# World of Darkness: Dark Eras

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The Lessons of History
Piedmont, California, 2010

The table is only half a table, and the dining room is only half a room. A mirror runs right down the middle of it, presenting reality with an illusion of itself. On one side — the real side — a man is having dinner facing the mirror. He devours mousse de foie gras, steak of bob veal, caramelized pears, and spinach salad, occasionally pausing to pat his face with a silk napkin or sip deep red wine from a crystal glass.

“You aren’t enjoying the meal?” Basil asks his reflection around a mouthful of delicately braised, pale ivory flesh. He is Caucasian, tall and slim, with sandy blond hair and green eyes.

It’s true. Basil’s image in the glass has barely touched his food, only picked at it and moved it around his plate.

“When will this be over?” the man in the mirror asks.

Basil sighs. “Christ almighty, Basil, why are you such a drag? If I’d known you would be so painfully dull, I’d have just let you die.”

“I wish you had.”

Basil, choosing to ignore his reflection, continues. “Well, Basil, you are young and relatively healthy. I expect that with a little help I could squeeze another seventy or eighty years out of your mortal frame, and then it’s on to new digs for me and down into oblivion for you. Will that make you happy, Basil?”

“As long as it means that it’s over.”

Basil rolls his eyes at his reflection. “You are such a fucking drama queen, do you know that? Live a little, why don’t you? I feed you the most exquisite foods imaginable, find the most gorgeous examples of humanity to share your bed, and do you ever thank me? Of course not. It’s always ‘please go away’ and ‘please let me die’ or ‘when will this be over?’ You do know that I could torment you if I wanted to, don’t you? I could spend all day shoving needles under my fingernails. I could make you watch as I chopped off bits that I don’t really need. This could be a much less pleasant arrangement, Basil. It has been, in the past, with others.”

The man in the mirror doesn’t say anything. Basil sighs again.

“You do know you could fight me, don’t you? It’s been years — I’m sure you’ve figured that out by now. I mean, I may be as a god to you pitiful mortal creatures, but humans have always had a talent for punching above their weight class. You could inconvenience me, and then I would have to hurt you…but you’re too fucking scared. You remember what happened to the last person who got in my way.”

Basil pauses, picks up what’s left of his dinner, and shove it unceremoniously into his mouth. He chews, swallows, and washes it down with the dregs of his wine, leaving greasy streaks on the glass. Then he strides to the bookshelf and fetches a block of clear acrylic, which he slams into the center of the table. A pair of eyes — golden brown irises, red muscle and pink nerve tissue still clinging to the sides and rear — stare out. The reflection stands, but Basil moves his hand and the glass seems to pulse. The reflection sits down again.
“You are nothing but a passenger, and you may as well start enjoying it. Eat your dinner.” Basil walks out of the room, leaving his reflection to sit and stare at the disembodied eyes.

“I shouldn’t be meeting with you,” he says. His rough and phlegmy voice may conceal a tiny hint of an accent. “I could be killed for this, you know.”

He is nothing but a hunched shadow in the driver’s seat. Whenever a car passes by on the freeway above, the reflected light reveals flashes of an ashen gray face, gray hands clutching the steering wheel.

“Are you afraid of the other bloodsuckers, or are you afraid of the Parasite?” Tajea asks. Sitting in the passenger’s side, she is illuminated by the streetlights. She is a dark-skinned woman in her late twenties or early thirties, wearing a dark leather jacket. Dark glasses hide her eyes.

His laugh is almost a cough. “The Parasite doesn’t care about me. He doesn’t care about anything. My kind have laws against ordinary people like you even knowing that we exist.”

“I don’t think that I count as ordinary.”

“Yeah — I’d like to see you explain that to some people I know. I’m sure you could convince them with a couple of your neat tricks.”

“Ok, then. Why are you here? You didn’t have to agree to meet me. I’ve got nothing on you.”

“I want to see the Parasite suffer.”

“Yeah, me too.”

The hulking shape in the driver’s seat turns towards her. Tajea turns her head in his direction and removes her glasses, revealing the scarred-over pits where her eyes used to be.

“Oh, man. You really pissed him off.”

She replaces her glasses. “What do you know?”

He shifts again in the driver’s seat, getting comfortable, and tells her.

**Bath, England, 1846**

The night was dark and lonely, and the snow falling outside was gray with soot, but inside the Saracen’s Head it was bright and warm. The guest of honor had yet to reveal his name, but he was very generous with his money. Several women competed for his attention, but he was primarily occupied with describing his bloody exploits doing the Queen’s work in Australia.

From time to time he glanced across the room to one of windows. With all the light inside and nothing but dark and snow outside, the windows were dim mirrors. In the glass, the spendthrift traveler could see that while he sat and flirted and held forth, his reflection stood watching him, silent and reproachful. From time to time, he grinned and raised a glass to his reflection; the image did not return the gesture.

He was so preoccupied with the adoration of the crowd — or at least with their adoration for his tales of adventure and the drinks he bought for anyone who cared to listen — that he didn’t notice the figures who lurked in the corners of the room. He didn’t notice the signals they passed to each other.
Without warning tables and chairs were kicked over and skins of kerosene splashed about the room. Flames raced up the walls. Patrons ran for the door, but the doors were barred from the outside.

But the wealthy stranger was no ordinary man. Moments later, he came bursting through the window and onto the snowy street, shattered glass falling all about him. There were men waiting for him there. They closed in, knives flashing in the light of the burning pub.

The first attacker died, his blood boiling and bursting through his skin. The second shrieked as his knife melted in his hands, searing his flesh and dripping, molten, into the snow. The third and fourth assailants succeeded, driving their knives again and again into the man’s belly. They didn’t get to enjoy their victory for long — even as their victim fell, their bodies exploded into tongues of colorless fire.

Their work was done, however. The stranger fell to the snowy ground. Other pub patrons who had tried to flee through the window lay around him, gasping through smoke-clogged lungs.

A pale woman walked into the alleyway to survey the evening’s work. She prodded the stranger’s body with the toe of one boot. The man twitched and began trying to crawl towards the burning pub.

“This is le Parasite?” she asked.

The surviving attacker — a gray-skinned man with unusually sharp features and a sharklike grin — cradled his burned hand and nodded.

“Why is he doing that?”

The gray-skinned knifeman looked down to see that the stranger — the Parasite — was dragging himself towards the smoldering pub.

The knifeman laughed. “He’s cold, I guess.”

The Parasite stretched one bloody hand up and into the flaming wreck of the inn. Then his body slumped down and lay still.

The gray man and the Frenchwoman watched. Then they heard the laughter and looked up. A man-shaped figure, trailing flame and smoke from his burning clothes, jumped through the crumbling timbers of the pub’s front door. He paused in the street, gestured rudely at the Frenchwoman, and then ran off into the night. The gray man moved to follow him, but the woman delayed him with a gesture.

“Let him go.”

“But you wanted me to —”

“We have learned something today. He is not limited to his body, and can claim another when it is destroyed. Interesting.”

“Maybe he can’t —”

“It is not worth it. We have learned more about our foe, and le Parasite has learned a lesson about how badly we want him to leave our domain. Perhaps if you exist as long as I have, you will learn patience. Go now. You will still be paid.”

Foster City, California, 2010
“And this drive contains…”

“Everything I know about what I am. The ghosts. The Underworld. Everything.”

The archivist — he has told her to call him “Horus,” but the name is so obviously fake that she can’t bring herself to take it seriously — lifts the flash drive experimentally. He narrows his eyes at it, as though he has some way of reading the information without a computer. Horus is a tall and thin man, his corduroy pants and suit jacket at odds with his lumberjack’s build and five o’clock shadow.

To Tajea’s surprise, Horus utters a satisfied grunt, as though he had read the contents of the flash drive, and pockets it. Then he glances up at her.

“You can drop the act, you know. I know that you can see me.”

“It’s not seeing, exactly.”

He waves his hand dismissively. “Close enough. In return for this, you want, what again?”

She sighs. “We talked about this.”

“A good bargainer always makes sure that both parties are satisfied. I am a very good bargainer. Remind me, please, what you want.”

“I want to know everything you can tell me about the Parasite. You know what I’m talking about. It lives up in Piedmont, in the East Bay.”

“Ah, yes. After many deaths, our Hierarch — sorry, our leader — placed the Parasite under interdiction. We are prevented from meddling in its affairs, however much we might like to. I assume you’re planning to kill it?”

“If I can.”

“Good. The thing that you call ‘the Parasite’ is more accurately ‘minyonyaji.’ No, don’t try to remember that name — it is in a cursed language, and will escape your mind as soon as you stop thinking about it. Not the minyonyaji, a minyonyaji. One of many. The one you are trying to kill is hopefully the last. I don’t know much about the minyonyaji you call the Parasite, but I can tell you about how one of them was ended permanently. Maybe there’s something you can use in the story.”

**Outside of Tyre, Empire of Phoenicia, 320 BCE**

The rain howled outside, battering the oiled cloth walls of the tent. The two men here were the only humans for miles.

The older man was ancient. He was called Uragesh, and this name, itself not his real name, but a false name that protected him from the wrath of his enemies, was followed by many titles: the Hawk of Tyre, the Wolf-Killer, the Unbroken Arrow. His dark skin was deeply scored by time and the sun; and his hair and beard, white with age, were intricately plated and woven with golden charms. Uragesh sat cross-legged in the center of the tent, surrounded by five braziers, lifted from the carpeted floor by brass tripods, each of them burning a different pungent herb. His eyes were closed and his hands folded into a complex pattern in his lap. He had tattoos, some abstract, some depicting warriors or dancers, covering his arms, legs, and naked torso.
The younger man appeared at the tent flap, shaking his head to displace the water that had gathered there. Eregen was, in many ways, a younger version of his mentor: the same dark skin, similar features, the same plaited hair, and some of the same charms and tattoos. Unlike the older man, however, the younger wore a coat of silver scales over linen tunic and short skirt. He was armed as well, with a sturdy bronze sword strapped to his waist.

“Master,” Eregen said with a small bow, “I have done as you requested. The merchants have been redirected and will find their way to the caravansary. We are alone again in the valley.”

“Good,” Uragesh replied. He opened his eyes and looked the younger man up and down. His gaze was piercing, but there was deep sadness in his old eyes. “Sit a while. We have much to discuss.”

The younger man did as he was asked, sitting on the thick carpets across from his elder.

“Master, I don’t understand. How will this help us to defeat the minyonyaji?”

“Peace. How long have you served me?”

“Fifteen years. Ever since you claimed me from my father’s people.”

“Fifteen years.” The old man sighed. “And you have served faithfully all these years.”

“I have, sir.”

“I have taught you everything I know about the enlightened way of war. Side by side, we have battled the hungry dead, the bastards of the higher world, and the slaves of those we name not. In all that time, I have never had reason to complain of your service. You have been attentive, obedient, and loyal. We have come to know each other, you and I. I have walked in your dreams, even unto your innermost worlds, and you have walked in mine.”

“Master, what has this to do with the minyonyaji?”

Uragesh met Eregen’s gaze and held it, fierce hatred replacing sadness. “I have walked for all these years with my sister’s daughter’s son…and you thought you could eat his soul and I would not see through your deception?”

The young man snarled and tried to draw his sword while rising to his feet. Uragesh lashed out with one leg, knocking the young man — or the thing wearing his skin — to the floor of the tent. The young man tried to rise again, but the old man knocked him down again, all the while slowly rising, himself, to stand above his opponent.

“You are a fool, minyonyaji, like all your kind. You are a hungry, hollow, spiteful spirit, and you will always be undone by your own greed.”

The thing wearing Eregen’s flesh tried to rise again. The old man kicked out precisely, sweeping his legs out from under him a final time.

“This is your end.” In one smooth motion, the older man retrieved Eregesh’s sword, then drove it through his chest, pinning him to the ground. The body spasmed once, then lay still, blood soaking the carpeted tent floor around him. The older man stepped back, as if to survey his work.

A haze, like a heat shimmer, rose off the body and drifted towards Uragesh. When the haze was only a hand’s breadth away from his face, the thin lines of smoke that rose from the braziers suddenly shifted in the air, weaving itself into a complex pattern between the man and the mirage. The haze — the disembodied spirit — spread out, looking for a way in.
“What were you thinking, taking one of the enlightened as your host? Did you think that I could let you live after such an insult? If you had constrained your depredations to the Sleepers, perhaps I could have ignored you for another few centuries, but now…”

Uragesh made a left-handed gesture and spoke four unintelligible words. The smoke unwound itself from about him and coiled around the haze. The tent was filled an unearthly keening and faces appeared in the smoke. The haze writhed among the swirling faces, but it was caught fast in the spell and could not escape.

“You should know this spell — you saw me use it often enough. Are the faces familiar to you, minyonyaji? These are your dead. They will do what no mortal man can do. They will shred you.”

The haze diminished, the smoke swirled faster, until both vanished with a final shriek.

The braziers had all but gone out, leaving the tent cold and dark. The old man would wait until the rain stopped, and then he would bury his apprentice’s body, and then he would move on.

San Francisco, CA, 2010

“Thanks,” he says, hefting the wrapped sandwich. He slides over on the bench, making room for his guest. He is a big man with a knotted, uneven build — one shoulder is several inches higher than the other — wearing layers of coats and pants, a nearly worn-out knit cap, and mismatched boots. He looks like one of San Francisco’s many homeless people, but oddly he doesn’t smell like one. All the dirt on his clothes and skin is ground in, and he smells just a little bit astringent.

“Normal people don’t usually weigh their food,” she points out.


“We’re more interested in what it’s going to taste like or what’s in it than how much mass it has. Most people’s insides don’t work like yours.”

He nods, still thoughtful. “I don’t suppose normal people eat the paper, either.”

“Nope.”

“That’s too bad. I’m going to eat it anyway. I hope you don’t mind.”

She shrugs. “I’ve seen worse.”

He gets the joke, and laughs, and she laughs with him.

“Did you want some help with something?” he asks around a mouthful of sandwich. “I still owe you, after you helped me with… the thing.” He gestures vaguely with his left hand. The hand is noticeably different from the rest of him — darker skinned, with more delicate bones.

“No, not today. I’ve been making deals and begging for favors all up and down the whole damn bay today, and I just wanted to share a sandwich and figure a few things out.”

He looks at what is left of his sandwich — far less than half — with a stricken expression on his face. He is relieved when she pulls a second sandwich out of her messenger bag and begins to eat.

“What’s troubling you?” he asks.

She tells him.
Oakland, California, 2007

“What I want to know,” he asked the weeping girl, “is how the hell did you find me?” When she didn’t answer right away, he kicked her in the belly. She jerked on the floor, her hands still clasped over the bleeding holes in her head where her eyes used to be.

She howled something that might have been “please” and “don’t know.”

“For fuck’s sake, we were done. I used you up and I moved on. You got what you wanted.” He began to rant, his attention wandering away from the young woman bleeding at his feet. “You mortals are all the same. You whine and you complain about me, but you don’t ever actually do anything about me. And eventually your stupid mortal bodies give out…why the hell would you come back?”

He laughed. “Speaking of which…” and followed her to where she had dragged herself, grabbed the back of her belt, and pulled her back to the center of the room.

“There are a couple of options here,” he said conversationally. He punctuated his list with blows to her back whenever he thought she might be losing consciousness.

“I could take your body. It’s a pretty nice one, but…” he clicked his tongue, disappointed. “I’ve already gone and ruined it. Basil, Basil, Basil, you never think ahead, do you? Anyway, option two is that I could kill you, but given that we’re having this conversation, I doubt that it would help. You’d just come back to bother me again. Whatever you are, death isn’t the solution. The last option is that I let you go, and you go have a long and happy mortal life somewhere far away from me.

“I think I’ll try three. If all else fails, I can always try option two later.”

She heard a slightly wet noise — her blood squelching against the concrete floor — as he knelt to pick something up off the floor. “And I’ll keep these, I think. They’ll look nice in my library.”

He laughed. “‘Look nice.’ Do you get it?”

He kept on laughing as he walked away, leaving her lying in her own blood.

San Francisco, California, 2010

“I never did find out where he thought he knew me from,” she muses. Without looking, she passes the rest of her sandwich to her companion, who wraps it up and stows it away in his enormous backpack.

“Maybe he did.”

“Then why don’t I remember him?”

“Maybe he knows part of you.”

She sighs. “We’re not like that, Charlie. We don’t…” She trails off, considering his words.

“That’s not what I meant.” He rolls his eyes, a gesture he picked up long ago by watching the people talk as they walked back and forth along the paths in his park. “I know that normal people aren’t made of cast-off parts and can’t stitch new parts on. What I meant was—”

“I know what you meant. I think you’re right. Part of me.”

Tajea stands. “Thank you, Charlie. I think I’m ready to finish this.”
Oakland, California, 2010

Schaefer’s Meat and Cold Storage on D Street in downtown Oakland is a concrete cube from the outside. Inside, there are offices, rooms full of tools and supplies, and enormous freezers.

Luring the Parasite to the business after hours wasn’t hard — for all his blasé attitude, he hadn’t lasted as long as he had by ignoring threats. For a girl with a ghost inside her, a girl for whom every house was haunted, it wasn’t much harder to trick him into one of the huge freezers, and then to cut the lights.

He turns, trying to find her by the sound of her footsteps. Her voice echoes off the metal walls and is absorbed by the hanging carcasses — it’s a lost cause. He knows it’s her. He’s heard her voice, taunting him, driving him from room to room until he found himself locked in this freezer with her.

He hears the blow coming before it is near enough to strike him. What is it — one of the hanging animal cadavers, designed to stun him and knock him off his feet? He smiles as he begins to twist himself away to avoid it. His body protests against the speed and agility he is forcing from its mortal fibers, but he ignores the discomfort.

Then something else protests as well — a will that he hasn’t encountered in years. The man who used to own this body suddenly comes to life, throwing all his years of pent-up frustration and humiliation against the interloper’s power. The body is frozen in place, struck by the swinging meat, and knocked sprawling to the floor.

“Basil!” the Parasite screams, “you fucking bastard. Oh, are you going to suffer for that!”

Tajea lands on his back. She has a hatchet — a tool, stolen from an emergency supply kit here in the building — and she hacks at him again and again. It takes a long time for him to stop struggling, and she hits him a few more times to be on the safe side. She doesn’t stop until the axe clatters off the concrete floor instead of thudding on flesh.

She sits up, still straddling the Parasite’s rent body.

For a moment, she wonders if she’s done something wrong. Then it hits her, a cloying heat that tries to creep into her nostrils. It’s like the worst sinus infection she ever had, pain and pressure, combined with a horrible sense of violation. She hears something laughing as it infiltrates her body, but there’s a desperate edge to that laughter.

Then Tajea hears another voice — an old voice, a dry and dusty voice that she has lived with for a long time.

“Not yours. Mine.”

And then, a moment later. “Wait…I know you. I remember you.”

And then there is nothing but screaming inside her. It takes a long time for the screaming to stop.

Tajea sits on the roof of an apartment building a few blocks away, watching the police lights glitter in the streets outside Schaefer’s Meat and Cold Storage. In what she uses instead of sight, the red and blue of the lights are equally pale, colorless, and cold. Six squad cars full of Oakland cops eager to do anything that doesn’t involve actually patrolling the ghetto have showed up to protect the crime scene. Tajea isn’t afraid that they’ll catch her — the magician called Horus
promised to use his influence to confound the investigation — and she wonders how the news will report it. A man hacked to bits in a cooler in a meat storage warehouse is pretty unusual.

Something dry and snaky stirs and uncoils within her. A spike of migraine pain jolts her brain and her vision blurs as the thing that lives inside Tajea Jones makes its displeasure known to her.

“What’s your problem?” Tajea asks out loud. “You weren’t happy when he took my eyes, either.”

“You let it in,” the dusty voice replies. It sounds even more tired than usual.

“I let it in because I knew you could handle it. You heard the story the wizard told us — the miy…the…” she frowns, trying to remember the word Horus had used, then shrugs and gives up. “The Parasite can be killed by its own dead. You. You’re one of the Parasite’s dead. He took your body a long time ago. That’s why you became a ghost when he finally let you go.”

“How could you be sure?”

“The things he said when he was beating me three years ago. And why else would he have come after me in the first place?”

“If you had been wrong, we would both be in Hell.”

“Yeah, well, you weren’t exactly very helpful. You could have made this whole thing a hell of a lot easier if you’d just told me you knew the Parasite. If it hadn’t been for Charlie, I might not have figured it out. Tell me again why I have to rely on a stitched-together dead guy to tell me this sort of thing? I have the laziest goddamn geist I’ve ever heard of.”

“And why did we kill it in a meat locker?”

“The vampire’s story. The Parasite doesn’t like the cold. I think it limited how far it could get without a body. I needed to be sure it went after me.”

The dry thing inside Tajea doesn’t respond, but Tajea feels it radiate grudging admiration, and she smiles.

“We have a bargain,” the voice insists.

“I know, I know. I do all the work in this relationship. I’ll make it up to you.”

“You will.”

“You would find a way to make me pay for helping you out, wouldn’t you?” Tajea sighs, pulls herself up to her feet, and makes her way to the fire escape. She knows that she had better start now if she wants to get home before dawn. Tajea doesn’t expect her passenger to respond to that last dig — and it doesn’t.

A few blocks away at Schaefer’s Meat and Cold Storage, baffled police scrape up a hatchet-marred body with a strangely serene expression on its face. Tajea makes her way home through the night, her passenger coiled up tight inside her, weary from its work.
Introduction

Stephan urged his horse forward. It whinnied softly, clearly disturbed, and stepped sideways instead. Stephan whispered soothing words and repeated his command, flicking the reins across the beast’s neck and squeezing its flanks with his thighs.

The ambushers struck at once. Footmen swinging clubs and rusty blades raced out of the undergrowth. Stephan heard a musket’s report and braced himself, but if a ball of lead imbedded itself in his flesh, he was too busy directing his horse through the flow of the battle and lashing out with his cavalry sabre to notice. Horse and rider moved among the attackers, striking with iron-shod hooves and edged steel whenever anyone got too close.

The battle was over as soon as it began. Stephan had suffered a few cuts and bruises to his legs. His horse was limping, and a knife hilt stuck out of the beast’s shoulder; Stephan could vaguely remember decapitating the man who put it there.

Stephan heard the sound of the hammer of a flintlock being pulled back. His eyes followed the sound to a tall man in a long, elegant coat standing at the edge of the clearing. The man’s face looked like it had been carved out of alabaster, too perfect to be real; but as Stephan watched, one corner of the thin-lipped mouth twitched up into an impossible smile. It was the eyes, though, that gave the man away. They were perfectly blank, devoid of anything human. Stephan knew those eyes, though the last time he had seen them they had not gazed at him out of a human face.

“Hello, Stephan,” the man said genially, the barrel of the musket pointed at Stephan’s chest.

“Hello, monster,” Stephan replied. He gestured at the dead and dying men around him. “Did I break some of your toys?”

“We will attend to that matter when you and I return home. Do you remember home, Stephan?”

“I will never go back with you,” Stephan spat.

The monster clad in human form shrugged and pulled the trigger. The musket ball sped towards Stephan’s chest, but Stephan was faster. He had no power over lead, but he had sworn binding oaths with the essence of the air. He invoked those oaths, and the wind blew across the clearing, knocking the musket ball off course so that it buried itself in a nearby tree instead of Stephan’s flesh.

The monster’s smile widened. “You have learned a few tricks.”

“More than a few, you old beast,” Stephan replied. He invoked more of the pacts and oaths he had sworn. Horse and rider swelled. Bits of wood and bracken flew up off the ground and wove itself into thorny armor around both of them. As the armor of vines and thorns engulfed his hand, Stephan raised his blade. A glint of green light ran down the edge, leaving an emerald glow behind it.

“I will not go back with you,” Stephan said coolly. “I will cut you down, and you won’t hurt me or anyone else ever again.”

Stephan commanded his horse to charge. This time, it did without hesitation, thundering across the trampled mud of the clearing.

On the far side, the monster merely smiled and raised its hands.
“History is a pack of lies about events that never happened told by people who weren’t there.”

—George Santayana

The vampire calls himself Peter, though he no longer remembers his original name. He keeps a silver locket with him, always. The portrait inside has long since faded to near-total obscurity, but he cannot bear to part with it. He does not know why.

It has been almost a hundred years since a wild and wandering mad thing imbued a corpse with the divine fire, and the thing that calls itself Birch was born. Birch has seen eras rise and fall, but has never found the path to humanity. Now Birch can feel, with bitter disappointment, the divine fire ebbing within him, and he knows that he does not have much more time.

The ancient journal has been passed from parent to child for ten generations, following the family from the streets of St. Petersburg to suburban Pennsylvania. It details the Warner family’s encounters with the thing that has stalked them through the ages. Cathleen Warner stands over her newborn baby’s cradle. The book is on the table beside her. In one hand she has a revolver, in the other she has an iron crowbar. One way or another, it ends tonight.

The World of Darkness is full of strange and terrible stories. There may be ancient bloodsucking monsters that take the forms of swarms of owls, a cult that steals the eyes of frogs to take their shapes, and at least one secret society of racist magical hermaphrodites, to name a few possibilities. The World of Darkness is deeply strange, often dangerous, and sometimes beautiful.

This strangeness stretches all the way back to the beginning of human history, and possibly further. Some individual entities in the World of Darkness are very old, with stories that span eras of human history. Although they sometimes include details — or at least hints — of these secret histories, most World of Darkness books are written to facilitate games set in the modern day.

Have you ever wanted to go back and take part in those ancient, secret histories? Have you ever wondered how the near collapse of America in the 1930s affected the Prometheans struggling towards humanity in its dusty wastelands and abandoned towns? Have you ever considered what it must have been like for the mages of the second or third generation after the fall of Atlantis, as they slowly became aware of the enormity of what had happened? Do you ever think about the possibilities inherent in combining the story of any World of Darkness game with the style of other eras of human history?

If so, then this book will interest you.
Dark Eras provides the details you need to tell stories in a variety of historical eras, from the ancient Near East to the 1970s and ’80s. Each era is an encapsulated setting, with everything you need to begin your exploration of the strange history of the World of Darkness.

Theme and Mood

The goal of this book is to provide just enough historical accuracy to be useful to players and Storytellers. For a chapter about the Dust Bowl to be useful, it needs to include enough historically accurate details to feel like the Dust Bowl. At the same time, the point of this book is not historical minutiae. This is a roleplaying supplement; history books cover that sort of thing.

The history presented here has a definite World of Darkness twist. The authors have stressed those historical details that are most likely to produce good World of Darkness stories. Where such details don’t exist, the authors have been happy to create them.

Ultimately, Dark Eras takes the attitude that history deserves just as much respect as any other element for your game — which is to say, as much as makes for a good story. In a game set in the World of Darkness, the Storyteller is free to emphasize, de-emphasize, change, or ignore altogether anything found in any World of Darkness sourcebook. Historical detail is no exception.

What’s In This Book

Dark Eras consists of nine sections, one for each of the World of Darkness game lines. They are presented in chronological order, beginning with the oldest. The eras are:

- **Mage: The Awakening — To the Strongest (330–320 BCE):** In the rise and fall of Alexander the Great’s Empire, armies marched and cultures clashed. In the birth pangs of Hellenistic civilization, Awakened sorcerers all over the ancient world met, fought, and joined together. In the chaos of Alexander’s assassination and the wars that followed, Cults became Orders amid conflicts still burning in the present day.

- **Vampire: The Requiem — Requiem for Regina (1593):** Elizabeth I cemented her grip on newly Protestant England. Carefully balancing demands from those with Catholic and Lutheran sympathies, she forged a police state. Yet London emerged as a thriving cultural center, and from the crucible emerged a Kindred society forever changed.

- **Changeling: The Lost — Lily, Sabre, and Thorn (1600s–early 1700s):** In the Age of Reason under the reign of Louis XIV, enlightenment went hand-in-hand with court intrigues. The Sun King’s court influenced a time when changeling freeholds gained increasing unity and communication. It is a time of adventure, deception, betrayal, and passion — the roar of cannon, the rustle of silk, the ring of steel. The joys and sorrows and outrageous fortunes of the swashbuckler — these are all too well-known to the Lost.

- **Hunter: The Vigil — Doubting Souls (1690–1695):** Immigrants and tribes struggled to co-exist on the Eastern Seaboard in the ever-expanding Colonies. Violent clashes, supernatural beliefs, and demonic influences spelled disaster for Salem Village and its surrounding towns, while others fought werewolves and vampires on the frontier. With so much at risk, only god-fearing men and women were deemed innocent — and those were few indeed.

- **Mummy: The Curse — The Ruins of Empire (1893–1924):** Perhaps the quintessential era of the mummy in the mind of Westerners, this period saw the decline of the two greatest empires of
the age: British and Ottoman. Walk with the Arisen as they bear witness to the death of the Victorian age, to pivotal mortal discoveries in Egypt, and to the horrors of the Great War.

• Promethean: The Created — *Handful of Dust* (1933–1940): The Great Depression and the black blizzards of the 1930s turned the American Midwest into a wasteland. For the better part of a decade, thousands of people experienced deprivation and alienation right alongside the Created. They also clung to the faint promise of hope, that the rains would come and restore the land.

• Geist: The Sin-Eaters — *God’s Own Country* (1950s): World War II is over and a new age of technology is coming, but a hidden storm threatens to overwhelm both the Māori and the European New Zealanders, flooding the world with the restless dead. The Bound are the last line of defense between a spirit-world gone mad and a sleepy island nation concerned with the advent of rock and roll and mourning their lost soldiers.

• Demon: The Descent — *Into the Cold* (1961): East Germany erects a wall against its Western counterpart, turning West Berlin into an island within its own country. As the Cold War heats up, demons find themselves the targets of increasing human scrutiny, and begin to realize that the God-Machine’s plans didn’t end with the War.


Death and Tragedy

Natural disasters kill and uproot indiscriminately, and even worse are the outrages performed upon humans by other humans. The Earth has seen murder, torture, genocide, and other atrocities. Huge swaths of human history are defined by who was eating and who wasn’t; who could have helped, but didn’t; and who was winning, who was losing, and what the consequences were.

These sorts of events don’t always make for good storytelling. All kinds of things can happen during a game session that might be hard or intense, but a Storyteller probably doesn’t want to leave her players in a state of shock. At least, not unless the Storyteller and players have all agreed ahead of time that they want to have that kind of game.

More importantly, natural (and unnatural) disasters tend to be deprotagonizing. Players like to feel as though their in-character decisions matter; placing them in a position where they can do nothing is a good way to leave them frustrated. It’s one thing to have characters facing any of the World of Darkness’s many implacable foes, but facing down an army, or an erupting volcano, or an untreatable disease is something else entirely. A rag-tag group of Pentacle mages can fight off an offensive by Seers of the Throne to claim dominion over their city, but they can’t do quite as much against an earthquake. Powerlessness is a spice that should be used very sparingly in the creation of a game session. It may be a part of life, but for a lot of players it makes for a negative experience of the game.

Death and tragedy can also provide great hooks for stories. Extremity brings out the best and the worst in a lot of people. Some of history’s worst times are also some of its most interesting. To the extent that *Dark Eras* can be about the past of the World of Darkness, feuds and alliances
can have their origins in the darkest parts of human history. This is true of families and organizations, and sometimes even more true of long-lived or immortal entities like vampires and mages.

A Storyteller also needs to be aware that the wounds left by some historical events might still be a little tender for some of his players. One of the chapters in this book focuses on New York in the 1970s. The Son of Sam killings of 1976 were only 37 years ago at the time of this writing. A group of players could very well include someone who lost a loved one or was otherwise deeply affected by those events. Bigger events cast shadows that can cross generations. Storytellers should tread carefully when they set their stories in times of war and genocide. As with any other story of death and tragedy, however, that doesn’t mean that a Storyteller shouldn’t try — it just means that she should be aware of the feelings and histories of her players.

Above all, when it comes to historical games, communication is key. Nobody knows better than the players what would push their buttons in a good way, what would push their buttons in a bad way, and what themes and challenges would interest them the most.

**Man’s Inhumanity to Man**

In 1787, the Scottish poet Robert Burns coined the phrase “man’s inhumanity to man” in *Man was Made to Mourn: A Dirge*. Since then, this phrase has been quoted in reference to the status of women, the enslavement of Africans in North America and their treatment after they were freed, and the general shape of Western history in the 20th century.

It would be foolish to pretend that the modern world is perfect, but humanity has certainly progressed. Slavery is rarer in most of the world than it once was. The rights of groups that nobody used to be willing to admit even existed are now being debated in public. Even though science and technology have created their share of new ills, they have also provided humanity with solutions to many of the problems that once cut lives short.

When you run a game set in a historical era, on the other hand, you will often find yourself diving head-first into prejudice and injustice.

First and foremost, talk to your players. People come to roleplaying for a wide variety of reasons and with a wide variety of expectations. Some players are looking for catharsis; they want their characters to be tried and abused. Some are just looking for a fun time with lots of explosions, and for the good guys to win in the end with nominal hardship and sacrifice. Some want something in-between.

Even the players who want to take the story to a realistic, dark place don’t want to be stymied at every turn. It’s one thing to have a player deal with frustrating prejudice, it’s something else to take away all his choices or force him into a purely reactive role.

Take the role of women in 1930s in America, for example. In that era, women had a very sharply delineated place within society. (For that matter, so did men, but their roles were more public, less limited, and more conducive to dramatic stories.) Women who stepped outside of that place were shunned and more likely to be the target of violence.

Whether or not it’s *accurate* for an independent-minded female character to be harassed at every turn and occasionally threatened with rape or assault, it certainly *isn’t fun*. The same is true of African-American characters at many times in America’s history, or characters of various other backgrounds and creeds in other parts of the world, at other times.
In other words, the guiding principle of any historical game should be playability, rather than accuracy. Where historical facts present more opportunities for storytelling, they should be embraced whole-heartedly. When they get in the way of a good story, they should be ignored.

When dealing with humanity’s history of unfairness, it’s better to limit the character’s surroundings rather than to limit the character. Don’t tell a player that she can’t portray a well-educated black man in the 1930s, for example. Feel free to portray the world around this character as ignorant, prejudiced, and unwilling to accept his intelligence — as long as this portrayal doesn’t get in the way of the character being the protagonist of his story, of course — but don’t limit the player.

For that matter, people have always existed who broke the mold of their times. During World War II, for example, one of Russia’s most feared snipers was a woman, and the British intelligence agencies employed female pilots and radio operators. Many of America’s black intellectuals managed to find both education and outlets for their ideas long before the civil rights movement forced mainstream universities to accept their applications. World of Darkness characters are already extraordinary: They have attracted the attention of an immortal monster, or escaped from wicked faeries, or thrown off the shackles of sleep and opened their eyes to eternal truths, and so on. Ordinary mortals could and did surpass the limitations of their times. Supernatural characters should not be any more limited.

Players and Storytellers also need to be sensitive in their portrayal of characters with beliefs that we, today, find deplorable. Storytellers are practically required to portray bigoted and wrong-headed beliefs in a historical game, and players may find it an interesting challenge.

When this comes up, the troupe needs to remember that while context is important, it isn’t everything. Knowing that your fellow player doesn’t mean it when he uses hurtful words isn’t necessarily going to take the sting out of them. As always, communication is key. Each player should know exactly how far she can push her portrayal of a character who is racist, sexist, homophobic, or whatever, and be open to having the rules changed if someone at the table has an unexpected reaction.

Alternately, it’s possible to throw all this out the window. Historical accuracy — like everything else about roleplaying and Storytelling — is just another tool, which players and Storytellers are free to use or discard at will. If an issue is too heavy or too raw for your group, just de-emphasize it. Your game is not required to include every terrible person or event to stain our history, and doing so doesn’t make your game “better” or “more realistic.”

Skills

As humanity adapts to the world it creates, the basic competencies required — the Skill list — has changed as well. The Computer Skill is a prime example. In the year 2014, some degree of the Computer Skill is almost ubiquitous. As late as the 1970s, however, this Skill was almost unheard of, except among a few isolated experts. The same is true of Firearms and Drive, both Skills related to technologies that didn’t exist until a specific point in human history.

Other Skills, however, have remained the same. Techniques may rise and fall, but the basic principles of harming other humans in hand-to-hand combat have not changed. Therefore, no matter what era you set your game in, the Brawl and Melee Skills act the same. Similarly, while the content and mores may have changed, human interaction has followed the same principles.
ever since our first ancestors began the long process of inventing language. As a result, Social Skills are unchanged.

Below is the complete list of alternate Skills, as well as guidelines for when these substitutions should take place.

**Archery For Firearms**

The first firearms were a crude combination of lance, flamethrower, and shrapnel launcher used in the early and mid-1100s in China. This weapon probably was not widely used, however. Over the years, and in many different parts of the world, crude personal firearms gradually evolved into refined and reliable artillery pieces. The first true guns — hand-held weapons usable by a single person — didn’t exist until the 1500s. These weapons remained quite rare until the late 1700s, when men stopped carrying rapiers and started carrying pistols instead. They were still highly unreliable until the introduction of standardized and mass-produced guns and ammunition in the 1830s.

Archery, on the other hand, has been with humankind since the end of the Upper Paleolithic Age — also called the Late or High Stone Age — about 10,000 years ago. Bows and other forms of assisted throwing were among the most popular methods of dealing death at range until they were supplanted by guns. Archery remained in use outside Europe and the Middle East for many years after the invention of the firearm.

The Firearms Skill does not exist in any game set before the 1500s. If a character wants to use a crude firearm or artillery skill before then, she should use the Athletics Skill, though her player can certainly choose a specialty in “Guns” or “Artillery.” Between the 1500s and the 1800s, both Archery and Firearms existed side by side, the former waning and the latter waxing. The advent of cheap and reliable guns in 1836 was the death knell for the Archery Skill, which was gradually folded into the Firearms Skill, where it remains for games set in the modern day. In games set outside of Europe or North America, Archery remained the king of ranged combat until guns arrived on the scene, usually in the hands of foreign conquerors. Although many native peoples continued to train in the use of their traditional weapons, most were also very happy to learn how to use firearms — and the Firearms Skill — once it became obvious how much more powerful these weapons were.

Unlike guns, bows are almost impossible to conceal. As a result, the Archery Skill was never as popular in its time as the Firearms Skill is now. Carrying a bow meant lugging around up to 10 pounds of wood, horn, and metal. Twenty arrows weighed more than a pound and had to be carried in a quiver, usually slung over the shoulder. Although an expert could fire a bow about as quickly as a modern rifleman can make an accurate shot, there was no reliable equivalent to a handgun’s portability and concealability, or a machine gun’s high rate of fire.

As a result, nobody learned archery for self-defense. A sturdy knife, spear, or sword was far better for that purpose. Archers were generally hunters or soldiers, prepared to shoot with support to protect them from the chaos of the battlefield, or hunters, trained to shoot in the relatively controlled circumstances of the hunt.

In terms of the eras described in this book, troupes should use the Firearms Skill for *Requiem for Regina*, *The Bowery Dogs*, *Handful of Dust*, *God’s Own Country*, *The Ruins of Empire*, and *Into the Cold*. *Lily, Sabre, and Thorn* and *Doubting Souls* fall into the in-between period. Some characters in these times might use Archery, some might use Firearms, and some might be
trained in both. The only era in which the Archery Skill dominates is *To the Strongest*, which is set long before firearms were even dreamed of.

**Archery**

Archery allows your character to shoot, identify, and repair any kind of weapon that mechanically assists in firing a projectile. This can include bows and their variants — including pellet bows — as well as spear-throwers and other similar weapons. The Archery Skill can be used to represent anyone from a hunter who shoots to eat, to a soldier who shoots to kill, to a sportsman who shoots for fun.

Because guns, if they exist at all, are rare in any time period that uses the Archery Skill, it does not apply to Firearms. Using a crude firearm is more a matter of brawn and luck, and uses the Athletics Skill instead.

**Possessed by:** Hunters, soldiers, sportsmen

**Specialties:** European Bow, Japanese Bow, Longbow, Pellet Bow, Poor Visibility, Short Bow, Trick Shot, Wind and Weather

**Roll Results**

Archery operates almost identically to the Firearms Skill described in *World of Darkness*. Dramatic failures work a little differently, however.

**Dramatic Failure:** Bows can fail in a wide variety of ways, from snapped strings to damage to the bow itself. Restringing a bow takes about as long as clearing a jam in a gun — one turn — but damage to the bow makes it useless until it can be repaired. Alternately, the archer might hit a different target. If the Storyteller has opted to represent ammunition narratively, rather than keep track of each missile, a dramatic failure could also indicate that your character has run out of arrows.

**Ride for Drive**

In all but the most choked urban centers, learning to drive is a rite of passage. In most First World nations, the population of cars almost equals the population of humans. Even in poorer countries, it isn’t at all unusual to encounter a car owned by a community or the rare wealthy individual.

The first steam-powered automobiles appeared in the late 1700s. However, these automobiles were nothing more than toys for the wealthy and eccentric. Automobile technology continued to develop throughout the 1800s, finally becoming profitable in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

In Europe and North America, cars remained luxuries until the post-World War II era, when advances in assembly line technology made cars faster and easier to produce. Although the industry has risen and fallen since then, cars have been almost ubiquitous ever since.

Horses were probably domesticated around 2000 BCE. Paleontologists still aren’t clear on when and where horses were first ridden. Some cultures — the ancient Egyptians, for example — never even considered riding on the horse’s back, preferring chariots. The Ride Skill, however, applies equally to horses that are ridden or driven.

Even in ancient times, horse ownership was far from universal. Not only were horses expensive to maintain, that maintenance required its own skill set. While a car can go months without
maintenance without any serious ill effects, a horse will die if not fed, kept at the right
temperature, frequently checked for injuries, and so on. While most Americans today know how
to drive, most people in antiquity never learned how to ride or care for a horse. When automobile
culture was born, it penetrated far deeper than equestrian culture ever had.

The Ride Skill is most appropriate for *Lily, Sabre, and Thorn, Requiem for Regina, Doubting
Souls,* and *To the Strongest.* Drive is most appropriate for *The Bowery Dogs, God’s Own
Country,* and *Handful of Dust. The Ruins of Empire* straddles the line between Drive and Ride,
with the aristocracy often learning both Skills, while the common people sometimes learned how
to ride or drive horses or donkeys if it was important to their livelihoods.

**Ride**

In addition to riding a horse or operating a horse-drawn vehicle, the Ride Skill is useful for
performing basic veterinary medicine on commonly ridden animals. Ride can also be used to
build and maintain a working relationship with such animals.

**Possessed by:** Farmers, hostlers and teamsters, cavalry soldiers, the idle rich

**Specialties:** Jumping, Particular Breeds (ie. Arabians), Riding in Combat, Tricks, Tailing,
Unfamiliar Horses

**Roll Results**

The Ride Skill is almost identical to the Drive Skill. Much like cars, animals have Handling
scores. As a rough guideline, an animal’s starting Handling score is its Wits rating. This score
can rise through good treatment and successive Manipulation + Ride rolls, or fall with
maltreatment and neglect.

Unlike Drive, Ride operates with Social Attributes rather than Physical Attributes. Driving a car
has a lot to do with how deftly one can handle the wheel, but riding is more about
communicating across the gap between species. Ridden Pursuit, for example, uses Manipulation
+ Ride + Handling. Getting an animal to perform a jump or another dangerous trick uses
Presence + Ride + Handling. Ridden Tailing, however, still uses Wits + Ride + Handling,
because it relies more on the rider’s judgment than her relationship with her animal.

**Dramatic Failure:** Dramatic failure with a horse almost always involves either an injury to the
horse, or the animal adopting an unhelpful attitude — simply refusing to perform or even rearing
up and throwing its rider. It’s also possible, though unlikely, for the rider to just fall off.

**Enigmas for Computers**

*Not the Omni-Tool*

The Enigmas Skill is not intended as a replacement for interaction, problem
solving, or the other fun tasks of participating in a roleplaying game. If you ever
find yourself in a situation where a player can use the Enigmas Skill to "solve"
the plot with a single dice roll, then either the plot is too simplistic or you have
misunderstood the scope of the Enigmas Skill.

The best way to think of the Enigmas Skill is as another source of information. In
the same way that the Empathy Skill might help a character to realize that another
character is lying, but not communicate the truth, the Enigmas Skill answers
specific questions. Characters can use it to decode cyphers, puzzle out complex bureaucracies, or create ways to confuse and deceive others. They cannot use it to understand others’ motivations or learn things they have no way of knowing.

Computers are a staple of life in the First World, but this was not always the case. Although humans have had machines that assisted in quickly adding and subtracting — like the abacus — for a long time, the first true mechanical calculator appeared in the mid-1600s. The technology stalled for another 200 years until the invention of the first reliable and commercially viable calculator in 1851. Computers continued to become more reliable and versatile from that point, but remained highly specialized pieces of equipment. This changed in the 1980s, with the first home computers. Since then, computers have continued to spread into other technologies, until now many common devices contain computers and require some degree of the Computer Skill to operate.

In a World of Darkness game, the Computer Skill is usually used to manipulate information, whether it’s researching a database, hacking into a protected system, or hiding a paper trail. Before the invention and proliferation of computers, characters used the Enigmas Skill to solve — and create — puzzles. Enigmas is useful for creating or decoding cyphers or codes, and navigating or manipulating complex systems (including bureaucracies). In those time periods where computers were beginning to come into existence, but weren’t widespread enough to justify the Computer Skill, characters should use the Crafts or Science Skills to manipulate this burgeoning technology.

The Computer Skill doesn’t exist until the 1980s. As a result, it isn’t really appropriate to any of the eras described in this book. Every era in this book uses the Enigmas Skill instead.

**Enigmas**

Enigmas is the Skill for finding patterns in chaos. It is particularly useful for unravelling codes and cyphers, navigating complex systems — like arcane peerages or unwieldy bureaucracies — and cross-referencing large amounts of disparate information.

**Possessed by:** Occultists, scholars, spies

**Specialties:** Bureaucracies, Codes, Conspiracies, Research, Social Networks

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** Your character fails to accurately decipher the information but is convinced that she succeeded. The Storyteller should provide a dramatically appropriate misinterpretation. Alternately, if the character is attempting to hide information, the effort is hopelessly transparent.

**Failure:** Your character’s efforts fail, but at least she knows it. She can try again with a –1 penalty.

**Success:** The attempt is successful. Either your character decodes the information or she obscures it.

**Exceptional Success:** If your character was trying to decode information, she gets more than she hoped she would. Perhaps she is able to intuit someone’s motivations, or discovers something she wasn’t even looking for. If she is trying to hide something, then the information is exceptionally well hidden.
Decoding Ciphers

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Enigmas

**Action:** Extended (5–20 successes; each roll represents one hour of work).

People have been using codes to obscure information for as long as there has been written language. At first, when literacy was vanishingly rare, simply writing the information down could be the code. As literacy became more common, the codes became more complex. Codes and ciphers are many and varied, from simple substitution codes, which replace each letter with another letter of the same alphabet, to extremely complex substitution codes in which each letter changes the meaning of subsequent letters. Other codes involve inventing entirely new alphabets which, presumably, only the target understands.

However, no code is perfect. With enough work, any code can be broken.

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The character makes some kind of terrible mistake. If there is a trap in the code — a false message layered on top of the real one — then he mistakenly decodes that message. Alternately, he manages to decode just enough of the message to misunderstand something critical.

**Failure:** No successes are added to the total.

**Success:** The character makes progress toward breaking the code. If the player reaches the requisite number of successes, the Storyteller should provide the text of the message, if she has it available, or at least a summary of what the message contained.

**Exceptional Success:** Not only does the character decode the message, he masters this code completely. Make a note of this code’s name and qualities on your character sheet. He can now decode any message that uses the same code with a simple Intelligence + Enigmas roll, gains 9-again on all dice rolls to unravel related codes, and gains the Rote Action quality on all rolls to use this code himself.

**Possible Penalties:** Distracting surroundings (−1), tension and time limitations (−1), extraordinarily complex code (−1 to −3), forced to decipher mentally – no paper, pencils, etc. (−3)

Encoding Information

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Enigmas + equipment

**Action:** Instant (decoding a message takes between a few minutes and a few hours, depending on the length of the message and the complexity of the code, but it is represented by a single roll).

Alternately, the character might want to use a code to make something unreadable to others.

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The character believes that the information is encoded, but it is actually painfully obvious. Anyone with basic training in cryptography (at least a single dot of Enigmas) can unravel this “code” with an instant action (Intelligence + Enigmas).

**Failure:** The character fails to encode the information, but at least he knows that his efforts have been in vain.
Success: The information is encoded and must be decoded using the action described above.

Exceptional Success: The character uses a particularly devious code, or uses a deceptively simple code in a particularly devious way. The message counts as an extraordinarily complex code and imposes a −3 penalty on anyone who tries to decode it.

Mastering Complex Systems

Dice Pool: Wits + Enigmas

Action: Extended (10+ successes; each roll represents three hours of interaction or observation).

Enigmas can also be used to understand or exert one’s will over all sorts of complex systems, from bureaucracies to hierarchies to tangled webs of relationships and enmities. Doing so can involve days of careful observation and interaction, feeling out the ties that bind and sever. This action is appropriate if a character is trying to understand or manipulate a large social group, like a family, a court, or an office.

This use of Enigmas is very similar to some uses of the Socialize Skill. The distinction is a matter of scale. If a character is trying to make his way through a dozen people at a party, he would use the Socialize Skill. If he is trying to influence the actions and attitudes of a hundred people over the course of a week, he is using the Enigmas Skill.

Gaining Merit Dots

Using the Enigmas Skill to understand and manipulate organizations can grant a character temporary Merit dots. One possible outcome of an exceptional success could be that the character gains those Merit dots permanently. Depending on how the troupe wants to handle changing Merits, there are a couple of different ways you could handle this.

The first is that the player should still spend experience points to make the Merit dots permanent. This is the best option for troupes that are interested in keeping things fair and making sure that every character advances at the same speed. In this case, the advantage isn’t that the dots are free, but that the player has the opportunity to buy them for the character without the character having to spend valuable time, energy, and resources performing the legwork that is usually necessary to buy these kinds of Social Merits.

The second option is that Merits aren’t part of the character in the same way as Skills and Attributes and can be more easily added (or subtracted!). In this case, the Merit points are just added.

However your troupe wants to handle this is fine, but make sure that you are consistent. Very few things bug players more than feeling like they are getting a raw deal.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: If the character is gathering information, she might develop an embarrassing, or potentially even life-threatening, misunderstanding about the situation. She might mistake the nature of a relationship, believing that an insistent secretary is actually the superior, or that two affectionate friends are actually lovers. On the other hand, if the character is trying to manipulate an organization, she might manage to produce the opposite of the effect she was going for.
Alternately, the character might make a dangerous mistake in the course of gathering information. At best, she might lose the social capital that made her a part of the situation she was trying to manipulate: Her invitation is revoked and she is asked to leave, she loses her job or is demoted, or people stop talking to her. At worst, she might attract more dangerous attention from people who disapprove of her prying.

**Failure:** No successes are added to the total. The character’s time and effort are wasted — she can’t make heads or tails of this situation.

**Success:** The character gains information and influence over the situation. The benefits of this roll are usually narrative, but the Storyteller might want to describe the relationships or even sketch out a quick relationship map. If the Storyteller prefers to abstract the results of this roll, the character can instead add her dots of Enigmas to appropriate Social rolls until the social situation shifts (usually a month or two). If the character was more interested in influence than information, the Storyteller might grant the player a few dots of temporary Merits — some appropriate Merits include Allies, Contacts, and Resources — for a month or two.

**Exceptional Success:** In addition to enjoying the benefits of success, the character enjoys some ancillary benefit. Perhaps her efforts are particularly successful (as described by the Storyteller). If the Storyteller had intended to grant the character temporary Merit dots or bonuses to Social rolls, she might grant more points ordice, or have them last longer. If the character was trying to be subtle, her manipulations or investigations could go completely uncommented upon.

**Possible Penalties:** The character is extremely unfamiliar with the situation he is trying to understand or manipulate (e.g., A European infiltrating an Asian corporation) (–3).

**Other Skills**

As society changes and technology advances, familiar Skills change in subtle ways.

**Academics**

At its most basic level, the Academics Skill refers to the knowledge that a society views as important enough to pass on to the next generation. As a result, the scope of Academics varies depending on the time and place. For example, in modern America, literacy is viewed as a basic skill. Even a character with no dots in Academics can probably read; illiteracy is probably best represented with a Flaw or a Persistent Condition (depending on whether or not the troupe is using the God-Machine Chronicle). The same thing is not true of medieval Europe, for example. A reasonably well-educated person might still be only semi-literate, or even completely illiterate. At the same time, in modern America, the idea of scholarly languages has fallen almost completely by the wayside; in medieval Europe, a highly educated person (Academics ••• or more) would have some familiarity with written Latin and Greek, even without buying the Language Merit.

