shipyards, munition plants, laboratories, etc. to have access to technology that can help them undermine the enemy. Others are fascinated by futuristic stories and, like the Bone Shadows, wonder if they're prophetic — to a point. Where the Bone Shadows take an occultist's view of the era, the Iron Masters view science fiction as a tool to help them foresee the future. The Iron Masters hunt Nazis while also tracking and investigating the rise of corporations. Despite their willingness to embrace technology, the Iron Masters don't want a repeat of the Great Depression, and suspect that capitalist companies, if left unchecked, will spawn new enemies.

Storm Lords: The Storm Lords are gathering in larger cities to hunt the Ridden and the Spirit-Claimed in the cities of New York, L.A., Chicago, and Detroit. The tribe doesn't know why spirits are behaving strangely in these cities, but they are searching for answers. A few Storm Lords believe that spirits are attacking the Forsaken by possessing key individuals who can expose the tribe's secrets. Others wonder if this uptick in supernatural activity is natural and will fade eventually once the war ends. For now, the Storm Lords gear up and go where the hunt takes them.

Ghost Wolves: The Unbound struggle with their consciences. Though the tribe does not target one type of prey, many participate in the war effort as best they can. The Ghost Wolves have seen war before, but sense that something is different and far more dangerous this time — for them. Some Ghost Wolves have signed up with the military to find answers; others hunt Nazi infiltrators. A few have committed to establishing deeper connections with other packs and tribes, fearing the way of the lone wolf is too risky in an era fraught with enemies.

In this era, hunting fascists and angry spirits are not unique to one tribe or another; their preferred prey should be used as a guideline. Most werewolves understand the atrocities in Europe and Southeast Asia will permanently twist the Shadow and greatly empower the hideous Maeljin in unexpected ways. Some Forsaken have committed to undoing this damage, while others work to prevent a conflict from erupting on American soil by hunting Nazis.

Finishing Touches

Fans of science fiction in this era tend to have some education in science- or technology-related fields. Scientists and engineers read popular science-fiction magazines alongside hobbyists and radio operators.

It is recommended that a Forsaken character possesses some degree of education; this knowledge will help them deal with issues in urban areas, military shipyards, or industrial complexes. Most chronicles will likely feature werewolves confronting new industrial and urban spirits, and their skills will help the Forsaken understand their enemy's strengths and weaknesses. When preparing to face a hostile spirit associated with radios or radio waves, a werewolf who understands how that equipment works would shield a room against radio waves with metal foil or screen mesh. By doing so, they might even discover those actions tapped into the spirit's Ban or Bane.

All Auspices are useful in this setting for different reasons. Ithaeur will be useful for chronicles where the players explore the Shadow, and Elodoth is perfect for characters involved in the science-fiction community. When battling strange and unfamiliar spirits, both Irraka and Rahu remain invaluable, and a Cahalith's dreams can reveal essential information about new types of spirits, or upcoming changes in the Shadow.

Selecting Gifts is also important to ensure the Forsaken fits into this milieu and type of chronicle. Gifts of Insight, Knowledge, and Technology will help Forsaken who explore the swiftly changing urban Shadow or want to learn about new industrial spirits. Characters who are drawn to the science-fiction community may want to consider the Gift Lunatic Inspiration (**Werewolf: The Forsaken Second Edition**, p. 127); though it's dangerous, this Gift can be a useful way to help specific authors of their choosing.

Totems can help shape the chronicle in ways that better fit this era and its themes. For example, a skyscraper totem is an excellent option for characters in New York City; thematically, the totem would tap into the chronicle's urban focus and the sprawling, futuristic metropolises that are the hallmark of science-fiction stories. Spirits associated with technology, like radio, electricity, or more abstract spirits like a spirit of progress are also good choices. A spirit of science-fiction magazines would be an unusual choice but would help anchor the Forsaken to the era.

Can a Werewolf Write Science Fiction?

A werewolf might have trouble being a prolific author while satisfying the demands of the hunt, but it is possible for them to write short stories or novels and submit them for publication. A profession that requires them to edit, read, and choose submissions, put together a science-fiction magazine, or acquire novels is far too restrictive for the vast majority of Forsaken. However, Wolf-Blooded or human members of the characters' pack could easily have a job in publishing and would be in an excellent position to gather information or help meet authors. Pack members who don't work in publishing do have other options, however. They might attend a reading or a convention to discuss an author's story; doing so will give them firsthand experience to help glean supernatural insights or discover the strange visions that inspired a story.



For the Storyteller: Escalating Themes

Forsaken chronicles set in the Golden Age of Science Fiction will touch on three types of stories: the hunt for Nazis, how new technology affects the supernatural, and how the supernatural is behaving oddly.

Nazi Infiltration

In a large American city like New Yorkz City or Los Angeles, a group of Bale Hounds infiltrating the Pure of the Fire-Touched loyal to the Maeljin seeks to transform the metropolis into a vast Wound like ones present in Nazi-occupied territories. These werewolves are working with local Nazi sympathizers who are planning to poison the local water supply and plant bombs in regions of the city inhabited by immigrants and refugees. The Pure helping with these efforts are regarded by the Nazis as "people who possess powerful ancient Germanic magics.". The Pure have also helped several high-ranking members of the local Nazis become Urged or Spirit-Claimed.

One of the local Uratha, perhaps one of the characters, receives a message from a local Blood Talon who was had been investigating rumors of Pure activity. The message is carried by a spirit and is somewhat garbled but mentions a Pure pack is planning a campaign of death designed to transform the city into a Wound. The message also mentions they are working with humans to accomplish this. Unfortunately, the Blood Talon messenger is found dead later that day with several pamphlets circling events in the area.

Another werewolf, preferably one of the player characters, who's loosely associated with the local science science-fiction club recognizes the clue left at the scene. Several of the club's members are Jewish authors who have been investigating rumors that local Nazi sympathizers are targeting them. These fans are not soldiers, and are ill-equipped for a confrontation with the Nazis, but have been sneaking around and listening to rumors; older members have been paying bartenders, street vendors, and delivery workers to keep their eyes peeled.

Fans believe the Nazi sympathizers are planning something "big" in a few weeks and mention the Nazis have recently gotten involved in some "weird religious stuff" and are working with new people who seem scary. Several of the fans have attempted to go to the police with this information but have been rebuffed due to a mixture of anti-Semitic views and a general disbelief that a secret cell of Nazi sympathizers is working in the city. If the characters can pool their resources and knowledge together to formulate a plan, they can prevent a catastrophe.

Supernatural Inventors

Every Uratha knows that conventional technologies from radios to X-rays are incapable of manipulating the Gauntlet, trapping spirits, or detecting members of the



zHosts. A small, yet growing, number of scientists can create inventions that affect spirits or the Gauntlet. These inventions are unique devices that can be built, repaired, or even duplicated by their creator, but are impossible for anyone else — including werewolves — to duplicate and can never be mass-produced.

These inventors might be ordinary mortals who initially understand very little about spirits and the *Hisil* but are rapidly learning more. Alternately, they could be Spirit-Claimed who are hostile to the Uratha and are building inventions that can identify or harm werewolves. A human inventor who believes they've developed a method of observing and contacting a parallel world may either attract the attention of the characters or notice that one of their devices reveals that the characters possess unusual amounts of extradimensional energy

Alternately, a Spirit-Claimed engineer may be building devices that can detect werewolves, temporarily suppress the Forsaken's ability to change form, force them to change, or even create supernatural barriers they cannot cross. This inventor may be simply using these devices to protect themselves from the Uratha, or they might be planning to demonstrate these devices to the press to set off a wave of anti-werewolf paranoia.

If the inventor or inventors are Spirit-Claimed, the characters not only need to stop them, but also find out why some of these creatures are developing a new ability. Perhaps there is a new and powerful spirit associated with technology in the characters' city that has found a way to empower some of its Spirit-Claimed servants — if the characters destroy it, the inventions may become nothing more than curious-looking junk.

If the inventors are simply curious scientists who stumbled across the unknown, the characters must decide how much to tell the inventor. On the positive side, the character's devices can be quite useful, and they would make an ideal addition to the pack — if the characters can get the person to trust them. For a larger-scale campaign, perhaps the emergence of some powerful technological spirit is enabling a small, but steadily growing, group of inventors and hobbyists to experiment with such devices. The characters must then find a way to either prevent this from happening or recruit the inventors to help them create new technologies that can detect spirits, Hosts, and Ridden people several blocks or even several miles away.

Alien Invaders

An entire city block's worth of people are being possessed, Urged, or Claimed. Each passing night, their numbers increase, coinciding with attacks on the Hosts and the Uratha. Some local werewolves believe the Pure are involved, while others are convinced extremely powerful spirits are at work. Local Uratha agree this situation must be investigated and stopped before the city's leaders catch wind of the "epidemic".