*The Bowery Dogs, God’s Own Country,* and *Into the Cold* use a more or less modern interpretation of the Academics Skill. The Academics Skill in *Handful of Dust* is almost modern, in that the expectations are the same. Although literacy is widespread, it is still less universal than it is in our own time.

*To The Strongest, Lily, Sabre, and Thorn,* and *Doubting Souls* take place in largely pre-literate societies. In those time periods, most of the Academics Skill’s content is passed down orally. Literacy is more common in *Doubting Souls,* largely because of the Protestant belief that adults
should be literate in order to read and interpret the Bible for themselves. Illiteracy was still common, however, and many adults who were literate enough to read the Bible lacked the skills, the opportunity, or the interest to read much of anything else.

*Ruins of Empire* sits somewhere between the other two camps. Literacy was definitely expected among the aristocracy, and many members of the middle class aspired to it. However, it was still rare among common people.

**Larceny**

Thieves have preyed on their fellow men and women for as long as there has been private property. Wherever thieves and intruders lurk, others do what they can to protect what they have. The Larceny Skill is born out of that conflict.

Locks are almost as ancient as civilization itself. The earliest locks were discovered in the ruins of ancient Assyria. Locks have improved significantly since then, but the principle remains the same. The best locks in the past, though, were nothing compared to today’s technology. As a result, locks should present less of a significant obstacle the further a game is set in the past.

Home security systems are exclusively a thing of the modern day. However, different societies have tried a wide variety of things to protect their homes and property, from tricks as complex as intentionally squeaky floorboards to keeping loud dogs as pets. Before the advent of the modern security system, most forms of home security were evaded with Stealth (or, rarely Animal Ken) rather than Larceny.

**Medicine**

Medical science has been through incredible changes throughout human history. Modern doctors are horrified by the things done by the physicians of the past: crude trepanning and lobotomies, bloodletting, toxic chemicals like mercury used as cure-alls. Doctors of the future will probably look back on the practices of the present with similar horror. Doctors didn’t even start washing their hands until 1847.

From a game perspective, however, it’s important not to deny players the satisfaction of seeing their characters’ Skill points being used to good effect. No player wants to be told that even though she succeeded at her Intelligence + Medicine roll to treat an important Storyteller character’s fever, her character’s patient is going to die anyway because mercury is toxic and cupping doesn’t actually do any good.

At the same time, medicine is one of those things that has changed a lot over the years, and the changes in medical science can provide a lot of drama and historical color. For example, until the invention of penicillin in the 1930s, sepsis was so deadly that even a relatively minor wound could be a death sentence. Putting characters in a situation where they must help someone survive an infection can put them into the period, as well as being a deadly serious challenge.

One way to handle this from a game perspective is to penalize a character’s dice pool based on the effectiveness of medicine in their time. As a rough guideline, medical science has always been pretty effective at helping the body to do things that it can more or less manage on its own (with the exception of childbirth, which physicians have botched for years and are still arguing about). For example, although they didn’t know about germ theory, humans have known enough to bind wounds and keep them dry and clean. Humans have been stitching serious wounds shut for more than 5,000 years.
Surgery, on the other hand, is more difficult. Archeological evidence suggests surgeries taking place as early as 350 BCE. Many early surgeons had a fairly good idea of anatomy and could lance abscesses and remove tumors. However, the lack of any kind of antibiotics or a reliable way to treat pain during convalescence made surgery an unattractive prospect. Until the 20th century and the advent of reliable painkillers and antibiotics, many patients chose a clean death rather than a painful procedure which might result in nothing more than a lingering and agonizing demise by sepsis.

Infection has been the hardest thing for human medicine to deal with. Before the invention of antibiotics in the 1930s, a physician could do little but keep any wound clean, keep the patient as comfortable as possible, and hope for the best. If the patient’s body was able to overcome the infection, she would live; if it wasn’t, she would die.

_The Bowery Dogs_, _Into the Cold_, and _God’s Own Country_ all take place after the invention of antibiotics — arguably the biggest quantum leap in modern medicine. As a result, in all of these settings the Medicine Skill operates in a more or less modern way. It’s important to note that although antibiotics existed, access to antibiotics was anything but universal.

_Handful of Dust_ straddles the line between the pre- and post-antibiotics eras. The first antibacterial agent — a dye used to treat leather — was discovered in the late 1920s, but it was unreliable and many people were allergic to it. The first reliable and relatively safe antibiotics made from penicillin were not approved for human use until the 1940s.

_Lily, Sabre, and Thorn, Doubting Souls_, and _The Ruins of Empire_ all take place in an in-between period. Although medicine had begun to operate scientifically, physicians still lacked the tools to deal with infection. Any Medicine roll involving surgery or treating a serious wound is at –4 dice. Dramatic failures almost inevitably involve infection.

_To The Strongest_ is set in medicine’s distant past. Anything beyond relatively simple surgery or treating basic and minor wounds is at –6 dice. A dramatic failure certainly involves infection, or could indicate that the physician has used a completely ineffective or actively harmful treatment, like bleeding or mercury.

In _Lily, Sabre, and Thorn, Doubting Souls, The Ruins of Empire_, and _To The Strongest_, treating infection uses a slightly different system than it does in more modern games. Instead of the physician’s player rolling to treat the infection, the patient’s player is rolling to survive the infection.

Surviving an infection is an extended Stamina + Resolve roll with a –0 to –6 penalty based on the circumstances (–0 for resting comfortably in a warm bed with plenty of food; –6 for huddling in a filthy cave, in winter, with insufficient food and water). The severity of the infection is reflected by the number of successes the player needs for her character to survive (between 10 and 25). The player should roll once per day. The physician’s efforts to help his patient survive are reflected using the Teamwork rules found on page 134 of _World of Darkness_, using Intelligence + Medicine to add dice to the patient’s Stamina + Resolve dice pools.

**Example:** _Patience Whitefield, a young woman in 1697 Salem, was mauled by a mysterious beast while gathering mushrooms in the woods. While her older sister and a few of her friends hunt for the monster, Patience struggles to survive the infection that has set in._

_Patience is in bed in her family home, but it’s winter, and the Whitefields don’t have enough fuel to keep their drafty cabin as warm as they would like (–1 penalty). The infection is a massive_
whole-body sepsis, so Patience will need to acquire 20 successes in order to survive. Patience’s Stamina + Resolve total is 6, and she has five points of Willpower remaining. Patience’s player decides that she will spend Willpower on each roll until she runs out. Thanks to Patience’s parents’ efforts to make her comfortable and keep her fed, Patience’s player will receive two bonus dice on each roll.

On the first day, Patience’s player hefts a handful of 10 dice (6 dice base, with a +3 die bonus from the Willpower point, a +2 die bonus from the care provided by Patience’s family, and a – 1 die penalty for the chilly temperatures inside the cabin). She rolls only two successes. Patience’s fever worsens and the half-healed wounds become inflamed.

On the second day, Patience’s player rolls another two successes. Patience is now completely delirious. The inflamed wounds start to smell like rotten meat. Patience’s mother stops praying for her survival and starts praying for her soul.

On the third day, Patience’s player rolls three successes. Patience’s condition seems to stabilize. She still isn’t conscious, but her temperature has stopped rising.

On the fourth day, Patience’s player rolls an amazing seven successes. Patience’s fever wavers, but doesn’t break. Although still not fully aware of her surroundings, Patience’s delirium fades a little and she is able to exchange a few words with her worried parents and drink a few mouthfuls of broth.

On the fifth day, Patience’s player rolls three more successes. Patience falls back into fever dreams. Her delirium seems quieter now, but nobody can tell if this is because she is on the mend or if she is simply too weak to thrash around and call out the way she did earlier in the week.

On the final day, Patience has run out of Willpower, so her player only rolls 7 dice. She still manages to get three successes, enough to bring the total to 20. Patience’s fever breaks and her delirium transitions into normal, healing sleep. The flesh around her wounds gradually fades from bright red to a healthy pink. When her sister returns from the woods with stories of wolfmen and pagan rites, she will find Patience up and about, though still weak. Patience has survived the sepsis, though she will carry the scars for the rest of her life.

Science
The Science Skill remains unchanged in all eras, from the hoary past of 315 BCE to the modern day. Humans have always used science to understand the world around them. What modern people dismiss as “superstition” is nothing more and nothing less than the less successful science of an earlier time. Whether you’re talking about chemistry or alchemy, child development or the balances of the four humors, you’re talking about science.

Although the content of science has changed, humans have always used the same techniques and reasoning to describe and understand the world around them. Whenever a character tries to reason out the rules of the natural world — or recall how those rules have been reasoned by someone who came before her — she uses the Science Skill.

Streetwise
Looking back from the modern era, history looks like a long march towards urbanization. The very first city was probably Uruk, built in Mesopotamia some time between 4500 and 3100 BCE. Although cities have fallen in and out of favor with various human societies since then, the general trend has been towards cities concentrating more and more wealth, influence, and human
life within their borders. The Streetwise Skill has been with humanity for as long as cities have created unique dangers and opportunities for those who dared to live within them.

The mechanics of the Streetwise Skill don’t change significantly in different time periods, but the uses do. Drugs and prostitution are illegal in modern New York, but they were legal in ancient Tyre. On the other hand, a character in an ancient Mesopotamian city might still need to use the Streetwise Skill to find smuggled goods.

Before the game starts, the Storyteller should take a moment to decide what sort of services and information are illegal or hard to find in the cities where the game will take place and determine what kinds of Streetwise actions, bonuses, and penalties are available.
Thick black tendrils coiled around Nike as she stumbled away from the creature. She struggled against the constricting, dark flesh, calling out for help from her assistants. Sraosha called to her, making some kind of gesture as he did, but he had reverted to his native tongue.

“I don’t understand!”

“Evil!” He called out, making the same gesture.

Frustration overcame Nike’s fear. As if she couldn’t figure out that the monster was evil. Every movement caused the creature to constrict further, making thinking, and even breathing, difficult. Nearby, she could hear Ptah chanting, calling magical fire to burn the thing. This would be a better idea if she weren’t trapped chest-deep within its dark body. Crying out for the Egyptian to reconsider his action was beyond her limited supply of air at the moment, so instead she concentrated on the words to pull forth a magical shield. The effort strained her to nearly passing out, but just as the first waves of heat lapped at her skin, she felt the power of her magic take hold and block the inferno that enveloped her. Her hasty spell was not perfect, however, and she felt the blistering heat.

From where he was standing, Ptah could see his mistake immediately; the creature’s body was impervious to his attack, but Nike was not. He watched in horror as her clothes and hair started smoking and burning, but before he could react a tendril snaked out at him, the edges burning with his own fire. He danced away from the thing, beginning the incantation to call power into his sword. Five more tendrils rushed at him, forcing him back and causing him to falter in his spell weaving. He cursed, and slashed at the dark form, hoping that his bronze would hurt the thing.

The creature’s grip on Nike loosened ever so slightly as it dealt with Ptah, allowing her vision to clear and giving her enough room to slip her hand onto the hilt of her dagger. She could see Ptah fighting off six tendrils at once, his attacks leaving small oozing wounds on the creature and provoking it to recoil and strike with ferocious abandon. Sraosha was nowhere in sight. Pulling the dagger was agonizing, and the pain of movement and lack of air forced her to stop several times in her effort. Once it was free, she tried to stab at the large, black form coiled around her, but the exhaustion of pulling the weapon forth prevented her from putting any real force behind the blows.

As he fought, Ptah’s warrior training took over, driving out all other thoughts. His sword seemed to sing as he struck the dark tentacles, drawing thick, reddish-brown blood as he made contact. He knew the wounds were not deep; he only hoped he could tire the thing enough to give Nike and Sraosha a chance.

Sraosha stood paralyzed by fear as Nike and Ptah fought the daeva. Though he did not know its name, he was certain it was a servant of the dark god. He tried to think, to pull himself out of the fear that had gripped his mind and turned him into a quivering child. Both of the foreign sorcerers had stopped casting spells and had resorted to force of arms against the demon. Blood oozed from dozens of open wounds on the creature, leaking darkness into the world. Snakes, spiders, and a slew of insects erupted into life where the blood splashed onto the ground scattered from the combat.

The sight shook him, and he was able to finally push past his fear into anger. Their attacks were not hurting or weakening the demon, instead only furthering its agenda. He had no words in
Greek to explain to them what this was, or the enormity of their problem. So instead he simply yelled out “Run!” as loud as he could and rushed towards Nike in the center of the mass.

Ptah heard Sraosha’s call and saw him run towards the creature. Unsure of what the Persian sorcerer was planning, he pressed his assault forward, gaining ground to meet him in the middle. Sraosha had no weapon, though he was speaking in his native tongue, fast and rhythmic. Ptah hoped it was some kind of warrior mantra.

Nike had just freed her other arm as Sraosha reached her. He pulled on the coils wrapped around her, while chanting and gesturing urgently for her to assist him. Her strength was nearly completely gone, and all she had the energy to do was hand him her dagger. He took it from her and flung it into the trees before beginning to pull at the tentacle again. Shocked and angered, Nike pushed free of her captor with renewed strength.

Ptah arrived, hacking and slashing at the tentacles attempting to regain a hold on Nike. Sraosha hefted her and began running towards the tree line, chanting and murmuring the whole way. She heard the words “Ahura Mazda” repeated over and over again, and realized he was praying. She wasn’t sure if his prayers were actually affecting the creature, but it seemed uninterested in a vigorous pursuit. Ptah lingered at the threshold of the temple long enough to cover their retreat, and the trio quickly made it to the tree line and beyond. Sraosha never once looked back, or stopped his litany of prayers until they were deep into the forest.

**To the Strongest**

_When Alexander heard from Anaxarchus of the infinite number of worlds, he wept, and when his friends asked him what was the matter, he replied, "Is it not a matter for tears that, when the number of worlds is infinite, I have not conquered one?"

—Plutarch, *Moralia*

If Alexander cut the Gordian Knot as legend says, he used a sword to solve the riddle that challenged kings. But if you believe in philosophy over force, the real blade was a mind trained by Aristotle to see things as they are, banish useless rituals, and think beyond the patterns of ordinary, deluded mortals. If you honor certain gods, implacable and old beyond imagining, he cut down one of their number, one who guarded their crown of wisdom and power. These ancients overthrew their own forebears, and guard the spoils of victory. That’s why heroes go mad.

Some say Alexander died because he claimed a hero’s mantle too late: He reached too far for an inhabitant of the lowly Age of Iron. They say he wanted to be worshiped as a god, and to be fair, he never blushed at the title “Zeus-Ammon.” The lord of Olympus has ended civilizations for less.

If Alexander is a god trembling in his too-weak shell of flesh, he must represent some fusion of the divine king and a sorrowful Dionysus. As wine and fever cast their twisted vision and toxic air over his last days in Babylon, Alexander’s hard-headed generals surreptitiously sharpen swords and ready alliances for the next bloody stage. If any part of Alexander is a god, it would be his legacy: violent ambition wrapped in intellectual rigor, applied to the dream of empire. One day he’ll leave it all “to the strongest,” and the world will see how a god’s work dies — and how
the violent and brilliant mortals dream of him in every age to come, and raise murderous, beautiful empires of their own.

Theme and Mood

*To the Strongest* straddles 323 BCE, across the decline and death of Alexander the Great. Its subject is his half-consolidated Empire. Alexander promoted unity in a mixed culture: a melting pot stirred with a bloody blade. Thus, our theme of **unity and division** describes how the Empire’s death spasms throw Hellenistic traditions far and wide, shaping the region for centuries to come.

Awakened witches and philosophers will use this era to finish the work of eons, binding divided practices into a new art of high sorcery. For now, their work is only half-finished; the diaspora’s branches have grown long, but the wielders of those branches do not yet realize they spring from one tree. The Empire brings them together, and sets the example of people brought together by conquest. Driven by whispers from beyond Tartarus, more than a few sorcerers would follow Alexander’s footsteps to some half-revealed throne, wielding a kingly scepter and godly thunderbolt. Other sages dream as grandly, but with a different aim: Ascend to the supreme secrets of native sorcery and alien cults alike. Our mood of **ambition unleashed** captures both sorts of desires.

An Iron Age

Pentacle mages in the 21st century uphold a supposedly eternal tradition, but its immortality is only a fact in the most abstract sense: an essence that remains as names and values change. Modern Awakened rarely believe that mages in the distant past used the same rituals as they do now, and only a few fanatics, ranting with evidence-proof fervor, say that Atlantis was a historical place in the usual sense. Magic obscures the facts, and sensible archeology sets limits of what could exist in the first place. If the primitive historical view was correct, even Sleepers would know it. A modern mage transported over two and a quarter millennia back probably wouldn’t be surprised that her Hellenistic forebears believe Atlantis is a philosophical exercise, or even that there aren’t formal “orders,” but schools of similar occult philosophies instead.

She might be more surprised that magic isn’t a high art, but a low one, practiced by heretical philosophers and shifty hermits. Alexander starts changing that, but it takes a few more generations for magic to grow into a “wisdom tradition.” Warriors start the process by studying philosophers — they can’t have Aristotle, so they look for the next best thing. Alexander’s Empire exposes people to new ideas from once inaccessible places, but also exposes the common patterns in all ideas.

Beliefs and Darshanas

Behind it all, Creation hums with secret music. Through ecstatic prayer, esoteric logic, and deep meditation, sorcerers adopt certain beliefs in common — and strangely, these doctrines transcend their adherents’ cultures. Awakened don’t form the orders known to their descendants, but adopt **darshanas**: belief systems common to many lands. An Asian sorcerer would recognize a Greek following the same darshana, as long as they took the time to speak and translate certain metaphysical concepts. Future generations will examine the darshanas and common legendry, and say they hail from an Awakened ur-culture’s castes and customs — and who knows if they’re right? For now, sorcerers recognize their similarities, and ascribe it to knowing eternal, universal truths.
These philosophies reveal themselves to sorcerers from all lands, though they achieve the most formal recognition in the East, where they acquire names:

**Jnanashakti**, the school of wisdom. Practitioners look inside themselves at consciousness’ inner worlds but also study the five elements, living things, and the magic that flows among them all. In Greece and parts of Asia, the school is called the **Gnostikon**.

**Mahanizrayani**, the school of the great ladder, declares that humans are the most blessed beings in all worlds because they can travel to any realm in a single life. Deeds and magical desire can make them demons, beasts, gods, or ghosts. Practitioners take their lead from the institutional priesthoods of many cultures. Western devotees speak of the great ladder, but call themselves the **Omphalos**, which they say is no stone at Delphi, but a mighty rock in the Astral Realms.

**Samashti**, the school of totality or the supreme end. Adherents cannot attain salvation until the universe does, so all personal moral striving is irrelevant — everything is corrupt, but some things work toward universal liberation. Any act that does so, no matter how offensive to ordinary morals, is permissible. Greek-speaking sorcerers speak of a sect of “guardians” or **Phulakeion**.

**Vajrastra**, the school of the **Adamantine Arrow** or thunderbolt, finds enlightenment in violent struggle. It’s a faith of storm gods and heroes, favored by military-minded sorcerers from many societies.

**Hidden Thrones and Chasms**

The Abyss exists in Alexander’s time. The Exarchs are as real as they’ve been, through any age after the Fall. Nevertheless, in this era, the Awakened focus on them less than they will in centuries to come. Initiates of the Arcadian Mysteries (see below) know the Olympians made the world a flawed, shadowy place that hides Forms from the unenlightened. They struggle against gods, not ancient sorcerers — though in some interpretations, the “gods” are not completely inhuman, and are the ancestors of kings. Persian sorcerers know that Babylonian Baalim summon entities from the Abyss, and Indians understand both the Asuras that stand between sages and the Realm of Forms, and the Narakas of their madness and moral failings.

All of these concepts describe Awakened secrets, but sorcerers from different lands haven’t combined them into “universal” ideas. They clash over territory, Hallows, and secrets, more often than they strive against these great enemies. After Alexander dies, the Hellenistic Age helps mages share ideas. For perhaps the first time since the Fall, the Exarchs fear collective Awakened might — and in seeming response, nurture the first true Seers of the Throne, tempting the Tyrannoi into what modern Awakened remember as the first Ministry. For now, the gods watch and sometimes punish, but their agents are individuals and small circles, not grand organizations.

**Nations and Cults**

Mages who Awaken near Alexander’s time not only wrestle with changes to the social role of magic, but to their identities as citizens. Greek grandparents remember that before they were Hellenes, they belonged to proud city states. Now Athens is just another city in the Empire, and
Sparta is a museum to its former glory, filled with strutting, ineffectual warriors. Like Sleepers, sorcerers embraced broader identities as Greeks or Persians. Great cults cover these categories, teaching occult metaphysics from their respective cultures’ points of view — and, for the most part, barring foreigners from their territories and secrets. Where darshanas represent archetypal magical belief systems, cults give them mythic particulars: gods, cosmologies, and legendary histories.

The Arcadian Mysteries or Pelasgians claim descent from the most ancient peoples of Greece, who ruled before giants raised now-ruined walls and wrote indecipherable characters on clay. Until recently, Arcadian cultists were usually low-born folk magicians. They recently repaired their reputations by becoming philosophers, adapting cultic lore to Plato’s metaphysics. These sorcerer-sophists call themselves Atlanteans, and say that as philosopher kings, they’ll herd people toward a new Golden Age. Tyrannoi would rather rule the world as it is, through divine allies and earthly conquests.

Outsiders call Karpani Magi, but a “magus” is a Zoroastrian priest who guides lives toward Ahura Mazda. Karpani belong to an older tradition of poets and singers who could brighten or defile with magical speech. Until Alexander took the Persian Empire, the Karpani were content to act quietly; but when his soldiers scattered the priestly magi, the Karpani were forced to take their place.

The Mantra Sadhaki (informally, the Mantrikis) claim to carry on the culture of the Naga Kingdom, greatest of the demigod-peoples of old. Most Mantrikis are Sannyasi: ascetics who wander between temples and reject caste. As increasing numbers return to the world of kings and commerce, the cult may take a more active role in Sleeper affairs.

The Mysteries of Egypt

Many Greeks and Hellenistic Asians believe that these days, the gods prefer Africa. Homer said that the gods regularly visit Ethiopia, and Herodotus reports that they told the Egyptians that Pan was dead. Egypt invented a strange written language and intricate art made from seemingly inexhaustible reserves of gold. Africa must be the land of magic, and Egypt a nation of sorcerers.

Organized Awakened know that Egypt isn’t quite that magical, but there’s something otherworldly about the place. Terrible things happen to sorcerers who linger, or gather in significant numbers. A few natives with highly eccentric magical practices seem to be immune, but they avoid or drive away visitors. Strange spirits stalk the desert Twilight, including unusually intelligent, powerful ghosts. No great cult comes from Egypt proper, though many Awakened use Egyptian trappings in their workings.

Awakened Demographics

To contrast the modern, degenerate age with a supposedly magic-drenched past, some mages say Awakenings have decreased over time. They’re almost right. Although many more mages per capita inhabit Alexander’s age than the 21st century, this hasn’t created an era of myths made real. The average person is unlikely to ever witness an indisputable act of magic. The truth is that even though there’s a higher proportion of Awakened to Sleepers than there will be in the future,
that’s out of a total world population of anywhere from 150 million to 231 million people. Forty million of these might live within Alexander’s Empire.

Despite this modest-seeming (though by ancient standards, teeming) populace, enough sorcerers hide in the fold to form hierarchies around cities, temples, and trade routes, with enough left over to claim caves and rude hermitages in the places between them. Some of these witches might know a primitive trick or two without being Awakened, but fewer know the non-language of the Oracles that marks those roused from slumber into the plots of the gods.

Alexander’s time is also notable as the last gasp of heroic heritage. Centuries ago, Greece’s kingdoms were conquered by Heraclidae, descendants of Herakles who led the Dорians to conquer Peloponnesus. Now the last Heraclids are kings of Sparta, as insular and powerless as the phalanxes that defend them. Many families claim descent from Jason, Odysseus, or Telamon. Arcadian cults track these heroic dynasties (future mages will call them “Proximi”), monitor their offspring for magical ability, and take them under wing; but a few strike out on their own and, for a while, common people witness the power and flaws of ancient heroes.

Alexander: Mage, Hero, or Mere Mortal?

This talk of sorcerers, heroes, gods, and trembling mortals begs the question: Was Alexander himself anything other than a Sleeper? Alexander’s mother Olympias supposedly said his true father was Zeus. Alexander sometimes accepted a semi-divine portrayal, but that’s a matter of politics, not metaphysics. Could he have been a sorcerer? He won his Empire through military genius and fighting skill, not curses and astrology. He was an intellectual whose studies with Aristotle focused on reason, not magical tricks. To the Strongest assumes that Alexander was Great...for a man unencumbered by a divine heritage, Awakened soul, or heroic lineage. He was just a man — and he died like one, from an undignified disease and, perhaps, a wounded spirit.

In your chronicle, the truth depends on how you want to portray the man and his age. If this is the last gasp of the old gods, perhaps he is the son of Zeus, or has Herakles’ blood flowing through his veins. Alexander dies as the last mythic hero. On the other hand, he could Awaken through philosophical study and, as a sorcerer, create his Empire through subtle coincidences. Instead of the last hero, Awakened Alexander is the first modern man, wielding knowledge and the sword together. The world can’t withstand the changes he means to bring about, so he dies, despairing of an Atlantis he could have made real.

What Has Come Before

Alexander is uneasy in peace but rules confidently, as he was trained to by his royal family. His father, Philip, prepared his first throne for him, for Alexander succeeded him as Hegemon of Greece (though the Spartans maintained an independent state). Perhaps his secret was to rule as if he has always ruled, or was the king his subjects were waiting for, whether they knew it or not. He maintained much of the Persian bureaucracy, adding his head to the intact body of the state. The Egyptians welcomed him as a liberator from Persian rule, and he allowed them to maintain their religion and local customs, importing Greek culture by founding Egypt’s Alexandria (one of many cities to bear the name).

Alexander was not always gentle, and never simply eased into power. He conquered. He scattered the Zoroastrian priesthood. When his strategies failed to win him an easy victory in the Siege of Tyre, he massacred 8,000 people and sold 20,000 more into slavery. After these convulsions, average people lived as they had under Darius and other rulers, but gained more
exposure to other cultures. They learned that men and women like them lived in distant realms, with the same pains and joys.

Beyond core territories, Alexander often gave enemies more freedom to dictate surrender terms. In defeat, Porus of India demanded to be treated “like a king.” Alexander made him a regent. He didn’t extend these privileges to enemy foot soldiers, however. The Kambojas fought fiercely, and Alexander leveled their cities and put the survivors in chains.

Alexander rarely restricted religious practices, so his conquests exposed diverse faiths and philosophies to each other. Greeks often identified local gods as variations of their own, but also acknowledged that there were gods unknown to them. They naturally retold and mixed up legends as they heard them. Gods adapted and transformed, and so did their rites — and the sorcery that channels divine power. Ideas flowed alongside exotic goods and Macedonian phalanxes.

Ages of Humanity

Most Greek sorcerers believe in the Hesiodic theory of ages, below.

**Golden Age:** Humans and gods freely mingled. All humans were Awakened, with magical daemons inhabiting perfect bodies. Mages believe this was a world where the Shadow, Astral, and material planes were one realm. This ended with the Titanomachy, when Zeus overthrew Cronus.

**Silver Age:** Humans lived in childlike ignorance, lulled to Sleep by the gods. When they rebelled, Zeus destroyed them, but their wild souls became spirits in the Shadow.

**Bronze Age:** People in this time are said to be “bronze-clad” as a comment upon their inventiveness and violence. They lived in armored houses, wielded sharp weapons, and possessed minds and bodies honed for conflict. The Pelasgians reigned in Arcadia until Lycaeon served his own son as an offering to Zeus. The king of the gods obliterated the royal family and sent a flood to swallow the world. The spirits of this age were consigned to deepest Hades, and never permitted to walk the world as ghosts. The Arcadian cult believe themselves to be the heirs of the Bronze Age.

**Heroic Age:** In this, the age of Troy and the Argonauts, heroes soared close to Golden Age virtue. They walked with gods and demigods, and founded all human nations before passing into Elysium. This age ended when the gods permitted heroes whom the gods had cursed for impiety to return from their adventures, their former powers diminished.

**Iron Age:** The current age.

Indian sorcerers mark similar ages through Vedic Yugas that last approximately 12,000 years each.

**Satya Yuga:** The godlike humans of this age lived for 100,000 years. Toil was unknown, because these naturally Ascended people acquired anything they wished through will alone.

**Treta Yuga:** The first flaws entered the human spirit, but humans still possessed tremendous power and innate Awakening. The gods sent avatars to protect the
world, especially when Ravana, king of demons, conquered existence. Vishnu incarnated as Rama to liberate the world.

**Dwapar Yuga:** Indian sorcerers claim a special knowledge of this age, the time of the Mahabharata. Men and women in this age had to strive to Awaken, but those who did possessed legendary powers, prompting the gods to entrust them with moral teachings for the age to come. People were as ambitious as they were mighty, however; their battles built culture, but annihilated their own greatness.

**Kali Yuga:** The current age, where immorality reigns, and humans cannot Awaken without exceptional effort.

**Timeline**

**480–479 BCE:** The battles of Salamis and Plataea defeat the Persian Empire’s invasion force. The Empire never again attempts to invade the Greek mainland, and maintains a strong separation between Greek and Asian civilizations. Greek magi make violent contact with more organized, literate Persian counterparts. Buoyed by the victory it led, Athens creates the Delian League to defend against future invasions.

**469–399 BCE:** Life of Socrates. Known primarily through Plato’s works, Socrates develops a dialectical teaching method that challenges popular ideas and the thinking of the pre-Socratic sophists. Charged with corrupting youth and impiety, Socrates refuses the opportunity to flee and commits suicide, carrying out his own execution.

**431–404 BCE:** The Peloponnesian War pits the Spartan-led Peloponnesian League against a Delian League that has evolved into an Athens-dominated Empire. Both sides descend to brutal, total war until, besieged, Athens surrenders. Athens spends a year under the Thirty Tyrants, a Spartan-installed puppet regime, until restoring democracy. Athens never regains its former power, and even Sparta is too exhausted by the war to maintain the spoils of victory.

**425–336 BCE:** Artaxerxes III becomes the emperor of Persia after the brothers ahead of him are executed, commit suicide, and are murdered, respectively. He kills his 80 closest relatives to secure the throne. In 338 BCE, his vizier Bagoas poisons him, and has his sons murdered. Artaxerxes IV is left alive to act as Bagoas’ puppet ruler, until the vizier poisons him as well.

**371–362 BCE:** Theban and Boeotian troops crush the Spartans at the Battle of Leuctra, establishing the Theban Hegemony, but the putative Empire collapses after the Battle of Mantinea. The Theban army defeats an alliance of Spartan and Athenian soldiers, but loses its king, Epaminondas. After that, the Theban influence dwindles as Macedon’s rises.

**360 BCE:** In the dialogues of *Timaeus* and *Critias*, Plato describes Atlantis as a philosophical exercise. Some Greek magi subsequently adopt the name to share their legends of the Hesiodic Bronze Age and associated philosophies.

**356 BCE:** Birth of Alexander III, the Great, to Philip II of Macedon and Olympias. Alexander is trained as a warrior and philosopher from an early age. His principal non-military teacher is Aristotle, the preeminent student of Plato.

**339–338 BCE:** Philip conquers most of Greece. Only Sparta maintains independence, and it’s a shadow of its former self. At the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 BCE, Philip defeats the Athenian and Theban armies and asserts hegemonic rule. The arrangement is formalized in treaties, creating a combined Greek force for Philip’s planned war with Persia.
336 BCE: Philip is assassinated by his bodyguard. Alexander inherits Macedon and hegemony over the Greeks. After a period of exile and intrigues within his household, he continues his father’s plans for the conquest of Persia.

In Persia, Darius III becomes emperor. Bagoas selects this cousin of the imperial line as a puppet to replace Artaxerxes IV. Darius resists his vizier’s manipulations. When Bagoas tries to kill Darius that year, Darius forces the vizier to drink his own poison.

331 BCE: Years of war with Persia and its satellites culminate in the Battle of Gaugamela. Alexander’s tactics allow him to defeat a numerically superior Persian force led by Darius. This defeat leads to the conquest of Persia. Darius’ satraps murder him during their retreat, leaving his body for Alexander to find. Alexander buries it with honors after he enters Babylon in October. At this point, he has effectively conquered Persia.

329–326 BCE: Alexander leads his armies east to consolidate Persian territories and expand farther, as far as Scythia and Bactria. He marries a local princess, Roxana, but fails to establish more than a superficial rule. He presses on to India, where his increasingly agitated generals preside over several massacres. After defeating Porus and obtaining his submission, Alexander’s generals revolt and refuse to follow him farther east. Alexander’s Asian conquests end astride the Ganges, at the foot of the Himalayas. He relents; they march back.

Cultures of the Empire
Alexander demands submission, not cultural conformity. This occasionally puts him in an awkward position, such as when Greek subjects criticize the ritual gestures of submission due to the Persian king of kings. He encourages subordinates to adopt local customs and, like him, synthesize the familiar and foreign into a new culture: Greek-speaking, but with Asian and Egyptian influences. This Hellenistic culture will outlast Alexander, shaping societies from Italy to the Hindu Kush, but his Empire’s constituent nations have just begun to merge. Their languages number in the hundreds and their gods in the thousands, but under common conquest the following cultures draw inspiration from each other.

Greeks: Alexander inherited his father’s League of Corinth, which united most of Greece’s city states under Macedonian hegemony a generation ago. Sparta remains independent and technically unconquered, but politically irrelevant. For the first time, being Greek means being part of a nation, not the whole. Furthermore, Greek identity is portable. Alexander’s soldiers take it with them in conquest. Greek traders and immigrants follow, until one can find Greeks from all walks of life in any place where Alexander has ruled for more than a few years. Greek is the language of the ruling class.

Persians: Greeks provide the military core of Alexander’s Empire but Persians give it an administrative structure, imperial traditions, and millions of subjects. At its height, the Achaemenid Dynasty ruled perhaps half of the world’s people through satrapies, efficiently gathering taxes and moving goods. Alexander preserves as much of this structure as possible, but replaces Persian satraps with Greeks wherever he can. Alexander maintains the Persian custom of displaying reverence toward the Shahanshah, or “King of Kings.”

Egyptians: Long under the Persian yoke, Egyptians hail Alexander’s army as a form of divine intervention, and call him the son of Amun. Nevertheless, he keeps some Persian institutions to exert political control, filling them with Macedonian stewards. He founds Alexandria in 331 BCE; Greeks join Egyptians to populate the city, but Naucratis still remains the center of the
Greek presence in Egypt for some time. Despite their approval of Alexander’s conquest of the Persians, many Egyptians resent foreign rule on general principle. They especially wish to maintain a culture that stretches back to before recorded history. The Pharaohs are gone, but Egyptians still honor deities such as Osiris and Anubis. Greek rulers identify them with their own gods. After Alexander’s death, they’ll create combined gods like Serapis to unify the religions.

**Jews:** As unwilling subjects of the Persian Empire, the Jews greet Alexander’s arrival with ambivalence. According to rumor, Alexander personally assured High Priest Simon the Just that the Jews will govern themselves as they have since Cyrus ended the Babylonian Captivity. Many Jews live in communities outside Palestine, however, and add Greek culture to their own. The Jews of Alexandria grow into an influential, culturally distinct community. Almost all of them maintain their monotheistic beliefs and language.

**Asians and Indians:** As Alexander’s armies strike eastward they encounter peoples who were scarcely ruled by Persia or who maintained their independence. In Bactria he marries a local aristocrat, Roxana. Curiously, many Bactrians already speak Greek and maintain Greek customs, because the Persians exiled Greek-speaking North Africans here before Alexander arrived. These chaotic culture mixtures are the rule until one reaches India itself, whose people belong to dozens of independent kingdoms but keep common traditions based on the holy Vedas and philosophical movements. Indians and other Asians travel throughout the Empire. Greeks call their ascetics *gymnosophists* ("naked sages"), but also encounter less flamboyant traders and soldiers.

**Magic and the Supernatural**

Before Alexander, the Greeks saw magic as a low practice designed to force the gods’ hands. Sorcerers were believed to combine deception, madness, and real, dangerous power to various degrees. People went to them for love, prophecies, and success earned through secret forces, but not enlightenment. A professional witch was a myth-teller, performer, and wrangler of superstitions.

The most famous sorcerer is Orpheus, the great charmer, who almost conquered death for love. Other ancient poets, heroes, and philosophers were said to possess magical abilities, and though many disbelieve, just as many take the living oracles seriously. As products of virtue, wisdom, or divine favor, poets and philosophers possess less sinister connotations, though heroes tend to come to bad ends.

It’s hard to define a typical subject of Alexander, but most of the major cultures believe that mad gods, monsters, and warring heroes have faded from the world. Many Greeks live near ruins, and Indians sing of old battles. The giants are gone, but people believe in unusual animals like the *martyaxwar*, a great cat that shoots spines from its tail (and will one day be called a manticore). Many traditions describe hearth spirits, wood nymphs, and other hidden, magical peoples.

Alexander’s reign sparks new interest in the magical arts, because folk wisdom and philosophy cross paths across the known world. After he dies, new cults arise, and would-be wizards create countless amulets and papyri. Alexander’s assault on Asia exposes the West to Indian and Persian beliefs. His Empire contains countless unknown magical traditions, meeting on the road, at war, or in new cities that bear his name.

**Material Culture**
Alexander sparks an era of rapid technological advancement, but many of the results won’t make themselves known until after his death. Most of the kingdoms under his command work iron confidently, but in a hundred years they’ll use water wheels and pneumatic systems to do work, and develop intricate gears for automata and even simple computers. While Alexander lives, prodigies might develop such devices, but no evidence remains. Thinkers and makers meet in places like Alexandria to exchange ideas, presaging the great library that will rise after Alexander’s death to record their innovations. This is a time when strict divisions among practical crafts, philosophy, and natural science don’t exist, so strange theories inspire many technologies.

Economics
Throughout the Empire, common people barter with their neighbors to get whatever they can’t produce themselves. They’re usually free or semi-free tenant farmers who deal exclusively in goods they can use. This partly shields them from the sharp inflation that follows Alexander’s conquests. Pillage releases large amounts of gold and silver into circulation. Prices soar wherever soldiers seem likely to spend their loot.

Coinage
Alexander’s mints make coins that conform to Greek standards, but Persian currency still circulates. Traders judge coins by weight and purity, favoring Persian coins for their unadulterated metal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coin/Measure</th>
<th>Weight (Oz.)</th>
<th>Purchasing Power</th>
<th>Resources Rating</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talent (Greek)</td>
<td>900 silver</td>
<td>60 minas</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>Measure used for trade and tribute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mina (Greek)</td>
<td>15 silver</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>100 drachmas</td>
<td>3 minas for a typical slave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daric (Persian)</td>
<td>0.3 gold</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>20 sigloi or 25 drachmas.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siglos (Persian)</td>
<td>0.2 silver</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5 oboli.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drachma (Greek)</td>
<td>0.15 silver</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>6 oboli; a day’s wages for a skilled worker</td>
<td>Single coins representing 2, 4 and 10 drachmas also circulate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obol (Greek)</td>
<td>0.025 silver</td>
<td>8 copper chalkoi</td>
<td>a chous (about ¾ gallon) of wine.</td>
<td>Single coins representing 2, 3 and 4 oboli also circulate, along with fractions of obols.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalkos (Greek)</td>
<td>0.2 silver</td>
<td>A meal.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Military Technology
Alexander’s army employs the Macedonian phalanx: a tight formation of soldiers using long spears. Philip of Macedon changed the typical phalanx by equipping it with sarissas, spears five to seven yards long that gave the soldiers a reach advantage over other units. The phalanx provides the decisive, crushing blow in engagements, supported by cavalry and javelin-wielding peltast skirmishers. Despite the lack of stirrups, mounted soldiers use bows, lances, javelin, and makhaira (a category of chopping swords that includes the kopis) without falling from their
mounts. Chariots take the field as well, as platforms for archers, spearmen, and javelin-throwers, but aren’t considered to be effective except as a psychological tactic against primitive enemies.

Soldiers use weapons made of iron, and armor made of thick linen and, for heavy troops, bronze plates. In addition to ordinary bows (often compound bows made of wood and horn) a few archers use the *gastraphetes*, a crossbow they cock with both hands, bracing it against their bellies. Alexander’s army uses a larger version called the *oxybeles* in siege warfare.

**War Elephants**

Alexander and his enemies both employed Asian elephants as mobile platforms for archers and other ranged-weapon wielders. An elephant can also run up to 30 miles per hour in a devastating charge. However, an elephant’s intelligence is a hindrance, driving it to act unpredictably; a panicked elephant is a danger to both sides of a battle.

Elephants are exceptional creatures, and use the following special rules.

**High Ground**

A fully grown war elephant’s back provides a stable platform for up to four people (though two is preferable) to loose bows, throw javelins, and stab enemies with long spears. This provides moving “high ground” and an unobstructed view, granting a +1 die bonus to attack pools, and penalizing most close-combat attacks against passengers (a –1 die penalty). An additional mahout (rider-trainer) sits just behind the elephant’s head, directing it.

**Matters of Size**

*Bulky Creature*: War elephants are faster than they look, but compared to humans, issue more force due to mass than acceleration. Smaller targets find it easier to get out of the way, but can still be killed by an errant blow. If an elephant attacks a target of Size 7 or less, it suffers a –5 penalty to its attack dice pool. If the attack hits anyway, add +3 points of bashing damage. While an elephant has a Defense score, it may only employ it to defend against targeted attacks aimed at its head or legs, unless the attacker’s Size is 8 or higher.

*Mass Slam*: An elephant may perform a body slam attack against multiple adjacent targets with a combined Size 15. Roll its dice pool separately for each target, but count it as only one attack.

*Natural Armor*: Adult elephants have exceptionally tough, 1-inch-thick skin, providing natural 2/1 (general/ballistic) armor.

*Trample*: If a target of Size 7 or less can’t or won’t get out of the way, add a bonus of +5 dice to the elephant’s attack as it crushes targets underfoot. The elephant also inflicts lethal damage. This stacks with the Bulky Creature rule, above, for a total of no attack penalty, with +3 points of damage (all lethal) added to any successful attack.

*Trunk*: A mature war elephant’s trunk possesses a Strength score of 5 and can be used to throw or immobilize opponents before crushing or goring them.

**Morale Effects**

War elephants frighten unprepared troops. Whenever a creature that’s Size 7 or less (typically humans, horses, and dogs) sees it attack another living thing or is approached with aggressive intent, roll that creature’s Resolve + Composure. If a creature actually endures direct attack by a
war elephant (not its passengers), the Resolve + Composure roll is opposed by the elephant’s Presence + Intimidation roll.

If an animal has a handler or rider nearby, roll the higher of the animal’s Resolve + Composure or the human’s Presence + Animal Ken dice pools.

If the roll fails, the frightened creature must flee until it spends a Willpower point or the player succeeds at two Resolve + Composure rolls (make one per turn). Once two such rolls succeed, war elephants never inflict this fear on the creature again.

**Elephant Behavior**

An elephant’s intelligence makes it hard to predict, and liable to ignore its mahout’s commands. Situations that might spark unpredictable behavior include abuse, males entering musth (a periodic cycle of sexual arousal and aggression), harm to a familiar human or animal (including the mahout), suffering aggravated damage, or a reminder of past trauma.

If any of these arise, the Storyteller may choose to roll the elephant’s Resolve + Composure. If the roll fails, the elephant either flees or attacks the source of its stress.

**Attributes:**

- Intelligence: 1
- Wits: 3
- Resolve: 4
- Strength: 10
- Dexterity: 2
- Stamina: 10
- Presence: 4
- Manipulation: 1
- Composure: 2

**Skills:**

- Athletics: 2
- Brawl: 2
- Intimidation: 3
- Survival: 3

**Willpower:** 6

**Initiative:** 4

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 17 (Species Factor 5)

**Size:** 15

**Weapons/Attacks:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Damage</th>
<th>Dice Pool*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gore</td>
<td>3(L)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stomp/Slam</td>
<td>1(B)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trample**</td>
<td>1(L)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**[END TAB SEPARATED COLUMNS]**

* Unmodified, base dice pool, but see rules on p. XX. –5 to dice pools but +3 damage against opponents of Size 7 or less.

** See rules on p. XX. Cannot be used against mobile opponents.

**Armor:**

- 2/1 (Natural Armor) or 4/1 (Elephant Armor; –1 Dex, –1 Defense)

**Health:**

25

**Arms and Armor from Alexander’s Age**

[BEGIN TAB-SEPARATED TABLE]
Ranged Weapons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Damage</th>
<th>Ranges</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compound Bow</td>
<td>Strength+1</td>
<td>* 1</td>
<td>As built</td>
<td>User’s</td>
<td>Size –1</td>
<td>●●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastraphetes (Belly Crossbow)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50/100/200</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2/N</td>
<td>●●●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javelin</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Aerodynamic</td>
<td>Thrown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2/N</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 4x the user’s Strength + Size + Archery

Close Combat Weapons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Damage</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Durability</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Makhaira (Kopis and other Chopping Swords)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>●●</td>
<td>9-again in targeted attacks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarissa (Long Spear)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td>+1 Defense, or +2 Defense vs. shorter pole arms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiphos (Stabbing Sword)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Armor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Defense</th>
<th>Speed</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linothorax (Linen Armor)</td>
<td>1/0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>−1</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thorax (Bronze Armor)</td>
<td>3/1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>−1</td>
<td>−2</td>
<td>●●●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoplon/Apsis (Large Shield)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A shield adds the listed bonus to Defense. This shield also applies a −1 penalty to incoming ranged attacks.

What is to Come

The long-lasting effect of the spread of Greek culture into Asia leads to the Hellenistic period. Persia and even northwest India are inundated with western philosophies and culture, though India is resistant to this culture change.

Later, as Rome begins to take more and more territories, the Kingdom of Pergamon allies itself with Rome and becomes a major supporter. Rome takes over the Seleucid Empire with their help, and soon the Roman Empire emerges as a major world power, eventually conquering the Ptolemaic Kingdom at the height of its golden era.

Timeline
326–324 BCE: Alexander takes a route through the deserts to return to Macedonia. On his way, he takes wounds in a fight with the fierce Malli, to the point that his army believes him dead. He miraculously recovers, and leads the group onward home. The trip sees many of his men die of dehydration, starvation, and fatigue.

324 BCE: Alexander returns to Persia to find that his satraps have been misbehaving in his absence. He executes several to make an example. While there, he attempts to create lasting relations between the Macedonian and Persian people, marrying his officers to Persian noblewomen. An Indian sage pledged to his service commits suicide by self-immolation, after prophesying that he will meet Alexander again, “in Babylon.”

That year, Alexander’s lover Hephaestion — a man he once ritually made Patroclus to his Achilles — dies after a period of illness. Consumed with grief, Alexander exhibits increasingly erratic behavior.

323 BCE: Alexander’s route home to Babylon falls on ill omens. Chaldean mystics warn him not to enter from the west lest he face the setting sun, a symbol of decline. He instead approaches from the east, through ill-favored marshy terrain.

In late May, Alexander becomes ill and remains sick for 14 days. On the 15th day, he makes what seems a miraculous recovery before suddenly dying hours later. The cause of his death is shrouded in mystery, and even his physicians cannot explain his illness, sparking rumors of assassination and poisoning. Alexander’s orders for inheritance are for “the strongest” to take over; yet just before death, he hands his signet ring to his bodyguard, Perdiccas. This leads to confusion about succession and a shaky resolution naming both Alexander’s half-brother Philip III, and his son Alexander IV, as king.

323–321 BCE: With the Empire in contention, Alexander’s conquests continue to cause mingling between the East and West, spreading Greek influence and beginning both the Hellenization of Persia and lands to the East, and the Orientalization of Western lands. Greek and Persian mages travel to India, finding strange traditions and mysterious lands as they do.

321 BCE: The unstable unity in Macedon collapses with the assassination of Perdiccas. A war breaks out between the regents, or Diadochi (literally “successors”), and rages for the next 40 years. The Empire eventually settles into four major power bases: the Ptolemaic Kingdom in Egypt, the Seleucid Empire in the east, the Kingdom of Pergamon in Asia Minor, and Macedon.

320 BCE and beyond: With Alexander’s death, his satraps in the east return to Macedon, weakening the Greek influence in India. Chandragupta Maurya takes advantage of the power vacuum and conquers northwest India, creating the Maurya Empire, one of the largest and most influential Empires in India. The long-lasting effect of the spread of Greek culture into Asia begins the Hellenistic period.

The Magical World

The meeting of Greek, Indian, and Persian cultures leads to intermingling of Awakened sorcerers from many different backgrounds. Pelasgians travel with Alexander’s army both in support of his conquest, and as adventurers seeking out the mysteries of the eastern world. The Karpani are forced to come out of hiding and interact with the Awakened society. The Mantrikis travel west in hopes of gaining wisdom and understanding from their new brethren. As sorcerers travel across the world in the wake of Alexander’s Empire, the Awakened come to realize that they are
not isolated and alone. Instead, they too can share culture and influence to create their own Awakened Empire that stretches across the known civilized world.

At the same time, the Tyrannoi faction of the Grecian Cult organizes and gains traction. Its members take up the name of Diadochi, stylizing themselves as the true successors of the Empire, with the divine right to become rulers of the universe.

The Way of Oracles and Furies

You live in a forward-looking age. Sleepers and sorcerers alike combine ancient wisdom with innovations, or mix the familiar and foreign.

You live in a blood-laced age, where conquerors justify themselves with exotic philosophies and modified religions. In Babylon, a Macedonian warlord fancies himself a philosopher, and accepts worship as a god.

You’ve Awakened to high magic. You unify witchcraft and philosophy, and can navigate the contradictions of this age. You see the secret patterns; you hear the meaning of mad sibyls’ chants.

Witchcraft, Religion, and Philosophy

Even in this time, total belief in the supernatural is the domain of a fanatical few. Many are skeptical; most are cautious. Before Alexander, the prevailing view treats magic as a folk perversion of religion that defrauds the gullible with ignorant chants and country myths. The only parts that work are probably dangerous.

Urban centers and holy sites host an orthodox priesthood that usually doesn’t make exuberant claims about its powers. Greeks tolerate a spectrum of opinions about the nature of the gods, but religion is ultimately a system of tribal belonging. Zoroastrian priests exhort followers to live pure, truthful lives that participate in the divine intelligence of Ahura Mazda. In India, priests remind people of their dharma. Religion isn’t a modular part of one’s identity, but part of the basic fabric of society. To belong, you perform the rites.

Then we have the philosophers. Pythagoras was said to be able to remember other lives and take on a golden, divine aspect. Empedocles controlled storms and did not die, but ascended from this strife-torn world. Asian sages speak of siddhi, “attainments,” achieved through sufficient spiritual awareness. The further back in time these thinkers lived, the greater their reputed powers—a fact that arouses doubt. But even though philosophers closer to living memory make less spectacular claims, they share mystical ideas, sometimes with a favored few. Plato and Xenophon both hint at a mystical side to Socrates’ teachings—one that might have been the true cause of his trial and execution.

Witchcraft, faith, and philosophy all contribute to the common view of magic, and secret practices connect these perspectives in small communities. Greek mystery religions worship the Great Goddess, Orpheus, and other chthonic figures. Asian mystics renounce the world to contemplate secret teachings.

Then Alexander forces Asians, Persians, Africans, and Greeks to pay common tribute. He entertains their thinkers and leaves offerings at their shrines. Witches meet foreign soldiers on the road and sell them charms. Indian mystics share philosophies and supernatural visions with Alexander and his generals. They mix and mash together gods on the road, and initiates of the
Mysteries discover that their lore isn’t so mysterious after all. Once confined to the edges of orthodoxy, magic seeps back into common discourse.

Some would-be sorcerers are wise in an ordinary way, disciplined and learned. Many are charlatans. But a few self-styled miracle workers demonstrate true power. They see the future, hiss curses, or claim superhuman excellence from a divine bloodline. They reshape the Earth — but only the Earth. Even they are not the true prodigies, who seize power from beyond Chaos in the realms where the titans shudder and the gods harvest celestial might. That privilege belongs to the Awakened.

Forms of Magic
The era of To the Strongest supports many workers of magic, and at least as many frauds — though some of the former prefer to act like the latter to avoid the dangers of real magic, and some of the latter stumble into real power without being prepared for the consequences.

Hearth Witches
These Sleepers know where to find magic, but can’t invoke it in their souls. A hearth witch might own working amulets and other relics, harvest rare supernatural plants like Hermes’ moly, or know a “spell” that contains power because of the entities that heed it, not any energy contained in the incantation itself. For example, Odysseus knew that by filling a trench with blood in a certain ritual, shades would drink and speak to him.

Anyone can become a hearth witch but it’s a dangerous profession to study in depth, because virtually all hearth methods contain curses or other detrimental effects.

Traits: Hearth witches are Sleepers with access to magical items or some way to exert non-supernatural social influence over a ghost, spirit, or other supernatural being. The ones who survive their first “spells” almost always possess dots in the Occult Skill.

Petty Seers and Sorcerers
Some Sleepers stir restlessly, and gain a small set of powers. They see invisible forces or summon petty curses due to arduous training, initiations, or an inborn quirk. These same factors tend to weaken their sanity, or at least their appreciation for social norms. Many act as country witches, mystery priests, or wilderness hermits.

Traits: Petty magicians possess a few Supernatural Merits such as Unseen Sense. Most cannot acquire new supernatural abilities, but may supplement what they know with relics and hearth rituals.

New Flaw: The Sibyl’s Tongue
During Alexander’s time, the Sibyl’s Tongue is a common Flaw among non-Awakened beings with supernatural perceptions. Under its influence, a character may only communicate what she has learned through personal supernatural perception by speaking in the High Speech — but she cannot understand it. For her, her revelations are in the form of glossolalia; but the Awakened understand the meaning.

A player with the Flaw can spend a Willpower point to share information in the form of a riddle or allegory instead. The end result should be something guessable, but not obvious.
Characters who Awaken lose this Flaw.

Of Mythic Blood
Though all are many generations removed from ancestor gods and holy families, a few people manifest the noble qualities called Arya or Arete by birth, not effort.

Traits: Children of gods and ancient sages may possess one or two Supernatural Merits, and cannot learn others. The strongest possess the Proximi Merit and an array of innate magical abilities.

The Awakened
The greatest sorcerers behold piercing radiance beyond the cave of ignorance. Its light banishes the divide between witch, philosopher, and priest. In Alexander’s time, Atlantis is Plato’s allegory — just ask his still-living pupils. There’s no great Diamond preserving a prehistory, but a handful of great cults, grasping at the truth of the Time Before Time like blind men describing an elephant — or taming a dragon.

Before Awakening, these sorcerers might belong to any of the other categories, or none. While occult studies and mystic awareness seem to make Awakening more likely, some of these mighty sorcerers rise to their stations despite being the sons and daughters of anonymous peasants, unable to read or write. Yet they all partake of the power.

Oracular Awakening
What does it mean to be an Awakened sorcerer? Most wizards’ cults answer the question with similar stories. They say that when one Awakens, she sees past the obscure realm of humans and animals to abodes of gods and abstract forms. She attains a semi-divine nature, or an enlightened aspect parallel to divinity. Bactrian and Indian sorcerers use the term Awakening (buddhi) to describe this state, and occasionally describe the wisest of their kind as avesa avatars: beings possessed by divine nature. Persians say virtuous poets possess khvarenah, a “shining” nature worthy of worship. Greek Awakened believe they cross the threshold of understanding the unclothed cosmos, including the omens sent by the gods. Thus, they gain oracular powers.

Alexandrian Mage Quick Reference
Creating a mage in Alexander’s time is mostly a matter of following the normal rules in Mage: The Awakening. The following differences and new names bring the game to this period.

Mages, Magi: The term “mage” is entirely out of character. The terms “magos” and “magi” are recent Persian imports. The Awakened refer to themselves by a variety of other names, most often “sorcerer.”

Other Terms: Greek mages speak of Pneuma, not Mana, and the term is becoming a general one. Only a few philosophers talk about Paradoxes. They more often speak of Nemesis. They treat the High Speech as an enlightened meta-language, not a common heritage from some shadowy first civilization.

Paths: Mages belong to Paths as usual, but visions of Watchtowers during Awakenings are much rarer. Awakened often travel to sacred places for magical revelations, but may engage in inward journeys that call upon the myths they know.
Arcana: The word “Arcana” is Latin. Greek mages master Archai (singular, Arche), or primal principles.

Orders: Instead of “orders,” sorcerers adhere to one of four darshanas, or schools of esoteric philosophy that have spontaneously formed among Awakened of different cultures. These provide rote skills. In addition, Awakened usually belong to a Cult from their own culture, which provides additional oblations, Legacy access, and a guiding mythology.

Secret Speech and Sacred Signs
Now that Alexander’s Empire makes it easier to travel and compare practices, the Awakened understand better than ever that despite different cultures, they share a basic nature, though each cult believes it has a superior grasp of the underlying metaphysics. Lore that used to require Astral quests, spirits, or Space-twisted strides can be learned from veterans and merchants.

First, Awakened initiates of any of the great cults learn the rudiments of a primal spoken language. Greek sorcerers find themselves able to understand the babbling of genuine oracles at Delphi, Dodona, and elsewhere as if it’s their native language — and they hear that frauds are nothing but nonsense. They can speak in tongues to each other, sending hidden messages within the gibberish. Sorcerers who were raised on the Vedas suddenly understand the Sandhya or “twilight” Sanskrit that uses metaphors and perfect tones to convey esoteric ideas. Persian Karpani spontaneously understand a similar variant of Avestan. And incredibly, speakers of different variants of the secret language understand each other.

Cross-cultural groups have begun to call it High Speech. During Alexander’s time, elder sorcerers attain great fluency in this language, but their students rarely know how to talk about more than magic.

Furthermore, the Awakened learn to inscribe and discern secret signs within their cultures’ ritual languages, though some also combine them into geometric diagrams, or artistic depictions of magical concepts. One day mages will reinvent these figures as “Atlantean runes.” Again, the Awakened understand foreign manifestations of the written form.

Power, Hubris, and the Furies
As they share wisdom and battle for a trickle of Alexander’s spoils, the Awakened learn that they pay a common price for power. They know magic shapes a vital force called Pneuma in Greek, which has entered common use throughout the Empire. Indian mages call it jiva (as distinct from prana, the energy inherent to the material plane). Persians treat it as a manifestation of atar, the “invisible fire” that transmits truth. Later generations unite these ideas under the Polynesian term Mana.

Although godly power flows through them, sorcerers suffer punishment for hubris: defying the moral and metaphysical strictures that mortals obey and gods enforce. Millennia later, many people will think of hubris only as a form of excessive pride, but for Greeks it encompasses the act of bringing shame upon oneself or another. According to Aristotle, people commit these acts because they feel superior to others, and above the rules of society, which ultimately come from the gods. Other cults define honorable and impure acts based on their home cultures, always including the abuse of spiritual gifts to defy the order of things. Indian mages consider certain
acts to possess a quality of tamas: “darkness,” or moral indifference. Zoroastrians conflate deception and impurity into the principle of druj.

Sometimes the universe punishes impurity. Few Awakened believe that gods strike them down with thunderbolts — their worldviews are much too sophisticated for that — but understand that when their spirits step too far off the path prepared for them by mortal customs, they forsake divine stewardship. Arcadian sorcerers sometimes say that the Erinyes, born of primordial Night, arise to punish those who go astray (and the Timoroi claim to serve them). Just as often sorcerers claim that the Furies represent the dark parts of their magical psyches that languish farthest from the bright Forms. What modern mages call Paradoxes, their ancient ancestors name Nemesis.

Cultural Mores and Nemesis

Alexander’s time predates human rights or secular culture. Save for occasional disruptions from radical thinkers, religion, philosophy, and tribal traditions form a seamless whole. When a sorcerer uses her Art to break cultural taboos she might risk Nemesis even when the act is as innocuous as gaining entry into a sacrosanct temple, or guaranteeing an assignation for a supposedly impure (though consensual) sexual experience.

Rather than forcing players to make characters suffer supernatural punishments for these acts, we suggest giving them the option to choose the following Condition.

New Flaw: Magical Taboo

Due to her culture or personal history, your character possesses a taboo that functions as an additional Wisdom sin, linked to a Wisdom total of the player’s choice — the higher the Wisdom linked to the sin, the less seriously she treats the taboo. She might possess a taboo against using magic on virgins or in relation to some “unclean” animal. This sin doesn’t need to have moral standing in the usual sense, and might not be something the character really believes, but it’s integral to the way she practices magic.

If she chooses to, a player may to drop the Flaw when her character gains a point of Wisdom.

The Elemental Paths

Since the epics, sorcerers have walked Paths linked to the elements of Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and the emptiness called Aether or Akasa. (In later ages, mages will call “Aether” the realm of celestial power, but for now, Aether is the “substance” of space.) Beyond the gross phenomena they designate, the five elements are ways to classify what one perceives, and how the cosmos attains its multitude of forms. Magicians from opposite ends of Alexander’s Empire learned that they know the same elements and correspondences. Born with varied temperaments and destinies, each aspiring sorcerer found her Path through contemplation and hard experience, and walked it until she Awakened in a sacred place either contained in her soul, or out in the world, where gods and heroes walked before her. This journey determines the Archai, or fundamental magics each sorcerer commands particularly well. Centuries from now, sorcerers will call them Arcana.

Acanthos, Thorns in the Wind
Acanthos, “thorns,” are so named because destiny is capricious. Eastern sorcerers often speak of how we suffer in proportion to our attachments to things, goals, and people, because the Wheel of Dharma tears them all from our grasp. Tyche is a popular goddess in Alexander’s time, because adherents understand that she can be fickle, bringing death as often as good fortune, as armies drift like wild storms and common people flee for shelter. Thus, the Acanthos are associated with Air.

Achaei: Fate and Time; Inferior: Forces.

Gods: Greek — Tyche, Ananke, the Fates, Chronos; Indian — Vishnu, Lakshmi, the Ghandarvas; Persian — Ashi Yazata.

Sacred Places: In Argos, Palamedes, inventor of dice, dedicated his creation to Tyche. Acanthoi there guard these first dice, which supposedly possess great power over destiny.

Oblations: Creating amulets and other “good luck charms,” divination rites.

Magical Tools: Amulets, dice, lots, divination tools.

Mastigos, Colorless Scourge of the Aether

The Scourge are the strangest Path, concerned with matters that even sorcerers consider to be esoteric. Followers of the Path explore souls ardently, mapping their regions and hazards, and use the results to flay away unwanted desires. Greek practitioners are usually philosophers who barely speak of magic. Persian Mastigoi are infamous for perverting thought, the primal gift of Ahura Mazda, into something capable of inflicting lies and satisfying perverse pleasures. But perhaps the most intimidating members of the sect hail from Asia, where so-called “deathless ones” or Arhats silently hone their minds and destroy the limitations of place, which they declare to be illusions.

Achaei: Mind and Space; Inferior: Matter.

Gods: Greek — Philosophical concepts such as the Good and the Demiurge; Indian — Sages such as the Buddha; Persian — the seven virtuous Amesha Spentas or deceptive Daevas.

Sacred Places: Mastigoi rarely revere places, though they might respect the power of focused thought or sacred geometry. Members of the Path love scholarship and debate, however, and have gathered in cities like Alexandria to discuss the arts of thought and memory.

Oblations: Chanting, debate, mathematics, writing.

Magical Tools: Geometric designs such as mandalas or yantras, papyri with philosophical tracts, mirrors.

Moros, Doom of the Silent Earth

Moros is the personification of doom, associated with the element of Earth. Commonly said to have grim or morbid temperaments, a sizeable number actually display a genuine love of life, fueled by the knowledge that nothing after death can deliver the same pleasures. In the West, they’re often called Hades’ children; like him, they command the Archai of Death and Matter. Indian sorcerers are less focused on divine connections, but recognize that death and earthly riches are things that pass away, while the soul and its purpose remain eternal. Persians focus on Earth itself, and the rites that prevent it from being stained with death’s pollution.

Achaei: Death and Matter; Inferior: Spirit.
**Gods:** Greek — Hades, Charon, Thanatos, Orpheus; Indian — Yama, Kali, Kubera; Persian — Shraosha Yazata.

**Sacred Places:** Great Moroi reside in Necromanteion at Ephyra by the Acheron, where necromantic oracles help Sleepers communicate with the dead. It is said that Indian sorcerers maintain a grand temple to Yama far southeast of the edges of the Empire. Persian Moroi don’t especially revere death, but attend to burial grounds to prevent corpses from polluting the world.

**Oblations:** Burying offerings for the dead, such as oboli for Charon. Meditation in a burial ground. Handling human remains for reburial or other ritual purposes.

**Magical Tools:** Bones, jewels, money, and gold.

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**Obrimos, the Fire’s Purifying Rage**

*Obrimoi* or “Raging Ones” earn their name not just for anger, but overall strength of passion. For every Obrimos who gives in to wild emotion, another tames it with ascetic discipline. They use fire as a purifying metaphor to burn away unnecessary emotions and look within, at the celestial energy flowing between them and the wider cosmos. They command powers associated with the kings of gods, so those who forsake ascetic lives often devote their passions to ruling others, or destroying what offends them with fire and thunderbolts.

**Archai:** Forces and Prime; Inferior: Death.

**Gods:** Greek — Zeus, Herakles, Ares; Indian — Shiva, Agni, Durga; Persian — Atar Yazata.

**Sacred Places:** Mount Olympus is a well-known sacred site where many Obrimos Awakenings have occurred, but the Path is too fractious to maintain a common presence. Karpani meditate at places such as Arrapha, where, unlit and unmaintained by human intervention, fires continually burn.

**Oblations:** Burnt offerings, fasting, exposure to fire and storms.

**Magical Tools:** Ash, fire, crowns, scepters and other symbols of rule.

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**Thyrso, a Staff Rising from the Wild Waters**

*Thyrsoi* take their name from the phallic pinecone-headed staff used by the cult of Dionysus. Closely identified with the cult, many Greek Thyrsoi are recognized priests and celebrants. Persian Thyrsoi are less well regarded, as they often truck with “unclean” spirits and elemental manifestations. Indian followers of the Path see the Thyrso staff as a manifestation of the *Lingam*, a similar sign of Shiva’s power. In this age, Thyrsoi are archetypal magicians: wild people who live in the country, talk to spirits, and ignore the purity laws others obey. Thyrso is associated with water to represent both clear, sacred water and the less pure fluids that flow through bodies.

**Archai:** Life and Spirit; Inferior: Mind.

**Gods:** Greek — Aphrodite, Dionysus, Pan; Indian — Shiva; Persian — the Ahurani Yazads.

**Sacred Places:** Thyrsoi believe that their mightiest brethren live in the land of Nysa, a mountainous place that might be in Africa, Arabia, or India. Some of them believe it’s another name for the cosmic axis: Mount Meru, or the celestial Olympus that casts the mundane mountain as its shadow.

**Oblations:** Ritual sex, intoxication, hunting, solitude in wild places.
Magical Tools: Stone fetishes, green branches, water from sacred streams.

Darshanas: Philosophies of Magic

New thought leaps across the world at the speed of lectures and reading eyes. Alexander came of age close to the apex of a philosophical revolution that swept across Greece in a chaotic fashion, following the political fashions of the old city-states. Alexander’s father unified the country, but its people have yet to systematize their arts of thought. Despite or because of the more intense disunity among Indian states, their thinkers, bound by the Vedas and their priests, design common classifications for their philosophies.

In this, as in many things, the Awakened follow Sleeper customs. As organized darshanas in the East, Awakened philosophies find names, but the same beliefs flourish everywhere. Multiple sources of inspiration converge on four major schools. Certain ideas seem to flower whenever Awakened gather, no matter the countries they hail from: notions about veiled truths, invisible realms, and soul-wracking duties.

Forms and Worlds
Mythics and philosophers in many nations believe in a hierarchy of worlds. Wise gods reign on high, and the dead and unclean inhabit dark precincts. The ordinary world sits in the middle of it all. Priests put their beloved deities at the top, of course, on celestial Olympus (for which the material mountain is a symbol) or the Indian Swar ("sky") or Arupa ("formless") worlds.

Plato and Indian scholars both promote new perspectives on the world-system. Plato establishes a hierarchy based on truth. The highest world belongs to universally true Forms (Greek: eidoi). A form is the essential, descriptive basis of a thing, without which it could not exist. There are many imperfect cubes of stone, wood, and bone, but the geometric description of a cube is essential to them all. The Buddha and other Indian thinkers believe that the worlds are states of consciousness — even gods are rarefied ways of thinking.

Sorcerers follow a mixture of these beliefs. Their Paths use emotional and material touchstones to represent true Forms. By knowing the Forms, they can cause instances of them to manifest in the lower, imperfect realms of matter. Touching the highest realms requires spiritual refinement — and in fact, the worlds above may be nothing more than states of consciousness. Mages will eventually develop these concepts into the notion of the Supernal Realms. Their predecessors believe in equally sophisticated notions, but they’re informed by individual beliefs and experiences, instead of the grand, secret mythos unveiled by future generations.

Jnanashakti

or the Gnostikon: School of Wisdom

Awakening is only an opportunity. Newly opened eyes adjust to the realm beyond black ignorance, but have yet to perceive what truly exists. Pure Form shines brightly, so one must adapt eyes of the spirit to see through the glory, to the thing itself. A sorcerer should be a philosopher and a mystic. Investigating truth is her supreme purpose.
The Jnanashakti ("Power of Wisdom") darshana claims to keep scrolls and tablets espousing its values that date back to the age of heroes, written in the High Speech. This archive is only part of the treasures kept by followers, who also hoard magical relics and pass secret epic poems from one bard to the next.

Followers also study nature, by cataloguing unusual creatures, recording odd phenomena and developing theories to explain them. They write bestiaries and scrolls on physics. They stalk the Shadow in search of ghosts and monsters, and explore ruins from the elder ages. They build wondrous devices to demonstrate the power of the Forms over falsehood, but these aren't always magical inventions. Sometimes, mathematics and nature only need vessels of wood and metal to demonstrate their power.

Jnanashakti say that outer journeys only take them halfway through the quest. Ultimate knowledge requires spiritual discipline, for Awakened psyches reflect the greater cosmos. Adherents use Astral meditation to understand the soul’s secret wisdom as well as its darker, flawed regions.

**Ethos:** It’s the duty of an Awakened citizen to learn, know, and teach the truth in proportion to his fellows’ ability to learn. His knowledge should enrich society, but not overthrow it — scholars are wise advisors, not kings. His study takes two forms, for he must understand nature and all observable phenomena to create a basis for the internal, imaginative study of consciousness and higher truth. He can teach Sleepers to sharpen their minds and learn practical skills, but higher studies lie beyond them — in fact, they might learn just enough to go insane, so it’s best to limit them to non-mystical teachings.

**Traditions:** The Indian Ayudhamuni ("sages of tools") seek out objects and places from the prior Age, guarding them from Sleepers and unworthy Awakened. Persian Kaldu ("Chaldeans," now a general term for astrologers and other scholars) uncover deceptions against Sleepers and Awakened, which they believe serve the Dark One, Angra Mainyu. Like students of Parmenides, the Greek Gnostikon welcomes contemplative individuals searching for the difference between Arche, the fundamental truth of the magic, and Doxa, the illusions people perceive out of ignorance. Over the last century, Socrates’ lineage has affected Greeks deeply, linking mystical ideas about truth to notions of mathematical perfection.

**Metaphysics:** The cosmos is a dark shell of imperfect matter concealing the light of pure Forms. Gnosis is the transcendental wisdom that gives the Awakened the power to see it, beyond all illusions. Universally truthful Forms can be described according to the objective measurements of mathematics, the Vedas, and other means which cannot be spoken of, but wordlessly known by Awakened minds. When perceived by lesser minds, Forms degrade into mere approximations. Ignorance is everywhere now, so we live in the Fallen Age, surrounded by the lies we see.

**Rote Skills:** Crafts, Occult, Science.

**Magical Tools:** Written materials, writing implements, and novel devices constructed over the course of one’s studies.

**Future Fate:** Over the coming century, the Jnanashakti begin to organize into a society of seekers of wisdom throughout the known world, but never fully unify. Instead, the school divides itself into two separate and distinct factions which will endure for nearly two millennia. One faction, led by the Pelasgians (with a few members of other cults), seeks to search out magical wonders and learn how to use them for the betterment of Enlightened society. The other faction,
led mostly by Karpani, believes that wonders should be archived and contained, to protect Enlightened society from the dangers of unknown relics. Many Mantrikis are a part of this faction, though more out of distaste for the Pelasgians than any true alliance with the Karpani.

Mahanizrayani

*or the Omphalos: School of the Great Ladder*

In this age of slumber, humanity has forgotten that it may rise beyond the animals and come face to face with gods. For most, this requires moral guidance across many lives. Only Awakened truly see the glorious, fearsome worlds that hide from ordinary senses and stir within the soul’s infinite space. Sleepers need priests to teach them about the Great Ladder of existence, and Awakened must be encouraged to gaze ever upward, towards the immortal Forms and Godhead beyond.

Mahanizrayani sorcerers consider themselves to be nothing less than custodians of the order of all things. They possess an unparalleled understanding of the many realms of existence, because it is their purpose to ensure that no being invades a foreign world. Only human beings should soar between planes within their mortal lives, and they must be shepherded away from dark incarnations.

Sorcerers should guide Sleepers into peaceful, ordinary lives. If unready souls dabble with the capricious powers that surround them they almost always suffer death, or reduction to some degenerate state. Awakened must submit to guidance and judgment, so they won’t fall like the old heroes.

**Ethos:** Adepts of the Great Ladder Awakened to guide the flock into noble incarnations and an eventual liberation from pain. For most, this will take many lives; but a few possess the spark of Awakening, earned through tumultuous past lives or exceptional discipline. Priests of the school want to spark the fire in sorcerers’ mighty souls, to help them attain Ascension, and teach Sleepers to serve civilization — that is, keep to moral laws, uphold scholarship, and respect noble rulers. Without civilization’s laws, human beings would surely descend into endless war and fallen incarnations.

**Traditions:** In the East, ascetic Nagaraja are turning evildoers’ negative emotions against themselves. Greek *Chthonaoidoi* (“poets of the underworld”) teach people about spirits and other supernatural beings, and the ways mortals should appease, bind, or destroy them, as the occasion demands. Persian *Dasturs* take the title of religious judges, for they determine whether an action furthers truth or deception.

**Metaphysics:** Many realms lie between complete enlightenment and the lightless hells of ignorance, hate, and self-obsession. Through multiple incarnations or moments of magical inspiration, humans soar to the thrones of the gods, or sink into pain. These realms include the Lower Depths (called *Erebus*, or *Naraka*) where souls sink with unclean burdens; the Twilight of ghosts (shades or *pretas*); the Shadow realm of petty spirits (such as nymphs or Indian *asuras*); the Astral Realm of ambitious gods (lesser *devas*, or children of the Olympian Twelve); and beyond, the Supernal *Hyperuranion* or *Rupaloka* of Forms where one attains unity with imperishable, divine principles.

**Rote Skills:** Academics, Expression, Persuasion.
Magical Tools: Ceremonial robes, artwork depicting the Great Ladder (as a tree, mountain, or mandala of beings), shrines and temples.

Future Fate: The Mahanizrayani take Alexander’s death the hardest. They pushed the Awakened community to work together to create their own utopian Empire. In the face of disaster, the school takes two different directions. Most counsel patience and restraint — the creation of an Empire takes lifetimes. These sorcerers feel they should build upon their knowledge of the successes and failures of Alexander’s realm, and work toward a vision of a perfect unity and a great utopian Empire. Led by some of the most devout Pelasgians, they vow to lead the Awakened to a new era of enlightenment. The other faction, led by some of the Arcadian cult of the Tyrannoi and exiled Mantrikis, seeks to take on the responsibility of forging the Empire now. Too long have Sleepers been allowed to rule themselves, creating vast Empires only to lose them overnight. Mages are far superior to their Sleeper counterparts, and should be allowed to finally take their rightful places as rulers of the world.

Samashti

or the Phulakeion: School of the Supreme End

The Samashti school devotes itself to the universal perfection of humanity, because anything less is failure. Like many mystics, the so-called Guardians (in Greek, Phulakes) believe the world we perceive is a layer of deception over the sublime truth; but unlike other darshanas, they deny the notion that righteous gods and virtuous philosophies connect humankind to the true world’s music. No, these are comforting myths sorcerers invented to pacify Sleepers — but they forgot the purpose of these myths, and most believe these lies themselves.

Awakening only opens your eyes to the nature of the Great Lie, and sometimes lets you summon the true cosmos to displace it, but never cures your soul of it. Bound to falsehood, your spirit can only find liberation when all of humanity does, and only under the guidance of one who has achieved final enlightenment. Adherents remain divided about who the Enlightened One will be — Buddha, avatar, hero, or sacred king — but agree that without such guidance, all religion and moral law is meaningless beyond its day to day functionality. Gods are lies or egotistical monsters; philosophies are all false. Murder or alms have no effect on your soul. Thus, Guardians look for their Enlightened One, or plot to create him through a combination of tutelage and destiny-twisting magic. For now, flawed souls are universal. Awakened who don’t contribute to social stability or the quest for the Enlightened One should be eliminated. Dangerous magic needs to be erased from the world.

These beliefs stain Samashti sorcerers with a reputation for deception and betrayal. Enemies say the school is actually a sect of “moderate” Timoroi who’ve decided to prey on other Awakened in a slower, more sustainable fashion. Nevertheless, the Guardians also hunt down dangerous magicians and artifacts with particular zeal.

Ethos: Only Awakened can Ascend and escape this foul world, but it’s immoral for them to do so, and leave everyone else twitching in the pain of existence. Thus, Guardians must prevent other Awakened from escaping so that they will turn and save everyone. Furthermore, Sleepers must never be allowed to suspect that their religions are meaningless, their souls are condemned, and that there’s no higher calling for an individual or society. If this were commonly known, civilization would collapse — and indeed, has collapsed, when sorcerers first faced the truth of
this cursed world, and scattered to the winds. Yet this very curse means Guardians need not fear ordinary moral laws, so long as their acts further the great mission.

**Traditions:** This small darshana includes the Platonist *Phulakeion* cult, from which members take the “Guardian” epithet. In Asia, most adherents hide their beliefs, but a small sect called the *Khatwangi* (roughly “Bearers of the Rod,” referring to a weapon or object made of bone) exists. Persian *Maari* (“Snakes”) follow the school by offering petty witchcraft to ordinary people, because it’s better that they do it instead of some unpredictable fraud or wild sorcerer.

**Metaphysics:** As every great myth shows, impure acts — shattering, killing events — created the cosmos. The world is stained by its initial sacrifices, and unable to return to perfection. This price of creation cannot be paid until the cosmos produces a pure individual: One who achieves final enlightenment and chooses to save the world, not abandon it. Until that point, our befouled universe contains nothing truly virtuous. Men and women should remain faithful to family and tribe for practical reasons, but their spirits will always be trapped, no matter what they do. There is no difference between a god and a monster, or a prince and a beggar, and no reward for righteousness beyond egoistic pleasure and sentimental satisfaction.

**Rote Skills:** Investigation, Stealth, Subterfuge.

**Magical Tools:** Cloaks, masks, bones.

**Future Fate:** The Samashti formalize the desire to remove the magical world from that of the Sleepers. They take on a totalitarian role of preparing the world for an inevitable salvation, one in which Sleepers have no part, and mages have no influence. They urge their brethren to use good judgment when acting, and to eschew hubris at all costs. The group is so small that they choose to accept what they deem as the sins of the world upon themselves in hopes of lifting the karmic weight off others. The order takes on the role of investigating those who would put a stain on the magical world, and do whatever it takes to cleanse that world in preparation for future salvation.

As the darshana gains in fanaticism, many members abandon the Samashti to join the Vajrastra. They seek glory and honor in defending the magical world from outside threats, instead of the perceived threats within.

**Vajrastra**

*or the Adamantine Arrow: School of the Thunderbolt*

In an age of war, warriors claim mighty spoils. Always popular, the Vajrastra (“Thunderbolt Weapon” or loosely, “Adamantine Arrow”) school has risen to particular prominence, as its sorcerers walk with conquering armies or defend their communities from assaults. Many soldiers ask deep questions about a world they see convulsing with violence. They don’t Awaken any more often than other people, but readily join together once they do, forming war bands of militant sorcerers bound by common experiences. Alexander’s campaigns give them wealth, and a broader perspective than many other sorcerers.

True veterans have seen Awakened chant and bleed in every nation and, casting rumors and bigotry aside, can see a world of sorcerers from many lands, using many tongues to speak of one truth. This opens opportunities for understanding — and conquest. For centuries, the school’s warrior cults have left authority to kings and morality to priests. A warrior off the field slows down, losing touch with the life-and-death truths of combat. Alexander’s solution was to never
stop marching, and seek glory through continuous conquest. Forced back from the end of the
known world, he’s been struck with fatal melancholy. It’s easy for a true soldier to see his fate.

Nevertheless, he solved the warrior-ruler’s dilemma. Eternal war is the answer, because it’s the
truth of the cosmos. Military strife only reveals the secret condition of existence to Sleepers.
When Alexander’s Empire falls, the Adamantine Arrow will rebuild it under their command.
They won’t stop at India; they dream of rumored lands beyond, with abundant silk and new
secrets to relinquish.

**Ethos:** The Awakened are mortals with the gifts of gods, so they stand to waste their lives to a
greater degree than either, refusing to use their might to bring meaning to a brief existence. Thus,
a sorcerer must emulate heroes and sages. She rejects vain rewards like gold and meaningless
titles, obeys oaths, and struggles against all adversity, to glorify herself and provide a moral
example that defeats death when her flesh cannot. On the question of ruling over others, the
school holds that while acceptable, it courts corruption. It is too easy to lazily ease onto a throne,
and always better to be a general on the march.

**Traditions:** The Awakened Diadochi in Alexander’s army wait to inherit his realm. Persian
Artestars (“Charioteers”), ravaged by Diadochi attacks, also wait for the end, to take revenge and
liberate their people. Some Indian Vajastra belong to a fellowship called the Banapani (“Arrows
in the Hand”), but many belong to independent bands. In this era, belonging to the Kshatriya
“warrior caste” doesn’t predict membership.

**Metaphysics:** Myths set the pattern for history and the subtle structure of souls. Gods, monsters,
and mortals battle in every epic, and the cosmos still rings with war, though only Awakened can
hear the clash of spirit-talons and the screams of war-made ghosts. Even the soul is a
battleground between the easy way of indolence and the disciplined lives people were meant to
live. Mysteries bring the mythic drama to caves and closed temple rooms, but the truth is that the
Trojan War is happening now, and the Mahabharata always thunders, because the truths within
them stir in human hearts, and all of us, mortal and divine, re-enact the stories.

**Rote Skills:** Athletics, Weaponry, Intimidation.

**Magical Tools:** Weapons and armor.

**Future Fate:** The Vajrastra seek direction from the Mahanizrayani and find resolution in the
idea of a future utopian world. Dedicated to assisting with this future creation, they swear to
protect the magical world and its ideals. A few break away to join the Samashti orders, deciding
to take the burdens of sin upon themselves as a way to protect society. The bulk of the mages
take to following other sorcerers around to ensure safety and unimpeded research and growth.
The dedication the Vajrastra show to their charges leads to the decision to create formalized
missions and oaths for each of the order to follow.

The Ajivaki: Schools of No School

The semi-organized Ajivaki, or “Living” sects reject the other four schools. These
sorcerers don’t organize as easily as some, but most employ the same basic
critique to attack the great darshanas: Magic isn’t a war, a grim duty, a sacred
hierarchy, or a search for truth, but immanent in the world, always arising. Souls
channel it, but it happens in the here and now.
Ajivaki sorcerers reject the notion that we live in a world that shows one side to common mortals, and another to witches, philosophers, and gods. Adherents believe that magic should flow out from what ordinary people believe, not philosophers. They often pretend to be the primitive witches or ordinary priests "high" wizards of the other darshanas look down on.

In the years following Alexander's death, few of the Ajivaka remain as they settle into one order or the next. Mostly the Karpani, who remained in seclusion after Alexander's conquest of Persia, continue to hold to the belief of seeking truth and holding to small communities. A few Mantrikis continue on this path, seeking humble lives. Those who remain Ajivaka are slowly excluded from the growing society developing around the Awakened community. They are not shunned, but are instead bombarded with political pressure if they decide to interact with other mages.

The Great Cults

Manifesting with common ideas throughout Alexander's realm, the darshanas ease encounters between sorcerers from diverse nations. Yet the schools provide an ethos, not a mythos. Where did magic come from? Why does it remain hidden? How did the first wizards learn the Art, and what powers do they raise?

Sorcerers look to their cults to answer these other questions, knowing full well that they'll supply partial, tentative truths. Full knowledge is enlightenment, the flowering of a life of discipline and seeking. Cults provide enough information to begin the journey: a framework of gods, legends, and secret powers discovered by their ancestors. Great cults supporting hundreds of mages flourish throughout the Empire. We've detailed major Greek, Persian, and Indian cults, but each civilization hosts smaller groups, and other nations of the realm have their own lodges.

Cults determine how wizards organize in their native lands, but Alexander's thrown a spear into formerly orderly hierarchies. Greek sorcerers claim Persian territory by right of conquest, and Indian sages walk from one end of the Empire to the other. They challenge local pecking orders, inspiring vendettas and duels.

Each cult contains a number of Legacies, including (but not limited to) the previously published Legacies listed with each cult. Cult members of any Path may join these. In Alexander's Empire, some tutors now accept pupils from the Legacy's Path no matter the cult — only individual bonds of trust matter to them. Finally, a few Legacies are so old they predate the cults. Their sorcerers take pupils from any cult or none — they're passing fancies compared to the elder Arts.

The Arcadian Mysteries

Pelagians, Heirs of the Titans

The Olympian gods have always feared humanity would overthrow them the way the gods toppled the titans. In the Silver Age, they gave humans rough, innocent souls to curtail their ambitions, but in doing so lost their worship. The gods cast these souls into the Shadow to become nature spirits.

The Olympians inaugurated the Bronze Age of worshipful mortals, but upward-looking piety came with dreams and ambitions. The Pelagians ruled Arcadia then, and built a mighty city that filled the gods with trepidation. To humble these mortals, the Olympians snuffed out every
Arcadian fire except for those in the temples, to roast sacrifices. But the Pelasgians freed Prometheus and learned to command flame. Next, the gods made Pandora to spread chaos, and set men against women, but the mortals made her queen of Arcadia.

Guided by Prometheus and Pandora, Pelasgian mystics spoke with dreaming titans and beheld the celestial music of the ten Archai. They ended sacrifices and embraced sorcery, but made no move against the gods until King Lycaeon moved against Zeus. The sorcerer-monarch offered his own son as a poisoned sacrifice, to strike down the Thunderer with defilement.

The Olympians destroyed Arcadia with a great flood, and the Bronze Age came crashing down. Deucalion’s line survived, and with it, the secrets of magic. The cult of Arcadian Mysteries claims this Pelasgian tradition. Like their bronze-clad ancestors they listen to whispers from Tartarus. Crossing that abyss, they perceive the world of Form and music, and when they desire, impose its principles on the world.

**Mythos:** Magic draws down primordial Forms. These eternal truths aren’t just ideal objects, but titans: the gods of the gods. Concept begat concept, acquiring complexity and personality. Cronus was one of these. He prepared the way for gods and mortals with Uranus’s blood, and blessed the cosmos with the diversity, personality, and individual existence he possessed.

For his blessing and crime, Cronus’ Olympian children cast him into Tartarus: the gap between the created world and its Forms. The gods became demiuergoi when they took the titans’ place in the scheme of things and so made Creation a distorted shadow of the ideal realm, not a true reflection. Although he seized the Form of thunder, Zeus could never become one with its substance, so through him the power degraded into a shadow. So too did Poseidon and Hades claim titans’ thrones without becoming one with their domains, for they were limited by the urge to remain individuals instead of raw elemental entities.

Through the Archai, sorcerers reach beyond the Olympians’ imperfect, visible world. They cross Tartarus by bargaining with fallen titans, using the rites devised by their Pelasgian ancestors. Sorcerers negotiate with the darkness but never obey it, and ultimately keep these titans sealed away. Wizards pass these guardians to touch the Forms coiled in the Oroboros.

**Factions:** The cult originally split along political lines, with each faction supporting a city-state or power bloc. After Philip of Macedon unified Greece, his Awakened supporters did the same for the cult. Its combined power defended Greek interests and may have contributed to Alexander’s ascendancy, but his success divides the cult once more. The Atlanteans have gained followers as Plato’s legacy grows ever more famous, especially as his pupil Aristotle becomes known as Alexander’s teacher. They’ve shed much of the cult’s mythology or redefined it as abstract philosophical symbolism, and look to Atlantis as mythic Arcadia reborn, ruled by philosopher-kings. Tyrannoi follow Alexander’s imperial example instead of his intellectual influences. They’ve seen him reshape religions to suit him, and believe that through temporal influence and powerful magic they can bind the Olympians, displacing them as they displaced the titans. As new gods they’d not only deserve obedience, but worship.

**Organization:** Like Sleeper mystery cults, the Arcadians use secret signs and myths to set degrees in their hierarchy. As a sorcerer rises through the ranks, she learns new invocations to the titans of Tartarus and the Oroboros of Forms. A sorcerer who knows the songs and gestures of high rank is to be obeyed by lesser magicians. All loyal members of the cult obey their region’s Hierophant and his Epoptoi council of Masters. A typical branch of the cult centers on a
great oracle or ancient shrine. Despite its lore, the cult neither hates nor loves the gods. Sleepers have no other way to make contact with celestial powers, and the war of generations is inevitable: the heartbeats of the Fates. Thus, members often practice ordinary religions to show their obedience to tribe and homeland. Due to their learning, many are even priests.

**Oblations:** Hymns to the titans; visiting an oracle or shrine; sacrificing meat and blood to the titans, and fat to the gods.

**Legacies:** The House of Ariadne, who follow the threads of Time; the Orphans of Proteus, wild shapeshifters; Skalds (called Rhapsodes in this age), singers of epic songs; Sphinxes, who study the secrets of language; and Storm Keepers, who practice weather-witchcraft.

**Future Fate:** Greek sorcerers spread influence across the known world, and their ideas begin to permeate the cultures of their brethren. Atlanteans spread philosophy and influence over the Karpani and Mantrikis, redefining the cults in their own terms.

The Tyrranoni

As war ravages Alexander’s Empire, the Tyrranoni see a unique opportunity to grasp power from the Sleepers and rise up as new gods. Several cabals of Tyrranoni Vajrastra view eternal war as a way to prevent Sleepers from rising up, allowing them to take control over the world. Stylizing themselves after the Diadochi, even taking on the name, they incite wars and take an active part, hoping to keep Sleepers in conflict as they build their own empire. Tyrranoni sorcerers of other darshanas form alliances with the new faction, and within a decade open talk and worship of the Supernal tyrants is common.

**Karpani**

*The False Magi, Poets of Flame and Corruption*

Zoroastrianism survives — thrives, even — in Persia; but in conquest, Alexander butchered its high clergy, smashed great temples, and burned sacred texts. He had no particular grudge against the religion, but ruined it for the same reason he ravaged other Achaemenid institutions: They were political competitors who needed to be humbled. The magi have been overthrown, and heretics ape their words from the shadows.

Persian mages call themselves Karpani: remnants of an ancient order of poets and cantors who served Persians before Zoroaster founded the great faith. He spoke against the Karpani, accusing them of chanting to flatter and pry wealth from their patrons. Zoroastrians never acquired enough political power to suppress other Persian religions. That would have been a confusing exercise anyway, because non-Zoroastrians often honor the same Yazatas and Daevas. Magi demoted the pantheon to servants and shadows of its supreme powers, but respected them nonetheless.

Karpani adopted aspects of the religion to illuminate their magical studies, but never considered themselves true Zoroastrians, much less priests. They were the witch-poets people went to when they wanted results, not spiritual edification. But Alexander’s conquest thrust them into that role, and a few now believe it’s their mission to fight for Persians in the Empire and preserve their culture, including the sacred rites of a religion that rejected them. Yet just as many remain devoted to sorcery first, and play with light or dark powers when it suits them.
Mythos: Magic emanates from the righteous, creative power of Ahura-Mazda or Angra Mainyu’s evil. Ahura Mazda radiates and maintains the stuff of existence itself; Angra Mainyu continually putrefies and destroys it. Ahura Mazda leads the seven creative powers, or Amesha Spentas. The Evil One and his six greatest daevas oppose them, spirit for spirit, as divine personalities, moral positions, and natural forces. Five of the seven pairs correspond to Paths and their magic. Together, they are:

- Ahura Mazda (protection of the soul) and Angra Mainyu (spiritual corruption); Divine Power.
- Vohu Manah (righteous purposefulness) and Aka Manah (moral cowardice); Acanthos.
- Asha (truthfulness) and Indar (deceitfulness); Obrimos.
- Armaiti (devotion to justice) and Nanghait (discontent); Mastigos.
- Haurvatat (preservation of wholeness) and Tauriz (destruction); Thyrsos.
- Ameretat (“immortality” and preservation of health) and Zarich (aging and illness); Moros.
- Kshathra Vairya (just leadership) and Saurva (oppression); Worldly Power.

Karpani see the cosmos as a struggle between moral forces with physical manifestations. A sorcerer is a poet whose verses either reveal the truths of the Amesha Spentas, or conceal and corrupt, strengthening their opposing daevas. Many Karpani internalize these good and evil spirits as Virtues and Vices, but these don’t need to match their Paths. Rather, using its primary Archai possess corresponding moral stakes, whether or not the situation at hand makes this immediately obvious. Poets believe that Forces is always a matter of truth or deception. Fire burns away concealing darkness, or the darkness smothers it. Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu stand beyond the powers of high magic. Kshathra Vairya and Saurva command the lesser powers of the world, from petty spirits to warring armies.

Factions: Karpani believe that all magic has a moral component, but many take a relaxed attitude toward righteous behavior. Sorcery’s a dangerous profession, and a practitioner balances pure and impure actions until he finds a balance to suit his conscience. The old polytheistic witches and pagan poets call themselves Kavi (singular, Kavu), a word that means “visionary” and is often applied to gods and mystics. Kavi satisfy the flock’s desires for a price, and align with Amesha Spentas or Daevas according to a client’s will or their own desires. Yashtipati (“Hymn Masters”) believe in a duty to participate in the creative purpose Ahura Mazda gave humanity, and strive to align their actions with the Amesha Spentas alone.

Organization: Karpani put stock in eloquently spoken memorized verse. There may be sorcerers among them who can’t recite two hours of holy texts from memory, but their companions would hold them in low esteem for failing to meet the standard. This encourages them to organize in small groups devoted to study and mutual self-protection. Archai and occult knowledge determine the pecking order. A Mede (named after the religious caste of pre-Zoroastrian Persia and often used by Greeks to refer to all Persians) settles disputes by dint of superior scholarship when he can, and judges whether an action would satisfy Ahura Mazda or Angra Mainyu. He doesn’t enforce these decisions, but relies on other Karpani to be moved by his logic and erudition. A large city might possess a handful of Medes sorcerers assigned varying degrees of trust depending on the issues or people at hand.

Oblations: Prayer before a fire or pure water, reciting religious texts.
Legacies: Celestial Masters, who harness the motions of stars and planets; the Clavicularius (called Binders of Daevas) who enslave their personified passions; Singers in Silence, mourners for the dead and dying; and Subtle Ones, who practice the arts of secrecy as a path to humility.

Future Fate: The term magus and mage begin to gain popularity in describing any sorcerer, and soon the Karpani become almost indistinguishable from the Greek and Indian sorcerers entering their lands. Most Karpani leave their cloistered lives to travel the world to learn and adopt the best parts of new cultures. Those devoted to preserving Persian culture sequester themselves into Zoroastrian monasteries, refusing to join with the rest of the growing Awakened society.

Mantra Sadhaki

Exiles from the Kingdom of Dragons

Look at humanity in the Kali Yuga: almost entirely Asleep, spiritually blind, weak and mortal. It was not always so. In the prior age, superhuman tribes carved the world into warring kingdoms. They were violent, but even their evil was wiser than contemporary good. They knew when they sinned. Instead of confusion about their purpose, they felt afraid to embrace it.

Of all demigod nations, the greatest was the Naga Kingdom. The Naga people took their name from the serpentine gods they worshipped, who taught them the elemental Paths and the way of civilization long before the other tribes, and might have served as fathers and mothers to them all — in ancient times, the line between blood heritage and teachings was vanishingly thin. One of the five great bloodlines produced Prince Aryaka, and his great-granddaughter Kuni gave birth to the Pandavas: the fathers of civilization.

Nagas battled their Pandava relatives, but also forged alliances with them to help them fulfill their destinies. Yet even in triumph, the Nagas felt loss, for the Pandavas were destined to leave lesser descendants. They helped the Pandavas build mighty cities in the Khandava Forest, and suffered as the mortal race declined — and, on several occasions, betrayed them. Finally, the time came to withdraw heroic power from the Pandavas. The Mahabharata says a snake killed Arjuna’s grandson, bringing the Age of Iron to the world. The Naga tribe also withdrew, but gave its teachings to a line of ascetics, the Mantra Sadhaki, to continue the task of guiding ordinary humans toward righteousness.

Mythos: Magic consists of two interrelated phenomena: siddhi, or “attainments” granted by enlightenment, and mantras that create change through the use of a magical formula. Although they’re synonymous with mystical sounds, mantras ultimately function by issuing vibrations to the primordial medium. To set these on their proper source, a sorcerer must visualize every aspect of the change he wishes to create, and imagine the songs that call upon appropriate Devas, or high gods. Siddhi manifest spontaneously as states of being, not thoughtful actions.

All forms of magic require an enlightened consciousness however, and never simply call power from higher to lower realms. Magic is a meditative act that sends the sorcerer’s consciousness to the Devas of the Rupaloka, or world of ideal forms — and according to some, the sorcerer becomes the god that grants his desire, for every deity is also a jhana, or meditative state. Therein lies the danger of magic: An impure consciousness flies to darker realms, and becomes the very demons that befoul it.

Factions: Mantrikis divide themselves according to their position on whether the cult should remain Sannyasi or revive the Naga Kingdom — an act that was until recently believed to be
pointless, since none of the superhuman nations could thrive in the Kali Yuga. The orthodox view broke against Alexander’s war with the Kambojas. Even though he never interfered with the Kambojas’ spiritual lives, some elders in the cult believe that the Kambojas’ failures represent a weakness in the dharma passed down by the Pandavas and their followers. The other side keeps vows to live alongside society, not within it. Neither faction has an official name.

**Organization:** The Mantra Sadhaki walk from place to place in small groups consisting of a mentor, or Acarya, and his followers. They select migration patterns that ensure that they’ll meet other cabals regularly, and keep their temples and Hallows occupied. Elders walk smaller circles across the land so that others can find and consult them. Taking their name from musical demigods, a small council of Ghandarvas act as messengers and advisors for each Rishi that leads them.

**Oblations:** Fasting throughout the day before meditating, nudity, chanting, drawing yantras and mandalas.

**Legacies:** The Fallen Pillar, whose adepts find enlightenment through ascetic self-denial; Perfected Adepts who master physical yoga and martial arts; Thread-Cutters (called Cakravartī) who cut short karmically diseased lives; and Uncrowned Kings, who practice yoga that refines the intellect.

**Future Fate:** The darshanas claimed by the Mantrikis are joined by like-minded mages from various countries, and the influx of new ideals solidifies them into far-reaching organizations.

**Barbarians and Enemy Witches**

Elder sorcerers know that strange sects thrive in the shadows of orthodox cults and darshanas. Most of these represent local priests and mystics, and behold part of the truth in much the same way as their better-known counterparts; but a few contain immoral or alien practices too harmful to permit, but too potent to extinguish.

**Baalim**

Greeks call it Tartarus. Indians and Persians talk about self-deception in the soul, and how it gives birth to demon worlds. Babylonian sorcerers developed the science of communicating with and binding these gods of anti-form. They called them Annunaki, and associated them with strange sigils and invisible constellations. Greeks call them titans. Members of the Arcadian Mysteries know better than to worship them, but must bargain with them to perceive the Forms.

The world of shape and law cast them into the Abyss, and now their priests, or Baalim, communicate with them in moments of mad ecstasy. Karpani know the Baalim and their hunger to rip the skin of law and sanity from the cosmos. Outside Babylon and other ancient settlements, these renegades rarely operate in groups, and well-regarded sorcerers don’t consider them a pressing threat. It will take many generations for wizards to see the Abyss as both a spiritual and cosmic condition, much less a yawning threat that requires constant vigilance. Besides, sorcerers deal with dark forces as a matter of course, so Tartarus is a magical realm to respect and exploit, not fear as a special adversary.

**Pharmakons**

Associated with poisoning, healing, and human sacrifice, Greek Pharmakons are known for performing human sacrifices in times of urgent need. These witches drugs their victims before either torturing or killing them. Other sorcerers believe Pharmakons are ritually impure and
exclude them from their cults. This leads mages in Alexander’s time to give this title to all solitary sorcerers. Equivalents exist in many societies.

If a Pharmakon survives her first few years, it’s because she possesses an exceptional mix of knowledge, will, and magical power. Many belong to darshanas, though fellow adherents avoid them, unless they need something done that’s out of bounds for respectable sorcerers — and given wizards’ eccentricities, this includes some extreme services. In some regions, it has become the norm to employ a Pharmakon to administer punishments on behalf of a cult. The sorcerer wears a mask to mark herself as a representative of the cult, without her person actually belonging to it.

Some Pharmakons embrace their exclusion to such an extent that they reject all forms of ritual purity — only then, they say, will they be able to view the unmasked truths of existence. Indian sorcerers call them Atamasi, or those “without darkness,” because they embrace filth, intoxication, and grave ash. They deny that truth lies in Form alone, and search lonely “lower depths” for power.

Future sorcerers would classify Pharmakons as members of the Mad, but in Alexander’s time, people don’t draw a line between willfully defying social norms and becoming so soul-broken they stagger beyond them. When a Pharmakon loses control of his gifts, his cult, which may have tolerated him up to this point, usually kills or banishes him.

Timoroi: Hounds of the Furies

Timoroi, or “Frightening Ones,” claim to serve primal gods of moral law. They further claim that these primal gods have decreed that in this age humanity is no longer worthy of the Art. Greek Timoroi identify with the Erinyes and are sometimes called by this name, though these sorcerers never use the name themselves — that would be foolish. Do traumatic Awakenings destine a few for the Timoroi obsession? Perhaps, but a small number acquire it through great spiritual pain partway on the path to enlightenment. It is said that if a sorcerer speaks to a Timoros for too long, he’ll be swayed by her arguments and insidious spirit.

Timoroi are usually untutored by choice. They’re scarcely more deserving than the wizards they hunt, so why should they seek magical lore? The dangerous exceptions belong to a Legacy that teaches members to become immortal by eating Awakened souls. These are the only sorcerers other Timoroi name after spirits of vengeance, and know them as the Eumenides (“Kindly Ones”). One day they’ll be called “Timori,” after the Latinized version of their sect’s name.

Adventures in the Classical World

Sorcerers from all cultures feel the effects of Alexander’s conquests into the Eastern world. Western sorcerers traveling to the East and Eastern sorcerers dealing with Western invaders experience unique issues. Many speak of Alexander’s hubris influencing those around him to their own hubristic acts. The following stories set the stage for the Awakened of the Classical Era, and the adventures and difficulties they face.

The Lost Gathas

Many Karpani believe that Zarathustra, later called Zoroaster by the Greeks, was Awakened and had the gift of prophesy. The other cults are more skeptical, but his prophetic visions are much studied by the Awakened. He described a single creator and god of light, Ahura Mazda — with those who work for him as conduits between god and humankind — as well as a single
opposition and ruler of darkness, Angra Mainyu, with his own evil spirits called *daeva* working within the world. Not much is known of Zarathustra, except what he wrote into the *Gathas*, each hymn describing encounters with the divine and their place in the world. Much of what he wrote about involved the *daevas*. He described them at length, including detailed and complicated mathematical equations associated with each, as well as a name. For most Persian scholars, these texts are the basis for much scientific and theological debate; but for the Awakened, they hold a larger draw. Many of Zarathustra’s descriptions have elements of High Speech that indicate rituals and spell circles.

Zarathustra’s visions and prophecies are recorded and compiled within the *Avesta*, the original copy of which was held in the capital of Persepolis. When Alexander took the city, he allowed his army to loot and pillage for days. Among other things, pieces of the Avesta were removed and divided up among some of his scholars. Later, a fire in the palace destroyed the remaining texts.

A year after the initial separation of the Avesta, strange sightings are reported all across the country. The incidents start slowly, and are recounted several times from the original source. Then, the incidents become more prevalent, causing fear and confusion among the people.