The characters may explore several options: They can journey deep into the *Hisil* and attempt to find answers there, they can ally with scientific experts and investigators to find out what they have in common, or they can get to know, capture, or interrogate a newly- arrived spirit. Regardless of their approach, the pack's goals are clear. First, they need to find out why so many spirits are arriving and taking over people. Then, they need to discover how they can prevent more people from being harmed. Lastly, they must figure out how to reverse the effects. Their investigation will most likely require traveling into the *Hisil* and either defeating or negotiating with one or more powerful spirits.

For a somewhat stranger and less apocalyptic version of the problem, perhaps the spirits are possessing inanimate objects such as buildings or machines. Regardless of whether the spirits inhabit people or objects, the vast majority aren't destructive or overtly malevolent. What's more, the Hosts have mostly fled the area where these spirits are showing up, but there is clearly a problem that needs to be solved. Will the characters solve it with trickery, negotiation, or violence?

Antagonists

Antagonists of the era range from the Ridden to Nazi sympathizers. In addition to the bit players and antagonists presented in this era, the Hate-Monger, a Spirit-Ridden antagonist found in **Werewolf: The Forsaken** on p. 208, is an ideal choice for this setting. This creature was most likely working in one of the branches of the German American Bund — a group that openly supported Adolf Hitler until the U.S. entered World War II.

Because a significant percentage of golden-age science-fiction authors were Jewish, the science-fiction community is an obvious target for this entity's hate. During the war, the Hate-Monger (**Werewolf the Forsaken Second Edition** p. 209) might shift their focus to target other marginalized groups like Japanese Americans.

CRIMSON HORROR /JOE DAVIS

"I heard you're having some disagreements with your director over the latest mummy film, would you like some advice?"

Background: The Crimson Horror is a spirit of fear who found Joe Davis, a young and ruthlessly ambitious man, in a moment of vulnerability. Davis had recently lost his job as a director's assistant; while he was out running errands in the dead of night, he encountered a "monster with fangs and fur". Scared out of his wits, Davis called the police — but was laughed at. When he showed up on set several hours later, he was fired for being tardy.

Later that night, a slippery voice whispered promises in his ear, telling Joe that it was his duty to expose those monsters to the public. Davis agreed. Deep down, he knew he'd have to pay a steep price. To him? Exposing "monsters" was worth the cost. Now, Joe Davis is on the verge of becoming

Claimed. Though he has yet to merge with the spirit of fear, Joe refers to himself in private by (what he calls) his superhero's name: the Crimson Horror.

Description: Joe Davis appears as an attractive man in his early 30s; and, thanks to hours of theatrical makeup, prosthetics, and costuming, Joe is preparing for the transformation his spirit of fear warned him about. He wears well-tailored suits, always drives a new car, and is a regular presence at almost every Hollywood party. He currently lacks any official title beyond being a consultant; producers and directors often clamor for the Crimson Horror's attention, because it's ideas and suggestions lead to runaway hits.

Storytelling Hints: Joe Davis has willingly given himself over to the spirit of fear, because he loves the promise of social influence he'll use to alter horror movie scripts and set designs. The Crimson Horror has sworn an oath to expose the supernatural whenever it can. Amongst the lies it has told Joe: The Crimson horror was responsible for obtaining funding for *The Son of Frankenstein* (1939) and told the director of *The Wolfman* (1941) that werewolves were vulnerable to silver.

Despite what it promised Joe, the Crimson Horror doesn't care about exposing the supernatural. The spirit of fear simply wishes to frighten as many people as possible, and understands that horror movies are an excellent way to do that. Its plans to extend its influence are pragmatic; it wants more Urged and Claimed mortals to work in Los Angeles to make more horror movies. To deal with the Forsaken that stand between it and success, the Crimson Horror hopes to make a very, unique movie exposing the Uratha's secrets to hunters.

Over the next several days, Joe Davis and the Crimson Horror will merge — unless the Forsaken can find and stop him. (See page 191, **Werewolf the Forsaken Second Edition**.) It is strongly recommended that the Crimson Horror will use the Hypnotic Gaze Dread Power to spread its ideas to producers and directors.

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Presence 4, Manipulation 6, Composure 3

Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 1, Expression 2, Firearms 2, Intimidation 3, Occult 3, Persuasion 3, Politics 2, Socialize 2, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Contact (movie industry, wealthy Californians) 2, Resources 3, Safe Place 2, Status 1, Striking Looks 1

Willpower: 6

Essence: 20

Health: 8

Initiative: 7

Defense: 5

Speed: 12

DUKE OF LIGHT

"Mmm…Mmmore…"

Background: Widespread electrification is relatively new. Even in the largest U.S. cities, it's less than 50 years old. However, this has been enough time for new spirits to be created, and older spirits to warp and change to fit their new conditions. The Duke of Light is an old spirit that used to be a spirit of artificial light who thrived in the presence of candles and gas lamps. The electrification of large cities like New York and Los Angeles, with their streetlights, neon signs, and huge movie marquees caused this minor spirit to thrive and grow vastly in both power and size. Now, it hungers for electricity even more than it craves light. It is the spirit in charge of light across the entire central downtown area of the city and holds court over a huge array of spirits associated with electricity, light, and industrial technology.

Description: The Duke of Light is a bloated, octopus-like entity seemingly made of thick, brightly glowing tentacles that occasionally crackle with electricity. While it can move quite rapidly by running on its many limbs, it prefers being stationary, feeding on electricity. It holds court in a huge, hive-like structure that is the Shadow counterpart of a major local power station.

Storytelling Hints: The Duke of Light's primary drives are its hunger for electricity and its desire to spread more artificial light, especially large displays of outdoor light. Its hunger for electricity is so great that it occasionally causes minor power shortages and brownouts as it draws power directly from the mortal world. Also, in addition to a host of servants and assistants in the *Hisil*, it also regularly sends spirits to possess, Urge, or Claim humans so that they will construct ever-larger outdoor displays of lights. It fears darkness, but could someday cause a massive blackout, which would drive it to take revenge on the humans it blames for all its problems.

Rank: 4

Attributes: Power 10, Finesse 9, Resistance 7

Willpower: 10

Essence: 25

Initiative: 16

Defense: 9

Speed: 19

Size: 8

Corpus: 15

Influences: Electricity • • • , Light • •

Manifestations: Materialize, Reaching, Shadow Gateway, Twilight Form

Numina: Awe, Blast, Implant Mission, Left-Handed Spanner, Rapture, Regenerate, Telekinesis



Ban: The Duke of Light cannot turn off or break any electric lights. If it does so, even by accident, it begins to bleed 1 point of Essence per turn until it either turns the light back on or flees the scene. Uratha who seek it out could carry fragile electric lights to prevent it from attacking them.

Banes: The Duke of Light must be locked in a well-insulated, utterly dark room with no electricity for 30 days.

Deviant: Shattered Utopias

Many Renegades have no patience for the burgeoning wave of science fiction sweeping the nation. Nothing these writers come up with rivals their own tortured lives for seeing what pushing the boundaries of known science can do; why would they want to read fictional tales that don't accurately reflect their experiences, written by people who have no idea what they're talking about? But some find comfort in the idea of a new genre of storytelling that touches so closely on what was once an unimaginable horror in the public's eyes. If readers become accustomed to stories like theirs, they say — if readers can sympathize with aliens, cyborgs, and mutants — then maybe one day the discovery of real Deviants in their midst won't cause fright and chaos. Maybe they could live openly. Maybe they wouldn't have to be so isolated anymore.

This brave new world hopeful Remade imagine not only never comes to pass, but shatters like glass against the realities of a nation filled with fear of the enemy once the war begins. Americans with Japanese, German, and Italian ancestry suffer bigotry and imprisonment at the hands of their own neighbors and the government that's supposed to represent them. If Baselines can't even accept each other, Renegades realize, they'll never accept inhuman Deviants outside the pages of a comic book or magazine. Those who hoped fictional heroes like Captain America and Superman would lead to a change in their lives soon learn to resent these perfect, handsome saviors who never have to deal with uncontrollable telepathic static in their minds or watching their own powers hurt everyone around them. By the time Hitler rises to power, the common science-fiction trope of "*homo superior*" — evolutionary offshoots of humanity with brilliant minds and amazing abilities — hits uncomfortably close to home

Chronicles of Darkness in the Golden Age of Science Fiction

The denizens of the supernatural are threatened by the rapid changes of technology, many of which are described in science fiction, and the deadly war that affects their homes in America and overseas. Their anxieties tend to manifest in unique ways; some will flee until the threat has passed, some will fight, some will rally allies, some will obsess over new stories and wonder if the authors are prophetic. With these sweeping changes, this era is rife with crossover potential, as European **Kindred** flee to American cities, posing as refugees, and concentrate on securing domain; many plot to overthrow local princes, hoping to reestablish a base of operations that will ensure their legacy. Meanwhile, many American Kindred are struggling to maintain order and control and are forging new alliances to ensure they remain well fed and hidden. As cities grow faster than they expected, American Kindred compete to secure their domains before their rivals do.