- A dark entity appeared in a home of a young couple, stole the life of the newborn child, and dissipated into darkness. The lifeless corpse of the child was left blacked and withered.
- A group of men are attacked on the road at night. Their screams are swallowed by the darkness. One of the party is taken off into the woods, and the rest are left intact. Later, when they go to search for him, they find his lifeless body battered and bruised deep purple.
- A goat herder claims that a dark man rises up from the lake near his farm. Each night he takes one of his goats and drains it dry, leaving a dark, desiccated corpse.

Investigating these incidents shows a pattern. First-hand witnesses describe seeing snakes, spiders, and insects around the area. The vermin appear out of nowhere and disappear just as abruptly once the person dies. Witnesses never get a look at the killer, though many speculate that it was large, dark, and evil.

**What is Happening?**

Several Gathas of the Avesta are in the hands of a Greek Moros, Alkaios, traveling with Alexander’s army. Recognizing the few fragments of High Speech integrated into the texts, he was convinced that these books were ancient grimoires holding Persian secrets. After a year of study and experiment, he instead finds that the books are magical bindings on several ancient *daeva*: demons who serve Angra Mainyu. Alkaios is certain that if he releases them, they will reward him for his assistance by giving him dominion over Persia and possibly the entire world. His first attempt released one of the most powerful servants, Azi Dahaka, into the world under his control. If Alkaios is not stopped, he will soon release more *daeva*.

**Azi Dahaka**

Treat Azi Dahaka as a Rank 3 spirit of darkness with the Blast, Harrow, Materialize, and Soul Snatch Numina.

**Who are the Characters?**
Characters can come from any background, and are likely to belong to the Jnanashakti, Samashti or Vajrastra darshanas. The Jnanashakti look to find Alkaios and study the magic held within the Gathas. The Samashti seek to contain whatever Alkaios has found, and possibly keep it from returning to Sleeper hands. The Vajrastra wish to seek out the evil responsible for the deaths and destroy it, making the land safe again. The Mahanizrayani are concerned about the common people and seek to secure their safety; and some may also be interested in the information Alkaios has uncovered.

• Greek and Egyptian characters are in Persia in the wake of Alexander’s army, looking for power and wisdom. The appearance of the creature creates a strain between the Awakened and the Persian community, as fear of the unknown causes people to reject the foreigners. Rumors of religious texts with High Speech are widespread amongst the other Awakened, and the name Alkaios is mentioned as being the caretaker of the texts.

• Persian characters are searching for the lost Gathas, hoping that the possible magical texts have not fallen into the wrong hands. The deaths pose a serious problem for the characters, as someone they know or love may have been killed. Characters versed in mythology may recognize the snakes and insects as indications of Azi Dahaka, though he is thought to be bound by the power of Ahura Mazda.

• Indian characters are in Persia after Alexander’s retreat from India. They are interested in meeting other Awakened in Alexander’s Empire, and possibly preventing the Greeks from gaining a stronger foothold in India. Though they have their own agendas, the problems in Persia could be a preamble to similar issues in India. They seek to aid the Awakened community in discovering the source of these issues and putting them to rest.

Possible resolutions

• Stopping Alkaios: Investigating the deaths and the loss of the Gathas should lead the characters to him, but if not Azi Dahaka will. Dahaka is not happy to be bound in the service of Alkaios, and gladly tells the characters where the Awakened can be found. He is still a daeva and has his own agenda. He is sure if Alkaios is killed, he will be set free to act on his own will. He attempts to kill the characters if given the chance, though he can be reasoned with as long as he believes his goals are being met. Killing Alkaios does stop him, but it also releases Azi Dahaka to his own free will. Alkaios cannot be reasoned with. He worships the Supernal tyrants and believes that it is his right as an Awakened sorcerer to use whatever power is available to do as he wishes. He is full of himself, and can be tricked and deceived into revealing information about what he plans or even how he unbound the daeva.

• With enough time and research, the text of the Gathas can be used to reconstruct the binding spell used to originally hold the daeva, but Alkaios attempts to stop the characters if he is still around. Azi Dahaka is a powerful daeva, and is immortal. He can be harmed, but not killed. If the characters attempt to kill him in a direct fight, they may do enough damage to weaken him before a binding, or they may even banish him for a few days. Without a powerful binding, he always returns, seeking his vengeance against the characters.

Naga Temple

The great epic, the Mahabharata, tells of ancient peoples who once populated India. Many of these societies, the Deva, Rakshasa, Kinnara, and Naga had vast empires and performed many acts of heroism. The story indicates that the names of these tribes were taken from even older
creatures of legend, mythological beings who were half-man and half-animal, who once populated the Himalayas. Each of these creatures was once real; and all are believed to still exist deep within the Himalayas.

Very few people travel into the Himalayas to determine the truth, and those who do rarely return. Everyone knows a story about someone making an ill-fated journey into the mountains. Sometimes it is a woman who followed a half-horse Kinnara with promises of love and perpetual pleasure. She leaves in the night and is never seen again. Often, a man is tricked by a Rakshasa into making the trip in search of riches, only to be eaten when he arrives. A hero makes the trip to visit the Deva, and is rewarded with the strength to save his people and win a beautiful bride. The stories are many and varied and often sound too fantastical to be true. Yet, people make pilgrimages, and stories keep surfacing about their fates.

Xenon, a Greek Obrimos, heard these stories as far away as Babylon. His own studies and research led him to believe that these exotic creatures were not mythological beings, but instead Awakened, or at least created by Awakened magic. He put together an expedition following in the wake of Alexander’s army. He tried to get other Awakened to travel with him, but most assumed he was at best wrong, and at worst heading towards suicide. Shortly after Alexander’s army entered Persia, Xenon and his expeditionary team, a group of four guides, disappeared. Three years passed without any sign of his return, and those who knew him assumed he had died on the journey.

Just after Alexander’s campaign in India, Xenon was found in the city of Aornos, unconscious and in the care of Hindu monks. When he at last awoke, he told a fabulous tale of finding a ruined temple high in the mountains. A tunnel led him deep into the mountain’s core and eventually opened out onto a golden city. Beautiful creatures — half-man, half-snake — greeted him and took him in. They showed him the wonders of their home and forbade him from touching anything. He obeyed and inside he saw many wonders. Magical artifacts and lore of the ages were stored in the golden city. In a moment of weakness, Xenon attempted to pick up a book. The Naga turned on him and attacked. He tried to defend himself, but they were immune to his magic. They beat him to near death, then took him away from the city. He claims they felt pity for him since they had accepted him into their home for so long, and is sure that he could find his way back to the city if any are willing to go with him.

What is Happening?

Xenon did make it to a temple deep in the Himalayas, but he never lived with the Naga, nor did he see a golden city. He found the ruins of what was clearly some kind of advanced civilization. He spent months trying to figure out how to get in, and when he finally did, he was scared off by the man-snakes. It is true that the Naga were immune to his magic, but he never spoke with them or entered the city. The Naga exist to protect the treasures hidden within the city. They are not aggressive unless people try to enter, and Xenon was only able to see the entrance to the city. He wants to see more, and know more, and has concocted his tale to lure other mages to go back with him to destroy the Naga guards.

Naga

Treat each Naga as a Rank 2 spirit with Countermagic as a Numen. The Naga can reflexively countermagic any form of magic, including covert spells. Spend one
essence and roll Power + Finesse. If successes rolled for the Naga meet or exceed those for the spell, the spell is countered.

Who are the Characters?
Characters can come from any background and are most likely to be members of the Jnanashakti and Vajrastra darshanas. The Jnanashakti are lured by the idea of untold treasures and magical artifacts deep in the ruins. The Vajrastra seek to gain honor and glory by slaying the mythical Naga guarding the city. The Mahanizrayani are interested in the promise of power and fame from such a journey. The Samashti seek to discover the nature of the Naga, and eradicate the dangerous magic that may maintain them. The Ajivaka may be enticed to discover the truth of Xenon’s story.

The characters have heard legends of mystical relics deep within the mountains. The lure of such a treasure trove of lore and magical energies draws them in. The locals know little about the geography of the area, or where such a lair may be hidden, only that it is guarded by mystical creatures immune to magic. Xenon’s expedition has been talked about widely, but many believe he was a failure and a liar. But, his descriptions are too detailed to be complete fabrications. Talking to Xenon will get the characters the same story above, from his own lips. Those capable of forcing him to tell the truth learn that he made up most of what he saw there, beyond the creatures.

Possible Resolutions
• If the characters take Xenon up on his offer to return to the city, they will find an underground temple full of Naga. While the creatures are immune to magical attacks, they are not immortal and are vulnerable to mundane attacks, especially because they will not be expecting it. As soon as they catch sight of Xenon they will attack the group. They gave him his warning and let him live, they will not do it a second time. The characters must fight their way through to find whatever lore or magical treasures lay inside.

• The characters may attempt to find the temple on their own without Xenon. He does not have the means to follow them on his own, though he will attempt to persuade them to take him with them. Though the search for the temple takes longer, the Naga will not attack on sight. The Naga converse with the characters and warn them that they cannot enter the city. They remain peaceable as long as the characters make no moves to enter the city. The Naga are reasonable, though they will not sway in their duty. Some characters may attempt to persuade or charm the Naga, though this cannot be done with magical means. The Naga are unassuming creatures, and will divulge anything the characters ask about, such as why they are there, who created them, and what their weaknesses are.

The Death of Alexander
Upon Alexander’s return to Babylon, he quickly became deathly ill then died many days later after a brief “recovery.” Prior to his taking ill, Alexander hosted several parties welcoming officers and satraps from Persia and India into his home. He drank and entertained for weeks, and the atmosphere of revelry was only broken by his sudden illness. His death was so sudden that his satraps had a hard time believing it was true at first. Then came the question of inheritance. Alexander refused to name an heir, though his wife Roxane was pregnant at the time of his death.
What makes his death even more tragic is the power struggle that caused his Awakened advisors
to delay giving assistance until it was too late. Three advisors stood in opposition on how to
handle the situation. Theophanes was a well-known Moros Phulakeion who advised against
drastic action, stating that mere mortal interference was beneath their notice. He was not opposed
to investigating the cause of Alexander’s illness, for fear that a magical attack would equally
influence the mortals around the king. Anaxagoras, a Thyrsos Mahanizrayani, believed that his
power over the Greeks, bestowed through Alexander, would dissipate after his death. He felt that
no matter what caused the illness, magic could surely save him. Kleitos, a Mastigos Tyrannoi,
saw in Alexander’s death the opportunity to take over the Empire on his own, and urged both
Anaxagoras and Theophanes to abandon Babylon and leave the well-being of Alexander to him.

The disputes of what to do and if they should investigate the illness raged for days, and as far as
anyone knows the three never came to a consensus. Kleitos’s attempts to get Theophanes and
Anaxagoras to leave the city troubled Theophanes, who sent a request to his fellow Atlanteans in
the area to assist in the decision. Before the summons went out, Alexander’s condition worsened,
and he died. As sorcerers flood Babylon in response to the summons, or just looking for answers
to Alexander’s death, his three advisors are nowhere to be found.

What is Happening?
Unlike the other stories in the section, Alexander’s death is too important a factor to have only
one true possibility. Presented below are three possibilities of what has happened to Alexander.

**Mantrikis Plot:** A few Mantrikis who had gained power and influence over Porus and his
generals followed Alexander’s army back to Babylon in hopes of gaining influence over
Alexander as the leader of a large and expanding Empire. Alexander’s court was filled with
sophists and scholars, skeptical about anything they could not explain through deduction. To add
to the difficulty, Alexander had several mages advising him already, and they were also
suspicious of the Mantrikis’ presence. Realizing they had no power to gain, the group left
Babylon, but not before setting a curse on Alexander. Their logic dictated that if they could not
control the largest Empire in the known world, then it should be destroyed.

**Unforeseen Illness:** The debate between Alexander’s sorcerer advisors raged for one week.
They eventually agreed to determine the cause of the illness to discover if he was sick of natural
causes. A heated debate on how to proceed ensued, leading to heightened emotions and standstill
on what to do. By the time Anaxagoras decided to act on his own to save the king, Kleitos
decided to act on his own to kill him. These events lead to Alexander’s remarkable recovery one
day, and his sudden death the same night.

Anaxagoras knew Kleitos had to be the one to undo his good work, and challenged him to a duel.
Though Theophanes counseled them both to wait for a council of Atlanteans to help solve the
dispute, they fought, leading to Anaxagoras’s death. Kleitos went into hiding, faking his own
death at the same time. Theophanes secluded himself in shame for allowing his two friends to
die.

**Poison:** Alexander’s illegitimate brother, Ptolemy I Soter, saw the revels as an opportunity to
slip Alexander a poison unnoticed. He worked in secret with help from Kleitos, who sought to
place himself as sole advisor and puppet master to the new Emperor. Once the poison began to
take effect, Kleitos delayed Anaxagoras and Theophanes as much as he could until it was too late
to save Alexander. As it became evident that Ptolemy would not succeed to the throne, Kleitos
became more erratic, attempting to bring Alexander’s half-brother, Philip III, under his sway. This caused Anaxagoras and Theophrastes to suspect Kleitos of complicity. He soon fled the palace, and they both followed in his wake.

Who are the Characters?
The characters are most likely to be members of the Mahanizrayani, Samashti, and Vajrastra darshanas. The Mahanizrayani are looking for answers and hoping to retain some control over the Empire as it changes hands. The Samashti are answering summons from Theophrastes and seek to find their fellow, as well as ensure the fallout from the debacle does not touch Sleeper lives. The Vajrastra are either answering summons from Theophrastes to assist in dealing with Kleitos and Anaxagoras or wish to discover the cause for Alexander’s illness and ensure those responsible come to justice.

Most of the characters should be part of the Arcadian cult. Mostly Atlanteans, though the death of the king draws the Tyrannoi in hopes of taking up the reins of power after his death. Mages from other nations certainly have an interest in visiting Babylon seeking knowledge and discourse with other Awakened. The death of Alexander touches all mages, as the hope for a diverse Awakened community has the chance of dying with his Empire.

Possible Resolutions
When the characters arrive in Babylon, they should seek out the three sorcerers. In some cases, not all of them are alive, or easy to find. Once found, they will assist the characters in whatever way they can. The palace guards and revelers are a hindrance to foreign mages seeking information. The characters must interact with the many Sleepers in the palace if they hope to gain access to investigate Alexander’s death.

Perdiccas, Alexander’s bodyguard, has the entire palace on lock-down. He refuses to allow any, even those who knew Alexander best, to disturb the dead emperor’s body until he can be embalmed. Philip III, Alexander’s half-brother, has assumed de facto control over the palace, and is keeping Alexander’s court until a successor can be decided. Callisthenes, Alexander’s royal Historian and Sleeper advisor, spends his time attempting to thwart Alexander’s three sorcerer advisors. Egyptian and Chaldean embalmers are at the palace to preserve Alexander’s body as soon as they can, and the characters must work quickly to see Alexander’s body before the process starts.

Mantrikis Plot: Alexander’s sorcerers have been investigating the route the Mantrikis used to curse Alexander. They have cloistered themselves away, but are not hard to find. They will urge the characters to track down the Mantrikis and bring them to justice. Following the trail of the Mantrikis is not as hard as it sounds. Their journey back home was halted by the news of Alexander’s death, and they have returned to Babylon in hopes of gaining control over his successor. They are unapologetic for their actions, though will be unlikely to reveal their selfish motives to the characters. The characters may choose to kill the Mantrikis for their deeds, though this will not change the course of the Empire. Characters who wish to take over the Empire may recruit the Mantrikis to assist them. The characters must contend with the many Tyrannoi who have descended on Babylon and wish to take leadership of the Empire for themselves.

Unforeseen Illness: The characters must gain admittance to examine Alexander’s body. They find that he was touched by magic by both Anaxagoras and Kleitos, and the true cause of his illness is obscured in the magical resonances. When the characters find Theophrastes, he
reluctantly relates the events surrounding Alexander’s death. Theophanes admits that he does not know the true fate of Kleitos, though he is assumed to be dead. Characters who seek out Kleitos find him with Philip III, attempting to appropriate the Empire through him. Kleitos is not wholly responsible for Alexander’s death, though the characters may still wish to bring him to justice for killing him after Anaxagoras had taken steps to heal him. If the characters are also members of the Tyrannoi, they may wish to join him to gain power over the Empire in its state of flux, or destroy him to take over his role.

**Poison:** Theophanes and Anaxagoras followed Kleitos into the city, but soon lost him. Realizing that his Tyrannoi support network was more vast than they had thought, they return to the palace to await sorcerers responding to Theophane’s requests. The characters arrive in the palace shortly before the sorcerers, and have time to attempt to examine Alexander’s body and discover he was poisoned. Anaxagoras and Theophanes work with the characters to find Kleitos and urge them to bring him to justice. When the characters find Kleitos, he is unrepentant, yet reasonable. If questioned, he will reveal his conspiracy with Ptolemy, and that the man knows what Kleitos is. If the characters attempt to kill Kleitos, he will not go down without a fight, and he has a cabal of Tyrannoi willing to protect him. Regardless of what the characters do with Kleitos, they must also deal with Ptolemi to make sure he doesn’t spread his knowledge.

**River Wardens**

When Alexander’s army invaded the Indus, they never made it further East than the Vitasta River, called *Hydaspes* by the Greeks. During the battle at the river, Porus’s army seemed able to see and predict Alexander’s every move, paralleling him along the west bank up and down for days. Porus traveled with several wise-men and spiritualists, who claimed the ability to speak with and make deals with *Yaksha*, or nature spirits. These men were under the direction of the Vajrastra Thyrso, Ila. Ila coerced five Yaksha from the river and forced them to work with each of her followers with promises to cleanse the river and remove the human taint when the war was won.

Already disgruntled at being disturbed, the Yaksha did the bare minimum to help Ila’s spiritualists. When Alexander split his army and took a troop North, the Yaksha did not report the movement until he had already crossed the river. Porus’s army went to meet him, but he was taken mostly by surprise. In a rage, Ila bound the Yaksha to the land, forcing them to remain manifest as animalistic creatures. She told each that if they helped her army defeat the intruders she would set them free. With little choice left, the Yaksha obeyed her commands. Alexander’s army proved to be too well trained and disciplined for the Indian armies and soon they suffered defeat. Ila was lost in the battle, killed by her own spiritualists when they discovered she had bound the Yaksha. In the aftermath of battle the Yaksha fled the river, retreating into the forest. They hoped to regain their spiritual forms, but Ila’s binding held after her death, condemning them to the material world.

In the months following the battle, travel on the road between the Hydaspes and the Ganges is dangerous. Travelers find entire baggage trains along the road, seemingly abandoned. Men never make it to their destinations, and are never heard from again. At first, the missing people were Greeks and Persians; the Indian satraps refused to investigate, assuming the men defected back to Macedonia. But as time goes on, it is clear that no one is safe. All travel in the area has been deemed dangerous, routes are blocked between the rivers, and communication between Porus and the satraps of Persia is nearly impossible.
What is Happening?
The once benevolent Yaksha are now hostile and vicious. They attack anyone who gets too close, even going out of their way to chase off travelers along roads. Ila’s magic bound the creatures to the material world, but their reaction to it has cemented their fate. Her death drove the Yaksha insane. Terror at remaining material forever drove them to destroy her spiritualists and flee into the woods. Since that time, Ila’s magic has faded and the Yaksha could return to their spiritual forms at any time of their choosing. Yet, insanity has convinced them that this is impossible, so they remain material. Now, in their insanity, they kill and revel in the death of men.

Yaksha
Treat the Yaksha as Rank 2 spirits of nature with the Blast, Harrow and Claim Numina. The Yaksha are permanently materialized, and if their Corpus is destroyed, they are banished to the Shadow Realm.

Who are the Characters?
Characters can come from any background and are likely to belong to the Mahanizrayani or the Vajrastra darshanas. The Mahanizrayani are concerned about the profuse number of Sleeper deaths, and wish to solve the issue to restore trade and communications. The Vajrastra wish to root out the evils killing men. The Jnanashakti want to study the Yaksha and their odd state of being. The Samashti are concerned about rogue magic in the area, and wish to see it contained.

• Greek, Egyptian, and Persian characters were with Alexander when he entered India and chose to stay to seek out the mysteries presented there. With the roads closed, supplies and communication are limited. While these are mere inconveniences to the Awakened, the local satrapies are growing hostile. Regaining the use of the roads is important for good relations, as well as the ability to return home with valuable research.

• Indian characters know that reopening the roads is important for their people. Some characters may be aware of Ila’s actions at the Hydaspes River, but logic would say that the Yaksha should be returned to their normal state by now. If not, then restoring the land to its natural order is of utmost importance.

Possible Resolutions
The Yaksha do not trust sorcerers and are unlikely to want to talk to them. No magic currently binds them, so attempts to dispel or banish them will fail. Though the Yaksha are still spirits, they are permanently materialized and cannot return to their native state. They can be killed just like any other creature, though they have gained strength in the time since their initial binding. If the characters do attempt to communicate with the Yaksha, they find the creatures to be unreasonably frightened and showing signs of insanity. If they are cured of this, the Yaksha become much more reasonable, and can be convinced to return to their spiritual forms and stop killing people.

Bearing Gifts
Alexander was resolved to integrate new cultural customs and policies into the Empire and homogenize his people under one rule. He encouraged his people to travel freely and to learn what they could about each culture. Of course, the Greeks benefitted the most from this, as they
encouraged everyone to speak their language and worship their gods. When Alexander adopted Persian customs in his court, his Greek countrymen took offense and showed displeasure, forcing him to abandon the new acts.

As the Greeks entered Asia Minor and the rest of Asia, they were often met with sights and activities that were completely new experiences for them. This was true for those traveling west as well, as they sought the cultural center of the new Empire. For the Awakened community, these new experiences were often a matter of discovering new magical traditions and exploring artifacts native to new countries. Sorcerers of different cultures within the Empire began to establish lines of communication, trading knowledge, tomes, and magical artifacts amongst like-minded individuals.

Such exchanges occurred between the magical cults as a way to spread their own beliefs to neighbors, though sorcerers of similar schools find more in common than they are expecting as the exchanges take root. A cult of Karpani in Susa has opened its libraries to all within Alexander’s Empire, accepting pledges of tomes and artifacts for the privilege. Travel to Susa from Greece has become relatively easy, and many of the Awakened make the pilgrimage to Susa, if only as an excuse to begin expeditions to gain knowledge and power.

The Karpani have made an open invitation, though the Zoroastrian priests are discerning in which pledges are acceptable and who will actually be allowed to peruse their archives. If the gift is suitable enough, such as a magical artifact or Grimoire, they may even offer a full exchange. Gaining a meeting with the Magi is not easy, requiring letters of introduction, and sometimes a personal introduction from a sorcerer they already know and trust. In recent weeks, gaining an audience has become nearly impossible as the Magi refuse to see anyone; it seems they have shut their doors on communications for good. Not only that, but communication has been lost between many sorcerers new to the city, and several have gone completely missing.

**What is Happening?**

The Magi of Susa are indeed interested in sharing and gaining new knowledge with like-minded sorcerers throughout the Empire. They are not as discerning or discriminating as rumor would make them out, though. As long as the sorcerer has something to share, they are willing to see her and at least let her peruse the library. News of this exchange of information has reached almost every sorcerer in the Empire, and many have flocked to Susa looking to partake.

The exchange of ideas and beliefs has indeed brought like-minded individuals together and caused some to begin organizing. Among the first to do so are the Diadochi. As they come together, they recognize that not all sorcerers share in their vision of mastery over the world, and could pose a danger to their goals if allowed to organize against them. To this end, a group has traveled to Susa and put measures in place to prevent sorcerers from gaining access to the Magi’s library. They intentionally seek out sorcerers new to Susa and do everything they can to prevent them from interacting with the Magi. Taking advantage of the cultural differences, they attempt to persuade the travelers not to meet with the Magi. If that fails, they steal pledges, and even resort to murder to keep the sorcerers from trading information.

**Who are the Characters?**

The characters are most likely to be Greek, though some may be coming from Egypt or India. Most of the characters are Jnanashakti, seeking to learn about new magical wonders and share information about what they have already learned. Some may be Samashti, seeking to ensure this
spread of information does not include the Sleepers, or Ajivaka seeking truth and personal meaning. The Mahanizrayani and the Vajrastra seek alliances with like-minded sorcerers, and seek to meet with the Magi to form new alliances.

The characters have just arrived in Susa with hopes to meet with and learn from the Karpani Magi. Each carries a pledge valuable enough to be exchanged for something from the Magi’s own resources. As they traverse the foreign city, they are approached by Rajani and Basilius who offer to assist them in getting to the Magi. They are both members of the Diadochi, and their job is to convince the characters to abandon their quest to visit the Magi. Rajani is a Mastigos from India, and she attempts to persuade any Indian characters to abandon their desire to deal with these foreigners who have disrupted their home lives. Basilius is a Thyrsos who insinuates to the Greek and Egyptian characters that the Persians are only attempting to take their valuable artifacts, and have nothing worth trading.

**Possible Resolutions**

Assuming the characters are resistant to Rajani’s and Basilius’s attempt to convince them otherwise, they seek out the Magi in Susa. Rajani and Basilius have been in the city for weeks, and have set up interference in the form of paid-off guards, magical concealment, and Sleepers they have enslaved to do their bidding. Attempts to find the Magi will alert the Diadochi, who escalate their tactics, resorting to attempts to steal the characters’ pledges, or even kill them.

- The characters must attempt to work around the measures Rajani and Basilius have put into place to meet with the Magi. This may take some time, if they attempt to find each and every Sleeper under the Tyrannoi’s control. If the characters choose to kill Rajani and Basilius, then they must discover where the two have set themselves up in the city, or set a trap for them.

- The characters may be able to trick Rajani and Basilius into revealing the location of the Magi, though this takes some cunning and double-dealing. With a little bit of investigation and pushing them to talk, the characters can learn why Rajani and Basilius want them to avoid the Magi. Both the sorcerers are confident in their worship of the Supernal Tyrants, and will gladly offer the characters a place in their organization. If the characters accept, they will be given tasks to assist the Diadochi in their efforts in Susa. From there the characters can continue to assist the Diadochi, or they can betray Rajani and Basilius by going to meet with the Magi anyway.

If the characters finally reach the Magi, the priests are in a state of confusion as to why no one has been visiting them. Alerting them to the presence of the Diadochi will allow the Zoroastrian priests to root them out of the city, and prevent them from gaining a firm hold in the future.

**Inspirations**

**Non-Fiction**

Glancing at a Wikipedia article, or leafing through a history book, might give you the impression that Alexander and the world he lived in are well-documented. The truth is that none of the nearly two dozen contemporary accounts of the man’s life have survived to the modern day — the quotations from them are all that’s left, thanks to 2,000 years of quotation and paraphrasing by later Classical scholars, particularly Romans. One of the main sources we have for details of the cultures and campaigns depicted in this chapter is Plutarch, who wrote 400 years after Alexander died and concentrates on making it a good parallel story to that of Julius Caesar.
Plutarch was also a priest of Delphi; maybe in the World of Darkness he left overtly magical elements of the story out.

One of the best modern works on the period is Robin Lane Fox’s *Alexander The Great*, which pieces together the confusing fragments into a compelling narrative and doesn’t ignore the cultures of the people the King of Kings conquered. Troupes wanting higher levels of detail on individual cultures than the Internet provides could do worse than looking at Fox’s bibliography as well — in particular RN Frye’s *The Heritage of Persia*.

To see how the magical traditions of Greece, Persia, and India informed the 19th-Century Occult revival Mage draws inspiration from, try Kurt Selegmann’s *History of Magic and the Occult*.

If you’d like to draw inspiration from the Philosophers, the *Dialogues of Plato* and the *Corpus Aristotelicum* are both available online.

**Fiction**

Oliver Stone’s *Alexander* flopped at the box office, struggling to cram a very complicated story into a film’s run-time. The “Final Cut” version on Blu-Ray is almost twice as long as the theatrical release, and yet another version is being prepared at time of writing.

Gene Wolfe’s *The Soldier Cycle (Soldier of the Mist, Soldier of Arete, and Soldier of Sidon)* is set a century before Alexander’s life, but features a Greek mercenary who, following a head injury, has no short-term memory but can see and speak to gods and supernatural creatures.
“He’s an ugly influence on the Lady Arabella Stuart,” the hooded figure in the cookhouse had said. “For that and other crimes, he has to die.”

Nicholas frowned as he tried to recall the rest of the conversation that brought him to the door of Sir Gresham’s estate in the dark of night, but only the scent of roasted meat and the weight of an overstuffed coin purse came to mind. The coin was convincing enough, but he took the black velvet doublet and equally fine blade offered as well. The doublet was cut to fit a man with a bit more girth around the middle, and the blade was just a bit too short for Nicholas’s liking. A quickly sewn-up tear in the side suspiciously matched the width of the blade as well. Still, it did not pay to question too deeply. What he did question was why he felt it was imperative to wear both for this bloody errand.

Getting into the estate was easy enough. The door hung open, unguarded. Nicholas could have simply walked in with none the wiser. Anyone looking on could have mistaken him for one of Sir Gresham’s pages or manservants. Still, he slunk through with as much stealth as he could; after all, easy entrance could just as easily be an invitation for a clandestine meeting as it could be a trap. Nicholas wondered if his benefactor would pay extra for scandalous information on a dead man.

Nicholas snuck through the pitch-black hallways with a surprising surety of gait. Even if Nicholas did not know the way, his feet did, leading him past the kitchens, where a couple of maids gossiped about an anticipated visitor that night. Nicholas nearly froze when he heard those words, but his feet guided him inexorably on. Still, he could not help but hear the name “Lady Stuart” in their chatter, and a reference to a position that Nicholas had only heard of in the boasts of teenage boys.

The door to the study was open as well, dim candlelight pouring into the hallway. A large set of shelves sat flush to the wall of the study, and through the door, Nicholas could see Sir Gresham idly examining the spines of the dozens of books kept there. Any one of those books cost more than what Nicholas would make in a year. He resolved to steal a volume or two to sell for a tidy profit after this business was concluded. With that, he crept quietly to the door and through it, his footfalls as silent as he could make them.

“Dear Lady Stuart! I’m glad you came toni——” Sir Gresham’s voice rang out with a jovial tone and a broad smile, but as he turned to face Nicholas, the cheer in his demeanor vanished as the words died on his lips. “…why, you’re not Lady Stuart.”

Nicholas cursed inwardly. He thought he was sufficiently silent to escape notice. His jaw clenched tight, and he shook his head. “Expecting her, my lord? I don’t think you’ll be seeing her this evening,” Nicholas replied slowly, trying to keep his tone even. His hand drifted to the hilt of the unfamiliar sword.

Sir Gresham released a heavy, exasperated sigh, his paunch rising and falling with the effort. “So. Walsingham sent you, did he? He’s getting sloppy. And, for God’s sake man, black?” Sir Gresham rolled his eyes. “Who died?”

“Had you not heard, my lord?” Nicholas replied with a tilt to his head. “You did.”

With surprising speed, Nicholas drew his blade, sending the point toward Sir Gresham’s heart with a lunge. The satisfying sinking sensation of piercing flesh followed, but not where Nicholas intended. Sir Gresham lifted his arm to deflect the blow, blocking the lethal tip with his fleshy
palm. He gripped the blade and yanked it free from Nicholas’s grip, sending it clattering along the library floor.

Sir Gresham pursed his lips and clicked his tongue. “I had hoped Felix would have sent someone a bit more competent.”

Nicholas recoiled with a snarl as his erstwhile victim turned his palm upward, revealing a deep furrow in the skin, but no blood spilling from it. The wound was only faintly limned in red, like eyes fresh from tears.

“Felix? Who...what...” Nicholas stammered. “What the hell is going on?”

A cold, cruel smile curled Sir Gresham’s lips and, with that same hand, he reached out to crush Nicholas’s throat with strong, thick fingers. “I could tell you,” Sir Gresham replied, “but it will do neither of us any good.” Nicholas struggled against Sir Gresham’s grip, but with no effort at all, Sir Gresham lifted him off the ground, pinning Nicholas to the bookcase. Sir Gresham looked up at Nicholas with a cherubic smile.

“But you’re right. It has everything to do with hell,” Sir Gresham purred, guiding Nicholas’s hand to his mouth. He parted his lips, and delicate fangs pierced Nicholas’s wrist. It took only a few moments to drain the would-be assassin dry. As Nicholas’s body slumped further in Sir Gresham’s grip, Sir Gresham’s licked the wound, closing the puncture marks with no trace that they were ever there. A smear of Nicholas’s blood from Sir Gresham’s tongue remained on the grayed flesh, but Sir Gresham wiped that away with his thumb before releasing the corpse. The sack of meat and bone hit the floor with a series of thuds: feet, knees, torso, then head…and a jingle of coin from the full purse.

Sir Gresham chuckled wickedly as he bent down to fetch the purse, studying it for a moment. The chuckle faded into a resigned sigh. “What a waste,” he muttered, then sat down at his desk, where ink and paper were at the ready. As he began to write, one of the maids from the kitchen approached the door with a tray of sweets. She let out a cry of fright as she spotted the stranger sprawled out on the floor, making the tray clatter noisily as she set it on the desk.

“Get a hold of yourself, girl. And clear it up, would you?” Sir Gresham asked, waving his hand at the cooling corpse. “I’d rather not spoil her ladyship’s dinner.”

Requiem for Regina

I looked for life and saw it was a shade
I trod the Earth and knew it was my tomb
And now I die, and now I was but made

Chidiock Tichborne

written on the eve of his execution, 1586

Introduction

1587. Even just through the gate, you’re quick to lose yourself in the London sprawl. The skeletons of new buildings are everywhere. There are more people here than ever before, and mostly they live in the shit. They’re jammed, crammed into spaces that would nauseate the
queen’s horse. Today, tomorrow, it’ll be this way for centuries to come. The city requires a constant stream of newcomers to devour and maintain itself. Perhaps you’re one of them. Disease is rampant. The filth is monumental, garbage and feces gild the streets. London, being London, corners the market on poverty. Its hovels redefine squalor.

London in the dark is all low’ring clouds and unfriendly shuttered buildings that close in on you when you look away. And the people. So many people. Just try and find a half-private place to piss or grope a Molly. You’ll get used to doing it in front of strangers, just like everyone else.

Eyes are everywhere. Keep that in mind as you chance your unsavory business on darkened streets. There’s someone watching you, always. Maybe just be a pickpocket, ready to chance his freedom for your pocket change. Maybe a sailor, nose sporting an angry carbuncle, insensate from drink in the corner. Or it may be someone you would not wish to encounter even on a crowded public street, in mid-day. Fortunately, daylight meetings are no longer one of your worries.

The merchant class is everywhere, eager to cadge you out of a coin or two in order to take that next quivering step up the ladder of prosperity. Yet the gulf that yawns between the most successful merchant and the least of the nobility remains staggering. To lead a prosperously comfortable, secure existence in these disorderly and dangerous times is something, but the upper crust drinks out of gold cups and picks the bones of quail from their teeth without a second thought to their good fortune.

And here you are, thirty-odd years into the rule of Elizabeth, long may she reign. After the terror of Mary, her sister is quieter. Heretics are no longer burned, and perhaps the stench has finally cleared your nostrils. Quieter, yes, but cannier and perhaps more ruthless.

Elizabeth is no longer a young maiden. That peacock Robert Dudley finally left court, in the most final way possible. He never did give up hoping that Elizabeth would marry him. Elizabeth rules from on high, the white queen. She is marble, inviolate, and people have mostly stopped saying she needs a husband. Meanwhile, Elizabeth, indifferent to all protestations, rules on.

Don’t think, however, that Elizabeth does not share the paranoia of the age. She is constantly being threatened, in body and mind, by assassins and those who seek to undermine her confidence and her authority. She is threatened by the French and Spanish from without, and the reformers from within. She has foiled multiple assassination plots, and her first cousin, Mary Queen of Scots, will soon be executed on her behalf.

Elizabeth rules a growing police state, and men in her employ can be found, permeating every large public gathering. Whether Elizabeth is due to be present or not, those who look suspicious are curtailed and led off for “questioning”. This is how she keeps her country safe, she claims. Best to stay a friend of the state.

In this world, a vampire can live like a king. More than ever, clever, savvy men and women can advance in society to take their place in the upper echelons of the court. Elizabeth favors those who amuse her, not just those who can trace their lineage back in musty old books. It’s a time where the new and the violent push aside the old and the unchanging.

All strata of vampire society are feeling this shift. The Invictus, keepers of both secrets and proud heritage, are riven between an old guard who wish to rule the night as they long have, while their younger counterparts look back to the glories of Rome and plot a new Camarilla.
The Lancea et Sanctum face the mortal Church splitting into irreconcilable factions. Their own leadership is in constant argument over how best to deal with this threat to their way of life and society.

The Weihan Cynn wait and watch. Though the mortal Queen has passed less harsh penalties for witchcraft, it is a dangerous time to consort with Britain’s dark forces. And the Gallows Post always exact their toll. Don’t travel without them.

London is a living thing, chewing on its own tail, consuming itself. For this economy to thrive requires a labor force that is docile and exists only to work. But the people are tired of their ignoble conditions and they are muttering about injustice. There is never enough food and what there is could be called half-rotten at best. Lucky for you you’re on a liquid diet.

Even during the day, it seems as though the sun never shines in gloomy, overcast London. The streets are a maze. Even lifelong residents can get lost in the chill fogs that sweep through the streets. These fogs are a vampire’s friend, for who will miss one mortal who disappears therein?

The dead of London sleep and they hunt. They feast on the fear and superstition, for even the most stout-hearted citizen will shudder when the hour grows late and the walk home yawns large. In the dark, shapes half-seen become monstrous beasts. The Damned grow fat on the fear.

The clamor of the city is never-ending. From sun-up market calls to late carousing, the city never sleeps. Screams are common in the night — who cares if it is drunken laughter or signals an ugly death? The Thames carries the whiff of the dead today, fish and God knows what else.

Be wary — London will chew you up and spit you back in the gutter, to float away with the rest of the offal. But make the right friends, take the right gambles, and the night can be yours as never before.

Theme and Mood

The theme is Schisms. Bonds that were once viewed as impossible to sunder are have given way to implacable enmities. England has changed vastly even within the Requiems of ancillae.

The mood is Someone’s Watching. Vampire governments have always tended towards being invasive, but mortals are beginning to poke into each other’s affairs more and more. The government keeps its ears keen for the hymns of the old faith, and the cat and mouse games it plays with those believers might lead it to the havens of the Damned.

What Has Come Before

The moon is more beautiful than the sun. The chill of night is softer on my brow than your hot breath. And it was worth it.

I was afraid, once, of the bargains that came in my dreams. I woke those nights, wild-eyed, burning with visions of grim wild things. Things I knew, unshakably, had the power to grant me any evil thing I might desire. The black dog that offered strength of will (and limb besides); enough to hold any heart in my hand, for only a sip of father’s blood. Your child (for it was yours, that night) sickened, but it did not trouble me. There would be other, better sons. And I had new hungers to contend with. The laughing crow, who waited seven nights to be invited in, and gave me senses so fine and bright that I could hear the whisper of her every smoky feather. The salt and bread I offered her rotted; in my long nights abroad, I found I no longer cared for the hospitality of strangers. The she-wolf took a kith and kin I had no use for, and the river-wet
mare ate the shadows off my heart; but their gifts were hardly sweeter than the burdens they freed me from. The lovely owl never needed to ask for my breath of morning.

In the beginning, nearly every clan in Albion had a holy sage they could call upon in times of need; their secret names shared from chief to chief over generations of rule. These sages protected their flocks, negotiated great workings with the peoples of the wood and bog, and (when it suited them) taught their brightest a tiny shadow of their own power. And all they asked for in exchange was blood. They were not a tribe unto themselves then, but they kept a sort of society and called one another Weiian Cynn. And they did know the owls. The lucky survivors of those encounters were sharper and colder, full of venomous whispers and deadly plans, with eyes that shined a brilliant gold. And they were revered, if loved somewhat less well than before.

Groans of the Britons: The Saxon Period (30-1043 AD)

The blood of Albion never did lie still.

The Picts warred with the Gaels, and married them. The Cornovii struggled with the Dumnonii like brothers. Only the Silures and Ordovices tried to take up arms against the Romans, and were crushed for their troubles. The Romans would come, and did, and brought more than one society to their frontier. For a time those Kindred wild enough to choose a distant province over glittering Rome ruled here. They drove the Weiian Cynn (who were few and scattered) away from their tribes, leaving to them the dark reaches beyond torchlight. In the deep woods and under the hills, they waited. Their golden-eyed survivors had promised that no empire of man would stand; that Rome would collapse under her own weight, taking her Kindred with her. And soon enough, by the Weiian Cynn’s reckoning, Londinium became too distant a province to maintain. The Pretanoi had accepted Roman roads, but they were far too busy fending off waves of Norsemen to shed tears when Londinium fell. When that night came at last, the Kindred of Albion didn’t mourn, for they had never known the Camarilla.

So when the Weiian Cynn returned to their tribes, to guide them and hold their pacts, the refugees who had once been Kindred returned with them. They remained in the monasteries and cloisters, in the lush fens and spent mines they already called home. Slowly and uneasily, these tribes united against the escalating foreign threats. The seafaring settlers brought their own dead — demanding and unruly ancestors who ultimately failed to settle with their living kin, and continued northward toward the Orkneys. Then came wave after wave of northern raiders picking at the edges of a newly forming nation. Where, in all this, did Rome’s childer go? Well, ask that woman with the dark curled hair, or the short man with a face carved from olive marble; they are among us yet.

In time, the tribes became kingdoms. Æthelstan, above all, brought them together, fostering the centralization and education that created an England. And through his daughter, Æthelgifu (a young priestess of the Weiian Cynn), Kindred found a safe home to shield them from the storm of wars on the continent. Unfortunately, it wasn’t to last.

Miracle Plays and Feast Days: The High Medieval Period (1066-1450)

The monastery and the cloister saved what fairy tales and legends of the Camarilla as remained to the Kindred of England. But mortal scribes were only occasionally literate, and Kindred scribes were no more likely to know Latin or Greek. There was too much at risk of being lost
entirely for every scribe to be taught his letters, so shortcuts were taken. Flaws begin to creep into their histories, compounding over time into a narrative that bore only a passing resemblance to the long-gone Camarilla. Then a bastard arrived from across the sea, and cut off the head of the English church and nobility in one fell swoop, sharply dividing the rulers from the ruled, and the remaining predators from their prey. The two peoples never fully became one, and neither peasants nor Kindred forgave him. But bitter as the class war that started at the Battle of Hastings was, England’s troubles would get far worse before they got better.

The Tower of London
The White Tower was built in 1078, as both a necessary fortress for the defense of London and as a glaring reminder that William would not relinquish England easily. Its use as a prison began almost immediately, despite being a royal residence well into the 16th century. After all, the Tower is a large keep, and was lightly inhabited even at its peak. Curiously, the dungeons themselves don’t seem to match the visible foundations. They’re smaller, for one thing; whole corridors appear to have been omitted, with nothing by smooth stone and packed earth where they should have been. And yet, some prisoners have claimed to hear things running on bare stone just beyond those walls, creaking and hissing, and the echo of hundreds of tiny feet. The guards trade ghost stories about those noises — that they’re lost souls of the Black Death seeking salvation, or of the native peasants who died in the Tower’s construction, or a dozen other reasons an Englishman might linger past death.

Two crusades, and several generations of absent kings, bled English peasants and clergy dry — leaving the wealth of their nation even more unequally distributed than before, while besieged by crime as they had never known. Then waves of famine and plague followed, punctuated by peasant revolts until nearly the end of the 15th century. John Ball raged against popes and kings in the common tongue, asking “When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?” Johanna Ferrour burned Savoy Palace and beheaded a Chancellor, inciting riots and personally taking her fair share of noble blood. Wat Tyler destroyed deeds and records of debt, wiping out decades of legal obligations that bound serfs to lord and Crown. Kindred found themselves on both sides of this conflict, rioting with peasants and riding with lords, falling prey to mortal political assassinations as frequently as to one another. They began consolidating for their own safety, coordinating their infiltration of generation after bloody generation of new nobles and new royal houses and new clerical organizations. The Weihan Cynn had always thrived by their connections, but now it was everyone’s responsibility to maintain them.

Æthelgifu, who became Ieldra while England’s mortals starved and rioted, drove her clan’s bargains with the other old creatures further. First, making common cause with spirits of Meadowsweet and Birch to protect all those who had fed on mortals from sharing their fate. Then, with the wolves who were sometimes women, to protect each other from hunters who came across the sea. Safe for a time, she began to husband the Weihan Cynn back to health. But before England’s creatures had caught their breath, the Plantagenet families were tearing at one another’s throats.

The Princes in the Tower
When Edward IV died suddenly, his two surviving sons found themselves at the center of a war for succession between two warring blocks of English nobles,
neither of whom were particularly invested in the health and welfare of competitors for the throne. So when the boys disappeared, there was a great deal of outrage, but no real surprise. Their bodies have yet to be found; while both Richard III and Henry Tudor were both happy to use the missing children as a bludgeon against one another, neither was willing to open an investigation into their supposed deaths. But then, even stout guardsmen find excuses not to visit the Tower’s cavernous depths.

Boars and Dragons: The War(s) of The Roses (1450-1490)
The Black Death didn’t leave England’s nobility unscathed, but far fewer lords fell to diseases of the city, and an excess of sons always breeds war. Everyone who could be king thought that they should be king, and took up arms to prove it. Mortal alliances were shattered left and right, with Kindred society alongside them. Lancaster and York both had legitimate claims, and both houses had been important enough for one vampire or another to nurture a few attentive servants within them. And they became…invested. It wasn’t enough to know the movements of the family, and exploit their resources as desired; your pet house had to win. For most, the game was over once the Lancasters won, but that was a mere century ago, and there remain some bitter losers. Fortunately, by some measures, the battered working and peasant classes were largely left out of the mess. They had no more say than a deer does who would be hounding them tomorrow, but for a moment the nobles were murdering one another instead of their servants.

The Book of Common Prayer: The Tudors (1500-1590)
As wars of succession often are, the resolution owed as much to marriages as battles. Overly ambitious lords and their families were largely killed; the rest opted to renounce or consolidate through their children, allowing them to return their attention to neglected farmlands and empty purses. Their peasant tenants had, all this time, been agitating for lower taxes and lower rents, for fair prices and protection. Landowners responded by enclosing the common pasture, and raised sheep instead of corn. They drove their formerly rural workers toward towns that were crowding into dense, filthy cities. The truly wild places where the Weihan Cynn once thrived got harder to come by. Even their woods were being parceled out as private hunting parks for wealthy mortals. Æthelgifu knew, finally, that they would need to modernize to thrive; not just accept the city, but join it. The Dygol Kepen, her bitter elders, are resisting; but the Moorish Qalandariyyah she’s recently accepted into the Weihan Cynn’s ranks have brought a casual acceptance of city life with them, and her youngest childer already love both bustle and woods.

It’s well that she did, because shortly thereafter, Henry VIII began selling the churches of England for spare parts. Over the course of less than five years, those few Kindred who were still cozened within religious orders, and the thousands of men and women employed by them, were abruptly homeless. But these nation-shaking reforms to English Catholicism were a byproduct of Henry’s real problem. He needed money, to refill a treasury he emptied with military spectacles and costly wars, and a male heir, to solidify his dynasty. Edward VI did succeed him, barely, but Catherine Parr had successfully reconciled Henry VIII with his daughters. So when Edward died young, he was unable to protect the Protestant nation he tried to build, or prevent his half-sisters from succeeding him.
The Elizabethan woman has a lot more freedom of movement than her continental sisters. She can't purchase property, but she can inherit it from husbands and relatives, and bequeath it in turn. She marries largely whom she wishes, much older than her granddaughters will, and increasingly works outside the home in her own business (or that of her family). Her moral sense is defined by the appropriate use of her sexuality. Pursuing children is laudable; fully a quarter of women are already pregnant when they marry. It's responsible, after all, for a couple to ensure their fertility before wedding. Pursuing power is rebellious; spinsters, revolutionaries, and artists alike are decried as whores and witches. Queen Bess has cultivated a cult of personal virginity, but no other English woman may marry her nation.

Two weeks later, Bloody Queen Mary ascended to the throne, and set about reversing her brother's and father's reforms, re-instituting Catholicism and systematically burning hundreds of religious and political dissenters as heretics. The common man’s opinion of her is still mixed; Catholics lament her loss, and Protestants rejoice at the end of her bloody purges. Her reign was marked by famine, a disastrous war in France, and an unpopular Spanish marriage; but she held Ireland, and tried to save an economy ruined by her father. For better or for worse, she was the first woman to successfully claim the throne under her own power, and she paved the way for Elizabeth to take her place.

Good Queen Bess walks a delicate middle path, repealing some of Mary’s reforms, but not reestablishing all of Edward’s, keeping a sort of religious stalemate in her country and her court. She has cautiously avoided conflict with the European powers, and allowed Parliament the room to legislate. In that comparative peace, English culture and trade are flourishing. These days her ships reach the Americas and the Ottoman Empire. The treasury is secure for the first time since her grandfather ruled, and her subjects are producing and consuming art in greater numbers than ever before. Kindred are freer to mingle with mortal society than they have been since the days of Rome and Byzantium, and some are taking a dangerously heavy hand with mortal politics.

The repeated attempts to overthrow or assassinate her are beginning to wear on Elizabeth. The most recent blow (though she fears not the last) has come at the hands of her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots. Whether or not Mary ever truly intended to overthrow Elizabeth, her friends and relatives certainly wanted her to, and Mary has spent half her life under house arrest for their efforts. Francis Walsingham, just a few months ago, found or conjured a silver casket of letters which proved Mary’s ill-intent, and justified both her trial and imminent execution. Elizabeth grudgingly signed a warrant, but has disclaimed actually ordering Mary’s death. Walsingham was conveniently absent from court, sick at home, when the execution took place, and he seems to have escaped Elizabeth’s wrath. Increasingly afraid of usurpation, Elizabeth has refused to name a successor, to the despair of her younger cabinet.

Tonight, Elizabeth’s trials are beginning to exceed her capacity, and her behavior at court has become erratic and emotional. Plague is washing across the continent yet again, Spain is picking fights with her armada, Ireland is growing restless, and the treasury is being depleted by yet more costly and inconclusive skirmishes. The wellspring of art and science has brought with it a worrying phenomenon of “atheism,” a kind of deadly anarchism that argues against both God and Queen. Her advisors, who have provided her with decades of good counsel, are old and sick and dying. Walsingham in particular has been increasingly ill of late. When he dies (as he must, very soon), there will be no one to take the reins of Elizabeth’s spy network; and all his countless
creatures will be left to their private machinations. His cousin Thomas is something of a diplomat, but does not seem to be made of the same stern stuff as Francis. He prefers to act as a treasured friend and patron to poets and playwrights, like his recent friend and employee, Christopher Marlowe. And Marlowe himself has been agitated and aggressive toward his colleagues, like a man in possession of a terrible secret.

What is to Come

In 1593, William Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus captures the imaginations of Kindred of all covenants, and an ambitious young vampire stages a private performance for the court. However, one of Ieldra Æthelgifu’s Hounds comes to report an incident during his patrols along the Strand that nearly killed him. In his hunger, he decimates the cast during the final scene of Act Two, sparing the poor boy playing Lavinia from bleeding out from the stumps of his wrists. The Blood-Queen promptly bans the deaths of actors onstage in future Kindred performances, but many Kindred keep their eye on Shakespeare throughout his career. The theater flourishes in general, especially with the construction of the Globe Theater in Southwark and other playwrights seeking out the fame of both Marlowe and Shakespeare.

After the death of Good Queen Bess, James VI of Scotland becomes James I of England as well, ruling both countries simultaneously. He continues the encouragement of literary culture, which provides some small comfort to the Kindred court. His history of witch hunts in Scotland makes the Weihan Cynn uneasy, but fortunately, his views on witchcraft mellow before he takes the English throne. Even the Lancea et Sanctum see a beacon of hope with the Scottish king as he tries to reunite the Catholics and Protestants in his kingdom by blurring the lines that differentiate the two faiths. However, his belief in absolute monarchy and the divine right of kings causes a few dissenting grumbles in the halls of Parliament. The Invictus quietly defuse these rumblings where they can, as they have influence with and hence a vested interest in some of James’ favorites.

However, the growing fringe movement of the Puritans takes greater umbrage with what they view as the corruption of their faith. All of Ieldra Æthelgifu’s court agree to stay away from the Puritans. Their stark, bare outlook on life makes them decidedly unappealing, and even the most skilled Serpent has trouble swaying them into temptation. Even the Gallows Post, who are the least discriminatory when it comes to who they deal with, shy away from the Puritans’ strict dress and even stricter mannerisms.