Mages are unclear how new technology will affect them, and while they are eager to learn more they're preoccupied with the war effort and are actively feeding Nazi occultists bad information in America and abroad. **Changelings** are scrambling to protect the Hedge; the cannons of war have destroyed many ancient gateways, and they are desperately trying to control their routes in and out of the Hedge. Some Changelings believe the Hedge is being attacked from the "inside" by an unknown assailant.

The **Begotten** worry that they've become unwanted by other members of the supernatural community and struggle to find their place; some seek valor in war, while others have decided to lay low until the war ends. Cultists are warning **mummies** that the threat of war has reached North Africa; before the campaign begins in 1940, many of the Undying will need to decide if they'll risk a fight or not. The Deathless have told their cultists they must discover which other supernatural creatures are active in the area; should the Deathless go to war, they will need allies.

Hunters are acutely aware that war affects the supernatural and seek to prevent widespread panic; those who've enlisted are watching and waiting for encounters with bloodsuckers and cryptids fleeing a battlefield. Other hunters, who are keeping the home fires burning, are pulling double shifts to patrol the streets; they are afraid their communities are more vulnerable to attack and remain ever vigilant to protect them. Hunters are on high alert because they believe they're the last line of defense against an unseen enemy, but what they struggle with are the rumors that members of Null Mysteriis and The Cheiron Group may actively be creating them for their own ends.

for Remade who already questioned whether they really belonged among Baselines *before* the Third Reich twisted the concept into a living nightmare.

Despite dashed hopes, many Renegades wish they could enlist in the military and fight overseas. Most don't dare. Even for those who can pass for Baselines, conscription means exposing themselves to any conspiracy willing to put the smallest effort into getting their hands on registration records. At that point, any conspiracy worth its salt could easily manipulate the highly regimented lives of enlisted soldiers and auxiliary personnel. Instead, most Renegades stay off the grid and content themselves with doing what they can on the home front — rooting out enemy spies, protecting those doing crucial work to turn the war's tide in the Allies' favor, and taking their hatred of the Nazis out on the next best thing: conspirators.

Those Deviants who do go "over there" smuggle themselves onto ships, steal identities, or are Remade by the U.S. Armed Forces in the first place. The military usually places Devoted soldiers in units with just a few specialists who ensure the Deviants reach their destinations unimpeded before unleashing their power; sneaking these super soldiers across enemy lines to strike key targets is a common tactic, and military conspiracies have no wish to expose their best secret weapons to too many eyes, lest the enemy capture one and reverse engineer more for themselves.

Origins

This era sees a substantial uptick in **Autourgic** and **Epimorphic** Remade, not only in support of the war effort, but as a result of the popularity of science-fiction stories and comic books depicting super soldiers and mutants with amazing powers. Quite a few of these Deviants are originally inspired by the provocative cover of *Captain America Comics* #1, which shows the eponymous hero punching Adolf Hitler square in the face. Many willing subjects imagine their abilities will make them instant war heroes, though the reality never lives up to expectations, prompting many to go Renegade once they realize what they've gotten themselves into.

Some of this era's **Exomorphic** Remade are soldiers whose superiors force them to undergo experimental treatments. Some are POWs or victims of atrocities, whom the military (U.S. or otherwise) uses as guinea pigs. Still others aren't products of the war at all, but victims of greed spurred by technological progress, or grandiose delusions of humanity's future inspired by science-fiction tales.

For **Genotypal** and **Pathological** Remade, the opposite is often true — science-fiction authors hear rumors or receive anonymous tips from conspiracies trying to lure Deviants into the open, and write stories inspired by real events. Once nuclear reactors are built in the United States and atomic weapon tests begin in the early 1940s, Genotypal and Pathological Remade tend to result from the intersection of accidental exposure to radiation and strange supernatural phenomena.

New Form: Supersoldier

A Progenitor could design any Deviant for violence, but World War II sees a sharp increase in Remade specifically intended for *war*. The ideal qualities, from a conspiracy's point of view, include obedience, resilience, vigor, heightened senses, peerless skill, and the ability to single-mindedly focus on the mission regardless of complications. A wholly human, propaganda-friendly look helps, too. Militaries on both sides experiment with drugs and chemicals to create better soldiers among their Baseline troops, but a Supersoldier far surpasses anything mere narcotics can do.

A Supersoldier is primed for combat at the expense of traits people need to thrive in peacetime — conspiracies hardly want their major investments walking off into the sunset after the war to settle down with a family and a mortgage. Inevitably, a conspiracy imprisons even the most loyal Devoted after the war's end to keep these dangerous, warlike Remade in check until the next time they're needed.

Systems: Once per chapter, as an instant action, the Supersoldier's player may redistribute dots from any Mental or Social Attributes to any Physical Attributes, up to (3 + Acclimation) dots. This may increase a Physical Attribute beyond 5 but may not increase it to more than twice its normal rating, and may not reduce a Mental or Social Attribute below 1. Attributes return to their normal ratings at the end of the scene.

In addition, during character creation, the Supersoldier's player may reduce the character's Willpower by any number of dots (to a minimum of one) to attach that many bonus dots of Variation Magnitude (which must be combined with Scars as usual) to her starting Loyalty Touchstones; the total bonus Magnitude may be spread out among as many or as few Loyalty Touchstones as the player likes. Grouping them together means more power applicable in fewer situations, and a higher risk of losing access to them all at once. The character may only use those Variation dots when taking actions that directly support the Loyalty Touchstone to which they're attached; even Persistent Variations toggle off otherwise. Any time these Variations stop working, their combined Scars also vanish. When the Touchstone is Wavering, the character gains a minor Instability each time she uses the attached Variation dots (or once per scene, for Persistent Variations). When the Touchstone is resolved or lost, the player may reattach the bonus Magnitude dots to different Loyalty Touchstones or hold them in abeyance until she replaces the lost Touchstone with a new one. If the Touchstone moves from Loyalty to Conviction, the attached Magnitude dots follow it; but if she later loses that Touchstone, she must reattach the dots to another Loyalty Touchstone.

Only the following Variations are eligible for this bonus Magnitude: Anomalous Biology, Carapace, Computer-Aided Processing, Enhanced Speed, Environmental Adaptation,

Hyper-Competence, Immunity, Lash, Mimicry, Natural Weapon, Omnicompetence, Platonic Body, Superhuman Attribute (Physical or Mental only), and Telepathy.

New Transmissible Divergence: Psychic Indoctrination

Whenever a Remade with this Transmissible Divergence uses any Variation on a Baseline, the target becomes indoctrinated. An alien thought infects her mind and rewrites her to match its origins. Treat this as a disease (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 96) that deals no damage, but requires a Resolve + Composure roll once per chapter to avoid progressing further, with a penalty equal to the number of chapters that have passed since they were first infected. If the roll succeeds three times in a row, the indoctrination is suppressed for the rest of the story; but if the character is exposed to its vector again, it immediately picks up where it left off.

Each time this roll fails, the character's player suffers a cumulative one-die penalty to Mental and Social rolls and gains the Persistent Obsession Condition regarding one otherworldly or inhuman phenomenon (Storyteller's choice). At −1, every failure on a roll with the character's highest-rated Mental or Social Skill is a dramatic failure; at −2, all Skills within that category; at −3 or more, all Mental and Social Skills. If the character accumulates a −5 penalty and would progress further, she instead experiences Divergence, resolves Obsession, and gains the Madness Condition; in action scenes, she suffers the Insane Tilt instead. Remade resolve Madness by gaining or losing a dot of Conviction or Loyalty, or by achieving exceptional success on a Faltering roll.

A cure to pre-Divergence indoctrination is up to the Storyteller, but it should require at least a story's worth of investigation and effort.

Conspiracy: Project Gladiator

War isn't the place for everyday Joes and Janes like you and me. Someday soon, we'll have better than the best humanity can offer on the front lines, waving the red, white, and blue.

Standing: 3

Background: During the original Great War, as technological progress shaped military tactics, Army nurse Hazel Griffin saw the need for more rigorous scientific research under direct military command; relying on independent contractors presented, in her mind, too much risk. She convinced several key officers to enact her plan: The army quietly absorbed a small commercial defense laboratory, putting the company out of business and offering its scientists jobs with salaries they couldn't refuse. Griffin only found



out after the contracts were signed that the Cheiron Group had once owned that company, and now every monstrous corpse and impossible chemical in their cold-storage cellars was hers to study and exploit. Even the wealthy and mysterious hunter conspiracy couldn't stand up to the American military-industrial complex in the middle of the biggest war the world had ever seen, so they reached what Griffin called "a comfortable arrangement."

At the end of the war, with no more need for accelerated wartime R&D, the government dismissed the "drafted" scientists back into their civilian lives — officially. Unofficially, Griffin and her co-conspirators fudged the books and continued to pump money into the lab under the cover of a series of shadow projects, foreseeing the day when the United States would once again plunge into war. This time, they intended to be ready.

Description: Over the past 20 years, the lab — known now only as Project Gladiator, or "Special Biodefense Project 665-K" whenever anyone asks where the money's gone — has progressed from developing chemical weapons and experimental rifles to super soldiers Remade through illegal human experimentation, picking up where Cheiron's splinter company left off and veering wildly from its original purpose. Griffin, an avid science-fiction fan, somewhat whimsically named the project after Philip Wylie's novel Gladiator, published in 1930 and believed to be the primary inspiration for comic-book-hero Superman's 1938 debut. She dreams of the day when the army will openly field an entire battalion of supermen, catapulting America into a new era of heroism as a shining example for the future. If a few failures cost a few lives along the way, well — every war has its casualties.

By the time the Manhattan Project launches in 1942, Griffin has her hands on an avenue for top-secret information about its research, and over the course of that year she adds an atomic energy branch to Project Gladiator that produces Deviants powered by nuclear fission.

Principles: The Future Is Now, Reason Before Passion, Predict the Enemy

Virtue: Courageous

Vice: Patriotic

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 2, Resistance 5

Hierarchical Node: Project Gladiator Laboratory (Hazel Griffin, army nurse). Middle age hasn't slowed Griffin down, and although her co-conspirators wield the rank, her boundless vision and drive make the wheels turn. She's remained steadfast and sure for over 20 years as the no-nonsense, practical idealist at the project's heart.

Temporal Nodes: Edgewood Arsenal, Aberdeen, MD (The Mustard Commando, Invasive Devoted). Gladiator's home base is a series of laboratories and offices within this chemical-weapon manufacturing and testing facility. It stays here even after the CWS builds the larger Dugway Proving Ground for expanded tests in 1941. The Mustard Commando guards the base and keeps rebellious test subjects in line. Chemical death runs through his veins in place of blood, he grows extra limbs covered in coarse hair and bulging muscles at will, and even the officers fear the shadow of his massive, grotesque bulk. Rumor has it he was the prototype, developed from modified mustard-gas treatments and parts from the corpse of a mutant lycanthrope that arrived with the rest of the original lab.

Corporal Baxter O'Hara, Airman. Gladiator teams up with the USAAF to fund a task force responsible for scavenging the remains of supernatural creatures, remnants of arcane substances and lore left behind in monster lairs and sorcerous sancta, and anything else they can get their hands on from the shadow world without making contact with any shadows — at least, that's the goal. Sometimes, contact is inevitable. The men report evidence that another military unit keeps beating them to the scene somehow; Griffin works to find out who her competition is. Corporal O'Hara is young and brash with a tough-guy attitude and thinks just scavenging isn't enough, but he obeys orders — for now.

Exploitive Nodes: Chemical Warfare Service (CWS) (Captain Archie Decker, supplier). The CWS is the army body responsible for developing and testing chemical weapons, and defenses against them. Gladiator falls under its jurisdiction, insofar as it falls under anyone's. Decker provides supplies, equipment, and test subject volunteers on the down low. He secretly wants to volunteer for the super soldier experiments himself and take to the front lines as a reborn war hero but hasn't yet found the guts to approach Griffin about it.

Fort Meade and POW camps (Doris Mosley, prison-bus driver). When volunteers dry up, or the scientists want to test a new idea but don't want to "waste" American soldiers on initial trials likely to fail, Griffin brings in POWs from Fort Meade and the camps scattered around Maryland and Virginia to make up the gap. Doris Mosley is the driver of the prison bus Gladiator uses to transport subjects. She speaks five languages, German and Italian among them, and lately she's overheard prisoners whispering about strange happenings in the camps — people speaking in tongues and growing metallic protuberances from their bodies, eyes shining like headlights in the dark, radios turning themselves on and off. She dares not mention it to anyone, for fear they'll think she's lost her mind; but eventually, one of these Claimed prisoners makes his way to the lab, and someone starts asking questions.

Structural Nodes: Military budget misappropriation (Harcourt Burns, clerk). None of this works without the dough, of course, and dough requires people shuffling numbers around on the books to keep Gladiator under the table. Everything in the lab is only accessible with security clearances that don't officially exist, funded with money earmarked for a nested series of dead-end missions and projects that produce just enough results on paper to avoid scrutiny from the brass. Harcourt Burns is the neurotic clerk who fudges the paperwork for the officers and has a general's secretary for a sweetheart — which is worth a lot of perks but makes people nervous about the prospect of the relationship going sour. Griffin has backup plans for dealing with her, should Burns ball it up for everyone.



Undisclosed switchboard (Shirley Sugar, plug-pusher). A secret switchboard that only reaches a few private telephone lines connects Griffin's people to anonymous contacts with code names who leak information about nuclear research and other classified military projects to Gladiator's R&D teams. Shirley Sugar (real name unknown) is the switchboard operator at Project Y, the secret Los Alamos Laboratory opened on New Years' Day 1943 that spearheads the Manhattan Project. She knows everyone and everything, and if the wrong people ever get their hands on her, Gladiator's lives aren't the only ones at risk.

Conspiracy Icons: Chemical Weapons Stockpile (Biochemical Augmentation; attached to Edgewood Arsenal); Supernatural Cache (Uncanny Tactics; attached to Task Force: VULTURE)

Biochemical Augmentation — Members gain the 8-again quality on rolls to resist all poisons for a scene after visiting the lab and undergoing biochemical treatments.

Uncanny Tactics — Members with lab access and enough security clearance may use the Predator's Cunning Chimeric Variation at Magnitude 2.

Web of Pain: Burns does his best to keep the money flowing, but Gladiator must be cautious; too much cash moving around at once raises questions the conspiracy would rather not answer. They have an uneasy alliance with one of the wealthiest old-money families in the country. The Winthers of Louisiana stay out of the public eye and carefully protect their secret: a hereditary mutation that affects one child per generation dating back centuries, which lets them draw immense power from celestial bodies, but requires them to consume elemental spirits to stave off unnatural hungers and delusions. (Structural)

Shirley Sugar has a lot of friends interested in what she knows, including a few in the publishing industry. One of her publisher contacts at Futurix Press **(p. 450)** subsidizes — and influences — several science-fiction conventions across the country, fostering certain kinds of ideas among the rapidly growing fanbase. The aim is to groom writers who will predict new ways to create mutant superhumans and utilize nuclear power — and in the process, feed ideas to Futurix' busy Progenitors. (Structural)

Adjusting for Your Chronicle

In **Deviant: The Renegades**, the characters' total Variation Magnitude defines a conspiracy's Standing and other traits. The Standing given here for Project Gladiator is a general indication of its efficacy and a suggestion for how powerful Deviant characters should be when they go up against it. Feel free to adjust its Standing and Attributes based on the chronicle's threat level and how many Renegade characters the conspiracy has it out for, as normal.

Unbeknownst to anyone, one of the officers who runs the show with Griffin is a Nazi sympathizer who sells secrets to the conspiracy's German counterpart, a biochemical lab working to create an even more so-called "perfect master race" of Übermenschen by way of Remade whose condition can be transmitted virally to others with particular genetic markers. (Hierarchical)

HATTIE GRIFFIN, THE ATOMIC ACE

"Move over, flyboys. The Atomic Ace can take it from here!"

Background: Hazel Griffin's only child Hattie dreamed of joining the army, too, but she wanted to fly planes and fix engines like her father. Mr. Griffin died in the Great War when she was just a little girl, but she treasured photos of him in uniform, and taught herself how to take things apart and put them back together while her widowed mother was busy with her conspiracy. Hattie knew nothing of Hazel's real work, but she knew her mother had secrets, and was determined to find out what they were. When the Second World War began, Hattie joined up with the WAAC immediately. After only a few months as an auxiliary mechanic, she found an opportunity to eavesdrop on a few conversations between Hazel and one of her scientists and insisted on joining Gladiator.