England’s forays across the Atlantic to the Spanish Main also capture the public’s attention. Sir Francis Drake, already a legend for circumnavigating the globe, takes his final voyage to the Spanish Main, and Sir Walter Raleigh sails through South America in search of a mythical city of gold. These voyages end in death by dysentery and disappointment, but the desire to travel to the New World in search of riches and glory remains strong. In 1607, a crew heads out to Virginia to found a new colony, praying that it would have better results than the last one.

The natives inhabiting the New World provide no end of fascination. The covenants wonder if Kindred walk among them as well, and early reports indicate that they do. The Invictus see trade opportunities and a land of opportunity and conquest, prospects particularly attractive to those who want to build a new Camarilla. The Lancea et Sanctum see a whole new flock in need of tending. The Weihan Cynn see kindred spirits in need of protection from the First and Second Estates. A couple warriors of the Weihan Cynn find their way to the New World with the second group of settlers in 1610, pledging to send regular reports back to Ieldra Æthelgifu and the court.
at large. They return with John Rolfe, who has taken a dark-skinned bride who calls herself Rebecca. Her story of her previous life as Pocahontas becomes the talk of London. The returned Blood-Blessed express a great deal of urgency to reach out into the New World to preserve and incorporate the religions of the native people before the agents of the First and Second Estates assimilate them, convert them, or wipe them out. Ieldra Æthelgifu allows a few to go, but does nothing to legitimize it in the court. After all, the irony of the whole idea of Kindred invading to “save” a particular culture is not lost on her.

The Kindred who keep their eyes on affairs at home marvel and fret over the scientific advances coming forward at a faster and faster pace. While these advances really started nearly half a century earlier, the most interesting aspects of the scientific revolution came from the advances in anatomy. William Harvey provides a complete and refined description of the circulatory system, and many Kindred who fancy themselves scientifically-minded posit that extensions of Harvey’s research could lead to a better understanding of the Kindred condition. Those Kindred who do try to experiment with this idea come up with no conclusive results; in later years, some of them will join the Ordo Dracul. A handful of Invictus keep an eye on Harvey’s research, while the Weihan Cynn and Lancea et Sanctum encourage more explorations into physics and astronomy, if only to keep the kine’s eyes upward.

War, Restoration, and Fate

However, the course of kine politics soldiers on. Charles, in his belief in the divine right of kings and his quarrels with Parliament over the extensions of the royal prerogative, leaves the Kindred of London torn. After all, the very concept of divine right fits the mindset of the Invictus, the Lancea et Sanctum, and even the Weihan Cynn perfectly. However, with a more authoritarian government, the king of the kine could easily order deaths and investigations left and right, with little to no checks or balances coming from Parliament.

Only the Gallows Post sits firmly on the side of the Parliament. Many of the elders in the Gallows Post remember the atrocities they saw during the Crusades, which rivaled even the bloodiest and most sadistic rituals of the other covenants. They are not convinced that any power given by the grace of any god belongs in the hands of the kine. As a result, they are also the first to hear of the Parliamentarians preparing for war. Slowly but surely, the Kindred of the Gallows Post in London make sure they have messages that will bring them out of England entirely. Their disappearance does not go unnoticed, but most of the other Kindred write it off to the transitory nature of the Gallows Post’s work.

Ieldra Æthelgifu does not write it off. One night, on the eve of the war, she simply disappears as mysteriously as she appeared after the Black Death. The council she leaves behind rules as best they can in her stead, even while each councilor jockeys for enough power to overtake the rest of the council. Through the entire English Civil War, the upper echelons of the Invictus, the Lancea et Sanctum, and the Weihan Cynn fight amongst each other, paying little to no heed to the neonates. Under Cromwell’s rule as Lord Protector of the Commonwealth, careless Kindred find themselves quickly targeted; and more than a few neonates disappear entirely, only for graffiti written in their ashes to appear on the walls of the Tower of London. The rest of the court shoots impotent, venomous looks at those who are supposed to lead them while the squabbling council and the Roundheads turn their beloved city into an austere hell.

Finally, in the wake of the triumphant return of Charles II to London, the Gallows Post makes a resurgence with Kindred from all over the known world in their company, including a Daeva
neonate hailing from the Ottoman Empire who goes by a single name: Kismet. His story captures the imagination of the entire court; he claims his sire is a great lady who lives west of England. Every time he tells the story, his sire’s appearance changes. One night, she is tall and slender, dusky-skinned as he is, with hair like the night sky itself. Another night, she is all voluptuous curves and her skin is the color of fresh milk, with hair like rays of sunlight and eyes like the sky of a bright summer day. On yet another night, her tresses sprout from her head like flames, and her eyes are set with emeralds. Yet, no matter how many times he tells the story, her name is always the same: Kamilah.

While Kismet distracts what remains of the court with his stories, those who look upon the return of the Gallows Post unfavorably find their resources bound, their hands stayed by powerful Kindred in their own covenants in courts throughout Europe, and their mortal retainers swinging by their necks until dead at noon. When the young Turk asks the court if they would allow him the honor of serving them as their prince, those not won over by his own majestic charm are in no position to oppose him.

Kismet chooses his own council, respecting the tradition of the number of members, but ensuring whoever represents a given covenant will actually work with him. The Gallows Post approves of such a plan until the moment Kismet applies it to his own covenant as well. Throughout the entire court, Kismet flouts the concept that older is better and appoints whomever he feels is most competent for a given job to do said job. Anyone who tries to obstruct those who Kismet appoints receive public censure. Elders write scathing letters to their peers on the Continent asking why they or their allies would support such a fraud.

Due to the sensitive nature of the letters, several elders employ the Gallows Post to dispatch them as a matter of course. Only half of the letters actually get through to their recipients, and those that do survive the journey are the ones that aren’t entrusted to the Gallows Post for delivery. Many of the replies disavow any support of Kismet or the Gallows Post, but bring no promise of assistance in ousting the young Turk. The authors of these replies frequently hint that their hands are tied for other reasons. The elders who do receive replies gather them with the intent to publicly oust and humiliate not just Kismet, but the entire Gallows Post covenant in London. They coordinate their efforts to decisively take Kismet down in the beginning of September 1666.

Of course, they cannot possibly plan around a fire starting in Pudding Lane that demolishes the majority of London in three days. The flames get too close for comfort before the elders can make their strike. A few lose control of their Beasts and abandon their letters completely in their instinctual urge to flee the oncoming flames. Nearly half the Kindred in the city simply do not escape the destruction at all. A few vampires even report seeing shadowy birds flying high above the embers and the screeching of owls.

When the smoke clears, those Kindred who remain turn to their prince to provide guidance and recovery, but he too is gone. He leaves a note of farewell, claiming that he has found his sire and entrusts his council to continue the good works begun in his reign. The letter is dated the night before the fires began.

The Invictus swoop in quickly to attempt to take power, with the main push for the throne coming from yet another Ventrue, Benjamin Cahill. He is a relatively young Lord, with his Embrace falling just before the death of Christopher Marlowe. However, he finds his own
undoing at the hands of Tarquin St. John, a Sanctified Shadow who also traveled to London with
the resurgence of the Gallows Post. For Tarquin, however, it was a return home.

The two of them debate the finer points of the doctrine of Longinus compared to that of the
Church of England. St. John counters every point Cahill throws at him with a beguiling calm
until finally Cahill loses his temper and assaults St. John in front of the assembled crowd. It takes
three Daeva and two Nosferatu to hold Cahill down until the frenzy subsides. After the incident,
Cahill quietly retreats from society and Tarquin St. John ascends as the second Archbishop of
London.

From the moment Archbishop St. John takes power, the Blood-Blessed are his primary targets of
derision and scorn. Derision and scorn mark St. John’s reign rather thoroughly as he belittles and
humiliates those who displease him in short order. He is a cosmopolitan prince, much like his
predecessor; and when his own breadth of experience is lacking, he looks to the courts of Europe
for guidance more frequently than the council or even the elders among his covenant. While the
council grumbles at the obvious snubs, they cannot help but concede the wisdom of most of
Archbishop St. John’s decisions. With the entire city, both Kindred and kine, in a state of
rebuilding, Archbishop St. John’s rule provides much-needed stability, and his deference to
elders pleases much of the old guard.

The First Estate shows their pleasure at Archbishop St. John’s reign most readily, despite the
disgrace of their man Cahill. Masses enjoy full attendance from both the First and the Second
Estates, even from those Unconquered who cling to the mortal faiths they held in life. The
Weihan Cynn and the Gallows Post try to attend as well, if only to show deference to the prince
as he preaches, but both covenants are turned away. The line “Let not seeds of wisdom be sown
where no garden can flourish,” once an admonishment in the Rule of Golgotha to not teach the
word of Longinus to mortals, now becomes popular in the court to denigrate the intelligence of
“lesser” covenants.

One of the few documented instances of the Archbishop St. John genuinely smiling comes from
the Declaration of Indulgence from the Roman Catholic King James II. The Sanctified and
Blood-Blessed breathe a sigh of relief, as it means their Catholic connections will have a reprieve
from the prosecution they received at the hands of the Crown. The Blood-Blessed immediately
funnel additional energy into their cult revolving around the Virgin Mary and compete fiercely
with the Sanctified for the dead souls of fledgling Kindred. Many ancilae of the First Estate, still
very much tied to their mortal faiths, bicker and squabble over the declaration, especially when
the Archbishop of Canterbury himself refuses to proclaim it. More letters go to Europe to call
upon their allies, and wherever possible, the Unconquered forego the usual practice of sending
their missives through the Gallows Post.

The invasion of William of Orange in 1689 brings about the Glorious Revolution that brings an
end to the reign of James II; he rules jointly with his wife, Mary. The event sends Archbishop St.
John into a frenzy in his private chambers, the news of which reaches the court through his ghoul
pleading for help on how to sedate him. Archbishop St. John slaughters the girl as an example to
the rest of the court on discretion and obedience, looking rather pointedly at the leadership of the
Weihan Cynn.

As if Archbishop St. John’s only grudgingly tolerant stance on the Weihan Cynn wasn’t trouble
enough, stories of witch trials crop up all over Europe at the turn of the 17th century and the
Weihan Cynn find themselves under attack yet again. The wild stories of witchcraft from
Europe, and then the colonies, ripple across the ocean. No one has the facts straight, and ambitious Sanctified such as Archbishop St. John use this hysteria, much like they tried to use the hysteria of the Inquisition, to root out their enemies within the Weihan Cynn and other covenants.

The tactics of the Second Estate backfire spectacularly. They find themselves under almost as much under scrutiny as those they accuse, especially if they used their powers of the Blood to set their mortal hounds on their enemies. Still, their efforts are not entirely unsuccessful. The Spear find themselves distracted with trying to defend themselves from their own allies in the Church. These allies, with the fracturing of the Church and the Protestant threat of the last century, are less interested in protecting their Kindred overseers than they are in saving their own skins.

A More Secular View

Finally, a coterie of neonates of the First Estate declares that enough is enough. They are children of the Age of Enlightenment, eager to cut themselves away from the dogma that has heavily colored their mortal lives and the reign of Archbishop St. John. These neonates come primarily from nobility and academia, but their appeals to reason and common sense call to the Gallows Post, who long since burned their bridges with faith-based thinking. This coterie does not name itself, but when Archbishop St. John catches wind of their schemes, he decries them as “the faithless” from his pulpit. Instead of taking offense, the young Unconquered coterie takes on the name of The Faithless with pride. They continue promoting their ideas, which are remarkably egalitarian. Infuriated, Archbishop St. John demands that all of The Faithless come forward, with the intention of executing them all then and there for insubordination. The original coterie steps forward, as does the entirety of the Gallows Post, a handful of sympathetic Unconquered, and about half of the Blood-Blessed. The resulting coup puts Archbishop St. John in a box with a stake through his heart, and Paul Michael Hill, one of the founding members of The Faithless, as prince in St. John’s place.

Prince Hill is a transplant from Ireland, having come to London during the reign of Good Queen Bess. He is one of the new breed of Invictus, having come up from relative obscurity into power through his own wealth, and being unafraid to do what is necessary to preserve and improve his own way of life. He frequently tells the story about how he met his sire while wearing the clothes he had stolen from a minor noble who had tried to cheat him in a game of cards. The clothes never fit him well, but his sire assumed from young Paul’s dress that he must have been nobility, and thus fit to become a Lord of the Unconquered. The rumors in the London court claim Prince Hill’s sire disappeared mysteriously during a visit to Paul’s hometown of Dublin.

Prince Hill takes a cosmopolitan and far-reaching approach to his rule, especially with the kine ratifying the union of England and Scotland into the Kingdom of Great Britain. He writes letters of friendship and goodwill to the Kindred courts across Great Britain and Ireland. In this letter, he posits the idea of an alliance among English-speaking domains in Europe and beyond, knowing full well that some of his comrades within the First Estate have traveled across oceans and continents worldwide to establish domains of their own with varying degrees of success. He calls for an end to the divisive nature of ad hoc courts and leadership styles, promoting a universal guide to Kindred society as a whole. While he does not immediately call the venture a new Camarilla, those princes who receive these letters and know their history can easily make the comparison. The Lancea et Sanctum, once they have licked their wounds and healed their pride from the downfall of Archbishop St. John, latch onto the idea as a vehicle for evangelizing
the word of Longinus. The Weihan Cynn practically salivate over the idea of connecting with other tribes and cultures who may have come up with new variations of the blood magic that has lain fallow for far too long. The Gallows Post laughs as the rest of the covenants finally catch up; after all, they have leveraged their own far-reaching network since their inception.

The reply Prince Hill receives from Dublin is naturally warm and welcoming, even offering an invitation for him to return to his hometown for another visit. When he does visit, he is greeted by a familiar face: Kismet, the childe of the freshly-installed princess, a Daeva called Carmilla. When he returns, he returns with a firm alliance struck between London and Dublin, despite the tenuous relationship between the English and the Irish in mortal circles.

His visit to Edinburgh is not so successful. By other names, the Weihan Cynn hold full sway in the Scottish capital, to the point where the other covenants prevalent in England have only one or two members at best. Another familiar face greets him in Scotland: Æthelgifu, the Mekhet who reigned over London during his Embrace. She finds his downplaying of the importance of faith and spirituality disrespectful, regardless of which deities receive reverence. While she claims to understand his perspective, she is convinced that regional differences are simply too great to overcome. By her reasoning, if a network of cities does join together, the organization required to coordinate them is too great to fully avoid the notice of the kine, and she refuses to see those who cling to older ways than Christianity persecuted as witches. The union of Scotland and England as one kingdom chafes her as well. She even goes so far as to call Prince Hill himself a sellout, hearkening to his own Irish heritage and the treatment of the Irish at the hands of the English.

Notably, Prince Hill travels without the assistance of the Gallows Post, but his own personal guard. With each passing night, the Gallows Post stare their own obsolescence in the face. The severe damage in trust done by the reign of Kismet has never truly mended, after all. Elders have more secure means, and among ancillae and neonates alike, employing the Gallows Post is lazy and gauche at best. With traveling growing easier night by night thanks to infrastructure improvements, and deadly plagues becoming infrequent due to advances in medicine, the dangers the road posed before are simply nonexistent.

Upon Prince Hill’s return, he immediately begins to pull strings within mortal circles of influence to decriminalize religious practices as a whole. He initially does this to appease Æthelgifu. Coincidentally, it also protects the members of the Lancea et Sanctum. While their actions follow a creed that draws inspiration from Christianity, they don’t always dovetail well with mortal faith and spirituality. To that end, and to also complete damage control on the debacle of the witch hunts at the end of the previous century, members of the First and Second Estates promote the Witchcraft Act of 1736 in the mortal Parliament, which criminalizes claiming that anyone has magical powers or practices witchcraft. This move utterly surprises the Weihan Cynn in London, but they fully support the measure as well.

Lord James Erskine, a Scottish member of the House of Lords, is the only vocal opponent of the Act. Prince Hill learns that Erskine’s fears of witchcraft are in fact very real. Erskine’s wife became an inconvenience to him, so he had her kidnapped and made the world believe she was dead. The Weihan Cynn of Edinburgh knew better. They greatly resented the abduction of one of their ghouls, and now doggedly obstruct him as best they can. Prince Hill leaves them to it, laughing all the way, while Erskine receives no end of ridicule for his decision.
During this time, Charles Emerson tackles another religious problem within the ranks of the Lancea et Sanctum. A devout man in life, he strongly believes in the validity of the Anglican Church, but many of his brothers and sisters have, at least in his mind, more Catholic leanings in their practice of the teachings of the Monachus. He studies the Testament of Longinus and the Sanguineous Catechism night after night, even occasionally forgetting to feed. When he re-emerges from his period of intense study, he presents the Westminster Creed, a variation that marries Anglican principles and Sanctified doctrine. This new creed appeals to the Anglicans within the First Estate and the remains of the Gallows Post, and the popularity of Emerson’s “new Masses” skyrocket. The elders of the Chapel and Spear immediately call in Inquisitors to curtail the spread of this new creed, but not before Emerson sends letters to his Sanctified brethren in the colonies. These colonial Sanctified priests travel like other mortal evangelists during that time, staging “frontier revivals” to spread this new creed to nascent American Kindred domains.

They also spread the concept of allied domains creating a larger network of support to one another, taking Emerson’s personal support of Prince Hill’s ideas as new Sanctified doctrine. The neonates who have never heard of the old Camarilla of Rome latch onto the idea, and across the pond, Prince Hill delights in hearing his ideas have taken hold to the west. In the east, however, he comes across more opposition. Trade in India is highly contested, and the factions of Kindred are even more fractious. Branches of the same covenants from different countries fight among themselves, and the Rakshasa, a revered bloodline of Nosferatu, take great umbrage at their mere presence. They laugh at the idea that a prince half a world away and in no position to actually assert his own claims is even trying to reach out so far.

In addition, problems arise closer to home. Charles, the exiled Stuart prince and grandson of James II, sails to Scotland in an attempt to reclaim his throne. Ieldra Æthelgifu’s court supports Bonny Prince Charlie wholeheartedly. So do the courts of Paris, offended that they were not included in Prince Hill’s Anglo-centric vision, and they send their own agents to support the cause. However, the rebellion fails in less than two years, and both England and Prince Paul Michael Hill of London sit in a stable place once more. With the support of Carmilla in Dublin and various compatriots throughout England and the colonies, the promise of a new Camarilla seems quite real. However, in the clamor of the bright future ahead, Prince Hill cannot see the flash of golden eyes or hear the rustle of dark wings behind him.

London Tonight

London between 1587 and 1593 is a modern, cosmopolitan city of 200,000 people. To Ieldra Æthelgifu and her court, it is the shining crown jewel of all England, and she will hear no claims to the contrary. High-born or low, Shadow or Serpent, there is a little something to whet everyone’s palate.

Accordingly, the Kindred are increasingly creatures of the city. Population centers have always attracted the Damned, but in ages past England had fewer vampires, and these cultivated blood cults in monasteries and backwater towns as much as in the city. By the late 16th century, however, the All Night Society has begun to gather in earnest.

The Food

The Kindred are no longer restricted to cultivating their own familiar herds and sneaking into houses at night. London has a thriving after-dark culture, and an exploding population. While
elders may stick to their close-knit herds and even centuries-old blood cults, younger vampires take full advantage of the new opportunities for anonymous feeding.

Taverns and alehouses are the most obvious opportunities. Full of jostling crowds and raucous music, it’s easy for a vampire to move among the food and seek out a victim. Indeed, the Kindred aren’t the only ones on the prowl. A particular class of criminal called demanders for glimmer haunt the after-dark establishments. These young women solicit gifts from their marks, in exchange for an arranged meeting in some private spot. When the mark arrives, the demander and her accomplices mug him. This strategy is increasingly common among young vampires, who often take the opportunity to fill their pockets as well as their bellies.

Some Kindred make their way as entertainers, relying on their skill and charm to earn a little money as well as their supper. They’re aided by the ubiquity of musicians at all levels of society, but it’s not an easy Masquerade. Musicians are in demand as much by day as by night, and their low status is a double-edged sword. It can be easy to come and go as a lower-class entertainer, but as part of the riff-raff you’ll always be scraping for a few more coins. Still, dwelling among the poor of London can provide opportunities to feed.

The faithful gather in churches all over the city, though mostly by day. Old records indicated Prince Gislebert forbade feeding on Sundays altogether during his reign, but no other prince has done so, not even Archbishop Wilfridus. Still, some who take sanctuary at St. Paul’s Cathedral at night tell of a scarred monk wandering the grounds, usually rocking someone small to sleep in his arms. Well, the figure appears to be sleeping, anyway.

For those who use sex to feed and need a quick bite without the normal thrill of the chase, the brothels of Southwark and Cheapside are ripe for the plucking. However, Ieldra Æthelgifu keeps special watch on these women, and any Kindred who kill or abuse a prostitute will draw the ire of the Blood-Queen. Daeva of all covenants, and particularly members of the Weihan Cynn, frequently make visits to Love Lane and Maiden Lane in particular. For those with less coin to spend, Gropecunt Lane works almost as well.

Disease provides another avenue for Kindred who require steady meals. The mad are sometimes put under house arrest, confined to a single room and watched over by a caretaker who monitors their activities and diet. Regular bleeding from a vein in the head is a perfectly normal treatment for such a caretaker to apply, and no one pays any mind to what happens to the blood afterwards.

Likewise, London has its share of plague angels. Since 1578, harsh measures have been in place to curtail the spread of plague. Victims are quarantined in their houses, the doors and windows barred and guards set at the doors. Entire families can be barricaded in if even one of them becomes ill. Though most Londoners wisely shun these houses, from which the piteous cries of the imprisoned echo, poor and elderly women often volunteer to be confined along with the plague-ridden to cook and clean. The imprisoned pay these women well for the risk they take, and no few of them are vampires, for who will notice if a plague victim is a little pale?

Funerals for plague victims also provide feeding opportunities for the enterprising Damned, for the law requires that they be held at dusk. For the living, this discourages attendance and thus, it is hoped, further contagion. For the dead, it provides access to mourners who might well welcome the temporary relief of the Kiss.

Although the Kindred have known since time immemorial that feeding upon the sick can spread disease, plague angels don’t suffer quite the stigma that they will in later years. With the Kindred
population of London growing even faster than the mortal one, the authorities are willing to look the other way at vampires who resort to such desperate measures.

The Folks

The divide between the city and the country grows sharper every year. The population of the towns is booming, and London is growing faster still. The people of the city increasingly see themselves as ambitious and upwardly mobile. Their beliefs shift to suit this: No longer is success solely a gift from God; instead, it becomes a measure of a person’s own effort and worthiness.

Even as the middle classes begin to control more of England’s wealth, the traditional upper crust begins to wane. There are fewer nobles than in prior eras, as Elizabeth rations titles and power tightly. Bishops, too, find their power curtailed. Where once their authority derived from an international power structure ruled by God’s representative on Earth, now they are mere servants of the state, their power granted and taken away at the whim of the monarch. The age old struggle between monarch and pope for control of the Church seems to have been definitively won.

The powerful readily grant favors and intercede on behalf of those who serve them or further their interests. In the future, young Kindred will see the patronage and favor trading upon which Kindred society is built as corrupt. In the 16th century, however, survival by doing favors and soliciting patronage is the habit of both the living and the dead.

A deeply brutal streak runs through the culture. Torture is one of the state’s many tools of power. While its use by mortal authorities is regulated and carefully (though often) applied, Kindred authorities exercise little restraint in applying fire and sun to those who do not cooperate.

Brawling among schoolboys is common, and most men are trained to serve in the militia. While excessively violent crime is punished, it’s not unusual for a dispute between peers to draw blood. Kindred society is likewise less restrained than in modern nights. While the court of Ieldra Æthelgifu is nominally a place of peace, vampires regularly take justice into their own hands. It is almost customary for a neonate who transgresses law or custom to be beaten into torpor and dropped at the door of his sire’s haven. If the sun should reach him before his sire does, there are rarely legal consequences.

The Faith

Even more so than in later years, religion lies at the heart of politics for both the living and the dead. The queen is constantly the subject of Catholic assassination plots, and the suspicion trickles down. In 1593, Parliament passes an act that mandates imprisonment for anyone who doesn’t attend a state-sanctioned church for a month. Citizens are required to register the church they attend; while some slip through the cracks, the state is ever vigilant. This complicates the Requiems of those vampires who maintain a “living” legal identity, for services after nightfall are uncommon.

Since Kindred travel surreptitiously by necessity, they sometimes fall under suspicion of being Catholics. Catholics aren’t allowed to travel more than five miles from their homes without a special license, so the business of forging these licenses thrives among the Damned.

Though Catholics are the primary political enemies of the state, they are not the only faithful who cause trouble for the nascent Church of England. Puritans and Calvinists also regularly
conflict with the new orthodoxy. As the Kindred population of London swells, members of all of these faiths find themselves Embraced. While the Lancea et Sanctum of later years will learn to recruit from the many faiths of the newly dead, in 1593 it is riddled with cracks as it attempts to indoctrinate Christians with radically different beliefs.

Worse, belief in God is no longer a given. The word “atheism” has recently come to mean people who deny the existence of God. Although in 1593 it remains a slur, the Reformation has opened the door to public doubt. Until now, The Sanctified and most of the Invictus have been united in the assumption that their authority is divine. Tonight, however, increasing numbers of the newly Embraced don’t accept this authority, and even reject the label “Damned.”

Regardless of their living faith (or lack thereof), many neonates fought so hard in life to hold onto their religious identities that they don’t wish to let them go after death. With the Icarian Heresy to the south, they don’t want further schisms in their faith, even if the Monachus allowed for different perspectives in the Testament itself. How much diversity is too much?

The Fun

Leisure activities abound for Kindred, no matter how an individual’s tastes run. For those with an athletic bent, hunting and fishing are readily available, as are indoor tennis courts. Nobles frequently gamble on a game of tennis or discuss matters of state over a drunken match. What better way to get a whisper of gossip than to listen in, or to take up a racket and play?

For watching other animals play with each other, the Beargarden provides frequent entertainments in the forms of bear-baiting and bull-baiting. Many of the Gangrel and Ventrue like to watch these events, and if the match gets boring, subtly influence the outcome. Many of the young Invictus and the Gallows Post earn a fair bit of coin betting on the matches. In private, Kindred-only matches, ghoulled dogs fight one another for coin, favors, and bragging rights for their domitor. To date, no one has brought in a ghoulled bear for baiting. Yet.

For watching more intelligent animals play with each other, Kindred enjoy a good play as much as mortals do. In Elizabethan London, good plays, literature, and poetry are in healthy supply. However, an audience of vampires has slightly different standards; until 1593, real deaths litter the stage. For that reason, revenge plays are remarkably popular among Ieldra Æthelgifu’s court. However, it is considered poor form to attend such a performance while hungry.

However, this year’s summer fun may be cut short. Reports of plague in London have begun, and there is talk of shutting the playhouses and restricting large public assemblies until it passes. The entire court of Kindred prays the plague will pass them by, or if it must come, be blessedly brief.

The Fighting

Underneath all the hustle and bustle of London above and below, the blood runs high in kine and Kindred alike. Covenants butt heads with each other, and even Kindred in the same covenant squabble among themselves.

The Invictus is splitting in two, much in the way that power is splitting in two in the mortal world. While titles and lineage provide some legitimacy, the redirection of wealth to those without the “right” titles and lineage makes it difficult to immediately vet kine contacts and retainers. A growing faction within the First Estate simply does not care what the source of a
given human’s power is. They only care that they have it. This has led to many neonates coming from the merchant classes, much to the old guard’s chagrin.

The Weihan Cynn enjoy relative peace while the First and Second Estates tear themselves asunder, quietly assuming influence through court mystics and astrologers. However, with the assumption of so many pagan faiths within their ranks, squabbles on doctrine still occur. The cult that reveres Mary has gone through several iterations, and the tensions between the Catholics and the nascent Church of England do not help.

On the surface, the Gallows Post seems to be the most stable of all the covenants in London. They enjoy a great deal of leeway, escorting travelers and bringing information back and forth to various Kindred for the right price, either in gold or favors. They also attract restless neonates who refuse to buy what the other covenants are selling. However, they sometimes discover too much information and struggle to not completely show their hand. They worry most of all about the sudden death of Christopher Marlowe; he clearly knew too much, so what’s to stop the entire covenant from suffering such a fate?

The Covenants

The Gallows Post

The roads are lonely, especially at night. They wind through claustrophobic woods and exposed plains.

Lonely, but not empty. Agents of the Crown watch the roads, looking for Catholics and agents of the Man in Rome sneaking about in the dark. For one of the Kindred, travel is a dangerous business. Too easy to get caught in the sun. Easier still to get mistaken for a subversive and thrown in a cell until the sun rises. The skills by which the Damned might evade agents of the state and horrors of the night alike are not easily acquired.

Enter the Gallows Post. Part messenger service, part gang of highwayman, these oft-romanticized Kindred are a vampire’s best hope to travel in safety and arrive in peace. They are welcomed in every town — perhaps not due to warm feelings, but rather for the necessity of the services they provide.

The Gallows Post, though a covenant in their own right, and certainly a bastion of wealth and influence, have until recently positioned themselves as apolitical. They claim don’t care who rules in a city, so long as the lines of travel and communication are secure.

Yet, in order to maintain this neutrality, they must play the favor-game of Kindred society. To keep the wolves’ from their charges’ backs, they must do business with the Weihan Cynn. And they are no friend to the human state, for they have found that there’s quite a business in smuggling human Jesuits across the countryside. The better they get at fulfilling their mission, the more compromises they make with their supposed independence.

In future years, this will tangle them more and more in politics, to the point of backing their own disastrous candidate for Prince of London. But for tonight, these growing links actually strengthen the Gallows Post, making the so-called “messengers” increasingly influential.

Sects
No one really knows if the Foxes exist, or rather if they’re truly a part of the Gallows Post. But it’s well known that Kindred who do not take advantage of the Post’s protection find themselves in awkward situations or led to bad ends, and so the myth arises.

The Foxes, so say the whispers in the Ieldra’s court, are the Post’s insurance against obsolescence. They are Kindred highwaymen, preying upon those among the Damned who do not pay their mother-covenant’s price. They act in the manner of the Wild Hunt, a raucous procession of frighteningly-costumed vampires who hunt down those who venture into the wild alone. They, as much as the wolves or the fae or the spirit of winter, are the reasons that a traveler might disappear on a journey as short as one night.

More certain are the Sparrows. Safe arrival cannot be ensured unless the destination can be made secure. So in addition to the guides, messengers, and nomads of the Gallows Post, there are also its Sparrows, its city informants and fixers, who prepare the way for the arrival of Post members and their charges. They are political animals, almost indistinguishable from certain elements of the Invictus and the Wei Han Cynn. They know all the safe houses, and who has to be paid off to keep them safe. They know all the threats to the new vampire in town, and all of the ways those threats might be warded against or bargained away. A Sparrow is a newly-arrived vampire’s best friend...provided, as always, that that vampire can meet the Sparrow’s price.

Finally, there are the Hounds, the masters of road and wilderness, the staunch defenders of messages and travelers. Some are physically imposing, warriors who look like they come from some earlier age. Others are smaller, more furtive, but no less certain of their duty nor less courageous when the time comes to defend a charge. They portray themselves as loyal and self-sacrificing to a fault — the customer’s needs are their own, and those needs shall be safeguarded regardless of the cost to the Hounds themselves.

**Merit: Envoy (• to *****)**

**Prerequisite:** Status (Gallows Post) •

The Kindred do not travel lightly. There are the hazards of the road, but also the hazards of finding oneself in a foreign domain friendless and alone. The networks established by the Gallows Post address these problems, and a respected envoy of the Post can warm her welcome nearly anywhere in Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

**Effect:** First, your character cannot be pursued or intercepted in inter-city travel unless the Skill, effect, or power achieves more successes than your character’s dots in Envoy.

Second, part of smart travel is never arriving empty-handed. When traveling, announce your character’s intended receiver, be it a person, faction, or even a vampire government. You or the Storyteller specify a gift, rumor, or other item of value which can be used as a one-time equipment bonus on any Social action when engaging with the stated receiver.

Third, once per story, half your character’s Envoy dots (rounded up) count toward Allies or Contacts dots in a city she newly arrives in.

**The Invictus**

Leadership is not a gift everyone is blessed with. It takes a strong and sure heart, conviction that your way is the best way. Though lineage does matter, far more vital are the gifts an individual possesses that prepare him to rule. Others see the greed of the Invictus, the way they surround themselves with glittering symbols of their power, but they are sincere in their conviction that
they are the leaders of the Kindred because that is their destiny. That they are not the rulers, that the Blood Queen who sits upon London’s throne is an ancient witch rather than a cutting-edge nobleman, rankles them deeply.

The Invictus are found throughout Europe and most of the Far East, and they have succeeded in attaching themselves to power. Among the courtiers of so many rulers (and some infamous) is often found a member of the Invictus, standing in the shadows. Sometimes, they are royal favorites; one in the time of Henry VII was rumored to have been groom of the stool. More often, though, the Invictus take positions of power that are not so public or under scrutiny. Prominence means attention, and attention threatens the Masquerade.

As for the Masquerade, the Invictus have long considered themselves the guardians at the gate. Of course their upper echelons enjoy mingling with the powerful of London, but at least aloud their devotion is always to the great secret of the dead. Occasionally their need for secrecy intersects neatly with the suppressive mechanisms of Elizabeth’s government. But more recently and more often, the Tudor police state makes the Masquerade ever more fraught.

The Invictus see their machinations as an elaborate, courtly dance, spinning their intrigues into fine threads to wrap a duchess in. Surely, it is so much better to be in the shadows behind the throne. In the imaginations of the common Kindred, their supporters and subjects are sprinkled all throughout Whitehall, through Elizabeth’s court and the great lords of the country. But threats to the Masquerade do not often occur in palaces. Even a member of the First Estate who holds a knighthly title among the Damned may spend his nights prowling taverns, stalking a ghoul with loose lips.

Power, true power, does not require a show of force; it is the iron within the soft kid gauntlet. Invictus play their games with high-stakes. The loser risks her land, position, and sometimes her very existence. But why play if the stakes will not be high?

The old, old money of the Invictus face a challenge. Their ways are fading. Their vast manor lands and holdings from the Middle Ages are being sub-divided, split and fading. Elizabeth has no desire to expand the nobility, and economic changes are sweeping their power base from under them. The people who worked the land, once popularly imagined to be docile, are now demanding more than some tired turnips they can scrounge out of a dried-out lot. Though the oaths of fealty and service are still used, the peasants have more power to bargain. And on those out-of-the-way country estates where vampires rule almost openly, mortals are tiring of paying their rent in blood.

The newest of the dead, whom the Elders have trained in the ways of power-mongering, are stirring for a fight. They have money and power, but they want more. They are quickly building personal connections in the city, networks of mortals who have amassed their own wealth and power. Many of these merchant princes become patrons of new Invictus, not realizing whom they are supporting.

The young see the cities as the future, see the waves of people flocking towards London for a chance at a better life. They see herds to rule, choice pickings for servants and hangers-on. They are fascinated by the wave of inventions created at this time, a thousand things to make their Requiem just a little better and a little easier. Though they do see the wisdom in maintaining power structures that have been around for hundreds of years, new Invictus are impatient. Why
start at the bottom if you can lunge to the top? What they don’t realize is that fate is a wheel and no one is on top forever.

Sects
There have been murmurings amongst the new Invictus of the need for a New Camarilla, to guide the Kindred in this brave new world. Explorers are redrawing the parameters of the maps, discovering new lands and treasures. The power and influence of Britain grows — it challenges the dominance even of mighty Spain. To the young Invictus, the old power structures only confine — they need a new ruling body, one that has the flexibility to adjust to a rapidly changing world.

The young vampire may find himself chafing at the structure and etiquette of the Invictus. He sees himself as a new predator, able to amass power and do as he likes in the playground London and the cities which will follow provide. But there are always Invictus elders to step in to remind him of the proper perspective.

Mortals represent another divisive point within the Invictus. The young are more likely to befriend their thralls, use them as food and amusement, but also build a sort of friendship with those who capture their fancy or esteem. The older Invictus have learned by years of loss and betrayal to see such “friends” only as a means to an end.

The new and old Invictus also disagree on the best way to relate to other covens, specifically the Lancea et Sanctum. The Old Guard sees the Spear as natural allies. They see the Sanctified as a moral center for Kindred society, and a way to put their own subjects into positions of religious power. The younger Invictus have scoff at the Elders for their ironically short memories: Have they forgotten what the Lancea et Sanctum did to the Camarilla in ancient Rome? As they learn the inglorious history of the Damned, they will not forgive or forget. They disdainfully consider the Second Estate to be reactionary zealots who are to be tolerated at best and eliminated at worst.

Even the most rabble-rousing young Invictus, however, will not seek to topple the structure, to drive the mortals to anarchy or revolution. Leave such wild ideas to those who haven’t found influence and purpose. The mob could quickly turn on them, for the Kindred must always bite the hand that feeds. They will, however, work within the constraints of their society, to bend matters to their will. They will enforce the Masquerade and deal with those who resist.

The Invictus establishment views death as a necessary tool, hand-in-hand with politics. Sometimes it is necessary to kill to solidify power or acquire money, or to prevent a crisis from spiraling out of hand. Unlike some of their passionate brethren, they do not kill for love or sport. For the most part, the death they mete out is free of vengeance or spite. Or, at least, they would like to think so. As secular intellectualism becomes fashionable, they consider themselves the most logical of the covenants.

The most radical of the young Invictus have formed a group called Canes Pugnaces (War Dogs). This aggressive name belies the true nature of their group; most of them disdain getting their hands dirty. But they are definitely of the neca ne neceris school. They keep a list bound within a black, leather-bound book; it represents the mortals who have either crossed them, or have lands or treasures that they seek.

Once a name is on the list, the young vampires work tirelessly through their mortal instruments to ruin their intended target. Once their chosen mortal has been abased and reduced to nothing,
they graciously move in as a means of salvation and offer a loan with ruinous terms. They have mastered the art of usury, while elder Invictus have a fastidious revulsion at the idea of being seen as money-lenders.

Though these two groups of Invictus can agree on almost nothing, they are of one mind of the importance of the Masquerade. Its concealments allow them to do their work quietly, knotting strings around the powerful in the city. Before they realize it, these mortals are tied into a web of Invictus obligation and the masters have become the puppets. True Invictus enjoy the thrust and riposte of human politics even more, sometimes, than Kindred politics. When one can die, the stakes are much higher.

By enforcing the Masquerade so sternly, the Invictus solidify their place of power within Kindred society. They are the guardians of the secrets, the makers of the rules, the enforcers of the errant. They have used this status to their advantage, for Kindred who run afoul of the Masquerade often find themselves indebted to Invictus as payment for covering their indiscretions.

As the keepers of the Masquerade, it is in the First Estate’s interest to cultivate fear among humanity. This time is ripe for fear and for sowing poisonous seeds in the minds of the humans among them. Kindred are part of local lore and many do believe in their presence — this is not in violation of the Masquerade. The Masquerade is breached when an individual Kindred is unmistakably uncovered by a mortal.

Secrecy is their finest weapon. If an Invictus does not want to tell her secrets, she is usually beyond compelling. Bribery is a waste of time, as they often can buy or sell you several times over. If you want information from an Invictus, be prepared to give something far more precious than money.

The Invictus are not immune to the siren call of money. They enjoy luxury: fine clothes of velvets and silks, palatial estates, ropes of pearls and emeralds, even exotic goods from the New World. Some have pretensions to nobility, whether or not their lineage supports that. With enough money, the son of a hostler can dazzle. Others prefer to fill their pockets through the misfortunes of others, opening tenements and workhouses. A notable few have infiltrated Elizabeth’s house of spymasters and laid foundations for their own machinations. The other covenants call them Claudio Ostio, from the phrase “Claudio ostio, ora aperta”: Closed mouth, open pocket.

Invictus tend to embrace other wealthy, powerful people; they believe they are of the best stock to maintain the success of their covenant. Yet the wealthy and powerful while alive may find themselves working dirty jobs once Embraced. Conversely, when the Invictus select someone of merit outside their privileged class, the ability to blend in with the rich or their households is sometimes a key Invictus talent.

If a vampire loves the finer things in life, the Invictus lifestyle holds many attractions: the finest carriages, sharpest weapons, many-masted galleons, and manor houses with lands stocked with plump stag and stables full of pure-bred horses.

Unsurprisingly, the established Invictus are loath to change, especially when maintaining their lifestyle, prestige, and position requires full-time attention. Tradition has kept the First Estate strong and helped them survive the rise and fall of kings and queens, the splitting of religions, and the decline of their accustomed way of life. When you have it all, the status quo is quite
attractive. Yet the newly Embraced Invictus continue to create ongoing headaches for their elders. There is not enough power and wealth to go around to suit the younger generation, who wouldn’t mind if it were somewhat redistributed.

The Lancea et Sanctum

The living and the dead have lost their way. It is not the first time. It will not be the last. The living shatter their painted windows and turn their monasteries to ruins; the newly dead deny that the Second Estate is — must be — the moral center of the Damned. Perhaps they do not even yet realize they are Damned. But they will come around, as they always do. And they will join in the scourging of the mortal faithful, and all will be set back on the path of righteousness.

So say the elders of the Lancea et Sanctum. But for all they claim that the flock has been lost before, this time is different. The Sanctified never bent knee to Rome, but their mortal charges did; and in faith and loyalty there was strength and redemption. Now, the power of God rests in the hands of the Queen, and nothing will ever be the same.

Schisms

In 380 AD, the Edict of Thessalonica was issued by Theodosius I, Valentinian II, and Gratian, making Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. The Roman Catholic church and, by extension, the pope, quickly became the most powerful religious organization in the world. That is, until Henry VIII, in one stroke of the pen, divorced Catherine of Aragon and appointed himself supreme head of the church.

This schism created deep fault lines in the church: Protestants plundered monasteries, shattered stained glass, and toppled statues. Catholics retaliated by calling forth the faithful, tearing families apart. Neighbors reported on each other for failing to cross themselves at mass. Mary I’s attempt to restore the strength of Catholicism resulted in the burning of thousands of heretics. Now it is Elizabeth’s choice, to navigate between the Scylla and Charybdis of Catholics and Protestants.

The Second Estate faces many conundrums. Does good behavior equal eternal salvation? Can a creature as cursed as a vampire save her immortal soul? Seeking salvation is heretical, but the gleam of temptation is always there. Is it possible to control the Hunger? When mortals execute their own brethren for false belief, is it the living or the dead who are doing the work of persecuting the faithful?

Many Kindred drawn to the Lancea et Sanctum were religious in their mortal lives. The covenant can bring comfort as well as the chill touch of judgment. Hell looms large in their imagination. Innocence is largely illusory. Religion is primarily about heavenly rewards. Vampirism is primarily about earthly rewards. Reconciling this seeming impossibility is at the heart of the Lancea et Sanctum.

Sects

The flock butchers itself before the eyes of the Sanctified, throwing the covenant into upheaval. Change blows like a diseased wind through the newest among them. The young do not readily part ways with their beliefs as Catholics and Protestants. Disagreement over spiritual focus has sundered the Second Estate. They have broken into factions with totally different missions and even squabbles over basic Church teachings.
The Keepers of the Word see themselves as protectors of the books and documents of their own history, such as the Testament of Longinus. Unlike the mortal Bible, the Testament has long since been translated into English, but the translations are archaic and poetic, not always accessible to the ordinary faithful. The Keepers shun the aggressive tactics of their brethren, preferring to focus on a life of discipline and study, moderation, and service to God. Lost souls who want to know their history and search for meaning ad vitam aeternam find their way to these Keepers, to seek answers and solace.

Of course, when the Keepers of the Word find texts or books that conflict with their carefully crafted histories, they are ruthless in destroying them. The Testament of Longinus is their holy writ, their version of the New Testament. In addition, the Keepers of the Word are notorious grave robbers and artifact-pilferers. They have been known to desecrate shrines in order to collect the holy relics therein. The dissolution of the monasteries has helped put many of these relics into their hands.

The Spear now believe they are the living instruments of justice, angels reflected darkly. With their spears of judgment, they prick the living and the dead who do not follow God’s word. Some have come to believe it is time to step up publicly and take their place as an instrument of God, to begin a campaign of terror never before imagined by mortals. Why continue hiding in the shadows?

These Sanctified embrace their role as instruments of God’s vengeance. In their fervency, they have little regard for the Masquerade, a tradition sacred to the Kindred (so they say) since the nights of Rome. They believe the world is ending in the cesspool that is London, the pit of mad greed and sensual pleasures. God wants them to purify the world, and why do it just one mortal at a time?

As always, there are those convinced that this is the most wicked moment in history and that only a flood of biblical vengeance will wash the city clean from the filth and vice that ravage it daily. Primarily, the younger or more hotheaded Kindred are drawn to this aspect of the Spear, and they call themselves Keepers of the Flame. Their motto is “Caedite eos, novit enim Dominus qui sunt eius,” or “Kill them all, for the Lord knows those who are his.”

When they gather, there are long speeches about preserving the morality of the flock, burning out the wicked, protecting the faith. To clear a boil, one must lance it and drain it of its contagion. When they punish a sinner, they are merely acting as flagellum dei or “the scourge of God.” These Kindred seem determined to bring about a new Crusade, not on foreign soil but upon the streets of London. They do not fear flame when it is the flame of righteousness.

These Kindred are determined to eradicate The Children’s Crusade, which is a growing threat, leading the hunt against the twisted collective of child-vampires whose personal mission is to kill all that is bright and beautiful in vengeance for what they’ve lost.

A splinter group of these young Kindred are known as The First Temptation. Much as the serpent tempted Eve with the Apple of Knowledge, so they arrange tests for their mortal followers. Some of these tests seem more like traps, and the punishment is almost always death, but members of The First Temptation maintain they are culling the morally weak from the herd.

Their favorite trick is what they call the “Apple of Discord,” named after the choice that led to the Trojan War. They find a small, close-knit group of mortals—a family or devoted group of friends—and toss an irresistible temptation in their midst, whichever of the seven deadly sins is
appropriate. Those who do not tear each other apart over greed or envy are finished off by the Temptation.

The elders of the clergy merely shake their heads, arguing that neither shutting one’s self away with books nor dealing vengeance on the streets of London is the path to God. Tradition is their watchword. Tradition will save them.

A great many members of the Lancea et Sanctum believe that their morality is a badly needed core to Kindred society. They refer to other covenants as the Lost and consider it their personal mission to bring them to salvation, often regardless of physical or emotional cost. These are the proselytizers, on a mission from God to redeem all the Lost, whether by comfort or cruelty.

While the Invictus blame the Lancea et Sanctum for the fall of the Camarilla in the days of the Roman Empire, the significance of the Spear has waned slightly as science and reason assert their primacy. As the glare of the Enlightenment approaches, the power of the Lancea et Sanctum recedes in conjunction with religion as a whole. Faith still has its place, though, and the Spear will hold the line *ab aeterno* against the tide of heresy till the end of days.

The Weihan Cynn

The Kindred style themselves Lords of the Dark. They claim they are Britain’s aristocracy by night. They may not rule mortal politics, but they rule what really matters: human life and death.

The Weihan Cynn know they are wrong. Britain by night has other rulers. Women who are also nearly the last of England’s wolves. Giants who walk like men and blight the land where they sleep. Spirits who claim domain over places both wild and overbuilt. Beauties of metal and glass who steal the faces of those they fancy. And those who just plain command the dead.

Any of these, all of these, could be a threat to the Kindred of Britain. There are too many of them to fight; they cannot, as a whole, be conquered and brought to heel. So the Weihan Cynn resort to the basest sorcery of all: They bargain. The Woods-Witches strike deals with the other monsters of the isles and play them against each other. Sometimes they even act as go-betweens, neutral parties between the forces of darkness. And so they weave a tangled web of loyalties and alliances that preserve the Kindred and allow them to prosper.

Between offering this safety net and wielding the power of their allies as a threat, the Weihan Cynn have managed to keep a dominant place in Kindred society despite the gods they worship having fallen more than once out of fashion. It is by these devices that Ieldra Æthelgifu stays secure upon her throne. For while the Invictus silencers worry about secrets given away and the Sanctified priests rant about blasphemy, they all know the truth: To cross the Weihan Cynn would be to find themselves unarmed among a sea of troubles.

Yet Ieldra Æthelgifu has reason to fear. Her own covenant-mates begin to make common cause with the Invictus, envisioning a great new nation raised in memory of the conquerors from Rome. Yet others covet magics that would change what it means to be Kindred, and so slip from her grasp. And then there are the mortals. For though in ancient times the Weihan Cynn ruled the occasional tribe as ancestor-gods, in recent centuries they have become more insular, maintaining only the human contact necessary for individual witches to survive. They no longer have many institutional roots, and as Elizabeth’s state pries further and deeper, they become more vulnerable.
Worse, the Ieldra finds she has rivals. A bloodline of Spanish missionaries with ties to the Vatican but none to the Lancea et Sanctum (with whom she holds uneasy truce) have begun to subvert her networks of monstrous allies. A rival cult called the Ful-Beannaithe have recently crossed the water.

The threats facing the Ieldra and the Weihan Cynn are many. But they are ancient, and they are ruthless, and everyone dangerous owes them favors.

Sects

Despite some interruptions, the Weihan Cynn have been the most powerful covenant in London — and, indeed, Britain — for as long as anyone can remember. They have, in their path to power, made compromises, welcomed in strays.

Not all of them like this. The ancient vampire faiths of Britain were mystery cults, places where secrets, and thus power, were kept in silence and safety. The Dygol Kepen, the Secret Keepers, believe in this more strongly with every passing year. The Ieldra has become too open...too many of the treaties by which she binds the powers of the land are known to the rabble of the other covenants, or the not-quite-so-pagan infiltrators of some of the other sects.

The Dygol Kepen know that the genie can’t be put back in the bottle. Instead, they delve for deeper secrets. They forge bargains on blackmail, bind mortals as they would once have bound the unnatural. They do not reject the Weihan Cynn’s leadership over the other covenants...but they see no reason that leadership must be open or fair.

Some among them remember the powers brought to Britain by the conquering Romans and the vestiges of their Camarilla. The wicked arts of the Veneficia, pagan rites of power that rival the miracles of the Lancea et Sanctum. These secrets have been lost, but perhaps pacts with the hidden things of England...the Lambton Worm, the Primordial Beasts...perhaps these will reveal the secrets of sorcery once more to the true faithful of the Weihan Cynn.

Insular as the vampire society of London is, the Ieldra is well aware of these plots. But she sees potential in recovered sorcery, and advantages in having a hidden cult in her midst that can take action with plausible deniability. She encourages them through go-betweens and hidden messages in her addresses. For their part, they do not trust her, but are pragmatic enough not to shun a potential alliance with their covenant’s present leader.

Among the strange bedfellows the Dygol Kepen are suspicious of are the Qalandariyyah. The core of these are a splinter sect of a human mystical tradition who found themselves Embraced during their journey to England. While their faith descends from Islam, and hence the belief in one God, their theology leads them to seek balance in the temporal world as a means to finding grace. Though they allow that embracing the unclean may be a path to balance, that still puts them quite at odds with what might be their obvious allies in the Lancea et Sanctum.

Instead, they see the contracts upon contracts of the Weihan Cynn as a form of balance — potentially, a path to grace. And they see the practical benefits, for in their native Andalusia there are many unclean spiritual powers which might be brought to heel with a canny bargain or two. Hence, despite differences in theology, they’ve thrown their lot in with the witches rather than the Sanctified.

Of course, there’s a not-so-subtle streak of evangelism in this relationship. Even as they seek to replicate and export the methods of the Weihan Cynn, they use their cooperation as a wedge to
force conversation on the core of their theology. It starts innocently enough. “Would you mind another god in your pantheon? Ours is mighty, and has many names.” And then it goes further: “Don’t you like our God just a little *better* than yours?”

Their primary aim, though, is not subversion but expansion. They would like to return to Andalusia with the uncanny contracts of the Weihan Cynn backing them up. They would like to build a power structure where all of the supernatural powers of the known world are indebted to them and their allies.

**Merit: Contract With the Uncanny (• to *****)**

**Prerequisite:** Status (Weihan Cynn) •

The Kindred must share the night…but they share it from a position of power. The power the Weihan Cynn hold over vampire society is rooted in their ancient pacts with Britain’s other supernatural forces. A member of the Weihan Cynn with the Contract With the Uncanny Merit can personally call upon her covenant’s ancient bargains.