Hattie soon became an indispensable asset to the labs, keeping the machinery running with her clever hands and morale high with her indomitable spirit. After the first time she witnessed a successful Divergence, her fascination knew no bounds. What if she herself had such powers? Surely then, no man could tell her "no." Surely then, she could be a real soldier and fly overseas with the boys. It wasn't long before she begged her mother to let her volunteer, but Hazel forbid it.

Not long after, in the wake of a pitched battle between spirits and Forsaken in which none survived, Task Force: VULTURE scavenged a fetish containing a uranium spirit, and Gladiator's scientists pressed it into service as the paranormal catalyst for a serum that would create super soldiers powered by atomic energy — at least, that was the idea. They hadn't yet successfully tested it when, one night, Hattie stayed behind when everyone else went home, claiming she had to fix a piece of malfunctioning equipment. She convinced a lab technician who was sweet on her to help her operate the specialized serum injector she'd helped build, and strapped herself in.

The grueling atomic treatments lasted late into the night. When her mother and the staff came in the next morning, they found her unconscious in the injector, and the lab tech — her Progenitor — dead from radiation poisoning. But Hattie awoke stronger, faster, and tougher than any poster boy for Uncle Sam. She became a soldier with astounding physical prowess and devastating destructive capabilities — but she's completely dependent on the

lab for the atomic serum that not only keeps her in peak condition but staves off a radiation sickness that would rot her from the inside out.

Description: Hattie — or "the Atomic Ace," as the Baselines call her with equal parts pride and trepidation — is a tall, buff, athletic woman in her mid-20s with chin-length, curly brown hair, a confident smile, and dark eyes that glow with radioluminescence when she uses her Lash Variation. She's officially on the books as a WAC corporal and wears the uniform, along with aviator goggles, a parachute, and a sidearm that other women aren't allowed to use. The men who fly with her treat her with respect and awe, but also jealousy and fear; her superior officer forbids her from mingling with anyone outside the conspiracy or appearing anywhere that might give the war correspondents opportunity to snap a photograph. Hattie considers herself lucky that her Divergence hasn't altered her outward appearance much, but in combat there's no mistaking her impossible strength and speed — or the lesions, burns, and unnatural tumors her body develops whenever she unleashes her full power — for anything ordinary.

Storytelling Hints: Far from the proud, independent Remade among the flyboys she'd intended to be, Hattie endures Gladiator's tight leash and constant tests to monitor her progress, and only leaves the airfield on specific orders. She's a good pilot, but more often she's a paratrooper, landing behind enemy lines to take out key targets with minimal backup. Unlike most soldiers, she periodically receives recall orders to fly back home to deal with conspiracy emergencies, capturing or killing Renegades or bailing VULTURE out when it draws too much attention. She's considered breaking free and smuggling herself into another squadron of regular airmen, but her dependence on the serum only Gladiator can make keeps her around.

Still, she believes in the cause and wants to prove to her mother she made the right choice (even if sometimes she's not sure), so she throws herself dutifully into battle whenever she gets the chance and inspires the squadron with her dauntless attitude. Her biggest regret is the loneliness her Divergence has brought; she hates being forced to live separately from the other WACs, she hates living in secret, and she hates the way even her friends are too afraid to spend much time with her anymore. It's put a damper on battlefield romance, too.

Characters who want to encourage Hattie to turn Renegade must first figure out how to replicate the serum.

Origin: Autourgic

Clade: Coactive

Forms: Devoted, Supersoldier

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4, Strength 5 (7), Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Skills: Academics 1, Crafts 4, Investigation 4, Medicine 1, Occult (Spirits) 1, Science (Nuclear Power) 1, Athletics 5, Brawl 5, Drive (Airplanes) 4, Firearms 3, Stealth 1, Survival 2, Weaponry 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 4, Persuasion (Inspiring) 3

Merits: Dauntless, Fleet of Foot 3, Hardy 3, Hypervigilance, Status (Project Gladiator) 1, Tolerance for Biology

Willpower: 3

Stability: 7

Conviction: 1 (Touchstone: an Epimorphic Renegade who escaped Gladiator recently)

Loyalty: 4 (Touchstones: Hazel Griffin, the U.S. Army, radio operator Martha Bates, the Mustard Commando)

Aspiration: Prove that women can be good soldiers

Initiative: 5 (10)

Defense: 8 (11)

Armor: 1/3

Speed: 16 (32)

Health: 9

Acclimation: 2

Controlled Scars: Deterioration (Lash) 4, Unstable Variation (Specialized Sense; Physical) 2

Persistent Scars: Dependency (Enhanced Speed, Immunity, Platonic Body) 5, Murderous Urge (with +1 Blatant Power Deviation; Superhuman Strength) 2

Variations: Enhanced Speed 2, Immunity (Radiation), Lash 5, Platonic Body 3, Specialized Sense (Geiger counter) 2, Superhuman Strength 2

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Dice Pool	Special
Lash	3L	30	10	No Init penalty; ignores Defense; inflicts Blinded & grave Sick Tilts
Unarmed	0B (L w/ trench knife)	Melee	10	
Grapple	0B	Melee	10	
Trench knife	0L	Melee	8	
Colt M1911A1	2L	30/60/120	6	

Notes: Hattie's Dependency Scar reflects acute radiation poisoning, exposed to a lethal dose during her Divergence; she has the Persistent Radiation Poisoning Condition **(p. 450)**, with Toxicity 5. Her Immunity Variation cancels out all effects, but when her Power Failure Scar deactivates it, the sickness returns in full force. Her Lash Variation is a blinding ray of white-hot nuclear fire, and her Platonic Body is her Supersoldier Variation.



For the Storyteller: Curiosity and the Remade

The Golden Age of Science Fiction runs primarily on two parallel tracks: the wave of futuristic idealism and scientific curiosity that sweeps the United States as science fiction becomes popular, and World War II as a pervasive backdrop that rears its head on the home front with regularity. These go hand in hand, as two major wars back-to-back dismantle any limitations the American people previously imagined existed on what was possible. This era lives and breathes at the intersection of these two tracks and both intersect with the stories and films prominent in this era.

Drawing inspiration for Deviant characters and conspiracies, shapeshifters, and weird contemporary spirits directly from period science-fiction stories will hit utopian themes squarely on the head. Storytellers can even pull entire plots from these tales and adapt them to fit the time period, the **Chronicles of Darkness**, the player characters, and their Aspirations.

Conditions

Below are a few Conditions Storytellers can introduce in this era to better represent the threats and situations characters might encounter.

Futuristic Visionary

New technologies and tales of scientific marvels galvanize your character into a flurry of inventiveness. Whenever you take a Build Equipment action (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 100) to create physical objects or repositories that would grant equipment bonuses or other benefits to Enigmas or Science actions, you may resolve this Condition before rolling to gain 8-again on the roll. If you succeed, gain a Willpower point.

Possible Sources: Exceptional success

Resolution: As above.

RADIATION POISONING (PERSISTENT)

Your character has been exposed to atomic radiation and suffers radiation poisoning. Symptoms can include nausea and vomiting, anemia, red and blistering skin, dizziness, and seizures.

The character suffers from a poison (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 98) with Toxicity based on the severity and duration of her exposure. It deals damage once per scene. She suffers the grave Poisoned Tilt during action scenes instead. In addition, without supernatural healing, damage takes double the time it normally would to heal, and you suffer a −2 to dice pools for all Mental actions.

This Condition can be temporary instead if the Storyteller decides the character's exposure doesn't warrant the Persistent version. It resolves after the character receives a scene's worth of medical treatment and a full chapter passes.

Resolution: The character receives significant, ongoing medical treatment and either a full story passes, or a full chapter passes and the character increases her Stamina.

Beat: The character's wound penalty increases or she loses consciousness due to damage from this Condition.

For the Storyteller: Narrating a Crossover

Werewolves and Deviants can appear in the same chronicle as allies or antagonists. When the Forsaken is not hunting the Remade, Storytellers can leverage common thematic keystones to bring them together. The Uratha value loyalty and the Remade *need* it, making them good team players — if they can keep *Kuruth* and Instability from tearing them apart. Between natural hunters who run on rage and vengeance-fueled human weapons whose broken souls force them to strive against hated foes, mutual enemies are a Storyteller's best bet for story hooks that bring the two together. Deviants are guaranteed to chase after Conviction Touchstones and werewolves are constantly on the hunt, so get the Web of Pain involved with the spirit world, the Pure, and other setting elements the Forsaken care about.

The following is an example of a mutual enemy Storytellers can use in their chronicles.

Futurix Press, Inc.

"Keep them looking up at the stars, and they'll never even think to look into the shadows."

Futurix Press, Inc. is a publishing house that puts out science-fiction quarterlies, like Atomic Quarterly, and novellas by popular and brilliant authors. That's just a front, though, for its real purpose: producing the perfect being.

Deep within the Web of Pain, a hidden cadre of Nazi sympathizers with a lab and too much money set out to create its own "master race" using experimental (and highly questionable) advances in genetic research. At roughly the same time, a pack of Ivory Claws with Nazi sympathies of their own set out to do much the same — breed their Pure messiah using a combination of age-old Tzuumfin rites and Nazi occultism. The two groups met during a gathering for an equally secretive underworld alliance that included government officials and foreign nationals as well as vampires, witches, and weirder things. Upon discovering they had resources to spare and a common goal of sorts, the conspiracy and the Anshega went into business together.

Futurix publishes legitimate, imaginative science-fiction stories, mostly written by Baselines who have no idea who's sitting on the board of directors. The company encourages these writers to come up with the most accurate picture of fantastical, futuristic science they can, predicting the pinnacle of human evolution and achievement. Then, the human conspiracy lifts these ideas straight out of the magazines' pages to inspire new methods and forms of Divergence, while the werewolves deliberately market these stories as rational tales based on real science, turning public opinion against superstition and belief in the supernatural wherever possible to protect their own and discourage monster hunters from suspecting the truth. Sharing resources and comparing notes, they run breeding programs punctuated by strange inventions and Shadowlore.

Whenever a Renegade, a Forsaken pack, or some other interloper sniffs around a little too persistently, the magazine publishes a story that hews way too close to the offender's real life, dropping enough hints that any humans looking to poke their noses where they don't belong can get in their way. In game terms, a character exposed this way gains the Notoriety Condition (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 290).

Darker Than You Think

In 1940, Jack Williamson, one of the authors working freelance for Futurix, accidentally stumbles across the truth. Terrified and desperate, he writes the novelette Darker Than You Think, a veiled exposé on the company's secrets masquerading as fiction and sells it to Unknown magazine. He immediately cuts off all communication with Futurix, finds a pack of Forsaken or a cohort of Renegades using the clues scattered about the magazines' previous issues, and begs for protection. In the meantime, while they try to hunt him down, the conspiracy and the Ivory Claws scrabble to find scapegoats they can set up for the fall once the story goes to press.

Story Hooks

Below are some story hooks specific to this era or have been inspired by science-fiction stories. These Story Hooks offer ways for a chronicle to include both the Forsaken and Remade.

Is There a Draft in Here?

Summary: Over the course of a few weeks, several of the cohort's Touchstones (both Loyalty and Conviction) are conscripted in quick succession, and any who apply for conscientious objector status are rejected. The Remade can't accompany them overseas — or to prison — without giving themselves away, and if they can't find a way to keep their Touchstones around, they'll rush headlong into Instability and lose control.

Setup: This is no streak of bad luck; a conspiracy — or more than one — with influence over who's chosen for war targets these Touchstones, in hopes that by denying the Renegades everyone important to them, they'll have no choice but to turn to the conspiracy. Through the Web of Pain, this conspiracy has entered a loose alliance with others manipulating the supernatural underworld through the draft boards, including a pack of Pure, a Seer Pylon, and the local Invictus.

Deviants: The cohort must learn about the conspiracy's influence and find a way to excise it before they lose their Touchstones and deteriorate into death or worse. Their enemy acting through a government institution with secret supernatural allies makes this much harder than it initially appears, encouraging them to seek aid from others with common cause, who blend in better with Baselines and thus have an easier time infiltrating human government offices. But why does this underworld alliance exist to begin with, and what else is the conspiracy getting out of it?

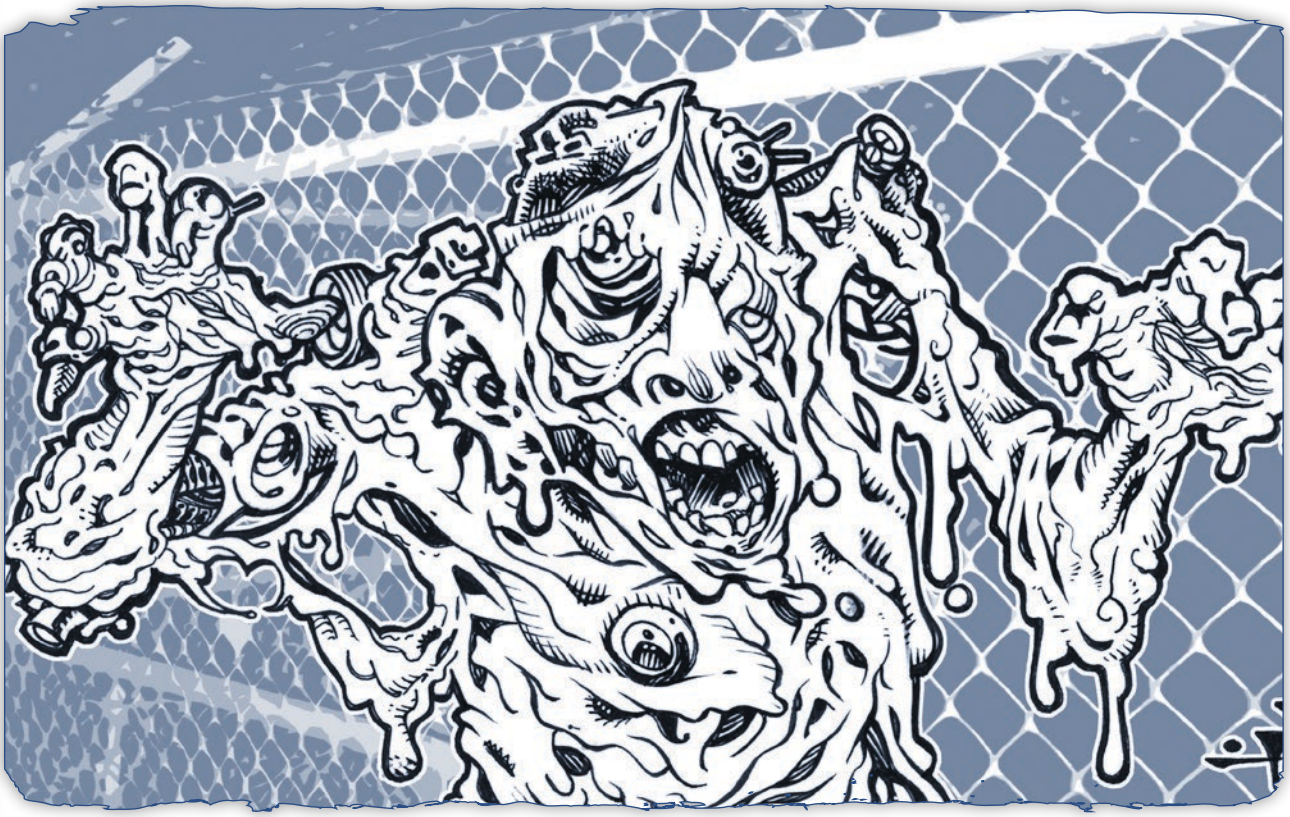
Werewolves: The Forsaken experience a similar issue; Ivory Claws use the draft board to ship off as many of the pack's Touchstones and Wolf-Blooded comrades as they can, leaving the werewolves exposed and friendless on a home front increasingly motivated by fear to root out the different and foreign. The Uratha, as shapeshifters, are well-placed to help the Renegades if the two groups hash out an alliance, and they benefit from the sheer versatility the Deviants contribute. But what do the Pure plan to do once they weaken the Forsaken, and why are they so willing to work with outsiders to get there?

Psychic Indoctrination

Summary: In 1943, Henry Kuttner and C. L. Moore (as Lewis Padgett) publish a short story entitled "Mimsy Were the Borogoves." They believe they invented it. In truth, they *adapted* it. The original tale, too alien to fit inside their human minds without reshaping itself, leaked to them subliminally through a stuttering psychic feed of jumbled memories from the broken mind of a discarded young Devoted. He and his sister had discovered a box of strange toys on the riverbank near their house, and the more they played, the further their minds strayed from normal human logic and pathways. Eventually, the toys conditioned both children to decidedly inhuman patterns of thought — they Diverged, becoming Pathological Cephalist Remade. But their Scars cracked their psyches wide open, the aberrant logic continuing to rewrite their brains until they went gratefully into the arms of the first conspiracy to stumble across them, pleading for help.

The conspiracy couldn't help. In a few short months, the pair lost the ability to effectively communicate with or comprehend anything or anyone but each other. The conspiracy couldn't use them anymore, so it left them to wander the streets. The conspirators never realized that the kids' mental broadcasts of what seemed like nonsense — just psychic static — were contagious.