**Effect:** When you choose Contract With the Uncanny, select one faction of supernatural creature. Usually, this will be something like “Werewolves,” but in a chronicle where you deal with the details of other supernatural cultures, you might instead have “Werewolves: Bone Shadows.” You may also choose a more abstract supernatural force, such as a saint or a season, provided that force is capable of granting favors of the sort listed on the chart below. The number of individuals the bargain is with affects the favors available; if a contract is with Saint Alban, then a level 6 favor that requires a faction to go to war is unavailable.

You may take this Merit multiple times to reflect multiple supernatural connections.

When using Contract With the Uncanny, you may call upon a favor from the chosen entity or group. The Storyteller chooses the level of the favor, using the following chart as a guideline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Favor</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Favor momentarily inconveniences the individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Favor inconveniences the individual for hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Favor threatens physical harm or significant social backlash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Favor threatens the life of the faction member in question, or risks ostracizing her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Favor threatens the lives of more than one of the faction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Favor requires the entire faction go to war or otherwise mobilize dangerously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Favor means certain death for numerous faction members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The character has to return the favor in kind. For example, a level 2 favor would require the vampire commit a level 2 favor in recompense. If the character does not have the appropriate number of dots in Contract With the Uncanny, add the difference in levels adds to the favor required in return. This can result in a favor over level 5.

If the character reneges on the favor, she loses access to this Merit (but Sanctity of Merits applies), and the faction strikes out against her at a commensurate level. For example, the backlash for not reciprocating a level 4 favor means the faction or force puts the character or
someone close to her in danger. This does not need to be immediate; it can lead to lasting vendettas.

Depending on whom the Contract is with, it may or may not allow for pitting the subject against members of its own kind. The changelings of Elizabethan London are, for example, riven by intense paranoia that each other group is bargaining with the True Fae, and ready to go to war with each other if asked. The Sin-Eaters, however, have a tightly-knit cultic nature that makes setting them at each other’s throats very hard. This may be cause to disallow a favor, or it may increase the favor’s level.

Favors requested via Contract With the Uncanny are built on hundreds of years of mutual back-scratching between the Weihan Cynn and supernatural forces, so they don’t require a great deal of additional negotiation. Therefore, a character using this Merit is almost guaranteed the intervention she wants — the Storyteller is encouraged to deny the favor only if it’s severely illogical.

**Britannia’s Finest**

These are the nights when Good Queen Bess fills her treasury with shares of private companies; when a merchant’s daughter makes a more suitable bride than all the connections of a wilted rural scion. A title isn’t enough to pave a young monster’s way in society. She’s got to have money too — in fleets or spices or silver itself — and a way to keep her hand on the lever of industry. So a pedigree is a virtue, but no more so than a fine purse or a privateer. After all, any ha’penny squire can purchase a plausible lineage, and a face which no portraiture has captured is quite useful in its own way.

By devoting their attentions to those just to the side of the seat of power, Kindred are learning to best gather the spoils of commerce without needing to tolerate its constant scrutiny.

**Kindred of Power: The Queen’s Court**

Ieldra Æthelgifu

Queen of the Weihan Cynn

Æthelgifu’s perspective is farsighted, even among the Cynn. She’s been a witch and a princess, an abbess and a diplomat, all as an apprenticeship to her true calling. Now she’s Ieldra, and has had fifteen lifetimes to hone an instinct for treachery and manipulation learned at her grandmother’s knee. Her induction wasn’t certain by any means, but when she crushed Rheged during the Ostmen invasions, it was no more than had been expected of her. She tolerates the Lancea et Sanctum because some faithful children of Albion have found a home there, but considers their cryptochristianity a ridiculous affectation. Better to cultivate a willing flock than harry them into an unproductive grave, after all.

But the Ieldra can see her own ways fading. Fewer families petition to enter into the Weihan Cynn’s protection; fewer children are being taught the old kinds of respect. Æthelgifu is canny, though, and has tightly guarded the secret to her substantial personal power, the threat of which has kept the Cynn in charge of an increasingly modern England. The Weihan Cynn, through Æthelgifu, hold the pacts that bind unnatural powers to their aid: wolves that walk, spirits of the sea and air, and the solitary beasts that remained in the bog and in the fen. And of course, her new allies from the south may be spun into a promising escape route if things go sour.
Cædmon the Lloegyrwys
Archbishop of the Lancea et Sanctum

An assumed name, surely, but the resemblance is striking. An amber-eyed poet who emerged from the wilderness speaking the lord’s word. According to Cædmon, he lost his abbey and brothers to the Lincolnshire rising; and turned toward London for a sign. There he found his house in disarray and chaos. Scores lost to the royal father and daughters alike, and not one godly man with the strength to bring the church together against their “flock.” Despite openly disdaining Protestants in his midst and lavishing favoritism on the Keepers of the Word, Cædmon has an uncanny way with words. Perhaps it’s the wine, or Kindred simply drunk on fellowship, but penitents seem to come away from his communion believing he spoke to them personally, sanctifying actions so compelling they couldn’t wait to set them into motion.

His bloody-minded devotion is keeping the fracturing Lancea et Sanctum together, but Cædmon is finding religious leadership more complicated than he’d anticipated. He never really stopped being a monk, and finds the diplomacy and logistics required of him to be a useless distraction from The Work. He and Æthelgifu have the barest of détentes, born out of a mutual need to crush The School of Night; but neither truly respects the other and a stiff breeze would shatter that frail bond. It is a wedge that Richard Bithewaye is eager to exploit.

Richard Bithewaye
Power Broker of the Invictus

Richard believes in nothing so much as power. Money doesn’t equal power, connections don’t equal power; power equals power. The only thing better is power over someone else. He’s been keeping a careful eye on the Kindred who fled to his city from dissolved monasteries and enclosed homesteads, those who weren’t welcomed to the bosom of Æthelgifu’s court. They’re hungry, and they’re angry, and London is only a moment away from boiling over. And when it does, he’ll be poised to step in and quell the riots, suggest some rules to protect the dead from the amassed mortals, and place himself at the head of this new civil order. And he’ll make sure that riot comes soon. Certainly he’s a thug, and more than a bit crass, but the very old and very wealthy are afforded some leniency in manner. After all, everyone already knows that they belong in the seat of power.

Trading on pedigree and a small personal army of ghouls, Richard bullied his way up the ladder and summarily removed his predecessor. Tragically, his sire was murdered by traitorous Spanish envoys while Richard was putting down an uprising among Bithewaye the Elder’s unruly peasants. But Richard ascending so far surely would have pleased the elderly namesake, if he’d known sooner what a viper he’d clutched to his bosom. Because Richard has a secret: he’s nobody, with nothing more than some sickly pigs to his birth name. He was Embraced to be a servant, not that Richard could imagine being truly loyal. Instead he feigned dutiful obedience and secretly lusted for his sire’s power. When the moment to strike presented itself, he staked his master without a second thought, leaving Bithewaye the Elder only the sun to find his way home.

Kindred of Quality: Lords and Ladies of the Chamber

Felix
Posing as Lord Francis Walsingham
It was surprisingly easy to slip into the real Lord Walsingham’s place. He’d been very sick, after all, and was spending more and more time at home. But he had so much to do, and so few people he trusted to delegate to. There were plots to watch or meddle with, some of which needed to be driven toward public exposure, and some to be quietly destroyed. Catholics to be weaseled out of hiding. Spaniards to intercept. Propaganda to author and distribute. Felix has a beguiling face, the odd bit of experience in espionage, and a conscience totally untroubled by lies. It was even easier when Walsingham suddenly died.

And so, for the last several years, Felix (as Lord Walsingham) has been constructing a web of partially true to outright false rumors that are turning the Queen’s court upside-down with paranoia. Attacks seem to be coming from every side; Jesuit spies peek through every keyhole. It’s all rather fun when you don’t care who’s about to get the ax. Felix’s motivations are a bit opaque to everyone but himself, but it’s safe to assume he’s in it for himself rather than any greater cause. This whole business with Marlowe and Frizer and Skeres is barreling towards disaster, though. Perhaps Frizer is simply jealous, but it’s got Felix worried. Worse, word has gotten out in London that a private ceremony was recently held for Walsingham’s death.

Mary Seton
Living Agent
Mary Seton was a courtier in the household of Mary, Queen of Scots, and well-loved by her mistress despite her sudden departure in 1585. When Queen Mary was later executed on the strength of a few French sonnets and romantic letters, some thought to ask who might know her handwriting better than her closest friend and confidante. But surely Mary had been a safe pair of hands to hold a silver casket of letters. Soon enough she’ll disappear into a convent, but right now she’s happily wealthy and being called on by foreign-sounding gentlemen unknown to the rest of her former lady’s household.

Arabella Stuart
Living Pawn
As the only child of a hasty marriage, and distantly in line for throne, Arabella is very much on the mind of Elizabeth’s counselors. Fortunately, while she’s talented and clever, her tutor “Morley” has been tacitly encouraging the romantic bent which is driving her away from advantageous marriages. That lack of ambition is protecting her from Queen Bess’s paranoia, but her family is eager to marry her off while the potential alliances are still favorable. If only Marlowe hadn’t introduced her to poetry.

Kindred of Character: Fleet Street
Cicely Rowe
Invictus Climber
It’s unfair is what it is. Hasn’t she strived with the best of them? Doesn’t she have a string on every lordling worth counting clear out to Bath? Hasn’t she put a boot in the throat of every ha’penny squire who’s come sniffing after her deeds or right to same? She’s earned her place again and again, but Bithewaye treats her like the clever hound who fetches his pheasants. Surely not everyone deserves the privilege of office, but she’s still not in line for Richard’s job, and she
rather thinks she should be. After all, England has a queen, and so do the Weihan Cynn. Why not the Invictus?

Cicely is the proprietress of the finest of gentlemen’s taverns and theaters, collector of bribes and favors, and distributor of same. For six weeks she’s been sitting on a fat secret: Richard’s real name. Trouble is, she doesn’t quite know how to turn it to her advantage. Cecily views reformers like Adam as lying somewhere between rats and poets, and tolerates neither in her establishments. But a secret’s worthless until you find a buyer.

Clement the Moor

Insightful Foreigner of the Weihan Cynn

Not every man of color in Elizabeth’s England was a slave, even formerly; some adventurous souls sought to visit the exotic northern kingdoms on their own power. A lifetime ago, Clement was such a man, eager to see England’s strange ways and quaint folk beliefs. London was happy to accept his service — as a militiaman, as a curiosity, as a symbol of England’s exaggerated influence over his homeland — but would not offer its respect. He had observed London as only an outsider could, with rapt attention and discernment. With insufficient pay to send himself home, to tell these stories he’d gathered, Clement had begun seriously considering selling himself into servitude. But a pale, bony woman approached him one evening, and asked him if he might mind telling her what he thought of the city. Flattered to be asked at last, the bite came too swiftly to see. Æthelgifu won a loyal agent with no more than an intense curiosity.

Oswyn Cresswell

Mortal Weihan Cynn Agent

Oswyn is the son of a son of a Weihan Cynn daughter. Quite mundane, if devoted to his ancestors, and willing to manage whatever a sister might need in the howling mob of London. He owns a dozen backstreet surgeons, dentists, and chemist shops, from which he relays messages, goods, and safe spaces for a great-grandmother’s day trip.

Kindred of Notoriety: Bridewell and Gatehouse

Nicholas Skeres

Living Agent of Felix

Not every working man is an honest one, and not every dishonest man deludes himself as to his honesty. Nicholas is a confidence man, an usurer, and a liar of the first order — and he wouldn’t deny a word of it. After all, men are weak and gullible, and anyone God lets him ruin surely deserved it. When Felix (as Lord Walsingham) approached him to put his skills to use catching larger and better prey, Nicholas was happy to lend a hand. He’s hoped to catch Walsingham too; but the man always seems ten steps ahead of him, and amused by his efforts to boot.

Adam Nomen

Once Invictus, now of The School of Night

Everything you might wish a young Kindred to be: clever, driven, and fiercely active in maintaining the Masquerade. He’s also shaking the foundation of the Queen’s Court by calling their very power into question. A new movement is taking shape among mortals — it’s terribly dangerous to admit to atheism in Elizabeth’s day, but some hint at it. Adam works among them,
but his plans cast catastrophically beyond those of his part-time philosopher friends. He wants to save Kindred society. Free it from the stranglehold of gods and demons, and fling open the doors to new, non-spiritual covenants. They are not damned, they are superior; not chosen by a god, but created as a glorious perfection of man. Adam is a heretic beyond tolerance, and it’s only a matter of time before he storms the church gates.

The School of Night
Depending on whom you ask, the School of Night is either: a band of treasonous monsters plotting to overthrow both God and Queen, who even now are licentiously corrupting youths away from honorable and moral service; or the only honest men in England, devoted to uncovering the deepest truths about human and Kindred natures and sharing those truths with those men who are ready to hear them. It’s difficult to catch the School of Night at study, though. Even clever, self-satisfied philosophers rarely publicly announce their devotion to treasonous scholarship. They exchange coded messages in pamphlets, plays, and small printings carefully dropped in predetermined locations. When they meet in person at all, they gather at the Mermaid Tavern, where they go unnoticed amid the poets crammed in thick as fleas.

Moll
Living Gallows Post Agent
Moll doesn’t quite know how old she is. She’s graying now, but fit for her age, and mad as a March hare. She dresses like a man, keeps huge dogs, and has a small lilting voice she uses to repeat bawdy ballads written about her. Most of her biographies (including the one she wrote) are thinly disguised gossip and prevarication, but she’s charming and debonair and well loved by ladies of her station. She’s also a vicious highwayman, whose brigand band has killed hundreds of people as she lays siege to the roads of London. The Gallows Post may have bribed her to keep away from their delicately drawn lines of commerce, or she may simply enjoy watching them trying to be sneaky.

Seçil
No one at all
Seçil is just a ghost story. An eyeless specter seen in the Tower when plague’s about to come around. They say if she catches you in her not-gaze, you’ll be coughing blood by morning. She’s got a weakness for pretty young women, though; sometimes a desperate girl will beg her for clemency.

Playing the Game
Elizabethan London has a wealth of opportunities for enterprising Kindred of all stripes. This chronicle provides a whirl of distractions for the player characters, bright flashes that draw the eye away from the ubiquitous filth and festering darkness underneath aged, gilded facades. While the Elizabethan era is described as a “golden age,” the gold as ever is flecked with gore. Plots to maintain the status quo clash with those that seek tear the conspirators’ rotting masks away. Ancient creditors come to collect on bargains struck in centuries past, and even preternatural power cannot overcome foul, natural disease.
To that end, we provide several stories that can be introduced either one at a time or layered upon each other until the players’ characters search for conspirators or spies around every corner, never trusting that they are truly alone or safe. Some of these stories focus strictly on Kindred matters, while others reach out into the world at large, roughly taking the hand of a single mortal to tug him dangerously close or offering many a feather-light, chilly caress that promises death.

Rotten Fruit

Summer fast approaches, and a foul stench wafts upon the warm breeze: plague. Death has hung upon London since winter, and it will only grow worse before it gets better. While it only sticks around for a year, which is but a single note of a Requiem, a lot can happen in a year.

The Script

London is no stranger to plague. Small waves of it have passed through the city in the recent past, with the plague of 1556 wiping out nearly a quarter of the population. For many elders, the Black Death two centuries prior that swept through the known world is still fresh in their minds. Kindred struggle to keep their personal feeding stock clean and healthy, but those without such a luxury find themselves at risk of consuming tainted blood and spreading the disease every time they go out for a bite.

Opening Act

The first cases of this round of plague begin in December of 1592. When the risk makes itself known, the kine government reminds the population of the regulations for identifying plague victims (or those at risk of contracting it) and controlling the disease. Individuals from homes with infected victims carry white sticks to warn others to stay away. However, these measures only go so far. As the infections spread, whole families find themselves barricaded in their homes, dusk funerals grow more frequent, and the peal of plague bells greets many Kindred ears as they wake from their daily slumber. The theaters shut down, as do most other entertainment venues that gather large crowds, leaving many entertainers (kine and Kindred alike) out of work.

Pivotal Scenes

• Vampires spread the plague much like fleas: Their immunity makes them ideal hosts, and as they feed, their victims become infected. To combat this, the Ieldra Æthelgifu decrees that any Kindred confirmed to have spread the plague by feeding will be publicly punished before the court for their negligence. In addition, any Kindred willfully spreading the plague in this manner will meet Final Death. This nearly brings the whole court into chaos as ambitious vampires try to throw their rivals under the plague cart, ensuring that the Ieldra continues to reign with little to no opposition.

• A relatively poor but populous neighborhood begins openly flouting the regulations, even when the residents therein are visibly infected with the plague. Upon further investigation, the residents of this neighborhood appear to gather weekly at a centrally located home in their neighborhood, which has been boarded up. While there, they offer prayers for mercy and small gifts at the door. The following night, the offerings left at the door are gone, and one of the residents is missing; no body, no struggle, just...gone. Stranger still, the residents of this neighborhood do not die from their afflictions. They remain alive and functioning remarkably well, despite the disease ravaging their bodies.
A small circle of Kindred has found a method to ensure their bellies remain full during the plague: Embracing their victims before draining them dry. This method, while psychologically traumatic, ensures their food supply is free of disease. However, Vitae addiction and diablerie become all but certainties with constant practice. This trend is troubling enough in elders who have no choice but to sup on Kindred vitae, but when ancillae and neonates turn to this more potent diet, the entire court of London runs the risk of devouring itself. Literally.

A troubling rumor begins to circulate among Kindred circles: the Ieldra Æthelgifu has had a private audience with a vampire developing the telltale buboes and exhibiting other symptoms of the plague that ravages the kine population. A general panic results among the court, as this implies that the disease can now infect Kindred. Some simply dismiss the idea, claiming that the rumored visitor was a Nosferatu who always appeared that way. The Haunts, however, aren’t talking, and the Ieldra denies such a meeting took place. Still, Kindred scour their own bodies for signs of disease taking root.

That Damned Poet Marlowe

In 1593, a popular playwright and poet dies under mysterious circumstances; and his connections to the Queen’s spymasters and a Mekhet enthralled with skulduggery cast a pall over all the Kindred of London.

The Script

Christopher Marlowe, the author of Doctor Faustus and a spy for the Crown, is killed while at the disposal of the Queen’s Privy Council, an advisory council to the Sovereign capable of circumventing the courts and Parliament (which they frequently did, under the rule of Henry VIII). The inquest into Marlowe’s death is hasty at best, and members of the Invictus with direct ties to the Privy Council cannot help but suspect that the inquest was a sham and a cover-up. The implications are disastrous for the vampire court of London. If Marlowe could be held for questioning by the Crown with little to no accountability, what would stop kine authorities from apprehending Kindred and throwing the Masquerade into turmoil?

Opening Act

Twelve days before his death, Christopher Marlowe was called for questioning by the Privy Council for charges of atheism and heresy, and was ordered to “give his daily attendance on their Lordships, until he shall be licensed to the contrary.” On May 30, 1593, Ingram Frizer stabbed Marlowe in self-defense, supposedly in an altercation over who would settle the bill at a local tavern. Marlowe died from his wounds. All of the men present when the crime took place were spies and confidence men, professional liars who had plenty to gain from Marlowe keeping his fool mouth shut. One of these men, Nicholas Skeres, is under the direct employ of Felix, an ancient Mekhet whose loyalties seem more to self and state than to vampire society. His methods are “graft, murder, and an occasional spot of treason,” to hear him tell it.

Pivotal Scenes

The players’ characters unearth some of Marlowe’s personal journals and letters to his patron, Thomas Walsingham. All of these documents are heavily encoded, but when decrypted, the documents describe incidents where Marlowe encountered members of Kindred society without understanding what he saw. One of the early letters describes him spying on his former employer, Francis Walsingham, conversing with a “deathly pale beauty” that could be the Ieldra herself. Another letter from 1590 describes an ailing Francis on his deathbed, with Francis’
perfectly healthy-looking doppelganger standing over him and speaking with a different voice. If Felix discovers the existence of Marlowe’s personal letters, he may seek to remove any evidence of their existence, including the players’ characters.

• Much to his personal shame, Felix has lost track of his agent, Nicholas Skeres, who, according to the official inquest, was present for Marlowe’s death. Skeres was involved in a money-lending scam with Ingram Frizer, the business agent for Thomas Walsingham (cousin to Francis) who stabbed Marlowe to death. The third witness, Robert Poley, was one of the most capable government agents in his day. The three of them are professional liars, and at least two carry state secrets; any of them may be aware of the existence of vampires, either through associations with Felix or through Marlowe’s discoveries. Finding and securing the trust (or silence) of any of these three men could help keep the Masquerade secure.

• Shortly after Marlowe’s death, a member of the Invictus enters the Ieldra’s court in a rage. His access to the Privy Council depended heavily on leveraging an advantageous marriage for Arabella Stuart in order to cement her as the royal heir. Now his access has been quite suddenly and severely cut off, and he directly declares that “damned poet Morley” is to blame. Is this “Morley” Christopher Marlowe? Did Francis Walsingham (or Felix as Walsingham) direct Marlowe to distract Arabella with poetry and notions of romance? Did Marlowe discover and reveal the Invictus’ machinations to the Privy Council?

The Faerie Queene

An ancient pact is invoked, involving a treasure of great value to those who struck the bargain. However, with no vampires around with intimate knowledge of the bargain, the court of London must rediscover it and decide whether or not to fulfill it.

The Script

A contingent of creatures calling themselves Fae comes to the court of Ieldra Æthelgifu. Their leader, who styles herself a queen, requests the return of a treasure, which she calls the Trophy. According to her, the Trophy was put into the care of the vampire queen of Lundenwic until such time as it was safe for the Fae to reclaim it. If the bargain is not met, all the Kindred of London will die.

Opening Act

Once upon a time, when the Saxons invaded England, a Woods-Witch made a deal with a powerful creature to sway the incoming armies. In return, the creature gave her a great treasure for safekeeping, binding her to never use it for her own gain and to return it at a given time. Shortly afterward, she rose to rule not only the Weihan Cynn, but all the Kindred of London. She told no one of her promise, thinking she would live long enough to return the Trophy to its rightful owner, but she was not so fortunate. The creature with whom the Woods-Witch struck the bargain does not bother to hide her disdain for the current Kindred court, calling the Ieldra a “mere girl” and the other vampires “helpless babies.” The loyal retainer who tries to defend Æthelgifu crumbles to a pile of ash with a single gesture from the Fae queen. She threatens the same fate to all the vampires in London if they do not comply. Feeling generous, the Fae queen allows the court until the next new moon to fulfill the bargain.

Pivotal Scenes
• No Kindred in the current court have any idea what the Trophy is or exactly where to find it. Æthelgifu remembers hearing of how the Trophy came into the Weihan Cynn’s hands, but even among the Woods-Witches, the Trophy is just a legend. While the Woods-Witch who made the initial deal told no one of the Trophy’s existence, others discovered it and frequently came to early and messy ends shortly afterward. Some tried to harness the Trophy’s power, while others simply tried to move it to prevent others from finding it and abusing it. The story goes that those who know how to control it can direct the fate of legions at their whim — which, given the display at court, leaves many Kindred questioning whether or not the Fae queen should have it. However, with the threat of annihilation, Kindred of all covenants are searching for the Trophy, even if they are not prepared to handle its power.

• John Norden, a cartographer and author of devotional works, has been doggedly chronicling the streets of London and Westminster in preparation for publication to the masses. By some twist, Norden always turns up where the players’ characters go to look for the Trophy. Norden could easily be following the players’ characters around. Alternatively, he could somehow have heard of the Trophy and be looking for it himself. In a stranger turn, simple fate or the resonant power of the Trophy could draw him into the path of the players’ characters time and time again. While Norden’s cartography garners him little patronage, his drive for accuracy in his maps could cause trouble later as well.

• Near Cripplegate, a legend exists of a “golden child,” a luminous youngster dressed in rags who approaches people to beg for food. Those who acquiesce with kindness find themselves blessed with good fortune, while those who spurn the child suffer from bad luck. Particularly violent or disdainful rebukes have more dire consequences. Those who have seen the child tell tales of glowing skin and eternal youth, with old grandmothers claiming the child looks the same even after decades have passed. Some even claim they have seen the child slip into a house on the verge of collapse to seek shelter. Perhaps the “golden child” has some insight about the Trophy, or could even be the Trophy.

What is the Trophy, Anyway?

The exact nature and capabilities of the Trophy have been left intentionally vague. The Trophy could be anything the Storyteller needs to craft the story she wants to tell, or whatever will best capture the attention of the players’ characters. If the “golden child” really is the Trophy, the effects of his (or her) powers could be entirely innocent, an extension of the child’s opinion of those around him (or her). If the Trophy is a prized object, such as the head of a magical beast or a piece of enchanted jewelry, making a forgery and planting it within easy reach of one’s competitors could throw others off the scent.

The powers it exhibits trend towards affecting an individual’s fate, but if that doesn’t work for the chronicle at hand, the Storyteller could easily change it. For example, a reliquary that appears small but holds and preserves oceans of blood for an indefinite amount of time could just as easily appeal to the Kindred of London. Customize the Trophy to be whatever it needs to be in the individual chronicle, even if that’s the Maltese Falcon.

A Church Divided
Serpents in the ranks of the House and Spear are passionate in their devotion to their faith. When that passion diverts the faithful elsewhere, however, the work of the Sanctified in London could crumble to dust.

The Script
Simon Loveney, a neonate freshly Embraced into the Daeva and the Lancea et Sanctum, shows a great deal of promise. His energetic zeal is infectious, and when he truly believes what he preaches, he can stir an entire congregation to his side. However, his sermons have trended toward the belief that the Sanctified have not adapted their teachings enough to modern kine religion, calling for reforms that give even the most progressive Sanctified factions in London pause.

Opening Act
Simon Loveney’s sire, a Daeva called Sister Fortune, found Simon reading Bible passages with a fervor that rivaled Cædmon the Lloegyrwys himself. She immediately compelled Simon to her side, only barely waiting until they were out of kine earshot to offer him the Choice that all prospective Sanctified receive: Accept the Embrace or die. Simon accepted, but immediately after his Embrace, he called several Sanctified beliefs into question.

Pivotal Scenes
• After his Embrace, Simon vehemently condemns the Creation Rite, where his sire took the lashings initially intended for him, per Lancea et Sanctum tradition. He describes the ritus as “unnecessary self-flagellation that no godly man would abide.” Budding radical factions within the Anglican Church have been known to refer to themselves as “the godly.” Is Simon tied to these extremist elements, derisively called “puritans” in mainstream religious circles? If so, how? And how will Simon react to other traditions of the Chapel and Spear? Will the Sanctified bother to attempt to reconcile the pomp and circumstance of their rites to their newest initiate?
• Simon is not the only neonate Sanctified in town. The religious zeal of the age, no matter how divided the kine have become, draws out many more like Simon; and even devout fervor cannot fully supplant the will to survive when presented with the choice of death or Damnation. However, these neonates gravitate to Simon; they can relate to his objections and struggle to relate to Longinian scripture and ceremony. This only widens the generation gap in the Lancea et Sanctum.
• Despite his opinions, Sanctified sects within London are actively trying to recruit Simon in order to direct his passionate energy to their own ends. To the surprise of many, the First Temptation seems to have the majority Simon’s attention, and he has actively snubbed the Keepers of the Flame, who seem to be an ideal fit based on Simon’s temperament. What are Simon’s true intentions with the First Temptation? Does he wish to join them or destroy the hedonists from the inside?
• Simon is already looking to Embrace a childe of his own, a known member of “the godly” by the name of Charles Emerson. Simon talks of Embracing a large brood of childer to help spread the Word of God, and aside from Emerson, his prospective childer are bawdy actors, irreverent artists, prostitutes, and independent businesswomen. For one so freshly Damned, what does he truly intend with this brood he wishes to bring to his bosom? And is it a coincidence that they all have red hair?
• Amidst the clamor surrounding Simon, his sire, Sister Fortune, goes missing. Has she simply taken the opportunity to step back from Kindred society? Did she know that Simon’s Embrace would strike sparks among the Lancea et Sanctum and is thus simply standing back from the powder keg? Has she fallen to a more malicious force, such as a quiet punishment for Embracing Simon? Or has he diablerized his own sire for a quick hit of early power?

Inspiration

The Time-Traveler’s Guide to Elizabethan England, by Ian Mortimer. Mortimer’s book covers virtually every aspect of late Tudor life. Quite to the advantage of a Vampire game, he’s more interested in ordinary folk than the maneuvering of the great and the good... though he hardly neglects the nobles and landowners. You’d be hard-pressed to find a more lively and vibrant account of the world our monsters inhabit.

Elizabeth and Elizabeth: The Golden Age, directed by Shekhar Kapur. On the other hand, if you want to look at English politics being run like a crime family, these visually gorgeous and rendingly dramatic films are your ticket. You can steal left and right from these two films when portraying the courts of the living and the dead alike.

Shakespeare in Love, directed by John Madden. Aside from some of the snark, this romantic comedy and its profusion of literary gags aren’t really Vampire material. But the film excels at a stylized portrayal of the look and feel of middle-class Elizabethan London. If you want to know what this chapter looks like, you could do worse than to watch this movie, then cake on the night and grime.
“Here we are,” said Phillippe. He dismounted the horse in a single, elegant movement and extended his hand up to her. Even though they had been riding all day and all night, he still looked as regal as ever in his royal blue silks embroidered in silver. Her thoughts strayed to her own tattered dress and how ridiculous she must look next to him. Do not let him make you feel small, she reminded herself. Never let anyone do that to you ever again.

“You are a murderer,” Perrette wanted to say. She said, “Thank you,” instead. Perrette hated her voice. At the best of times, it was soft and squeaky. It wasn’t musical and sweet like a little girl’s voice, but dry and withered like an old woman’s. Today, her voice was raw from sobbing, and she was still choking back tears.

Perrette took his hand. Phillippe put his other hand around her waist, and gently pulled her down from the saddle. “I’ll take you to the King in the morning,” he said.

“Your King destroyed my village,” she wanted to say. Instead she was silent. Hot tears welled up in her eyes. She bit her lip and looked away. She wouldn’t give him the satisfaction of seeing her cry.

“Oh, Perrette,” he said. He pulled her body close to his. He stroked her hair and embraced her tightly. Enveloped in the chill of Winter’s mantle and pressed against his warm body, she felt his Glamour wend its way into her mind. It soothed her anger, told her to surrender to him, told her that she had lost, and that she must yield to sorrow.

This must be what freezing to death feels like, she thought numbly. An easy death. A gentle death.

Then she felt the handle of his rapier press into her hip, and she remembered the faces of her parents. Dead now; their bodies left out in the open to rot. She realized that she could pull the knife from her belt and jam it between Phillippe’s ribs before he could step back to draw his sword, for she was small and quick.

No. Not now. Later, she thought. I will ruin him and his King first. She felt the power of Summer wash over her, and the Wyrd whispered that she could burn this whole city down.

“We can help,” Phillippe whispered, twisting a lock of her hair around his fingers.

Perette nodded. “Thank you,” she said, sniffling.

Phillippe’s death would not be easy or gentle.

Lily, Saber, and Thorn

A rogue does not laugh in the same way that an honest man does; a hypocrite does not shed the tears of a man of good faith. All falsehood is a mask; and however well made the mask may be, with a little attention we may always succeed in distinguishing it from the true face.

—Alexandre Dumas, The Three Musketeers

In the year 1648, the Thirty Years’ War comes to an end, marking the beginning of a new era for France. Louis XIV, the self-styled “Sun King,” leads his country into an age of political and social dominance, reconciling the old hereditary nobility of the Middle Ages and the rising bureaucratic class under his iron rule. The Sun King’s court is the envy of all Europe, but there are food riots in the capital, and the countryside is racked with warfare and famine. It is the Age
of Reason, and the age of the witch hunts. It is an age of unprecedented excess and of wretched poverty. The common man enjoys greater class mobility than ever before, but the trans-Atlantic slave trade is booming.

This is the setting of Lily, Sabre, and Thorn, but it is not the soul of the game. The soul of the game is that of swashbuckler fiction. It's a world where the heroes are loveable scoundrels who fight for love, honor, and freedom. It's a world of deadly intrigues, opulent feasts, and improbable swordfights. It's a world where revenge can bring a city to its knees, and true love conquers all.

Like fairy tales, swashbuckler fiction is upbeat in the popular imagination. The heroes and villains are easily distinguishable from one another, and in the end, good triumphs over evil. But Changeling players know that there is a darkness behind even the most innocent-seeming stories. Modern versions of The Count of Monte Cristo may cut out the infanticide, revenge, and decidedly unchivalrous poisonings, but anyone who has read the book knows how the story really goes. And though the grandeur of the Sun King is unparalleled in Europe, his rule is ruthless, and his courtiers scramble to get his favor lest their heads end up on the chopping block.

It is a world where appearances are everything, and no one is what he appears to be. The beautiful and unattainable queen twists a loyal soldier around her finger in the name of courtly love, then executes him after he's served his purpose. A roguish duelist and dandy is a sociopathic sadist (Tim Roth provides an excellent example of this in the 1995 film Rob Roy). The loyal serving-man fawns over his master, but his obsequious smile hides his deep resentment. The webs of intrigue run deep in Lily, Sabre, and Thorn, and an aspiring courtier may find that courage and honor are not enough to protect him from the machinations of his rivals.

It is a decadent, dirty world ruled by passion, greed, and hunger, where the gilded halls of Versailles are as dangerous as the back streets of Paris.

Why Swashbucklers?

The swashbuckler is caught between two worlds. He is not a true member of the aristocracy, though he can charm his way into any fête. He's not a commoner, though he always has a rose for the grisettes and a loaf of bread for the urchins of the cour des miracles. He loves his country, though it has left him crippled and penniless after the war's end. He loves his lady, though their love can never be. He loves his companions in arms, but they are as lost as he is.

He is, in other words, not so different from the changeling.

How to Use This Chapter

Lily, Sabre, and Thorn provides general guidelines and setting material for running a game of Changeling: The Lost in le Grand Siècle. Particular focus is given to the rule of Louis XIV. This is not to glorify or lionize the Sun King. Many considered him an egomaniacal tyrant whose decadent lifestyle was a travesty in the face of the misery of his subjects. Regardless, his style of absolute monarchy gave rise to the modern nation-state that we know today. More importantly for our purposes, the court of the Sun King would influence the Seasonal Courts and shape the lives of the Lost for generations to come.

This chapter is not intended to provide a comprehensive history or anthropology of early modern France. Setting material is presented in broad strokes. Thematic unity and genre are of primary
importance with historical accuracy as a distant second. Historical research will enrich your game, but historical elements should serve the purposes of your stories, not the other way around.

A list of works that inspired Lily, Sabre, and Thorn or that might be useful to players and storytellers looking to capture the essence of the game are given at the end of this chapter.

Themes

The traditional themes of swashbuckler fiction are present in Lily, Sabre, and Thorn, albeit in a dark, twisted form. While the splendors of courtly life and fae magic are sublime, there is always a hidden edge to them. The lives of the Lost are bittersweet at best, but they are never far from wonder and beauty.

Decadence and Romance

It was a rare enough occurrence for a child to be born to one of the Lost, but for two changelings to conceive a child was utterly unheard of. When the Spring Queen and her consort announced the christening of their newborn son, it was a remarkable occasion, and it demanded an exceptional fête. The Spring Court did not disappoint. The tables groaned under a massive feast: trays of candied quinces and frozen custards; suckling pig stuffed with braised cockatrice coxcomb; roast amaranthine stuffed with hobtruffles; tiny marzipan nymphs and satyrs cavorting in miniature palaces of spun sugar; chocolates from the New World nestled next to stuffed dates from Palestine. The courtiers were splendidly attired. The Royal Consort wore hunter green hose and a doublet of pale sage. His amber eyes blazed with pride. The Queen wore gauzy silks that shifted in color and patterns just as her wings did — hypnotic spirals of green, blue, and purple. Her hair and her feathery antennae glittered with silver dust. The babe was beautiful and sweet-natured — as if the son of the Spring Queen and her consort would be anything but. Even a few among the Winter Court could not help but smile when they looked upon him. Though his looks did not betray his fey heritage — he had neither his mother’s wings nor his father’s antlers — his eyes sparkled a clear emerald green, even at a week’s age.

The entire freehold was in attendance. Even the Winter King was present, though he remained in his chair, clad in his black funerary shroud as always, and spoke only through his seneschal. There were many in the freehold who thought such an extravagant gathering was inauspicious and certain to attract the Gentry, but the Spring Queen would not be refused on the eve of the vernal equinox.

The naysayers’ fears were unfounded. The evening was joyous. All feasted to until bursting. Even Paul Ninefingers refused a third helping of lamprey pie. There was dancing, and toasts, and poetry. More than a few of the attendees snuck off to dark corners of the hall to celebrate in a more private fashion — and if there were no more children born to the freehold in nine months’ time, it would not be for a lack of trying.

There was only one moment that evening where a hint of sorrow could be sensed. But if a sensitive Onyx Courtier were looking in the right direction at the right time, he would have seen this: At the height of the evening, as Bishop Tannhauser took the babe from the Queen’s arms for the baptism, the Vernal Queen met eyes with Thrice-Damned Jacques, standing in the back. He would have sensed the tiniest whisper of sorrow amidst the roar of joy and desire as Jacques’ emerald green eyes gazed into his Queen’s eyes — just for a moment — before he turned, left the ballroom and disappeared into the night.
Love and romance are key themes in swashbuckler fiction, and the Lost are nothing if not creatures of intense passion and intensity. The trust of a changeling is not easily won, and those who can bring themselves to devote themselves utterly to another person are either utterly foolish or very brave. The love of a changeling can bring a kingdom to its knees; the passion of the Lost burns brighter than the sun, and the warped love of the Gentry can shatter souls.

Most changelings choose to hide their romantic feelings. They may engage in distant, courtly affection for an unattainable lover as a way to avoid true intimacy, or they may have clandestine affairs with their beloved. And yet, there are some loves that simply cannot be. As in the mortal world, many marriages among politically-active Lost are used to cement ties between quarrelling changeling factions.

Honor and Glory

The duel was surely a formality, thought Reynault. He had offered no great slight — were the women of the Summer Court not known for their liberality? — and he had made due apologies. Still, Princess Carpillon made a great show of taking offense, and demanded satisfaction on the battlefield. Pistols at dawn, then. Easy enough; both parties would deliberately miss, and both could walk away from the field without dishonor.

When he heard the signal, Reynault drew his pistol, aimed it straight at the ground, and fired. He looked up at the Princess.

Her pistol was still pointed directly at him. Reynault couldn’t tell which was emitting more smoke: the barrel of Carpillon’s gun or the mantle of the Princess herself.

A changeling’s word is his life. His basic sustenance in Arcadia depended on his contracts with the elemental forces of that twisted realm, and it is no stretch to say that his survival in this world is almost as dependent on his reputation. His magics rely upon the contracts that he has forged with the elemental forces of the world. It is only by honoring these ancient pacts that he can wield fae magic at all. While a mortal man who was dishonored may find himself snubbed at parties and laughed at behind his back, a changeling shorn of his honor may find himself friendless and powerless against his enemies — or against the Gentry. Even when not sworn to a pledge, a Lost’s reputation is her shield, and being perceived as unreliable or dishonorable can be a matter of life and death.

Like honor, glory carries considerable weight in a reputation-based economy. But glory is not about strength of character: It is about power. Guilded Aspirants trade tales of their prowess in rhyming couplets at court; a Knight of the Summer Court presents her king with the heads of his enemies; the Autumn King presents an elaborate and costly feast and nearly bankrupts himself in the process. Conspicuous displays of power are necessary to attract followers and to intimidate one’s enemies. Glory means standing up for lost causes even when you’re against impossible odds. The glory-seeker sees a larger purpose to her life and to her death — whether she fights for her sovereign, for her freehold, or for her freedom. She may die young, it is true, but she will be sung about for generations to come.

Vengeance and Betrayal

Every one of the Lost has been wronged. They have been kidnapped, abused, tortured, destroyed, and remade as a shadow of their former selves. Each bears the scars of their Durance as an indelible reminder of what was forced upon them. Even the most resigned Winter courtier once entertained thoughts of vengeance, or so they say.
The fetch is another object of revenge. If you return home to discover that your husband has been sleeping with your fetch every night for the last seven years, can you forgive your fetch? Can you forgive your husband? And what of the faithful wife who, unaware that she is a fetch, finds her husband growing more and more distant until the day she catches him in flagrante delicto with a shapeshifting monster who is impersonating her? Should fetch and changeling settle their differences on the dueling field, or is death too good for them?

The structure of Lost society is rife with intrigue. The Lost are creatures of deception and disguises, and trust is a rare thing. Even the most steadfast and honest retainer might find that she needs to betray her sovereign if he is corrupt or mad.

Revenge is a strong theme of swashbuckler fiction and of Changeling: the Lost. What lengths will you go to for your revenge? Whom are you willing to hurt in the process? When you are done, will you be satisfied? Will you even remember who you are?

Identity and Redemption

“Ah, my angel has come for me again,” said Mathieux.

“Don’t get up,” said White-Thorn, putting her basket of wine, bread, and herbs on a small table.

“What sort of man would I be if I didn’t get out of my chair when a beautiful lady came into my home?” He stood to his full height, then tried to speak again, but was interrupted by a coughing fit.

White-Thorn scowled at him in mock anger. “You should be in bed, Monsieur Mathieux,” she said, and led him over to the small rope bed.

“Your henpecking shall be the death of me!” he said, smiling as he slowly eased his way onto the bed. He looked up at White-Thorn. “It’s times like this that you really do remind me of my wife. Did I ever tell you about her?”

White-Thorn turned back to the basket and busied herself with its contents, trying to hide her face from Mathieux. “You didn’t,” she lied. White-Thorn tried not to remember the last time she’d seen her fetch, face down in the river, with her straw hair floating away from her rapidly dissolving head of thatch and birds’ nests.

“Ah,” he said. “It’s funny, you remind me of her sometimes. You know, I had a dream about her again last night.” He coughed again — longer and wetter this time. “Do you think it’s really her?” he asked softly. “Do you think it’s some trick of the Devil?”

“I think you just miss her, that’s all,” said White-Thorn as she walked back to the bedside. “Drink this,” she said, handing him a medicinal tincture in a small glass.

Mathieux drank it down without complaint. The two sat together in silence for a long while.

“Will you grant an old man’s foolish request?” said Mathieux.

White-Thorn nodded.

“Stay at my side,” he said. “At least until I fall asleep.”

She did. That night, Mathieux dreamed of his wife again, and he was at peace.

The world has left the swashbuckler behind. The world is no longer as glamorous as it once was. The honor and glory of his summer years are hollow. The king he risked his life to protect has
died and left his throne to an ungrateful brat. He has nothing left but empty hedonism and a pauper’s grave.

The Lost, too, cannot recapture what they once had. They cannot simply resume their mortal lives, nor can they recapture the terrible glories of Arcadia. Some succumb to despair, ending their lives or returning to their Keepers after seeing that the world has left them behind. They must rebuild themselves and create new lives for themselves out of the shambles of their old ones.

While this may be tragic, the rootless nature of the Lost often leads them to lives of great adventure. They are free to roam as they please. They might live as simple con-men roaming from village to village, or they might become artists and artisans who create works of otherworldly beauty. They might reinvent themselves as mysterious nobles from a country you’ve never heard of, and spend their evenings wining, dining, and bedding the elites in Versailles. They might become the saviors of the common people, who right wrongs and defend the people from depravity of the Others and their fellow man.

They might be heroes.

**Mood: Baroque Heroism**

The world of *Lily, Sabre, and Thorn* is rendered in vibrant colors and bold textures. Your lover is the most handsome man in all of France; your Queen is wise and noble as Athena; your rival has a heart blacker and colder than the frozen seas of hell. But the soaring passions of the game of courtly intrigue are kept in place by byzantine rules spoken and unspoken, and there is always a price for breaking them. The looming spirit of the Enlightenment posits an orderly world where everything and everyone has her place. The trick is to bend the rules to your favor — or to be too clever or too charming to be caught.

It’s a world of deep intrigues and labyrinthine alliances, where a stolen glance at a masque or a flower placed in a corsage *just so* could carry secrets that could bring a kingdom down. The excess could drive a man mad — but it is a beautiful madness.

**France in Le Grande Siècle**

**The Court of the Sun King**

The 17th century belongs to France. France is the largest country in the West, and Louis XIV has brought it thoroughly under his thumb. Louis XIV shrewdly took advantage of mid-century civil unrest and firmly established absolute power for the French monarchy. He was ruthless and effective; the nobles who served under him found that they were no longer powerful vassals in their own right, but courtiers whose lives depended upon staying in the good graces of their king. His strongly centralized government would lay the foundation for the nation-state as we know it.

The Seasonal Courts would take notice. In this century, the Seasonal Courts consolidate their power. In previous centuries, they existed in the world of legend and myth. A changeling escaped the Hedge and heard the tales of a distant freehold where others of his kind live and are ruled by the sons and daughters of Maman Suzanne and Jean de la Niege. If he were brave enough, he might have undertaken a long and dangerous journey to find his fellow Lost.
But the rise of the freehold brings its own challenges. The Lost of the 17th century are fiercely independent and, having escaped the tyranny of the Others, will not bend the knee to a new master so easily — especially if they’ve lived on their own terms for decades.

The Robe and the Sword

Throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, France had been ruled by minor nobles — called the noblesse d’épée, or the nobles of the sword — who laid hereditary claim to small territories, each commanding their own private armies. In the wake of the Fronde, an uprising of many of the minor nobility during Louis XIV’s childhood, the Sun King created a national army that answered directly to him. Under his rule, a new class of nobility emerges — one whose claims rest not on land ownership or a hereditary title. These “nobles of the robe” were commoners — judges or administrators who typically purchased their posts from the crown for exorbitant bribes. The Sun King expertly plays these groups off of each other to keep himself firmly in control of his country.

A similar challenge faces many changeling sovereigns. As more Lost gather together, each brings her own ideas and agendas to the freehold. Intrigues and plotting abound, and any sovereign must choose her advisors carefully.

Life at Versailles

The Sun King did not rule his country from its capital. He detested Paris, and found a great advantage in placing his center of power in a place that was removed from the center of his populace.

Formerly a rustic hunting lodge, the Château de Versailles was renovated into a sprawling baroque palace. The Sun King was fond of using displays of conspicuous consumption to demonstrate his power; the Château de Versailles is perhaps the ultimate expression of this.

Under the formal bureaucracy established by the King and his predecessors, virtually nothing could be accomplished without his official approval. This meant that attendance at court in Versailles was mandatory for any aristocrat who wanted to govern effectively or even maintain his power. This led to Duc de Saint-Simon referring to Versailles as a “gilded cage” for the nobility.

As the planets orbit the Sun, so did life at Versailles revolve around the Sun King. His day began at the same time each morning; his attendants dressed him and bathed him according to a strict timeline. After exiting his chambers, he walked down the hallway to his dining room. All courtiers were expected to be in attendance to witness this procession and to watch him at his royal breakfast. No one was permitted to eat before he breakfasted. He would then announce his schedule for the day, and all of the court could make their plans accordingly. Anyone who wished to address him throughout the day was expected to obey elaborate rules of etiquette.

Courtiers had to be sure to know the correct form of address, the correct hour at which to approach the king, or even how to knock on his door correctly (scratch lightly with the pinky finger of the left hand; some courtiers let that nail grow long especially for this purpose). In the Royal Chapel, the King’s pew alone faced the altar; the other pews faced him.

While all of these rituals may seem like the idiosyncrasies of a megalomaniac (and they were, to some extent), there was a larger purpose behind them. Louis XIV worked tirelessly to promote France as a unitary entity that was not just controlled by him, but embodied by him. He was not the ruler of the state — he was the state. Versailles was a crucial part of this. Louis could control
almost every aspect of life at Versailles. Paris, on the other hand, would not be so easily controlled.

**Paris**

Paris in the 17th century has spilled beyond its medieval walls to become a metropolis of nearly 500,000 at the start of Louis XIV’s reign. The city is densely packed with rich and poor crammed together cheek by jowl. To keep order, Louis XIV’s chief minister created a royal police force in Paris — the first of its kind. The Lieutenant-General had broad authority to prosecute and bring charges against nearly anyone, though the bulk of the force’s efforts was focused on clearing out the slums and maintaining civic order. Any undesirables — beggars, prostitutes, malcontents, madmen — could be rounded up and placed in *l'Hôpital général*, a facility that more closely resembled a prison or a workhouse than a hospital in the modern sense. More than one low-Clarity changeling has found himself there, trapped in iron manacles and unable to escape.

There is beauty to be found in the madness, of course: Notre-Dame, Sainte-Chapelle, the Pont Neuf. The rulers of the *ancien régime* devoted considerable resources to the beautification of Paris. The Palais-Royal, L’Hôtel national des Invalides, the Palais du Luxembourg, and the promenade on the outskirts of town called Jardin des Tuileries (better known these days as the Champs-Elysees) were all new sights in the city.

Even in the 1600s, Paris is a city of the world. Senegalese sailors, Persian poets, and Algonquin traders can be found in its streets. The Lost of the city are similarly diverse. Madame Zhou is a Ming dynasty refugee and one of the most skilled oneiroomers of the age. In keeping with the hedgehog spines that cover her scalp, she is of a gloomy and irascible temperament, but anyone who can win her over will have an ally for life.

**Sidebar: Eclipse**

In August of 1654, a complete solar eclipse is visible for thousands of miles all over Europe. The event is marked by chaos and hysteria — especially where the Diurnal Courts make their home. In some places, the streets run red with blood as the Moon and Sun Courts openly wage war until both Sun and Moon have gone over the horizon. Near a small village in Poland, the Moon Court takes the opportunity to wreak havoc upon an invading Russian army, and the local Sun Court joins in the slaughter. In some areas, the opposite is rumored to have happened. The Sun and Moon Courts called a momentary truce, and walked together under the shadow of the eclipse.

In Paris, where the Diurnal Courts are not so powerful, events are quieter. Still, the *de facto* leader of the Moon Court, a Manikin con-man known as Blackeye the Turk, would hate to see an opportunity to stir up trouble go by. His chief target is likely to be Madame Hadjia of the Sun Court, a noble duelist and poet who is as renowned for her eloquence and kind heart as she is for her martial skill. Because there are comparatively few fellow Moon Courtiers in Paris, he might enlist the help of other Lost for assistance. Of course, Madame Hadjia might also reward anyone who tipped her off to Blackeye’s schemes, or she might just be planning a few pranks for Blackeye herself.
The rapid growth of the city has not been without problems. Many of the rural people who came to the city to seek their fortunes ended up in the gutter. The various slum districts of the city are known as *cours des miracles*. A powerful Autumn courtier known only as the Grande Thaumaturge keeps an eye on the comings and goings in the slums. His knowledge of the criminal underworld in Paris is almost as extensive as his knowledge of the occult. The Lost who wish to seek him out would do better to find his chief lieutenant, a Larcenist (*Night Horrors: Grim Fears*, p. 63) and small-time actor called Flimflam who trades small favors and fences goods for mortals and fellow changelings alike.

Diversity in the Kingdom of France

The France that we know today was not the France of the 17th century, nor the France of the 17th century the same as it had been in the 16th century. Centuries of warfare resulted in territories that switched between kings constantly. Most people only paid attention to who their immediate superiors were — typically, a minor noble who laid hereditary claim to a small parcel of land. Accordingly, most citizens are likely to think of themselves by a regional or ethnic identity rather than by their nationality. It is likely that many characters will have a language other than French — such as *langue d’oc*, Breton, or Catalan — or an unusual dialect thereof as their mother tongue. A sense of regional identity and pride still runs strong in France to this day. It also played a strong role in courtly life and a thematic role in the swashbuckling genre. *The Three Musketeers* would not be the same novel if D’Artagnan were a Parisian guttersnipe instead of a daring Gascon farm boy, after all.

The Kingdom of France contains several indigenous languages and cultures within its borders, and the Sun King made many efforts to stamp them out in place of a national, homogenous French identity. He gave wide state support to the Catholic Church not out of any sense of apparent religiosity, but rather because he recognized how powerful the Church could be in controlling the populace. (His philosophy of Gallicanism reinforced this; no Bishops could be appointed in France without his approval, and they could not leave the country without his permission.) Though de facto persecution was increasing in the 1680s, when poorly-disciplined soldiers known as *dragonnes* harassed Protestant citizens, the anti-Protestant sentiment came to a head in 1685. Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes and introduced the Edict of Fontainebleau, effectively legalizing the persecution of Protestants. Their homes and churches were burned, their businesses were seized, and Protestant public officials were given two weeks to convert under pain of death. As a result, nearly half a million Protestants fled the country.