Setup: One of the Remade characters' Baseline Loyalty Touchstones shows signs of erratic behavior and oddball



thinking, but the oddities give them keen insights they shouldn't have into weird phenomena. Use the Psychic Indoctrination Transmissible Divergence on p. 446 to represent their condition and how it spreads. This Touchstone's Obsession Condition revolves around the site of a recently fallen meteor, where a passel of void spirits causes havoc on the Forsaken pack's territory.

Deviants: The afflicted Touchstone's strange obsessions and slow decline in their ability to communicate with the cohort put them in great danger. The longer the cohort investigates, the more Baselines — and Touchstones — are vulnerable to indoctrination; they must race the clock to get to the bottom of it before this viral thought worm spreads uncontrollably, rewriting the entire city to some sideways, impossible logic. Where did the toys come from? Were they sent by a malevolent conspiracy bent on inflicting Divergence on a grand scale, or was it an unfortunate accident?

Werewolves: While defending their territory from the void spirits, the pack becomes embroiled in the Renegades' mission. Upon discovering that anyone infected by the Divergence can understand First Tongue even when nothing else gets through, they suspect the incidents are related. They must fend off the void spirits, search for clues to the potential *idigam's* nature and location before it makes itself known in destructive fashion and stop their human companions from getting infected — while the Uratha are immune, the Wolf-Blooded are not. If an *idigam* is causing the alien indoctrination, where is that Moon-Banished now, and can the process be reversed once begun?

Sources and Inspiration

Stanley G. Weinbaum's short story "A Martian Odyssey" (1934), C.L. Moore's anthology *Jirel of Jory* (1935–1939), and Clark Ashton Smith's short story "City of the Singing Flame" (1931) are all excellent examples of characters visiting strange and surreal worlds that could serve as inspirations for Uratha visiting unusual portions of the Shadow. Similarly, A. E. van Vogt's novel *Slan* (1940) is the archetypal example of a story of an oppressed and hunted individual fighting back against this oppression and transforming the world. E. E. Smith's novel *Galactic Patrol* (1937) is one of the first obviously anti-Nazi works of science fiction and was written before Germany had begun invading other nations. It is fascinating for its portrayal of space-Nazis, who are instantly recognizable by their Germanic names, but who are portrayed as murderously authoritarian criminal thugs, which is quite different from almost all later fictional portrayals of Nazis.

As mentioned in this chapter's introduction, the following science-fiction stories are perfect inspiration for **Deviant** in this era: A. E. van Vogt's *Slan*, Wilmar Shiras' "In Hiding" (later the first chapter of her novel *Children of the Atom*), Isaac Asimov's Mule stories from the *Foundation* series, and Gerald Heard's *Doppelgangers*.

Other Golden Age stories that delve into **Deviant** themes include Olaf Stapledon's novel *Odd John*, Stanley G. Weinbaum's story "Proteus Island," Lewis Padgett's Baldy stories (later collected as the novel *Mutant*) and

short story "Mimsy Were the Borogoves," Ray Bradbury's "Fever Dream," William Temple's *Four-Sided Triangle*, C. L. Moore's "No Woman Born," and Poul Anderson's "Tomorrow Children."

For modern inspirational media taking place in the era, you can't do much better than Charlie Higson's 10-episode series *Jekyll and Hyde*, a television sequel to Robert Louis Stevenson's gothic horror novel which depicts Dr. Robert Jekyll as the original Jekyll's grandson in the 1930s, who's unknowingly inherited his own Hyde with unnatural powers, and a mountain of mysteries about his own background. He's dragged into exploring them by the machinations of two opposing conspiracies, both of whom are willing to lie, cheat, steal, and murder to get their hands on him — all while he desperately tries to stay one step ahead of his own alter ego with science.

Marvel's *Agent Carter* is another good source of period inspiration, pitting secret agent Peggy Carter against the dual enemies of sexism and a conspiracy that's larger than she initially knows. She's not a Remade, but she deals with plenty of weird, super-scientific technologies and could easily be called a lowercase-R renegade.



DARK FOLLOWER

Å ukasz KorzeÅ„
Aaron Max Berkowitz
Aaron Mouritsen
Aaron Pothecary
Absalom Pickering
Adam J. Larson
Adam Pecar
Adam Utter
æŸ ç”² From Taiwan
Aidan Musson
AidenWIP
Alessandro Bruschi
Alessandro Vario
Alex Ates
Alex Borrome - The Dark One
Alexander "Almacov" Overton
Alexandre Malette
Aljen
Alok Baikadi
Amy Brennan
Andrew Wilson
Andrew Wilson
Andy Kwong
Antonio JosÃ© OcaÃ±a GarcÃa de Veas
April A Nielsen
Ashe Cordiner
Awn Elming
Axel J.
Beck
Blake McCormack
Bob Harrison
Bob Lewis
Bocky
Braden K
Brent A. Nellis
Brent Naylor
Brian LeTendre
Calder Rooney
Carlos Martin
Carlton W. Anderson
Carol Darnell
Casey Ingram
Casper Wallace
Charcoal Wraith
Charles Marion Watford Jr.
"Charles Wright"
Chow Matthew
Chris Allen
Chris Ank
Chris Curry
Chris Janson
Chris 'Stitches' Upton
Chris Wong
Coffeedog14
Colin Wilson
Coralie Page
Corey Elliott
Corwin Wright
Craig S
Cristiano "Leishmaniose" DeLira
D Whitley
Dakkaramazariah
Daniel â€œAristaâ€
Danirato
DarkFool
Dave Agnew
Dave Brookshaw
David Chart
David 'dj' Coleman
David E. Dalton
David Ehlen
David Larkins
David Meloche
David Paul
David Ramirez
David Ross
Deatna Green
Deke Reisig
Derek Grimm
Deyel Bokor-Charlier
Diana Fox
Dio Cane
Dmitry Petrov
Edward Noyce
Edward Palmer
El Gato Group
Emanuele D'Agostino
Emelyne Peloquin
Emorick
Eoin Maloney
Eric C. Magnuson
Erwin Burema
Eve Crawford
EvilOvenBaked Pasta
Ezra
Ferdinand von Schenk
Flint of the Cremated
Florian KÃ¼sener
Flux
Frank Clements
Gary Furash
Genevieve Cogman
George Corder
Gillfish
Glauber Rocha (GodM)
Gordon Arata
Graeme Lewis
Greg Conant
Greg Walter
Gregory Eburn
Guy Reece
H. Rasmussen
Henrik Nilsson
Herman Duyker
Ian D Ward
Ilan Emanuel
J. Abbott
J. Angus MacDonald
J. Thistle
J.E. McKeever
J.S. Thornburgh
J.T. Mahany
Jacob 'Milo v3' McKiernan
Jake Chung
James Alan Gardner
James Cartwright
James Coxen
James Huggins
James Nagle
Jared Dumont
Jared Levin
Jasmine Mullin
Jason "Derendel" Martinez
Jason Nell
Javier Gaspoz
Jeanette Marie Frost
Jeff Clark
Jefferson Sunrise
Jeremey D Walker
Jeremy Mettler
JesÃºs LuzÃ³n
Jesse Rod
Jim Brashears
Jim Burdo
"JMH621Nova"
JoÃ£o Mariano
Joe Craig
Joe Roberts
John Canter
John DiPietro
John Douglas Kennedy
John 'johnkzin' Rudd
John K Morris
John Layton
John Rachwal
John Veltman
John Wm. Thompson
Jon Rettie
Jonathan D. Harter
Jonathan Lang
Jonathan McMonigle
Jordan Springer
Joseph A Marshall
Josh Krutt
Joshua Thompson
Jozanna
JPD
Juan Manuel GonzÃ¡lez
Julio martell
Justin Delaney
Justin Hukle
K
Karl de Vries
Karl Larsson
Karl Sell
Karol 'Wyrdhamster' LitwiÅ„czuk
Kathryn Bartlett
Kenny 'Krivvin' Bailey
Kergonan