Jews in this period fared slightly better than they did under Louis XIII. The Sun King revoked the edict that declared it illegal under pain of death for Christians to converse with or shelter Jews. The reasons for this revocation were more utilitarian than humanitarian; there were many Jews in the newly-annexed Alsace-Lorraine, but there were too few to cause a dangerous uprising, and they were ripe targets for profitable extortion by government officials.

The Lost are masters of dissembling, and they can hide in places that are all but invisible to mortal eyes. Some Lost might aid their mortal counterparts fleeing persecution — either out of a sense of solidarity with the oppressed or for a handsome profit.

The Arts and Education
Literacy was on the rise in this era, though perhaps only twenty percent of the population could read and write. The newly-invented newspaper was gaining ground rapidly as a source of information. Students gathered at coffee shops and wine bars to read the papers and argue about philosophy. Middle- and upper-class ladies gathered in salons and did the same. *The Princess of Cleves*, the first psychological novel of Europe, is written during this time by Madame de Lafayette.

The most celebrated salon of Lost circles is Heloise de Claire’s Columbarium. The Columbarium is a marble-fronted townhouse in the Marais district of Paris where the fashionable Lost of Paris meet to trade ideas, news, and gossip. De Claire is a gracious but reserved Shadowsoul with an enviable art collection. She typically invites artists, philosophers, and any new changelings to the Columbarium at least once. The Columbarium is named for the courtyard behind the house (which is actually a Hollow) that contains a fine greenhouse of various goblin fruits and several pairs of snow-white doves. There are rumors that Heloise often entertains ghosts and other supernatural creatures in her salon. She never outright denies these rumors, but instead says that she does her utmost to be a gracious hostess to whoever enters her home in good faith.

The venerable guild of bards and memory-smiths, the Guild of the Sacred Journey (*Lords of Summer*, p. 134), is in a period of transition. The Guild had previously chosen its members for practical reasons such as fleet footedness, reliability, discretion, and the ability to memorize and recite often lengthy messages unerringly. Now that literacy is more common than ever and travel is safer and faster than in previous centuries, the Guild is finding itself increasingly less patronized by the Lost of France. In order to remain fashionable and relevant, the Guild is making a radical change: They’re now recruiting only the loveliest of the Fairest to serve under their banner.

Many of the old guard of the Sacred Couriers are finding themselves pushed out of the Guild. These disgruntled former couriers might be willing to share some of the messages that they’ve been entrusted with over the years for the right price. They have perfect memories, after all.

**Town and Country**

The early modern era sees an explosion in urban populations. Increased freedom of movement and the rise of the middle class mean that Lost are able to congregate in cities instead of remaining in isolated rural areas. This leads to increased organization, the rise of the freehold, and more powerful Courts.

In the medieval era, fewer of the Lost organized themselves into freeholds. While the mortal population of the era is more likely to believe that their loved ones had been kidnapped by the Fair Folk and replaced by a fetch, not all of the Lost were able to integrate seamlessly back into society. A changeling cannot disappear into the anonymity of the crowd in a small village — particularly if he once lived there as a mortal. Many of the medieval Lost lived marginal and often nomadic existences as outlaws, witches, and cunning-men, stealing their sustenance or bargaining with mortals to stay alive. With the improved transportation and increasing freedom of movement afforded to the common man in the early modern period, the Lost are now able to gather together under the protection and order of a freehold more readily than before.

Still, many remain in isolation. The more powerful among independent rural changelings are called Hedge Witches or Hedge Barons by their urban counterparts. They’re a tough, independent breed, and they’re as varied and beautiful as their less-rugged urban counterparts.
Those who live long enough and become powerful enough may heed the call of The Lost Pantheon (Lords of Summer, p. 151) and live as gods, but those are rare indeed. Many villages (particularly those in isolated villages areas like Briançon in the Alps) have long been under communal rule. The mortals in these areas do not take well to Louis XIV’s attempts to bring them under central governance, and the changelings who have resisted both the onslaught of the Fae and the calumniations of the Seasonal Courts for generations will not give up their independence lightly.

Some Lost, however, are simply alone, and see no other fae save for the occasional passing hobgoblin peddler. They may have no idea that there are others of their kind. Some have simply gone mad, or attack other changelings on sight, fearing the worst. Others style themselves as gods, cultivating small mortal cults. Few of them hold allegiance to the seasonal courts in any political sense, but enterprising urban courtier might find his country cousins to be valuable allies if he can bring them into the fold.

Anachronisms
The 17th century was a time of rapid scientific, technological, and philosophical changes. Even a worldly, bourgeois changeling abducted by the True Fae at the beginning of the century would likely not recognize a simple dinner fork, which was all but unknown in France until it was popularized by Catherine di Medici. However, not everyone would see these advancements at the same rate. A rural Lost might be astonished to see his likeness in a polished Venetian mirror, even if he suffered little temporal displacement in his Durance.

Other Places
Though the Sun King might be reluctant to admit it himself, there are other places of consequence outside of France during his reign. This is by no means a comprehensive who’s who of important people and places in Europe (that would be outside of the scope of this book), but international and intercultural events can make for excellent storytelling opportunities.

The High Seas
Blackburne of the Minch and the crew of Le Tenasse are the scourge of ships in the English Channel. Most of the ships he raids are mundane English or Dutch vessels, though he sometimes steers his ship into the watery parts of the Hedge to raid hobgoblin settlements. The bulk of his riches go to the monarch of Rossignol, the freehold of Saint-Malo, rather than to the coffers of the Sun King (though he has a well-forged letter of marque). Blackburne is cold-blooded and has nerves of steel, and has been known to take Le Tenasse into the dangerous Hedge to evade pursuit. He is known to ask for no quarter and give none in return, but he will always call out to a ship in verse before boarding. If the skipper responds in kind, he will be forced to leave the ship be, or so they say.

Nick Nye, a Telluric Welsh sailor, has come to the Court of Versailles to ask for patronage. The English courts are in no position to entertain his offers, so he is extending an offer to his wealthier French counterparts. Nye claims to have been abandoned by his crew on an expedition in Canada. He wandered the Hedge for years, and in doing so, he found something incredible — a passage to the Far East through the Hedge. He would need a proper ship and an ensorcelled crew, but Nye promises that if he reaches the Orient, his investors will have hundredfold returns.

The Holy Roman Empire: Fall and Rise
The Habsburg-controlled Holy Roman Empire is a confederation of largely independent states, spanning from the Spanish Netherlands in the northwest to the Austrian Archduchy bordering on Ottoman Hungary in the southeast. At the beginning of Louis XIV’s reign, the Empire had lost the Thirty Years War and seen its hopes of a Pan-European Empire extinguished. The war was largely fought on Imperial soil; the Empire’s population was nearly halved by the end of the war, though the Empire would see a great influx of Protestants from France after Louis XIV revokes the Treaty of Nantes.

The second half of the century is largely a rebuilding period, punctuated by wars with both the Bourbons and the Ottomans. The Empire was not the origin of many cultural innovations of this period, though it produced many fine musicians. The turn of the 18th century and the War of Spanish Succession would see the rise of Frederick II and set the stage for Germany’s Brandenburg-Prussia rise in the years to come.

The Lost of the Holy Roman Empire are a diverse and independent lot. They tend towards pragmatism and egalitarianism, particularly in rural areas. The Free Assembly of the city of Worms is a proud freehold of scholarly Lost. They are known for both their mortal learning and their oracular foresight. The freehold is structured after the fashion of a university. Their auguries and advice are sought out by Lost all over Europe. The chair of the assembly is the venerable Herr Sokol. Sokol is the foremost astrologer and historian in all of Western Europe. He’s wise as an owl, but he’s not known for brevity or topicality. It’s said that he was a dashing swordsman in his youth, and it’s easy to get on his good side if you will listen to his stories of his exploits.

In 1689 during the Nine Years’ War, Louis XIV briefly captures the city of Worms. During the chaos of the occupation, disaster strikes the freehold. In the aftermath, the collections of the Free Assembly are missing or destroyed. All but a handful of Worms’ Lost are missing, and those who survived have been driven utterly mad. The leader of the survivors, Sokol’s young apprentice Herr Nix, claims that a “great wyrm” emerged from the earth and devoured everyone in his path, including Herr Sokol. They claim that the dragon is portent of things to come, and that the Lost should go to ground while they still can. Nix and his followers flee into the Hedge soon after. Some dismiss Nix and his followers as madmen, but something must have happened to the Free Assembly, and there’s nothing to say it won’t happen again.

**Great Britain: Glory, Genocide, and Miracles**

The 17th century is a turbulent era for the British. Though the Anglophone world typically views England as being a crucial player in European politics, Britain is largely absent from the major conflict of the continent — that of the Hapsburg dynasty versus the Bourbons. Henry VIII’s break with the Catholic Church in the 16th century made Britain a destination of choice for many continental Protestants who were fleeing persecution in their homelands. Britain is largely embroiled in civil wars during the reign of the Sun King in France, starting with the regicide of Catholic sympathizer Charles I in 1649. He was succeeded by a de facto military dictatorship led by radical Puritan Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell led a bloody invasion of Scotland and waged a genocidal war against the Irish during Interregnum years. In 1660, the monarchy was restored with the return of Charles II, who had sought refuge in the court of Louis XIV. Cromwell’s iron-fisted Puritan rule had proved unpopular, and some accounts considered the Restoration of the monarchy an act of divine providence.
Several events made the 1660s a notable decade in Britain. Plague struck London in 1664, and did not disappear until the spring of 1666. One Londoner in five died in that time. Those who could afford it fled to the countryside. Later that year, the Great Fire of London struck, nearly burning the city to the ground. It was the same year that Isaac Newton split a ray of light with a prism, leading many to dub 1666 the “Year of Miracles.”

The English Lost are, in general, more conservative and serious than their French counterparts. The Courts of Winter and Autumn are powerful in the cities. In some rural areas, it is common for many changelings to live openly among mortals, refusing to hide their true fae identities. The Spring Court is under special scrutiny in this era, as popular attitudes among the Lost view them as increasingly immoral, pagan, or decadent. A few English Lost take refuge in Paris, fleeing the chaos of their homeland.

Spain: Empire in Decline

The first half of the 17th century had seen a sharp decline for the Habsburg-controlled Spanish Empire. The expulsion of the moriscos (Muslim converts to Catholicism) and the independence of Portugal devastated the Spanish economy. In the latter half of the century, the Spanish Empire continues its downward spiral.

The poor management of Charles II led to an empire of kleptocracy and corruption where the nobility were largely above the law and paid next to nothing in taxes. To make matters worse, a series of disastrous decisions led to rapid currency deflation. Though he has the largest empire in the world, Charles II neglects the army. Matters get worse in the second half of the century, when some of the wealthiest and most stable provinces are wracked with plague.

The Lost community in Spain is small and secretive, and for good reason. The Inquisition has been murdering changelings for over 200 years. The most infamous incident occurred in Logroño, in 1610, where the entire freehold of Sorginzulo was all but exterminated. Unsurprisingly, the courts of Fear and Sorrow are strong in Spain, but the court of Desire still maintains its strength in Catalonia. Still, many Lost have escaped to North Africa, the Middle East, or the New World for survival’s sake.

A disturbing rumor has reached the freeholds of France. There reports that some Lost claim that Charles II is actually a fetch — a twisted simulacrum of the king, made of unfired enamel and mismatched mosaic tiles. What’s more, a Drudge in Seville claims to be Charles, returned from the Hedge. The veracity of his claim is questionable as his Durance has twisted him beyond recognition, and replacing the fetch of a king might be nigh-impossible. However, the temptation to have one of their own as a mortal monarch is irresistible to many Lost.

The New World

*The Ashen Courtiers marveled at the bounty of the harvest. Goblin fruits of all shapes and sizes covered the table: fragrant Dream-a-Drupe, waxy Amarathine, decadent cocorange, bundles of coupnettle, and even a few hidefruit glistened like precious gems among the spread.*

*There was one fruit that puzzled them all.*

*Mathilde was the first to pick it up. She turned it over in her palms, and shook her head. “It is a beautiful color,” she said a bit lamely, and handed it over to Courtaud.*

*He sniffed it and frowned. “I don’t trust it,” he said. “It smells of madness and death.”*
“Wait,” said Printanière, grabbing the fruit from the Beast’s hands. “I think I’ve heard of this.” She placed the fruit on the table again. “It appears to be a tomatl. They’re from Mexica in New Spain.”

The courtiers nodded and murmured in assent. After a moment, Courtaud asked, “What’s it for?”

Printanière frowned and squinted at the fruit. “Hard to say,” she said.

The colonization of the New World presents new opportunities for the Lost of Europe. The New World welcomes misfits, criminals, and heretics of all stripes as long as they can pay for their passage or are willing to serve as indentured servants upon their arrival.

The notion of abandoning one’s homeland for a new world appeals to many Lost. Many of them are heartbroken and unable to bear being surrounded by the wreckage of their old lives. Others might want to put as much distance between them and their former Keepers as they can. Some might just want to make the journey for the same reasons any mortal might — for fame, freedom, or adventure.

While the exploration of the New World by Europeans gives some Lost hope for a new beginning, others see the colonial era differently. A Huron woman emerges from the Hedge, her body and soul torn to tatters by the Thorns, only to find that everyone she has ever known and loved lies dead from smallpox. A man flees bondage in Arcadia only to find himself in a strange foreign land where his wife, children, and his fetch are slaves on a Caribbean sugar plantation. Some of the European Lost might take a stand against the slave trade and the brutal extermination of the Native Americans, but too many will find reasons to ignore the atrocities. Their own existence is precarious enough, they say. Why complicate matters by worrying about the fate of mortals who are half a world away?

Sidebar: New Lyonnais

A group of young and adventurous Lost have established New Lyonnais, a small town on the coasts of Acadia in New France. Though the Lost number only a dozen, New Lyonnais is home to only 55 souls of French and Mi’kmaq origin, many of whom are ensorcelled. In the summer, they are ruled by Armand the Rhymer, a Moonborn (Winter Masques, p. 71) with a strong utopian bent. A charismatic man and occasional political agitator in the Old World, he founded New Lyonnais in hopes of creating a society where Lost and mortals could live side-by-side, without fear. In the winter, the dreamy Madame Tomah leads the freehold. She too has visions of a paradise, but she fears that Armand takes too many risks.

The group is actively seeking settlers in France. All are welcome, though those with the practical skills to survive the harsh winters of the New World are doubly so.

Daily Life

Life for the Lost is markedly different from that of their 21st-century counterparts. For one thing, mundane travel is much more difficult and dangerous. Hedge travel is more common — though it is no less dangerous than it is in modern times. The Seasonal Courts are rapidly evolving, still en route to the entrenched traditions they become in later centuries.
The Contracts of the Lost are valued differently in this era. Contracts that grant swift travel, such as Dreamsteps and Tread of the Swift Hooves, are much more vital. Contracts of the Wild and Eternal Court Contracts can provide invaluable help or hindrance in an era when man lives at the mercy of the elements. Contracts of Artifice gain new utility in a world where replacement goods can’t be purchased at the nearest superstore, and the healing powers of the Spring Court are near-miraculous in a world where medicine is poorly understood.

Unfortunately for the Lost, unalloyed iron is quite commonly used in this era. A workshop or a kitchen might pose dangers to them that they would not encounter in a modern context.

**Bridge-Burners**

We are at the dawn of a new era. The age of superstition and ignorance is over. The Earth is entering a new age. We will not be ruled by the spectres and phantoms of the past. We will not jump at shadows or toss salt over our shoulders. We will sever the ties between our world and the world of illusions and nonsense, and move forward into a golden age of reason.

The early modern era is an age of optimism. Though the first utopian novel, Thomas More’s *Utopia*, was published nearly a century before, Bacon’s posthumously-published *New Atlantis* and Campanella’s *City of the Sun* are both recent examples of utopian thought. The world is changing quickly, and the Lost have taken notice.

A group of young Bridgemasons (see *Lords of Summer*, p. 109) influenced by Sir Christopher Wren have taken to turning their own cities into walled utopias, freed from Hedge incursions. With proper civic planning and well-maintained public order, they claim, the Gentry have less and less power. It is their belief that as skepticism, rationalism, and disbelief in the supernatural continue to grow in the mortal population, the Gentry will have fewer places to enter the world. Designing a city after mathematical principles will naturally repel the True Fae and keep both mortals and the Lost safe.

Naturally, others of the Lost find this view hopelessly naive and even dangerous. Many in the Autumn Court object to this view in particular. They argue that fear is essential to protecting the mortal populace. Many of the Bridge-burners sneer at this and suggest that the Autumn Court is more interested in controlling the Lost than protecting the mortal populace. But it’s undeniable that the Gentry have no difficulty abducting a skeptic, no matter the strength of the skeptic’s rationalism.

**The Gentry**

The Gentry are fiercely territorial and possessive creatures. Everything that lives in their domain is their property. While this state of affairs may seem alien and bizarre to a modern perspective, it is not so foreign to changelings of an earlier era. Imagine a world where a starving man could be hanged for stealing an apple from an orchard, or where even the game birds are the property of the lord and poaching was punishable by death, or where a subsistence rancher suddenly found herself deprived of her meager livelihood by the Enclosure Acts. Imagine a world where some people — by simple dint of their family lineage — were reckoned as near-gods and entitled to nearly anything they could ask for, and where the common folk are regularly regarded as resources for the nobility at best and sub-human commodities at worst. It is a world perhaps not so far removed from the cruelties of Arcadia. Consequently, the Lost who shake the reins of the Others are not only fighting the mind-bending powers of Fae magics, but also the dominant discourse of their society as well.
It is unsurprising, then, that the Lost of this era refer to the Gentry differently from changelings in modern times. What would be referred to as a privateer in a modern context is typically referred to as an *écourcheur* — a flayer of skin — in early modern France. (Naturally, they refer to themselves as “vassals” or by a flamboyant noble title.) The Gentry and their agents roam the countryside more freely, scouring the land for the contumacious Lost, and even the mortals of these lands blow out their candles and hide in their cellars when the Fair Folk are riding.

Sidebar: Masques

Though reckoned somewhat old-fashioned by the mortals of this era, masques remain popular with the Lost of early modern France. Masques are a form of theatre similar to plays, but they are typically performed by masked partygoers in elaborate costume rather than by actors. It is not dissimilar to a heavily-scripted live-action roleplaying game. Many masques are idle entertainment; some are heavy with occult symbolism or ritual significance.

The Seasonal Courts

With communication and travel easier than ever, the power of the Seasonal Courts is waxing. Centralized governance among the Lost is easier than ever, and the Lost are able to organize and resist the Others more easily than before. Specially-tasked courtiers scour the streets and the countryside, hoping to find newly free changelings before goblin slavers or écorcheurs do.

The Courts are, of course, neither as uniform nor as ubiquitous as their modern counterparts. This is true not only of the Seasonal Courts, but of the Diurnal Courts as well — communication and centralization are simply not as easily achieved in this era. The Chinese branches of the Directional Courts are an exception to this, having been better-organized for centuries before the Seasonal Courts were founded.

Before the era of modern farming, central heat, and air conditioning, the seasons were more powerful in the lives of Lost and mortals alike. Though a snowy winter or a wet summer might mean an inconvenience for a modern changeling, it could spell the death of millions for those in this era. Even a Courtless changeling fears and respects the turn of the seasons.

Veneration for the seasons is expressed via adulation of the Seasonal Sovereigns and by various rituals and festivals that take place throughout the year. The most splendid seasonal festivals are the equinox and solstice celebrations, when transitions of power take place. Some of the more modern Lost dismiss these celebrations as ostentatious displays of wealth designed to stroke the egos of the monarchs, but others insist that they are of deeper significance. They are a part of the old bargains, they say, and executing them properly is vital to the safety and prosperity of the freehold. Participation or attendance is mandatory for most of these rituals, though those who must be excused for duties pertaining to the safety or prosperity of the freehold are typically excused. In southern freeholds, a suitable sacrificial offering is recommended in lieu of attendance.

While the specifics of the masques and the elaborateness of the celebrations may vary from freehold to freehold, there are common themes that occur in many of the rituals. The timing of the seasons also varies depending on the location of the freehold. In urban areas and those heavily influenced by the Court of the North Star (see below), a strict astronomical progression is followed: Spring begins on the vernal equinox, summer at the solstice, and so forth. This is
agreeable to most urban seasonal courtiers, who believe in the equitable distribution of power and to whom the turn of the seasons is a largely academic or political matter. Their lives are not as directly impacted by the elements as their rural counterparts. Other areas are more likely to follow weather patterns that may vary from year to year. This sometimes leads to strife in the freehold as courtiers disagree on what constitutes a “true” seasonal shift from a “false” one.

**Spring: Rêverie**

Desire runs deep through the world of *Lily, Sabre, and Thorn*. Stolen glances at a banquet, hidden behind a fan. The quiet yearning behind games of *les précieuses* in a lady’s *salon*. Desperate, forbidden embraces behind the curtains at the masquerade.

But behind the glamour and elegance, there are darker desires for the Emerald Court to feast upon. The decadence of courtly life is built on the desperation of the poor. Whether a farmer who can hardly feed his family after paying his taxes, a starving Parisian orphan staring at an apple cart, or a servant looking through the curtains at a world of luxury and comfort that she will never know, hunger and desperation are a fact of life. It is a world of conspicuous consumption, where having enough is never enough, and very few people have enough to even survive. The Spring Court is particularly powerful in Versailles, where the Antler Court mingles amongst the mortal aristocracy and feeds on their heady ambitions and desires.

In the north, spring begins on the first day of February. Freeholds in areas with a more Germanic influence (such as those in Rhône country or Alsace) generally cast some form of divination on the second day of February to see if it is truly spring; divination via marmots or other small rodents is particularly common. In the south, the rituals often involve a masque called the Return of the Flowering Child. The Flowering Child is played by a beautiful young person of the Spring Court, who has been ritually “abducted” by the Winter Court on the first day of winter. (If the harvest has been particularly sparse that year, the abduction may be more literal than symbolic, and the Flowering Child might not be a willing participant.)

Most rituals are themed around birth, though in urban areas these “births” tend to be more highly stylized. The Vernal Sovereign or one of her representatives may lead a dance that involves leaping through a ring of flame. In the country, the incoming sovereign may present the freehold with an effigy of a newborn child. Each member comes by to give their blessing and a small gift to the babe. At the end of the ritual, the babe is set upon an elaborate raft and sent down river, never to be seen again. Some urban changelings say that the savage Hedge Witches of the countryside changelings will abduct a real human baby for this ritual.

**Summer: La Gloire et les Émeutes**

A young duelist recounts the glorious battle where she bested her rival to crowd of admiring tavern-goers. Her audience is spellbound by her storytelling, but the duelist isn’t thinking about her potential bed-mates for the evening; she’s still animated by the contempt she feels for her hated enemy. The last defender of the freehold of Bayonne stands at the gate, all fire and fury and hate, cutting down the enemy as they make their unceasing attacks. She will not survive the night, but her King will, and she is not afraid to die.

The Seine runs slow and thick in the summer heat, stinking of the refuse of half a million souls. A young man with no prospects and no hope throws a cabbage gone rotten in the blistering heat at a patrolling policeman. The granaries are empty, and the people riot; the streets run red with blood.
Though it is a hundred years before the revolution, the discontent that would eventually spur it has already begun to show in France. The endless wars of Louis XIV led to oppressive tax burdens that left hundreds of thousands impoverished and starving. A Summer courtier might find sustenance in either the discontented mortals or by marching alongside the Sun King’s armies.

Many courts celebrate the beginning of summer on the first of May. It’s an occasion marked with great bonfires throughout the freeholds of France. In many rituals, the Summer Sovereign or a champion of her choice stands in the center of the freehold in the masque of the Green Man. The members of the freehold decorate him with flame-colored ribbons, bright flowers, and the like. When he is fully burdened, he is bidden to leap over the bonfire three times. The festival culminates with riotous celebrations. It’s a time of licentiousness and transgression; a certain amount of marital infidelity and minor crime is tolerated if committed in the spirit of the season. Even in freeholds that don’t transition to summer until the solstice, the first of May is generally still commemorated in some fashion. It’s a time of year associated with sex and romance. It’s fashionable in urban areas for young Lost to offer their sweethearts lilies-of-the-valley on this day.

In eastern freeholds (and those with a strong Summer presence, such as Gascony and Lyons), the evening typically takes a more violent bent: The festivities end with the frenzied Lost leading raids on hobgoblin settlements or on suspected Loyalists.

**Autumn: Le Cauchemar**

The wheat ripens, and the farmer prays that he will have enough grain to feed his family this year. The aristocrat looks out his windows at the rioting mobs, and wonders how long it will be before they come for him. A minister makes a humble request before the Sun King. He knows that if his proposal ends in disaster, he might pay the price with his head. The deserter hides in a barn, keeping as quiet as possible, knowing that he will be hanged if he is caught. Street urchins dare each other to venture into the Cimetière des Innocents at the stroke of midnight, each one egging the others on to go a little further than the last.

Navarre and other Basque-influenced regions are strongholds for the Leaden Mirror; London is another city largely dominated by the Autumn Court in the 17th century.

Paris may be the largest city in Europe, but the dead of the city far outnumber the living. The Autumn Court holds the secrets to the city’s sprawling catacombs. They hold their meetings at midnight amid the crooked tombstones and treacherous grounds of the Cimetière des Innocents, where the hastily-buried and unmourned dead are so numerous that the rotten earth is known to crumble beneath the feet of those foolish enough to go wandering its grounds without a guide.

The beginning of Autumn is typically celebrated with the first wheat harvest, which is typically around the beginning of August. In wine-growing regions, it may be celebrated after the crush. It is a particularly auspicious time for swearing pledges of all kinds — particularly the Heart’s Pledge. The bounty of the harvest generally is celebrated in autumnal festivities. This may be as simple as a table full of baked goods in a country freehold, or it may be a magnificent culinary competition for a wealthy urban freehold. The premier chef of a freehold may be designated *le Chevalier Gastronomique*, who will have the honor of serving the monarchs for a year. While this may seem like a dubious honor, the *Chevalier Gastronomique* can command a surprising
amount of influence in a wealthy freehold, as she can demand extensive resources in the name of keeping up with the latest in Lost culinary fashions.

The rituals of this holiday often involve death or sacrifice. In some places, a portion of the harvest is arranged around an effigy of the Summer King. The incoming Autumn Sovereign, who wears a sinister mask and carries a scythe, sets both the offering and the effigy ablaze. In other places, the Summer Sovereign or a proxy in a horned mask is given an enormous quantity of food to eat. When he finishes the feast, he is carried to the top of a hill and ritually “slain” by the masked Autumn Sovereign.

Some rural pockets in Brittany and Provence (though it is brutally hot in the latter region at this time of year) practice their funeral games at this time of year. These are athletic competitions that celebrate the lives of those of the freehold who have died in the previous year.

Sidebar: The House of Hellequin

The House of Hellequin is a motley of comedians. They travel all across Europe, performing their Commedia dell’arte acts for the delight of mortals and Lost alike. Though the mortals may not see Hellequin’s bloodstained hands or crooked horns through the Mask, his pranks always have an air of menace to them that terrifies and delights his audience.

Lesser known is the House of Hellequin’s other function in changeling society: that of the bounty hunter. They specialize in tormenting or terrorizing their quarry until they surrender, but they have been known to be fearsome hunters as well.

Winter: Les Années de Misère

The season of war is long gone, but her husband has still not come home. One day, her brother-in-law comes to her door with a letter in his hand, his face gray as the sky. The children ask why she is crying. She looks at their painfully thin faces and wonders how they will survive the winter.

The chevalier kisses his lady’s hand. She nods in acknowledgement but nothing more. Once, when they were young, they were in love. But she was promised to another, and he was a commoner besides. For a time, there was a chaste, courtly longing that inevitably gave way to nights of forbidden passion and lust. Then there was hate—a hatred for the rules that kept them apart, then a hatred for each other as each of them lacked the courage to move forward. And now? Now they look into each other’s eyes and see nothing but broken promises and wasted lives. They feel nothing.

The rise of the metropolis has given the Lost of the Winter Court even better opportunities to hide in plain sight. The city gives refuge to those changelings who cannot reconcile themselves with their former lives.

The 16th and 17th centuries suffer from many unusually cold, long winters. Nearly 600,000 will die of starvation after Le Grand Hiver of 1709, and over a million will be claimed by conditions created by the cold, wet summer and long winter of 1693–1694. It is a rich time for sorrow. Many Winter monarchs refuse to relinquish their crowns to the spring, claiming that they have been granted extended sovereignty by God or nature in the wake of these unforgiving seasons.
The transition from autumn to winter is associated with the winter solstice in both rural and urban freeholds. The rituals surrounding this transition tend to be somber, candle-lit affairs. A typical procession involves the Lost of the freehold standing in a line, holding candles or torches. The heart of the affair involves burying a member of the freehold. The ceremony is performed in silence. Usually this is performed in effigy, but sometimes a courtier will climb into a specially-prepared box and be “buried” by placing the box into a deep hole in the ground and covering him with cloth. The candles are then extinguished, and a silent vigil is kept for a time. Urban areas tend to have the entire freehold keep the vigil for a short duration — until a taper is burned out. Rural freeholds tend to keep longer vigils. In the east, some freeholds keep a twelve-day vigil. Eventually, the effigy or the courtier is released, and there is a great celebration. Wassailing is common in the northern freeholds, while mischief prevails in the east: Younger Lost will typically dress in masks (the goat is a popular choice) and threaten their older counterparts with violence unless they receive a small gift in return.

In southern freeholds, the abduction of the Flowering Child replaces the ritual burial. Members of the Winter Court usually appear in a procession with the stolen Flowering Child wrapped in a burial shroud at the head. They wear masks that appear as distorted, grief-stricken faces. They wail, sob, and rend their garments in a public display of grief.

Holidays and Festivals
Holidays and festivals are at the center of changeling social life. They offer the Lost opportunities to socialize, impress their neighbors, and embarrass their rivals (hopefully while the entire freehold is watching). Some festivals remained unchanged from their modern day celebrations in essence, but there are a few extra holidays that are worth mention.

Tournament of Hollyhock
The Tournament of Hollyhock is a large-scale chess tournament held on the lawns of Brocéliande. Each freehold may sponsor a player. The “pieces” are courtiers chosen for their martial prowess; the pawns are typically hobgoblin mercenaries. The rules differ slightly from those of normal chess. When a move is made to capture another piece, the two pieces fight a duel. If the aggressor succeeds, he captures the piece. If the aggressor loses, his team forfeits its turn. Being chosen to represent one’s freehold in the Hollyhock Tournament is a mark of great honor. More than one instance of foul play has stained the hollyhock fields at Brocéliande.

Feast of Saint John
The Feast of Saint John takes place on June 24th. It is a festival of early harvest of the bounty of a freehold in the summer. The harvest is typically conducted at night — the herbs and fruits of the Hedge harvested between sundown and midnight are said to have twice the magical potency of those harvested on other nights. It is a night when hidden things are illuminated; lost items have a tendency to reappear. It’s also a common evening for newly-emancipated changelings to return home.

The Feast of Saint John marks the only night of the year when bitter lilacs bloom in the Hedge. The blossoms of the mature bitter lilac can be dried and brewed into a tea. Any of the Lost who imbibe this beverage will be intermittently haunted with visions of their Durances. The visions will be brief, but clear. This prompts a degeneration roll in any characters with Clarity above 6. This roll is made at a –2 penalty if the victim does not know what he has ingested.
Le Fête des Fous

The Fête is a masque held annually on Twelfth Night (the 5th of January). From sundown to sunrise, the Lost of the freehold gather together and hold a formal court. According to the traditions of the masque, however, the court is turned completely on its head. A low-ranking member of the Freehold is promoted to King. The gender of the participant is irrelevant; and in some freeholds, an ensorcelled mortal will be promoted instead. The participant wears the masque of the King and is led into his court riding backwards on an ass. All of the other Lost are expected to dress as if their social roles have been reversed; the poor of the freehold dress in finery supplied to them by the more affluent members, and the wealthy dress in artfully tattered rags. The Lost petition their “King,” who listens to intentionally-absurd requests and in return, makes arbitrary or contradictory demands on his court. A great toast is had at the end of the evening, when the clock strikes midnight and the “King” dismisses his court. There are rumors that in rural Provence, the local tradition is that the King of Fools is ritually slaughtered at the end of the feast, though any Provençal changeling denies this in conversation with an outsider.

Some Lost—particularly among the Winter Court—argue that this tradition is antiquated and dangerous. There are no records of a Fête gone sour. But some argue that it’s only a matter of time before a King invokes the sovereignty granted to him by his Wyrd to enforce cruel demands on the partygoers, or where courtiers invoke the Wyrd to cement requests made in jest as powerful pledges.

In Defense of Le Fête des Fous, from the Memoirs of Reynard of Paris

The Gentry are, at their heart, honest creatures. (Just ask any of them; they will tell you this is so.) This is why they are so dangerous. If they were utterly unreliable, then no one would deal with them—who would make a contract with a monster who would break his word as soon as your back was turned? But if you have the faint hope that you’re smarter than them—that you’ve finally understood their mad logic and you can beat them at their own game—then you might come out ahead. Oh, the Gentry will mislead you, to be certain. They are master sophists. They will equivocate. They will employ all forms of chicanery and illusions to trick their targets. But the notion of a bald-faced lie—to say one thing and then do another—is, for them, simply an impossibility.

This is where we hold an advantage. Le Fête des Fous is a celebration of our ability to lie, to be insincere, to joke. They cannot do this, no matter how much they wish they could. It is a celebration of absurdity and humility—notions that the Gentry cannot even begin to comprehend.

The Frozen Market

This variation on the typical Winter Market only occurs in those years when the winter is cold enough that the Seine freezes solid. Beneath the shadows of the Pont Neuf after sundown, the Frozen Market opens. The Frozen Market differs from a typical Winter Market. It’s not a market per se, but a silent auction. The items sold at auction vary wildly depending on the year, but they’re always valuable: passage to the New World (and back), titles to various Hollows, and even a letter of manumission from Arcadia have been offered. The winners are always anonymous, of course—as the identity of the auctioneer is a secret held by the Winter Court, and the auctioneer herself pledge-bound to silence.
Grand Intrigues

There are many, many possible settings for a swashbuckling Changeling game. Here we present two venues of particular note, about to come into fierce conflict: the grand North Star court of Brocéliande, and the furious summer of Rennes.

The Empress of the North Star

The Empress Appears, from the Memoirs of Reynard of Paris

The Carnival of Marseilles is always a sight to behold. The grand pomp and splendour of the celebrations of the year 1655, however, paled in description to the sight of one of the spectators.

In my mind, she stands as tall as a tall man, though I know her to be of but moderate height. She wore a gown of deepest indigo, embroidered in lavender beads. She wore a simple circlet of marcasite upon her brow. The silver of her jewelry matched the brilliant gray of her eyes, striking against her radiant ebony skin. Her hair hangs in tight, elegant spirals that set many ladies and men of the court to envy. Her eyes seemed to pierce my very soul when I met her gaze; I knew her at once to be a woman who would not be deceived.

Her retinue was splendid as she. At her right, elegant and still as a caryatid, stood her bodyguard, an island of tranquility and poise in the raucous streets. Her guard seemed carved of marble in her white coat and periwig, with movements neat and spare as any dancer's. At her left stood her man, all in black, with long fingers like flechettes and a thin-lipped mouth full of needle-like teeth. Her servants stood at the ready — a half-dozen hobgoblins, splendid in their blue tunics trimmed in silver — and I knew that I would obey any command she uttered as certainly as they would.

Madame Estelle appeared first during Carnival in Marseille in 1655 accompanied by a splendid troupe of hobgoblin servants and a motley of Lost servants. She claimed to be a refugee of the Thirty Years' War. Her holdings had been seized by the Dutch government during wartime, and she was forced to liquidate what few holdings she had left. (Thankfully, she had a hidden cache of gold from her investments in the New World, and was able to acquit herself nicely.) Bearing no particular love for the Dutch government, she fled to France, and hoped to re-establish herself among the courts of the French Lost.

Estelle succeeded all too well, by the estimation of many.

Swearing fealty to no freehold, she traveled across the country, her magnificent retinue in tow. She had an uncanny knack for arriving at the right place at just the right time to be able to provide whatever a struggling freehold might need — money, advice, or strength of arms. She built up an extensive catalog of favors and friends. If it seemed suspicious, no one was able to point out any wrongdoing on her part. (And at least she's made her reputation on helping others rather than dragging good changelings into the mud, or so her defenders point out.)

The Accord of the Spheres

Madame Estelle continued in this manner for nine years. Then, in December 1664, as a brilliant comet appeared in the winter skies, seasonal monarchs across France received invitations to a grand fête at the North Star's manor, Brocéliande — a place which there had been much speculation about, but to which no one had even been. Though the fête would last several days and travel is difficult in the winter months, many accepted her invitation. Though it coincided
with a number of important festivals, all but a few of the monarchs of the most prominent
freeholds attended either in person or by envoy. Those who followed her directions found
themselves at Brocéliande, a sylvan Hollow on the outskirts of Paris. What happened over the
many days and nights following is a secret, but by Twelfth Night, the crowned heads of Paris,
Lyons, and Marseille were connected in an alliance. The exact nature of these oaths (known as
the Accord of the Spheres) is unknown, but the aforementioned freeholds now have a permanent
political presence in Brocéliande, and each court always has a representative from Brocéliande
at court. Brocéliande and the Court of the North Star have served to unify the Lost of France and
serve as a neutral ground for inter-freehold disputes. Many more freeholds would soon follow
in their footsteps. Madame Estelle became widely known as the Empress of the North Star.

One clause of the Accord of the Spheres is widely known: All freeholds who abide by the
Accord have sworn to divide the seasons evenly by the celestial calendar. The courts transition
from one to another during the equinoxes and solstices. “The seasons are fickle and cruel,”
claims the North Star. “We are men and women of reason; we need watch the world with the
cool grace and detachment of the stars.”

The North Star has no small share of detractors, most of whom refer to her by the unflattering
name of “Dog Star.” The Knights of St. Collen denounce her publicly, claiming that she has too
much power. The Empress herself is irreligious and bitterly critical of the Knights, claiming that
the Knighthood is corrupt and self-serving, an accusation that is not entirely without merit.
Furthermore, she has publicly chastised the Knighthood for not rebuking Catholicism, comparing
their loyalty to the Church even as it exterminates them under the mantle of the Inquisition to a
Loyalist’s deranged love for its Keeper.

Some are wary of her origins, which seem conveniently unverifiable. She does not hesitate to
respond directly to these insinuations. “Who among us is reconciled to our former lives?” she
responds. “I am the Empress of the North Star, but you are right to say that I was not always. None of us are what we used to be. Before you would have me recollect the pain of my Durance
and my lost mortal life in excruciating detail, I would insist that you go first.”

Brocéliande is but a few hours’ from the freehold of Versailles, and it has frequently availed
itself of the artisans — mortal and otherwise — of that storied place. Furniture of solid silver,
mirrors of Venetian glass, ornate Persian carpets, and gilded wood decorate the halls. The decor
changes from season to season, and as the fashions change, but a sidereal theme is always
present.

Life at Brocéliande is highly structured and as regular as the stars. The signers of the Accord
each have a permanent ambassador in that place, and guests are always welcome. The entirety of
the house arises at eight in the morning exactly, and all lights in the manor are extinguished at
exactly midnight. It is forbidden to walk the grounds or to leave one’s apartments after midnight.
The Empress’s favorites (each of whom is given a celestial title and particular responsibilities at
court) are exempt from these rules, as is the Empress herself. Her detractors claim that her
rigidity is solid proof that she is, if not one of the Gentry, then surely one of their agents.

Music always has a prominent place at Brocéliande, as the North Star is fond of it. Elaborately
rehearsed dances, opera, and symphonies fill the evenings, and the idle afternoons are spent at
hunting or wandering the extensive pleasure gardens. A sure way to impress the Empress is to
gift her with a musical performance of some sort; she may even grant a boon in return for a
particularly excellent recital.
So Who Is She?
Who is the Empress of the North Star? What is her ultimate goal? There are several possible answers; you are encouraged to choose whichever suits your Chronicle or use your own ideas as you see fit.

Exactly what it says on the tin: She is an affluent, ambitious changeling who has a knack (or maybe a Goblin Contract or two) for being in the right place at the right time. Though her motives are not entirely altruistic, she truly does believe that a strong and united France is the best for every changeling.

One of Them: The Empress is either one of the Gentry in disguise, or one of their agents. Her goal is to centralize and organize the Lost so the Gentry can find them.

Personal: Perhaps her motives are something more personal. Maybe she seeks to crush a particular rival (or freehold) that has wronged her in the past.

Whatever her motives are, she’s a powerful player at the Lost’s oldest game, and the thought of crossing her should give most changelings pause.

Rennes, Summer, 1683
The world is changing. As the Lost grow more numerous and better-organized, they find themselves increasingly divided in other ways. The country and the city drift apart. The Seasonal Courts threaten the autonomy of the Courtless. Older human ethnic and political divisions stir as the rise of the modern era threatens to erase entire cultures.

This is the background of Rennes, Summer, 1683. The story follows the struggles of five freeholds that struggle to protect their interests — or expand their reach — in the wake of a hostage crisis.

The city of Rennes has been run by a series of tyrants as far as anyone can remember. Any Lost who find their way to the city (and there are several) are press-ganged into service or sold back to the Fae. These tyrants call themselves the Bagaudae, and they answer to no authority but their own.

Other Breton Lost are tired of the Bagaudae’s depredations, and are even willing to forsake some of their treasured independence to be rid of them.

The Bretons and the French
Brittany (which contains Nantes, Rennes, and arguably Saint-Malo) has long been a culturally and linguistically distinct part of France. The linguistically and culturally Celtic Bretons cherish their independence, and they revolted against the increasingly powerful central government several times during the rule of the ancien régime.

Background
Rennes is located at both the confluence of the Illies and Villaine rivers and a crossroads of two Trods. One, called the Via Vannin, leads from Nantes to Truro in Cornwall and terminates in the Isle of Man. The other, the Via Britannica, leads between Paris and Brest. The changeling population of Rennes has been ruled by the hard-nosed Bagaudae since the fall of the Roman
Empire, and they have no intention of changing their ways for anyone or anything. They aggressively defend their territories and demand exorbitant tolls from anyone caught traveling their rivers or trods without their permission.

Because it is located along several trods, it is not uncommon for Lost who have newly escaped the Hedge to end up in Rennes. They soon are found by the Bagaudae, and, after grueling initiation rituals, pressed into pledges of loyalty to the freehold. Despite the fact that nearly all have been unwilling recruits, the Rennes Lost are a tight-knit group.

The Bagaudae have never been strangers to violence, either against mortals or other fae. They occasionally raid caravans of goblin traders or other freeholds for riches, captives to ransom, or even for the sake of proving one’s worth to the Bagaudae. A changeling who has led a successful raid is considered a formal citizen of the freehold, and worthy of at least a limited amount of respect.

The Bagaudae are not foolish. They don’t antagonize their neighbors to the point of open war, and they don’t pick fights that they know they cannot win. But the Bagaudae have grown bolder in recent years. Their current leader, Comorre, is courageous in battle and fiercely charismatic. Recently, Comorre and his followers seized a vessel carrying envoys from both the Freehold of Nantes and Paris en route to Rossignol in Saint-Malo.

The Parisians were outraged and demanded that the Nantais pay the ransom, as the freehold of Nantes had sponsored the journey and thus were responsible for the envoys’ protection. But the Nantais could not pay the ransom, and the situation deteriorated; a hobgoblin messenger presented the left hand of the Parisian envoy to the Spring Queen at the Vernal Equinox.

Paris was outraged, and demanded satisfaction from Nantes. Nantes’ hands were tied — the ransom was still beyond the means of the freehold.

Enter the Court of the North Star.

An emissary from Brocéliande has arrived in Nantes, making an offer: They will pay the ransom in its entirety. In return, several things will happen: Nantes will sign the Accord of the Spheres; and the Nantais will bring the Bagaudae to heel.

They will not be alone, of course — the Freehold of Nantes is not particularly martial, and they will require assistance. The Court of the North Star — as well as a few glory-seekers of Paris — is willing to lend its assistance.

After the defeat of the Bagaudae, the spoils of war will be divided into four shares. Brocéliande and Nantes each take one share, and Paris receives two (as recompense for their insult and injury).

Complications

Though they know it is likely suicidal, many of the proud and pestilent Bagaudae will defend their liberty to the death. Others are uneasy with their leadership and are more willing to compromise.

The Malouins of Rossignol have had a bitter rivalry with the Bagaudae for centuries, yet they are torn. The Malouins fear the expanding power of the Court of the North Star and of the French in general. Perronik, Summer King of Rossignol, is unconvinced that the entire hostage crisis...
wasn’t staged; if the Bagaudae ask for his aid, he may very well grant it unless convinced otherwise.

One of Comorre’s lieutenants has also gotten wind of the plan. Doenna, Comorre’s second-in-command, knows that the Bagaudae are doomed if the combined forces of Brocéliande, Paris, and Nantes descend upon them. She’s not as proud as Comorre, and she’s not willing to die to preserve the autonomy of the Bagaudae.

Gildas, Summer King of Nantes, is privately furious at Trémeur, the Spring King who pledged his freehold to Brocéliande. He resents the influence of outsiders, and believes that Nantes could have handled the situation without involving the French.

Paris itself is also troubled. On the fateful day of the Vernal Equinox, one year after his christening, the son of Madame Lucarne, the Spring Queen, and her consort, Favier, has gone missing. The Queen is determined to have him back, and has made a deal with the rest of the freehold: Whoever returns her son to her will have half of Paris’ share of the plunder of Rennes.

Involving the Players

The players can become involved in this situation through a variety of ways and at a variety of points in time. They may very well take the place of any storyteller characters listed below — they may very well be the hostages in the initial crisis themselves. The adventure material presented here is entirely intended as suggestions for enriching your chronicle. Take them, and use some (or all, or none) of them, and make them your own.

Those characters who wish to gain the favor of Paris or of Brocéliande can easily find it in this situation. Lost who lack a strong connection to any of the freeholds involved may simply want a share of the plunder or the glory. Others may feel a moral duty to stop the practices of the Bagaudae. On the other hand, they may feel a sense of regional pride that demands that the forces of Paris and Brocéliande be stopped in their tracks.

Regardless, the forces will muster in Nantes on the first day of August, and will strike the Bagaudae one week later.

Dramatis Personae

The Bagaudae

Comorre is the barrel-chested leader of the Bagaudae. His massive stature and his fearsome presence mean that he is occasionally mistaken for an Ogre, but his feathered crest and brilliant red scales betray his Draconic nature. He is proud and terrifying, and has never been known to seek compromise or forgiveness. No one in the freehold would dare contradict him openly, but Comorre rules with love as well as fear. He is as loyal to his band as they are to him, and he never leaves a man behind on the battlefield.

His second in command is Doenna, a Waterborn with a subtler approach than Comorre. Anyone in the freehold with a grievance knows to approach Doenna rather than their leader. She has known Comorre for 40 years and knows how to suggest ideas to Comorre in such a way that leads the proud Dragon to think that he thought of them himself.

Unlike Comorre, Doenna is unwilling to die for the Bagaudae. She will sue for peace with Nantes, if she has the chance. She is willing to hand over Comorre to do it. She’s also been
seeking out the lost child of the Parisian Spring Queen. If her freehold is going to be reduced to a smoking ruin, then she might as well be queen of the ruins.

**Nantes**

The attack on Nantes will be led by **Gildas**, the Summer King. Gildas is wise, and his wrath is a potent force, but he is no longer the young and umbrageous Stonebones he once was. He is privately furious with the young Soldier **Trémeur**, but he will honor the deals that the Vernal King made. Trémeur sees submission to the more powerful Courts as an inevitable fact of life and thinks that Gildas is simply old-fashioned and sentimental. Gildas’ highest priority is the safety and autonomy of his freehold; he thinks that an invasion into Rennes will cause needless bloodshed on all sides and is simply being done for the benefit of the foreign freeholds. He will not break any oaths, but he will entertain any other alternatives to the current plan.

**Paris**

The strike against the Bagaudae will be led by antlered Woodblood **Favier**, adjutant d’fer of the Summer Court. Favier is the consort of **Madame Lucarne**, the Spring Queen. The Queen was withdrawn through most of the spring and left most of her official duties to her seneschal. Favier and Madame Lucarne appear to be on poor terms; there are rumors that Percinet, the missing child, was fathered by someone other than Favier. The last person to poke fun at the child’s parentage, however, was gored to death in a hunting accident not long after. Few people dare question Percinet’s paternity publicly anymore.

Favier is a reserved, calculating man. He is privately annoyed at being sent off on a provincial errand, but relishes the opportunity for combat. Like most Parisians, he is annoyed by the stubbornness of the rural Lost and has little patience for their customs, but he is unlikely to express it openly.

**Brocéliande**

Two representatives of Brocéliande are present at Nantes. The caryatid-like **Zelionne** leads two dozen hobgoblin mercenaries who are well-disciplined and loyal (by hobgoblin standards, anyway). Zelionne sees much, and speaks little; she presents herself as a good soldier and nothing more.

The crafty Chatelaine **Ametz** is present in an administrative role. He presents himself as a humble, gracious servant, but this serves only to aggravate Gildas further.

**Saint-Malo**

The Lost of Rossignol are a shrewd and free-spirited lot. They have raided and been raided by the Bagaudae for centuries. Their quasi-friendly rivalry is a long-standing tradition. Indeed, there is even a local tradition of each freehold raiding the other on Midsummer Eve. The tradition was suspended this year for the first time in living memory.

**Perronik**, current Summer King, has called for a moratorium on raids against the Bagaudae at Comorre’s request (though the suggestion was originally Doenna’s). Ametz of Brocéliande visited Rossignol recently. During his stay suggested obliquely that Perronik’s actions could be construed as support for the Bagaudae. Perronik sneered openly at this suggestion, and demanded that Ametz retract his insult or suffer the King’s wrath. Ametz retracted it, of course, but the threat still remains.
Perronik, then, is at an impasse. He doubts that the Bagaudae can fight off the Nantais alliance, but he despises Brocéliande and Paris. He knows that if they capture Rennes, then Saint-Malo will become all the more valuable to them; it guards a major seaport and lies on the Via Britannica. On the other hand, he knows that defying them openly will likely spell disaster for his freehold.

Comorre, First Among the Bagaudae, The Dragon of Brittany

**Seeming:** Fairest  
**Kith:** Draconic  
**Court:** Summer  

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4  
**Physical Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3  
**Social Attributes:** Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 4  

**Mental Skills:** Enigmas 3, Occult 1, Politics 2  
**Physical Skills:** Athletics (Impressing People) 3, Brawl (Multiple Opponents) 4, Ride 2, Survival 2, Weaponry (Dueling) 4  
**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 1, Empathy 1, Expression 3, Intimidation 4, Persuasion (Inspiring Courage) 5, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 2  

**Merits:** Fast Reflexes 2, Giant, Status (Bagaudae, Breton criminals) 4, Striking Looks 2  

**Willpower:** 8  
**Clarity:** 5  
**Virtue:** Fortitude  
**Vice:** Pride  
**Initiative:** 10  
**Defense:** 4  
**Speed:** 13  
**Health:** 9  
**Wyrd:** 6 (Cannot drink alcohol without falling into a deep slumber)  

**Contracts:** Blades 3, Eternal Summer 3, Punishing Summer 3, Elements (Fire) 2, Stone 1, Vainglory 4  

**Glamour/Per Turn:** 15/6  

**Pledges:** Comorre has a twisted version of the Knight’s Pledge for the “proven” members of the Bagaudae, and another pledge with the leadership of Saint-Malo that states “they will only fight as brothers do.” Some observers consider this proof of an ironclad alliance; others note that Comorre killed his mortal brother in a duel over a woman.  

**Weapons/Attacks:**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Damage</th>
<th>Dice Pool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brawl</td>
<td>0B</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aftermath

If no one interferes, the Bagaudae are annihilated. Rossignol does not aid them. Several of the Bagaudae escape into the Hedge (including Doenna), but they do not regroup. Some flee to Saint-Malo. Comorre is in possession of a Blood Pennon (Changeling: The Lost, p. 208) and he will use it to make his final stand. A well-equipped hunting party of the Others will arrive in the city the following day, and inflict even more casualties on the occupiers. The Nantais Lost will bear the brunt of the losses, including Gildas himself.

Character Creation

Character creation in this Era is mechanically similar to that of Changeling: The Lost, but the setting of the game raises some questions that might have greater importance to this era.