Kevin Mueller
Killrog
Kimberely Altomere
Lanandor
Lance LeDuc
Lark Cunningham
Laurence M. Pereira
Leandro Raniero Fernandes
Leonardo Menezes Moura Cruz
Lisa Padol
Logan Rollins
Lord Arc
Luca Magorosso
Magnus StenrÃ¸d
Malcolm Jackson
Malu Castro
Marco Generoso
Marian Weaver
Mark "Toroid" Rae
Mark Campbell Sensenig
Mark Hulsman
Marko "Lykas" Stein
Markus Veit
Marshall Cain
Marshall J Moore
Martin J. Manco
Martin Trudeau
Mary Lee Ashcraft
Matt Corkum
Matt Ross
Matt Russo
Matthew Earlywine
Matthew Joel Stewart
Matthew Rees
Maurizio Locusti
Maxime Durand
Megan Jenkins
Megan Kennedy
MichaÅ, "Idril"
Michael Bowman
Michael Brewer
Michael Grasso
Michael Kahan
Michael Kelly
Michael O. Holland
Michael Parker
Michael Pietrelli
Michael Tully
Michaella Amora Ragowsky
Mike Mon
Mike Tucker
Molly Storm
Mr. Brown
Mr. Spark
Mr-Haitch
Nathan Hoskins
Nice Brian
Nicholas Berkeley
Nicholas Peterson
Nick Riley
Nicola Went
Ninjar
Oneiros
Owen Wesley Kerschner
Paolo Biggio
Patrick Hume
Patrick Knowles & Tyler Lominack
Paul Hunting
Paul Ryan
Perverseness
Peter Gates
Peter Li
Peter Petrovich
Peter Steponaitis
Phil Hattie
Preston Bruce
Preston Lee Bobo
Raphael Bressel
Rasmus StenbÃ¤ck
Rastlin_M
Ravraxas
Remy Handler
Rich Palij
Richard Ross
Rob Townsend
Robert aka Shukar
Robert DeBroeck
Robert Fraser
Robert Watson
Robert Wyatt
Rohel Terrazas
Ron "Phantom " Smay
Ross Byers
Rupert Pavel
Russell Doty
RVH
Ryan Griffin
Ryan Kent
Ryan Spinney
Ryan Tsandilis
Ryan Wheeldon
S.E. Stone
Sam Lyons
Sami "Heretic" Qvist
Satchel
Scott Hornbuckle
Scott Jenks
Scott Southwick
Seana McGuinness
Seidr Jonsdottir
Shadrakh
Shannon Keniry
Shawn Gustafson
Shen. Hung-Yang
Sillade
Silvio Herrera Gea
Skylar "Penta" Wall
Somalucard
Stephen J Beardslee
Steven D Warble
Steven K. Watkins
Stuart Martyn
Svend Andersen
Swallow
Sydney C.
Tara Cameron
Tartan Collier
Tassy Crewse
Ted Ludemann
Teresa Oswald
The Bellwether Beast
THE Donnie
The Great Ghoul
The Plaid Mentat
"Theo"
Thomas Martin Eifried
Tiffany Korta
Tobias Hensan
Tom and Rachel
Tony Strongman
Travis Penrod
Trevor Pease
tzeentchian
Vera Vartanian
Victor Segell
Vincent Devane
vincent furstenberger
Vito D.
Vojtech Pribyl
Wayback
Whistler
Will Blankenship
William 'Beej' Carson
Xinder
Yang Wu
Zeven
Zhivko Yakimov
Zilaenor

• • •

Andrew cain
Andrew Corrigall
Blair A. Monroe
DÃ¡vid Csobay
Daniel Scribner
Dave "UncleMonkey" Bruno
Dave "Wintergreen" Harrison
Derek Guder
Doug Grimes
Fredric Dalqvist
Gavin Carruthers
Guy Reisman
Ioannes Palaiologos
James Ford
Jeddy Kight
Jon Michael Razo
Joshua Cameron
Justin Woo
Korusef
M D Walcott
Mikael Assarsson
Nicole Winter
Robert Carnel
Robert G. Male
Siobhan (Bon) McKenna
Steven Nicholson
The Masseys



Weltwandler
William Doetsch
Yohay Kaplan

• • •

Andrew Alsberge
Ben Heisler
Brennan Willingham
Chariot du Bua
Chris Tutt
Danny 'Defeat-O' Lowe
Eric Richetti
Jesper Julskov Schlie
Joe Parrino
Justo Diaz
Kyle Rimmer
Maltry
Michael Mullin
MikesMind
Phil "Herr Direktor Funranium" Broughton
Ryan Byrne
Spencer "Grim" Brint
Thibaut DACHY
Troy Baker

DARK SEEKER

A. Leslie
A. Tompkins
Aaron "Bloody Jim" Reimer
Abner Rodrigues
Abraxas Lucius Abston
Adam â€œShamâ€ Talicska
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AurÃ©ly Sabourin Messina
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Beachfox
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Cantoredombre
Captain Weird Beard
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Chad Justice
Chasym
Chazz Kellner
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Conrad Julian White
Cornelius Milertens
Craig Oxbrow
Cruor LunUmbra
Czenyk
DaemonChrno
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Dan Dillon
Daniel â€œHe Who Hunts The Moonâ€ Weber
Daniel Andrei Fidelman
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David Fergman
David Franklin Felton
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Tommy Svensson
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Tristan “Twitchy” Wolfe DeRoches
Tuesdae Cheyenne
Two-Tails
Ty Bailey
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Zyfram

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DARK MASTER

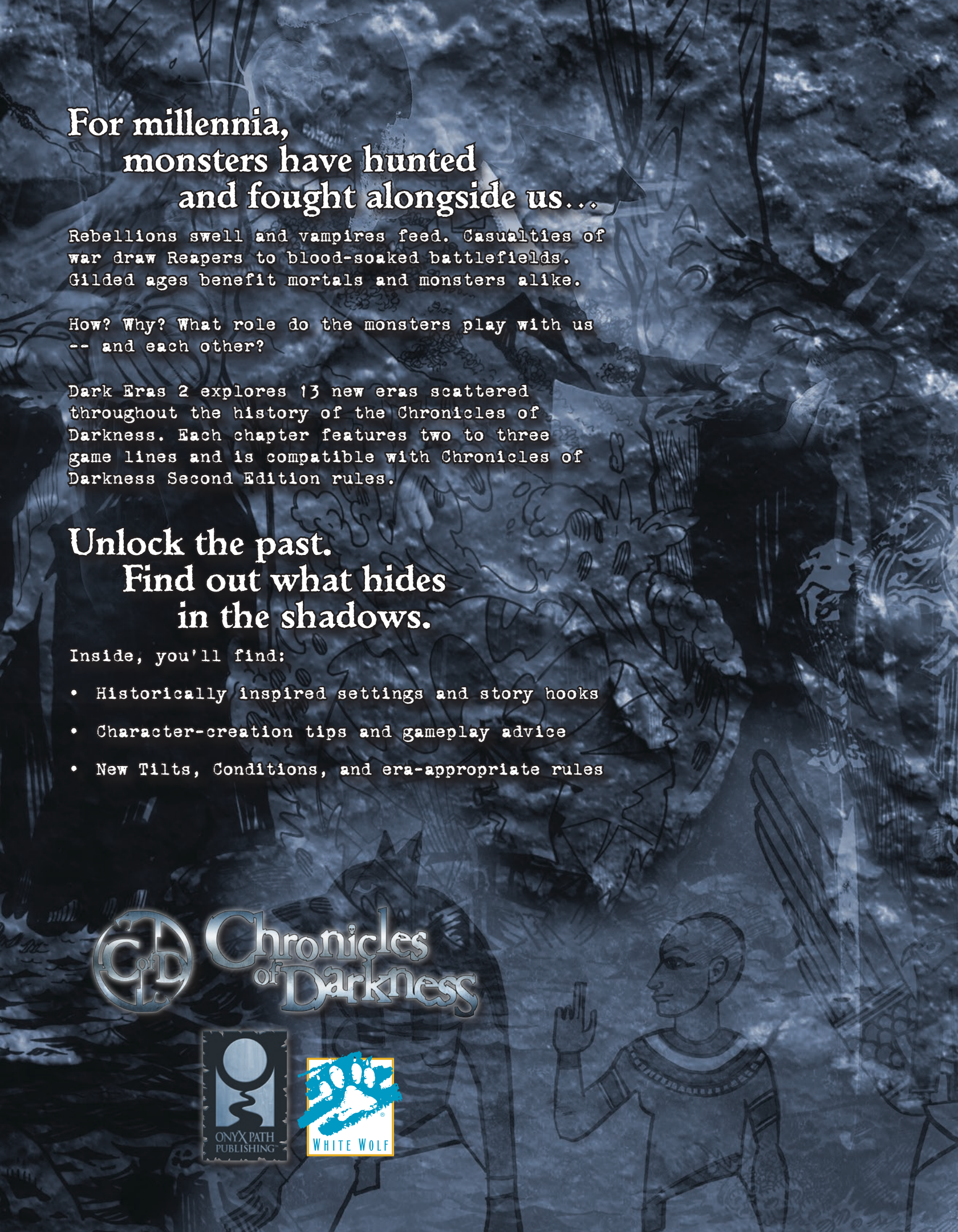
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