Where are you from? Do you speak French as your first language, or as a second? What are the Lost like where you are from (if you’re from a different place than where your chronicle is set)? Do you ever get homesick? Was your family wealthy?

Can you read? Most people in this era are illiterate. How did you learn?

Are you religious? While virtually no one publicly identifies as an atheist in this age, there are a few people to whom religion is utterly irrelevant. How have your religious views (or lack thereof) been changed by your Durance? Do you view the Gentry as demons?

Do you care about politics? Does the immense gulf between the rich and the poor bother you, or do you dismiss those as mortal concerns? Do you think that the urban courts have the right to impose their protection (and their will) on the rural Lost?

Skills

Here is a listing of all of the Skills available to players of Lily, Sabre, and Thorn, and some ideas on how they might appear on your chronicle.

Academics

Several men in the 17th century were credited as “the last man to know everything”: Athanasius Kircher, Thomas Young, and Gottfried Liebniz have all been dubbed thusly by various historians over the last few centuries. This term is not only meant to convey praise for those men, but also to demonstrate that the entire body of Western knowledge could be known by a single person at the time. A character with Academics has a solid grounding in history, geography, literature, theology —all of the things that are the province of learned men (save for natural philosophy, which is covered by Science). He can appreciate the fine arts and otherwise pass himself off as learned in his social circles.

If a character purchases any dots in Academics, she must also purchase the Literacy Merit (p. XX).

Possessed by: Students, clergy, artists, philosophers, lawyers, nobility of the robe

Specialties: Impress ing Rich People, Casuistry, Military Strategy, Philosophy

Enigmas
The fae have an uncanny logic all of their own. Some can untangle the threads of their twisted logic with their sharp intellect; others find that they have an intuitive grasp of it. Enigmas covers those skills required to solve riddles and logic puzzles, and to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena.

**Possessed by:** Changelings, philosophers, madmen, occultists

**Specialties:** Riddles, Logic Puzzles, Leaps of Intuition, Dream Interpretation

**Crafts**

Keeping up with the demands of courtly life demands both good taste and a team of excellent craftsmen to keep a courtier supplied with the latest fashions. The arts of cooking, architecture, and fashion are in high demand in the court of the Sun King, and a top-notch craftsman can win considerable favor by plying her trade.

**Possessed by:** Artisans, servants, laborers, farmers, ladies

**Specialties:** Textiles, Jewelry-making, Winemaking, Cooking, Architecture, Cosmetics, Perfumery

**Investigation**

The world of the Lost is rocked by intrigue and scandal. Though the Lost are notorious deceivers, a keen mind and careful observation can find the truth of any situation if the observer knows what to look for. On the other hand, Investigation can also be used to hide any traces of one’s involvement at a crime scene.

**Possessed by:** Servants, police, burglars, librarians

**Specialties:** Crime Scenes, Finding Lost Items, Destroying the Evidence

**Medicine**

Medicinal knowledge in the 17th century is largely unchanged from the medieval era. Disease is thought to be caused by foul vapors, demonic possession, or imbalances of the four classical humors. Basic understanding of sanitation and hygiene are poor. However, a character with Medicine possesses a basic understanding of human anatomy and knowledge of various herbal remedies. Some choose to use this knowledge to practice the healing arts; others might ply their trade in the dungeons of the Bastille or by mixing “inheritance powders” for unscrupulous nobles.

**Possessed by:** Surgeons, midwives, poisoners, torturers

**Specialties:** Field Medicine, Herbal Remedies, Diagnosis, Infectious Diseases

**Occult**

A clever changeling knows that she is not the only thing that lurks in the dark corners of the world. Ghosts, magicians, and the loup-garou are but a few of the mysteries that haunt the World of Darkness. Whether learned from a grimoire in a monastery or at your grandmother’s knee by the hearth, the Occult skill represents knowledge of the dark, hidden forces of the world.

**Possessed by:** Autumn Courtiers, clergy, ritualists, astrologers, oneiromancers, Hedge explorers, rural people, con men

**Specialties:** Astrology, Hedge Lore, Occult Symbolism, Oneiromancy
Politics
The baroque world of changeling politics can be nigh-incomprehensible to the untrained mind. The genealogies, ancient feuds, and labyrinthine bureaucracies that determine who holds the titles and who is really in charge are vital knowledge for the ambitious courtier or revolutionary.

**Possessed by:** Courtiers, bureaucrats, aristocrats, ambitious people  
**Specialties:** Heraldry, Appropriations, a particular court or region

Science
Scholarship is gaining a newfound respect in the Age of Reason, and a shrewd courtier should either be able to keep up with current discoveries or be able to bluff her way through scientific conversations. The reign of Louis XIV would see a number of scientific innovations: the discoveries of Newton, the discovery of microorganisms, the first blood transfusions, and many more.

If a character purchases any dots of Science, she must also possess the Literacy Merit (p XX).

**Possessed by:** Students, explorers, philosophers, intellectuals  
**Specialties:** Astronomy, Botany, Physics, Mathematics, Impressing People

Athletics
What swashbuckler story would be complete without daring feats of athletic prowess? Athletics covers everything from swinging from a chandelier to kicking a barrel down a staircase to climbing down from your mistress’s balcony. It’s also used for competing in the popular sports of the day, such as tennis or, in the New World, lacrosse.

**Possessed by:** Performers, laborers, farmers, children, soldiers, swashbucklers  
**Specialties:** While Fighting, Climbing, Impressing People

Brawl
The universal art of using one’s fists to beat an opponent senseless is a timeless custom enjoyed by people all over the world. Specific schools of martial arts exist in the early modern era: Collar-and-elbow style wrestling is an old folk custom in Brittany (and other Celtic lands), and the gentlemanly art of fisticuffs is beginning to become fashionable among the gentry in England. Among the refined classes in France, however, duels are still mostly commonly resolved by sword or pistol.

**Possessed by:** Soldiers, thugs, Bretons, Englishmen, Ogres  
**Specialties:** In Taverns, Impressing Potential Mates, Gentlemanly Fisticuffs, Fighting Dirty

Firearms
In the 17th century, firearms are still quite rare. Muskets are seen primarily in the military, though outlaws and wealthy people often carry a pistol as well. Even in large battles among the fae, they are of limited utility — the Lost do not march in lines like men or ants. Due to their relatively short range, poor accuracy, and tendency to misfire, they are often fired once in combat and then discarded in favor of a melee weapon.

**Possessed by:** Soldiers, nobles, outlaws, ne’er-do-wells
Specialties: Duels, Reloading, While Mounted, Trick Shots

Larceny
A swashbuckler might have a heart of gold, but sometimes she finds herself on the wrong side of the law. Larceny covers any manner of knavery or skullduggery that a changeling might regrettably find herself forced to do (only out of deepest necessity, of course). Larceny covers everything from cheating at basset to picking locks to feats of legerdemain and showmanship.

Possessed by: Urchins, criminals, con artists, merchants, police, knaves, ne’er-do-wells

Specialties: Sleight-of-hand, Breaking and Entering, Counterfeiting

Ride
The Ride skill is detailed on page XX. The fae often ride non-standard mounts, such as elk made of stars, wolves made of teeth, giant bumblebees, and so forth. These non-standard mounts are also governed with Ride (though the Storyeller may decide to impose a penalty for truly unusual mounts or mounts not suited to the rider’s size). It is not unheard of for oathbreakers in some freeholds to be cursed to serve as mounts for a year and a day, though this practice is considered old-fashioned by many modern Lost.

Possessed by: Farmers, hunters, nobles, messengers, cavalrymen

Specialties: Stunts, Racing, a particular steed, Flying Mounts, While in Combat

Stealth
The art of moving unnoticed is an invaluable skill for any courtier. Whether listening at doorways in the halls of Versailles, stowing away on a ship in Marseille, or hiding in a crowd from the gens d’armes in a Paris marketplace, Stealth is helpful for getting any swashbuckler out of—or into—trouble.

Possessed by: Courtiers, servants, hunters, burglars, Darklings

Specialties: Hiding in Crowds, In the Hedge, Indoors, Moving Silently

Survival
Mere survival is a challenge for people in the world of Lily, Sabre, and Thorn. The state of constant warfare (and its accompanying tax burden) means that most of the rural poor are surviving by the skin of their teeth (if they indeed survive at all). The spectre of famine looms constantly over rural life.

On the other end of the spectrum, hunting is a diverting sport for wealthy nobles. Game wardens in their employ spend a great deal of time hunting for game to flush toward their lords, and hunting for poaching peasants who would dare steal the animals that are on their lord’s land.

Possessed by: Peasants, farmers, hunters, game wardens, Beasts

Specialties: A particular region (either in the Hedge or the mortal world), Hunting, Sailing

Weaponry
Though dueling has been officially outlawed since the mid-16th century, duels of honor are popular in 17th century France. So too is the art of swordsmanship on the rise. Master swordsmen
seek to teach their art to whoever can afford their fees, while con artists fleece gullible students and noblemen that they’re learning the “true secrets” of master fencers.

**Possessed by:** Soldiers, university students, criminals, nobles  
**Specialties:** A particular weapon, Showing Off, Duelling, Improvised Weapons

**Animal Ken**

Animal Ken can be used for both natural and supernatural animals. Most talking cats enjoy having their ears scratched or their bellies rubbed, but Beasts are unlikely to take kindly to such offers. Some Beasts at particularly low Clarity may respond to Animal Ken when Empathy fails, but the aspiring courtier should exercise good judgment in this, lest he give grave offense.

**Possessed by:** Farmers, huntsmen, Beasts, Hedge explorers, stablehands  
**Specialties:** Horses, Hounds, Training, Falconry, Hedge Beasts

**Empathy**

Emotion is at the core of the changeling’s being. It is his sustenance and his addiction. It is a crucial tool of courtly life. When dealing with the feckless fae, knowing *when* to ask for a favor is as important as knowing *who* to ask.

**Possessed by:** Oneiromancers, servants, priests, courtiers  
**Specialties:** A Court’s chosen emotion, Formal Settings, Building Trust

**Expression**

In the early modern period, artistic and musical skill was much more common than in modern times. Before the era of mass media, people needed to provide their own entertainment. Whether at a highly formal courtly dance or leading a rousing song in a tavern, Expression is a valuable tool for ingratiating yourself into any social circle. It can also be used in lieu of Occult for performing rituals in a courtly setting.

**Possessed by:** Courtiers, peasants, students, poets, Fairest  
**Specialties:** Dancing, Masques, Formal Settings, Rituals

**Intimidation**

Intimidation is used in a wide variety of social situations. Whether it’s a skinny urchin in the slums demanding your purse while brandishing a bent kitchen knife, or a blustering duelist trying to scare off her foe before drawing her sword, or a thinly-veiled threat through smiling teeth delivered at a formal dinner party, Intimidation covers all forms of coercion.

**Possessed by:** Thugs, Ogres, steely society matrons, police, guards, police, bureaucrats, the Inquisition, aristocracy  
**Specialties:** Rooting Out Heretics, Extracting Confessions, Braggadocio, a class of target (e.g., commoners, criminals, children)

**Persuasion**

The gentler cousin of Intimidation involves getting someone to see things your way without use of force. Though it’s not necessarily any nobler than Intimidation, it’s generally more socially acceptable.
Possessed by: Leaders of all stripes, cunning-men and women, tricksters, lotharios, peddlers, merchants

Specialties: Kissing Up, Seduction, Solicitation, Inspiring Others

Socialize
While conducting oneself with grace and tact is timeless, the world of courtly intrigue has its own specific codes and etiquettes. Socialize also allows a character to understand the secret ways that courtiers communicate — whether it’s decoding a floral arrangement, sending a message by placing one’s beauty mark just so, or surreptitiously signaling a lover with one’s fan.

Possessed by: Servants, the wealthy, clergy, entertainers, prostitutes

Specialties: Formal Courtly Settings, Informal Parties, Slumming It

Streetwise
Navigating courtly life can be treacherous, but so can the back streets of Paris. A character with Streetwise knows where to buy poisons, how to speak l’argot (the Parisian thieves’ cant of the 17th century), and which coffee shops the real revolutionaries frequent.

Possessed by: Criminals, police, students, the urban underclass

Specialties: A particular location, A particular class of people (e.g., Beggars, Thieves, Prostitutes), Fencing Stolen Goods

Subterfuge
Mastering the fine art of subterfuge is essential for the successful courtier. Whether it’s the simple art of the white lie to appease a superior or disguising oneself in order to get into an exclusive party, outright lying is often an excellent tool when charm alone won’t do the job.

Possessed by: Clergymen, smugglers, courtiers, courtesans

Specialties: Flattery, Recognizing Liars, Disguise, Concealing Emotions

Merits
Certain merits may be more valuable in the early modern era than in modern times. Natural Immunity may save a character’s life during a plague year, Iron Stomach is more important in the era before food safety inspections, and Direction Sense matters more in the era before the GPS. As always, the players and Storyteller should all discuss the level of grittiness expected in play before the chronicle begins. While the Storyteller might think that dealing with the brutalities of life in the premodern era might be compelling, the players might not be expecting a game where D’Artagnan’s nose rots off from syphilis.

Language
Multilingualism is more common in this place and era. Even if a person doesn’t speak the local language, most French speakers can get by on lingua franca, provided they are in an area that speaks another Romance language. Each dot taken in the Language Merit indicates that a character can speak an additional language with the same fluency as his native language. He can only read and write in that language if he possesses the Literate Merit.

Literate (•)
In this Era, very few people can read or write. Perhaps only a quarter of the population is literate. By purchasing this Merit, the character is literate in every language that she knows. Literacy is a prerequisite for the Academics and Science Skills.

Contracts of Blades

The Fae love conflict and strife of all sorts, and thus long ago they struck a Contract with Blades — the ultimate symbol of separation. While initially intended as a martial Contract, its clauses have been put to more peaceful uses by gardeners, miners, and other laborers in Arcadia. The material of the blade is irrelevant; an obsidian dagger or a crystal letter opener would honor the contract, but a wooden club or steel spike would not. Iron blades, of course, never honor these contracts successfully. Contracts of Blades count as Affinity Contracts for all changelings.

Trusty Blades (•)

Bladed implements come readily to the aid of the changeling who invokes this clause. Swords spring from scabbards at the first hint of violence and daggers stubbornly refuse to be pried from the grip of their master.

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: None. For the remainder of the scene the changeling may draw a bladed weapon reflexively, without forfeiting her attack for the turn. Thus when entering combat, an unarmed character can invoke this Contract, draw her weapon, and use it to attack or perform a weaponry dodge in the first turn. Additionally, all attempts to disarm the character or turn the blade on its user are made at a –1 penalty. If a character is successfully disarmed, she can retrieve a dropped weapon (if she is not being restrained in such a way that the weapon is beyond her natural reach) reflexively as well, and attack or dodge with it in the same turn.

Action: Reflexive

Catch: The character loudly bids her blade to come to her assistance.

Well-Honed Edge (••)

The changeling can call upon this clause to temporarily sharpen or strengthen bladed implements. Swords slice cleanly through handkerchiefs, butter knives glitter keen as razors, and shears bite deep into vines tough as stone.

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Weaponry

Action: Instant

Catch: The character is about to face an opponent more heavily armored than she is.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The blades present are offended, and the next action attempted with a bladed implement is made at a –2 penalty.

Failure: The blades are unmoved, and the contract fails.

Success: For the rest of the scene, bladed tools and weapons employed by the character gain +1 Durability. Additionally, bladed weapons gain a +1 damage bonus for the remainder of the
scene. If increasing a tool’s Durability also increases its damage when used as an improvised weapon, this additional bonus does not apply. This Contract cannot be invoked on the same blade more than once per scene.

**Exceptional Success:** For the remainder of the scene, non-combat related rolls made with bladed implements benefit from the 8-again rule.

**Suggested Modifiers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+1</td>
<td>The character takes a few moments to praise the fine qualities of the blade.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Song of Flashing Steel (•••)**

Using this clause, the changeling can call to her hand one weapon or tool with which she is already familiar and has touched at least once with her bare skin. The blade literally flies through the air, weaving and ducking around objects and people, until it places itself in the character’s hand.

**Cost:** 2 Glamour (+1 Willpower if the blade is not within the line of sight)

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Wyrd (– opponent’s Strength or Wyrd, if applicable)

**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** The changeling has previously given the blade a unique name and calls it in a loud, clear voice.

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The blade flies wildly around its environment, damaging itself and other objects present for several minutes, then falls lifeless to the floor. It cannot be summoned again for 24 hours.

**Failure:** The Contract fails, and the character is aware.

**Success:** The blade flies to the hand of its master, deftly avoiding all obstacles save solid barriers. If the blade is within sight and has a clear path, it should reach the character within a turn. If the blade is not in the character’s line of sight, it travels as quickly as a horse at a full gallop.

With the expenditure of 1 Willpower, this clause can even be used on objects that are not currently in the changeling’s line of sight, though the object must be in the same world (and not in the Hedge or Arcadia). A blade answering this call cannot be stopped; any attempt by another being to restrain a blade answering the call fails automatically, as the blade nimbly dodges and continues on its course. The only exception to this rule is the case in which this clause is enacted against a blade currently being held (not just carried) by a person more familiar with the blade than the changeling who invoked the Contract. In this such a case, the changeling suffers that person’s Strength or Wyrd (whichever is higher) as a penalty to the activation roll.

Solid objects and barriers present more of a problem. If no open path is available, the blade will attack any barrier at its weakest point — breaking windows, cutting through thatch, and so forth until it reaches its target or it is itself destroyed by its effort.
The summoned blade always seeks the hand of she who called it, even if the character moves from the location at which she activated the clause, and even if she dies before the blade arrives. Once the blade has been successfully called, the effects of this Contract cannot be canceled. The blade will not rest until it reaches the hand of the summoner unless it destroys itself in the attempt.

A flying blade has no Mask. A blade traveling a long distance is likely to fly high enough to avoid trees and obstacles (and therefore notice) for most of its journey.

**Exceptional Success:** The result is the same as a regular success, except that solid barriers prove less of a problem for the blade. Driven by the Wyrd, fate conveniently provides opportunities for the blade to bypass obstacles — safes and vaults are accessed, windows and doors are left open, manholes and drains are left uncovered. The blade passes harmlessly through obstacles and therefore need do no damage to its environment or itself on its journey.

**Suggested Modifiers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Situation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+1</td>
<td>The character’s call to the blade is made verbally and is especially poetic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–1</td>
<td>The character has touched the blade only once before and has never used the blade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–2</td>
<td>The blade belongs to an enemy and it has tasted the character’s blood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Swords into Ploughshares (****)**

This clause can transform any blade into any other blade. A prized silver epee can become a pair of dull kitchen shears, or vice versa.

**Cost:** 2 Glamour and 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Wyrd

**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** If used to make a weapon into something less deadly, she must insult the wielder’s fighting prowess. To make a tool into a deadly weapon or transform one bladed weapon into another, she must praise the wielder’s martial skill. To change one kind of tool into another (e.g., a scalpel into a hoe), she must wax poetic about whatever task she intends the tool to accomplish (e.g., to transform a scalpel into a hoe, she must praise “the noble farmer, upon whose ceaseless labors the whole of civilization depends,” etc.).

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The clause backfires spectacularly, and the opposite of the intended effect is achieved. If used to destroy an opponent’s weapons, the weapons are treated as if they had been the targets of Well-Honed Edge, above. Tools simply fall apart. The character cannot invoke this clause again for 24 hours.

**Failure:** The clause fails, and any blades remain unchanged.

**Success:** The character can affect any number of blades within her immediate vicinity, whether she knows they are present or not. She can exclude any blades she wishes. She can choose only one type of transformation with each use of the power, however. She cannot transform her
opponent’s sabre into a letter opener while simultaneously upgrading her own dinner knife into a claymore, for example. The effect remains until the invoker wishes otherwise or dies.

**Exceptional Success:** Any weapons created by this power automatically benefit from Well-Honed Edge for the scene (above); any tools created give their owners a +1 bonus on all rolls related to their craft.

**Suggested Modifiers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Situation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+1</td>
<td>The target’s Vice is Pride.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Saber Dance (*****)**

Graceful dancers twirl swords effortlessly, butchers carve meat with brutal efficiency, surgeons operate with exacting precision, and even gardeners trim hedges into stunning works of art. But when the time comes for battle, the blade-wielder blessed by this clause finds that her civilian skills significantly augment her fighting prowess.

Changelings who invoke this contract are beautiful to watch, graceful and mesmerizing, and sometimes more than a little disturbing. Dancers spin and undulate with blades striking out in rhythm to their steps. Jugglers throw knives with breathtaking flourishes and pinpoint precision. Butchers land devastating blows that take their victims apart cleanly at the joints, and surgeons’ scalpels land deadly strikes against their opponents’ most vulnerable points.

**Cost:** 3 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Dexterity + Wyrd

**Action:** Reflexive

**Catch:** The character is dressed in a manner appropriate to her relevant non-combat skills — a juggler in motley, a surgeon in a smock, and so forth.

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The character gracelessly miscalculates, falls prone, and must spend a full turn getting to her feet. She is stunned and suffers a –1 penalty to her defense until she regains her feet. She cannot attempt the Saber Dance again for a full day.

**Failure:** The Contract fails to activate, but the character can act normally.

**Success:** To use this clause effectively, a character ought to possess both the Weaponry skill and at least one blade-related specialty in a non-combat skill such as Expression (Dance), Athletics (Juggling), Crafts (Cooking), or Medicine (Surgery).

In combat, the character gains the appropriate bonus to all blade-based weaponry attacks for a number of turns equal to the number of successes made on the activation roll times her Wyrd. Outside of combat, she gains the appropriate bonus to one use of a skill in which she has a relevant blade-related specialty. If the roll to use the skill is extended, then she gains the bonus for a number of rolls equal to the number of successes made on the contract activation roll times her Wyrd.

**Exceptional Success:** The character can carry on the dance for the duration of the combat or until she has completed her skill-based endeavor.
Suggested Modifiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Situation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+1</td>
<td>The character uses blades of a fine or superior quality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>+1</td>
<td>The character’s clothing fits loosely and allows a maximum range of movement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>−1</td>
<td>The character is wearing more than one point’s worth of armor.</td>
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New Tokens

The Honest Thief (•)

The Honest Thief is a small jeweled brooch that resembles a stylized magpie. While wearing it, the wearer can choose to activate the token at any time. While the pin is activated, it can perform one of two functions.

The first function is that of recording. When activated, the Honest Thief will listen and remember any sounds it hears for next minute. Its senses are approximately as keen as any normal human’s. It can only remember one minute of sounds at a time, and the minute must be contiguous.

For the second function, the Honest Thief will perfectly reproduce what it has been bidden to remember. It can imitate any sound, but it cannot reproduce supernatural effects that are carried via sound.

As a tertiary and somewhat less obviously useful function, the Honest Thief attracts magpies. While it is worn, any nearby magpies congregate near the wearer. They will not attack the wearer or obsessively follow him, but they will be attracted to his location.

Action: Reflexive

Mien: The Honest Thief is a silver brooch decorated in enamel and colored glass. When bidden to speak, it turns its head and moves its beak as if speaking, revealing a tiny red tongue like a drop of bright blood.

Drawback: Magpies are chatty birds, and the Honest Thief is no exception. No more than once per scene, the Thief may randomly blurt out a snatch of conversation that it has overheard at some point in its life. It may be an irrelevant bit of nonsense such as the cries of a fruit seller or a line of a poem heard at court. More likely, however, is that it will reveal a secret that is deeply embarrassing or incriminating to the wearer. It needn’t be something that the Thief has specifically been instructed to remember. Even when it isn’t active, the Thief is always listening.

Catch: Sometime after the next sunset, the Thief disappears from its owner’s possession, and it takes something precious with it. The Thief likes shiny objects, but it also prefers objects of great sentimental value to its owner. The stolen object appears at the next Goblin Market that the former owner attends, typically for resale at an exorbitant price.

The Claire de Lune Mask (•••)

The Claire de Lune Mask allows a changeling to create an alter ego. The first time the mask is worn, the wearer can fundamentally alter her appearance within certain constraints. While wearing the mask, the wearer may change her apparent height, weight, gender, voice, age, and clothing, but she will always appear as if she were an ordinary human masked for a costume ball.
Her kith will always be evident in her costume in some manner. A petite lupine Hunterheart might appear as a towering man in a leopard mask; a moss-covered, elderly Woodblood might disguise himself as a young man adorned with lilies. Once an alter ego is created, the Changeling cannot use the mask to disguise herself in any other way. For example, the Hunterheart mentioned above could not disguise herself as the man in the leopard mask one day and then disguise herself as a child in a tiger mask the next; she may only choose one disguise.

**Action:** Standard

**Mien:** Though it appears to be a simple wooden half-mask, the Mask covers the nose completely and adjusts itself to conform closely to the wearer’s face.

**Drawback:** The mask conforms so closely to the user’s face that it tends to become stuck. Successful removal of the mask requires a Strength + Athletics roll. In addition, the mask inflicts one level of bashing damage during each removal attempt, successful or not.

**Catch:** The mask takes a subtle toll on those who do not sacrifice Glamour to it. The personality of the alter ego will begin to change from the wearer’s true personality as she develops a mild Derangement of the Storyteller’s choice whenever she wears the mask. Though the Derangement will disappear when the mask is removed, it will unerringly reappear when the mask is donned again. If the wearer continues to refuse the price, she may acquire additional Derangements, or her symptoms may become more severe.

**Hobgoblin Truce (★★★★)***

The Hobgoblin Truce is a truly rare item — an enchanted flintlock pistol. To activate the Truce, the wielder selects a target, points the pistol at him, and pulls the trigger. The target must be within short range and able to hear the wielder. The wielder makes a simple command that can be accomplished in a single turn, such as “Give me your purse!” or “Drop your sword and get on your knees!” The player then makes a Manipulation + Wyrd roll resisted by the target’s Composure + Resolve. The target may not spend Willpower on this roll. A wielder may only use this power on a given target once per day. If he attempts to use it more than once, the power will fail and he will suffer the effects of a misfire (see p XX). The perverse magics of the Truce tend to favor smaller, weaker wielders over more imposing ones.

The Hobgoblin Truce cannot be used as an ordinary pistol. If the gun is loaded and fired, it will automatically misfire and its other powers will be useless until the next sunrise.

**Action:** Contested

**Mien:** The Hobgoblin Truce is a silver-plated Queen Anne pistol engraved with mermaids. When the trigger is pulled and the power is activated, great puff of purple smoke emits from the barrel and the mermaids open their mouths to reveal rows of shark-like teeth.

**Drawback:** The wielder begins to feel an unearned sense of superiority after using this weapon. His inflated ego makes it difficult for him to relate to others, and he is at a –2 to all Empathy rolls until the next sunrise.

**Catch:** The wielder is afflicted with cowardice. He is at a –2 penalty to any action that would demand courage or daring on his part, such as climbing a precarious cliff, facing down a foe in mortal combat, or resisting intimidation.

**Suggested Modifiers:**
Modifier  Situation
+1  The wielder physically unimposing in comparison to his target
+1  The wielder is Wizened
–1  The wielder has an Intimidation score of 3 or higher
–1  The wielder has a Size greater than 5

New Entitlement: The Knights of St. Collen

Ours is the burden of the cross and the sword. We bring succor to the weak, and judgment to the wicked. We serve Him who wore the crown of Thorns, our Lord and Savior, who knows our pain like no other.

The Knights of St. Collen is a proud order that dates back to the 7th century. It was well respected among the Lost of Western Europe, and once rivaled the Courts for popularity. Many Lost felt that the stories of Christ’s earthly suffering closely mirrored their own suffering. The Gentry are often repelled by the trappings of mortal religion, and the Lost could rely on the church for a measure of protection against their former masters. But as forces of the mortal Church began to stamp out heterodoxies and heretics in their own ranks toward the end of the Middle Ages, membership in the Knighthood waned. Many among the Lost began to fear that they were no longer welcome in the modern Church, an increasingly authoritarian and violent organization that categorized all spirits and fey creatures as demons.

In the 17th century, the Knighthood is struggling. Though many of its number wish to refrain from the political conflicts of the day and focus simply on spiritual matters, others are called to defend the faith from its mortal enemies. An Irish branch of the Knighthood, the Knights of St. Dymphna, was all but wiped out during the Cromwellian conquest, and the surviving members of the Knighthood are deeply bitter at the Irish Courts’ decision to lay low and hide from the mortal conflict.

In accordance with venerable custom, high-ranking Knights are often called in to arbitrate inter-Court disputes that cannot be otherwise settled. It is not uncommon to see a freehold with a permanently-appointed chief minister or seneschal from the Knighthood who oversees many aspects of the freehold’s stewardship, but this practice is becoming increasingly unpopular in modern times.

In addition to their magisterial roles, the Knights are honor-bound to give succor to changelings who have newly emerged from the Hedge, or those who are succumbing to loss of Clarity. Mortal charity is close to the hearts of many of the Knights as well. Most Knights believe that the Lost should reconcile themselves with mortal society, but they also believe that mortal society should reconcile itself to them. It is not uncommon for more powerful Knights to lead worship for mixed congregations of changelings and loyal human followers, though the mortal Church would almost certainly frown on their unconventional forms of worship.

In Lily, Sabre, & Thorn, the Knights find themselves increasingly conflicted. Can they maintain their faith in the face of a church that no longer has room for them, or will they dissolve utterly, a medieval relic out of place in the modern world?
Titles: Sir, Lady, Magister (male or female), Bishop (male or female). Nuns and clergy in mortal churches may choose to refer to themselves by their monastic or ecclesiastical titles.

Prerequisites: Clarity 5 or higher, Willpower 5 or higher. At least two of the following must have a score of 2 or higher: Academics, Investigation, Politics, Empathy. They may possess Court Goodwill (Any), but not Mantle.

Joining: Joining the Order is no simple task. The Knights are expected to demonstrate courage, strength of character, and good judgment. The exact means by which these tasks are administered varies; some of the more serious Knights might require that prospects publicly self-flagellate or devote themselves to great acts of asceticism. In Gascony, a prospective Knight might simply need to arm wrestle an Ogre. (Success is not mandatory, but imbibing copious quantities of Armagnac with one’s fellow Knights afterward is.) There are no formal vows of celibacy, poverty, and so forth as we associate with the modern Church, but many Knights will take these vows as a demonstration of their loyalty.

As a final requirement, the prospective Knight must make a full confession to one of the Knighthood’s priests. Initiation takes place during Midwinter. When the sun goes down, the prospective Knight begins to confess. He must, to the best of his recollection, confess every sin that he can recall during that time. If he willingly deceives or misleads his confessor, he is unable to join the order and suffers the penalties associated with renouncing an order (see “Quitting an Order,” Changeling: The Lost, p. 289).

While a confessor has a sacred duty to keep the contents of any confessional secret, he is not pledged to do so; in this respect, he answers only to God. If it is deemed that a Knight is behaving in such a way that undermines or embarrasses the Order, then it might only be appropriate for a confessor to use some of the knowledge he has gained from confession. For the good of the organization, of course.

Mien: Most Knights dress in a manner appropriate to the martial caste or the clergy of the area. In general, they tend to eschew elaborate fashion and wear simple clothing, though the definition of “simple clothing” may vary widely depending on local standards. An ascetic Knight might wear sackcloth and ashes, while a courtly Knight of the First Estate might wear flowing robes of scarlet velvet trimmed in ermine.

The mien of a Knight reflects his piety. Some will tend to manifest stigmata on the hands or on the forehead in intense situations such as combat. Others will affect the stillness and calm of a sacred icon; they appear tranquil and composed even in the most horrific situations. At high Wyrd, they may manifest a halo or a crown of thorns.

Background: Prospective Knights are typically recruited from the ranks of Christian (and particularly Catholic) changelings. Not all religious Christian changelings join the Order, and not all changeling clergy join the Order, but those who find themselves drawn either to the institution of the mortal Church or the salvation of the Cross over the intrigues of the Courts may find a home there.

Because of the political and magisterial bent of the organization, membership in the Knighthood requires sound judgment and a strong mind. Mental and Social Skills are common, as is an Academics specialty in Religion. Allies, Contacts, Status, and Mentors (either in the Knighthood or in the mortal Church) are also common.
**Organization:** The Knights are comparatively well organized. Each region or metropolitan area (called a synod within the ranks) has a ranking member known as a Bishop. Directly below the Bishops are the Priests-Magister, who are the overseers of a given freehold. Beneath them are Knights.

**Concepts:** Scheming courtly minister, penitent former criminal, gentle-hearted wandering friar, esteemed legal scholar, heterodox occultist, iron-willed magistrate, lecherous monk.

**Privileges**

**Phial of St. Collen (Token 4)**

The Phial of St. Collen is any small vial of water that has been blessed by a Bishop of the Knighthood. It is given to those members of the Order who achieve the rank of Priest-Magister or higher, though a Priest-Magister may loan some to a subordinate for a specific purpose.

Water thusly blessed is typically used for divinatory purposes. When sprinkled on the head of any target, it can be used to compel her to answer a single question truthfully to the best of her ability — without lying, deceiving, or willfully misleading the querent. The Phial of St. Collen can only be used in this way on a target once per day; subsequent applications will have no effect.

The Phial of St. Collen will also deal one level of bashing damage when applied to any creature with a Clarity score of 5 or lower. It has the additional property of dissolving dreamstuff such as those items produced by Cobblethought (*Changeling: The Lost*, p. 126) as well as Hedgespun items upon contact.

**Action:** Standard

**Mien:** Water from the phial glitters as if sunlit, even indoors or at night.

**Drawback:** After using the phial, a Knight cannot enter a Hollow again until the next noon. If it is used inside of a Hollow, the Knight is immediately transported to the Hollow’s entrance.

**Catch:** The phial burns the hand, causing serious burns and one level of lethal damage. The catch is also invoked if anyone who is not a member of Knighthood attempts to use the phial, regardless of whether they pay the cost or make their Wyrd roll.

**Rumors of the Knighthood**

A changeling Inquisitor and witch-hunter is roaming eastern England. His targets? Fetches. He accuses them publicly of witchcraft and conducts various “tests” — submerging them in water, pricking them with a mysterious pin — before riling the townsfolk into murdering the “witches” in their midst. His actions have only resulted in the murder of fetches, so far, but his brand of vigilantism is angering the Courts. Is he affiliated with the Knighthood? How is he able to detect fetches so unerringly?

A freehold’s confessor and Knight of St. Collen has disappeared. At the goblin markets, a strange vendor has appeared, selling what appears to be confessions of sins written in blood — signed with the names of the penitents. The Knighthood is tracking this vendor down, but they have not yet found him. Are they concerned for the fate of their priest, or are they trying to cover up their own sins?
Some Courts openly disdain the Knighthood. The persecutions of the Inquisition left many Lost embittered toward anything resembling Christian religion, and the Knights are criticized for not distancing themselves from mortal politics. The only violence, however, has been between Knights. Rumor has it that Huguenot and Catholic Knights have been quarrelling in Southern France after the Edict of Nantes legalized persecution of Protestants. The Bishop of Marseilles, Lady Rose-de-Lys, has been looking for stout-hearted Knights to help ease tensions. She’ll pay, of course.

Inspirations

Fiction

The fiction of Alexandre Dumas. Any list of swashbuckler fiction would be sorely incomplete without mentioning Dumas. However, Dumas wrote serial fiction and was paid by the word. Though his novels are highly entertaining and well-worth reading, they are quite lengthy. The time-pressed player may wish to watch one of the excellent film adaptations of his work. The 1973 film version of The Three Musketeers is a must-see. The Count of Monte Cristo, with its themes of identity, imprisonment, and revenge, is an excellent choice. (The 2004 anime series Gankutsuou is a visually stunning and novel take on the story.) The 1998 version of The Man in the Iron Mask is worth watching especially for Changeling players, though the performances are uneven. It could easily be viewed as a story of the struggle between a young changeling and his sadistic, powerful fetch.

Scaramouche by Rafael Sabatini. “He was born with a gift of laughter and a sense that the world was mad.” Though it takes place during the Revolutionary era rather than the reign of Louis XIV, Scaramouche is the tale of a man who follows his heart and brings down an oppressive regime in the name of love, honor, and revenge. It uses classic swashbuckler tropes to great effect.

The Fairy Tales of Madame d’Aulnoy. The rise of nationalism during the Early Modern period (and in Louis XIV’s reign) led to renewed interest in cataloguing and preserving France’s national folk heritage. This collection by Madame d’Aulnoy is a classic anthology of French folk tales catalogued during the reign of Louis XIV. A treasure trove of inspiration.

Non-Fiction

Strange Revelations: Magic, Poison, and Sacrilege in Louis XIV’s France by Lynn Wood Mollenauer. A rigorously researched and highly readable look at the occultism and labyrinthine intrigues surrounding the rule of the Sun King. Highly recommended.

The Book of the Courtier by Baldassare Castiglione. Though originally published in Venice over a century before the Sun King would take the crown, The Book of the Courtier was regarded as an indispensable text in Louis XIV’s day and considered mandatory reading for men and women of good manners.
“Liam, you must let me through.” I must admit, I never thought I’d see my brother take up arms against me. We were Irish cobbler caught between two Churches — Liam was a Puritan and I, his sister, a Catholic — and new to Salem Town. Liam was tall and built like a lumberjack. I, on the other hand, had fiery red hair and a face filled with freckles. To see him standing there on the bridge, so afraid—a lantern in one shaking hand and a musket in the other — it was as if he thought I’d curse him. “If I don’t reach the heart of the forest by the time the moon rises, I’ll…”

“Then it’s true. You are as Goody Blackbourne says. You consort with the Olde Boy.”

I froze, shocked that my brother would succumb to such vile gossip. I would rather sacrifice my own life than sign a pact with the Devil. Instead of getting angry, as Goody Prescott did when she was accused, I took a deep breath and said a prayer: “Lord, may I serve thee faithfully in this hour of need…”

Liam listened with great interest. When I was done, he glanced around to make sure no one was watching and leaned in to whisper in my ear. “Are you a witch, Patience? What do you do out in the forest at night? Do you dance naked under the full moon?”

How could I tell Liam about the Vigil? Surely, any confession of my secret vow could be twisted to condemn me. Salem Village is gripped with a terrible fever, an invisible malady that drives good men and women mad. I decided to show him, to force him to deal with the truth: that the Devil did exist and I was chosen to stop Him and His agents, and that those forces lingered at the very edges of our home.

“To your first question, my brother, I am no more a witch than you are.”

“And to my second?”

I pulled out my wooden cross, bowed my head, and laid my hand across his. “Lord, let this be the hour You remove the blindness from Liam’s eyes, so that he may take up arms in Your name.”

Liam jerked his hand away. “You speak as if you know Him personally. Are you so prideful, sister, that you make demands upon Him?”

“Come my brother,” I urged, pointing at the rising moon filling the blue-black sky. “I will show you what God has asked of me.”

“Then let us run…lest I turn you in for witchcraft.”

We crossed the bridge in silence and hastened to the treeline. The forest was unusually quiet that unholy night. I could not hear the owls hoot or frogs croak, nor see any signs of my fellow Hunters: twigs snapping, cries echoing, leaves rustling. It was as if we were standing before our father’s gravesite, remembering him.

I rushed to the edge of the clearing, the moonlight showing me the way, my brother not far behind. Once there, I crept behind a large oak and pulled out a satchel hidden by its roots. The pouch contained my Bible, vials of holy water, fresh rosemary, salt, and a musket loaded with silver bullets.

“Patience? Why did you lead me here?” Liam sounded anxious. I could not fault him for that. “Do you seek to distract me from my duties?”

“I intend to give you a set of new orders,” I said, my voice grim. “But first, I must —”
A sweet voice began to sing a lullaby, interrupting me.

“Lullay, mine Liking, my dear, mine Sweeting. Lullay, my sweetheart, mine own dear darling.”

“I didn’t understand what she was saying. We had agreed not to hunt the Beast until we were all accounted for, unless —

“Liam! It’s a trap. Stay here.” I stepped in front of that great oak, keeping its wide trunk at my back, and readied my holy water. There, standing out in the open, was Goody Hodgkins, the same midwife who delivered my own child not two summers past. She was but a shadow, a bloodless pale form, blood dripping from pearl-white fangs, staining her apron. The minister, my friend and fellow Hunter, lay crumpled in a heap in front of her. His wife and newborn babe, too.

“It’s Anne. Brother, she’s…she’s been turned.”

“And the one who performed this great evil?” Liam ignored my warning and snuck up beside me. This was too much for him. I was sure of it. “Is this what you wanted to tell me?”

It was then my worst fears were realized, for my fate was sealed not with a well-timed bullet or a vampire’s fangs deep in my neck, but six words followed by an unholy, high-pitched laugh.

“Patience, of course. She’s a witch.”

Doubting Souls

“Although the most acute judges of the witches and even the witches themselves, were convinced of the guilt of witchery, the guilt nevertheless was non-existent. It is thus with all guilt.”

—Friedrich Nietzsche

Theme: Challenged Beliefs

Though Salem’s townsfolk correctly identified that a supernatural threat lurked on the fringes of their town, they began to blame each other for inexplicable fits, the appearance of cloven hooves on their bare skin, and spontaneous bleeding. These phenomena occurred because they came to understand that the supernatural is not of the invisible world, but the visible. It is this belief that hunters must challenge carefully — or risk being accused of witchcraft themselves.

Hunters who quickly acclimate to the good people of Salem are not exempt from scrutiny, even amongst themselves. This era forces hunters to examine their consciences, their communities, and their feelings about the Vigil. It is a time of great unrest, both for native hunters and for those who immigrated to the Colonies from Europe, and many innocents are at risk.

Mood: Fear of the Unknown

Imagine a doctrine that draws distinct lines between the forces of good and evil, and warns that those entities can manifest in every aspect of a settler’s life. Puritanism takes the idea of the Devil and makes Him real. Does Satan exist? Can this spirit infect a hunter’s soul? Sway an unsuspecting wife to perform great works of evil?

17th Century Hunters
Witches, mystics, seers, vampires, and mages are part and parcel of the World of Darkness. When viewing the supernatural through a modern lens, the hunters of today may have a hard time convincing folks that magic is real. This wasn’t always the case, as the history of the witch trials clearly shows. Here, a Eurocentric history is presented to show that a belief in the supernatural was tangible, visible, prevalent, and prosecutable through a system of duality: God versus the Devil.

The events that occurred in Salem, Massachusetts happened at the tail end of the European witch trials in the midst of great religious, political, and social unrest. The information presented is meant to be used as inspiration for your game, not as fact. Some liberties were taken in order to put the witch trials in the framework of Hunter: The Vigil and to flesh out the time period.

Those are the questions that every cell must come to grips with, for monsters, innocents, and hunters are all at risk of being tried and executed. It is also why most hunters — especially in this time period — may be so tormented that they don’t know who (or what) to believe. Fighting the supernatural is easy. Understanding what’s real and what isn’t in a time period where colonists believe in magic is much, much harder. Throw that up against the Colonial era, the fight for land, and the growing need for independence. Suddenly, a settler’s calm, peaceful way of life has exploded with doubt and uncertainty.

One sincere warning is all it will take before hysteria sets in and innocent people die. That’s enough to frighten any mortal — especially a hunter.

A Charred Past

The word “witchcraft” had been associated with black magic or Satan-worshipping since the early days of the Holy Roman Empire and the publication of Canon Episcopi in 900 BCE. It fell under the umbrella of heresy, a punishable crime, and many were accused, tried, and arrested. The victims included free thinkers, pagan priests and priestesses, town healers, soothsayers, troublesome bishops and priests, midwives, and naturalists. Or, to put it bluntly: Anyone who didn’t believe in the sanctity and authority of the Holy Roman Empire was thought to practice heresy and dabble in the black arts.

A Different Kind of Heresy

The Church’s renewed focus on heresy was, in part, manipulated by vampire hunters. The Cainite Heresy believed that vampires had infiltrated less-populated areas in order to form an army of bloodsuckers that would one day storm and destroy the Vatican. They suspected that vampire blood had been mixed with sacramental wine and fed to villagers throughout Europe. To the Cainites, witches were not the cause of Europe’s ills; they felt the vampires were stirring up trouble for the witches to take the focus off of them. They attempted to use the nascent beginning of the trials to root out suspected vampires and ghouls and stop an epidemic before it started.

The majority of the records describing the conspiracy’s actions from the 13th and 14th centuries can either be found within the Vatican or with certain members of the Lucifuge and the Aegis Kai Doru.
Both the European and American civil witch trials are deeply rooted in the Inquisition, which was formed in 1229. Trials to punish suspected heretics were conducted by approved papal agents, some of whom were devout hunters, and incorporated torture to extract voluntary confessions. Often, it was difficult for the black-clad Inquisitors to obtain an admission of guilt, for most of the accused tried to prove their innocence. Everyone — hunters and witches, innocents and monsters — was at risk of being tried.

Torture devices, like the strappado, the hanging cage, the heretic’s fork, the pear, and the rack, were commonly used in conjunction with an extended stay in solitary confinement. Those who didn’t starve to death committed suicide. Those who didn’t commit suicide were dismembered, disemboweled, and burned. To make matters worse, age didn’t matter; children as young as 12 years old and dying, elderly priests within the Vatican itself were prosecuted.

The transition between the Inquisition and the civil witch trials can be traced to the emergence of new theological beliefs, the papal decrees that followed, and the Church’s growing coffers as the centuries progressed. The Vatican funded the Inquisition by accumulating the property holdings of convicted heretics, which is partly why wealthy nobles were targeted early on. That is, until the Church began accepting handsome bribes from anonymous donors asking the Inquisitors to steer clear of certain estates.

Conspiracies during this time period were hesitant to involve themselves in the trials for fear that they would be deemed heretics and draw the Church’s ire. This first Inquisition, while heavily focused on vampires, mostly swept up innocents and few monsters. Only hunters with a relationship with the Vatican opted to become Inquisitors during this era, simply because these Trials weren’t an effective method for capturing monsters.

Then, in the mid-13th century, the Church formed a second Inquisition, one geared toward finding, collecting, harvesting, and cleansing sorcerers and witches who lurked within the royal halls of Europe. This second, secret Inquisition, which lasted for a single decade, is commonly referred to as the Shadow Purge. It specifically targeted what the Church deemed to be the worst, most monstrous offenders and concentrated its efforts on magic-users. Heretics and other non-desirables were not targeted by the Shadow Purge. The Church’s focus shifted from vampires to witches, and there’s little evidence that shows why this happened. The Shadow Purge was short lived because it evolved and was supplanted by a newly formed and public Inquisition, one that shared its goals and resources.

Satan’s Children Stand Accused
The Lady of Milan knew of the Church’s desire to eradicate heretics, but did not make a move to protect her hunters until the Shadow Purge began. According to documents obtained by the Malleus Maleficarum conspiracy in the 16th century, the Lucifuge’s approach outlined several methods to avoid capture, detection, and suspicion. She spent much of her resources on reconnaissance to pinpoint the location of every Inquisitor in Europe. More surprising, however, was the fact that the Lady reached out to the leaders of the Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild (the name of the Cheiron Group at that time), Aegis Kai Doru, the Cainite Heresy, and the Ascending Ones to propose that they form a new, temporary compact specifically designed to defend hunters from widespread paranoia. The Lucifuge claimed that while *her* hunters were
obviously at risk, any hunter who upheld the Vigil was also in danger of being targeted and eliminated as well.

Though this compact was never created, rumors spread throughout Europe, pressuring hunters to examine their allies closely. While conspiracy leaders may have acted in the best interests of their groups by not joining the compact, some hunters still thought it was a good idea to band together, since innocents were just as likely to be victimized as captured monsters. To others, the Lucifuge and her hunters were abominations. Her hunters may claim to take up the Vigil, but that wasn’t proof the demonic blood flowing through their veins didn’t influence their actions.

The question of what to do about the Lucifuge drove a wedge between European hunters. Groups fractured and formed several, smaller demon-and-witch hunting groups — like the Divine Artificer, a compact intent on killing demons, the Lucifuge, her hunters, and all those suspected to share Satan’s blood.

Backed into a corner, the Lucifuge set up an underground network to hide and relocate any hunter who was at risk of being accused, convicted, or executed. Rescue was effected through the labyrinthine catacombs that once hid practicing Christians from the Romans long ago. The compact overseeing the effort came to be known as the Silent Imperative.

It is said that the Lady of Milan didn’t relax her stance until witchcraft could no longer be tried civilly, both in Europe and in the Americas, for of all the hunters, she had the most to lose.

Silent Imperative

The Silent Imperative quickly took on a life and identity of its own, separate from the Lucifuge. Mireille Debruler, a hunter who operated the French arm of the underground network, led hundreds if not thousands of citizens through the passages and crypts that zig-zag beneath all of Paris, not caring who her charges were, where they hailed from, or what crimes they had committed. When the Plague took hold, the Imperative disbanded, only to reform once again in the American Colonies centuries later.

As for the Lucifuge herself, some hunters believe she relocated with the Silent Imperative’s help until it was safe to return home.

Outer Demon, Inner Witch

Since the days of the pharaoh, demons were thought to be monstrous creatures — mortals could visibly identify a devil by its hooves, horns, wiry beard, wide-spaced eyes, and hooked nose. The Shadow Purge changed this belief and was influenced by the teachings of Thomas Aquinas, who emphasized that humans and demons were indistinguishable from one another, and that all foul deeds are the work of demons in disguise.

Up until that point, witches weren’t automatically associated with the Devil, not even by the hunters who tracked them down. This widespread change in belief, which focused on the idea that a neighbor, friend, lover, or sister could be the physical house for a demon, altered the public’s view of witches permanently. The heavy-handed emphasis on witchcraft shifted the Inquisition’s supernatural focus from bloodsuckers to magick-wielders. Witches were thought to be more dangerous than any other creature— a fact that made many hunters nervous. Was there a master vampire lurking in the Vatican, scheming to misplace blame on witches? Or, was there an even darker creature — a demon or a mummy —riling up the mob? To this day, no one knows for sure.
As the witch trials slowly spilled out into the civil courts, the idea that mortals have no free will affected how suspects were prosecuted. To a king, judge, or jury, it didn’t matter if the witch’s intentions were pure. Any signs of witchcraft, whether the end result was helpful or harmful, were prosecuted the same way — a fact that set many hunters on edge.

This idea definitively lessened the need for civil judges to take the accused’s own testimony into consideration — a practice that held true in the American witch trials centuries later. It meant that the victim’s allies could also be targeted for heresy, because if the accused was a witch, her allies were no doubt in league with the devil, too. Further, any mortal seen associating with a suspected witch, like a hunter, might also be accused.

Tragically Accused
By the 14th century, the belief in witchcraft became so entrenched in a European’s everyday life that the population was ripe for hysteria. When a deadly pandemic called the “Black Death” wiped out 25 to 50 percent of Europe’s population in the late 1340s, believers looked to the Church for answers. Millions died and a burdened populace sought a supernatural reason for their affliction: Witches.

The fear of witchcraft intensified during this time period to an all-time high. In response to this, some hunters openly shared information about the Vigil and took it upon themselves to educate villages about what a witch really looked like. In theory, the practice should have worked to combat the hysteria; however, as the Plague spread, small bits of information were often twisted to the extreme. A witch didn’t have “a” familiar; anyone who had an affinity toward toads, snakes, owls, or cats was likely to be a witch. Black cats, in particular, were deemed to be clear evidence of witchcraft due to their human-like cries for milk during suppertime.

The untimely and inexplicable deaths of over 25 million people had a profound effect on the political and supernatural landscape throughout Europe. The Black Death also impacted social mores, for victims found it difficult to remain “modest” once they fell ill. Everyone’s physical body — rich or poor, male or female, child or elder — was inspected for the plague’s telltale mark, a precursor to the witch’s mark. At the time, even the Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild found it difficult to operate within the moral confines of polite society. No hunter could easily touch a corpse, unless he was burying it, let alone ask a nurse to expose part of a corpse’s naked body. Not being able to touch a corpse was a problem for hunters, and the population of bloodsuckers increased as a result.

The scrutiny for signs of the plague had an impact on the witch trials as well, for the practice coincided with popular superstition and led to future examinations of moles, warts, birthmarks, genitalia, chests, teeth, and toes. In many ways, the Black Death amplified the belief that the damned not only walk among humankind, they mimic mortals to do the devil’s work.

Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild
Since its inception in pre-Roman times, the Cheiron Group has had many faces and names throughout the ages. While the group’s mission remained shrouded in mystery, the organization’s leaders often molded Cheiron’s public face to avoid suspicion and blend in.

During the Middle Ages, Cheiron’s headquarters were located in the south of France. The conspiracy was referred to as the Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild, a title that served them well. The Acheron Guild, which was represented by a mermaid holding a trident, began as a fleet of ships primarily used for transport and trade. The conspiracy found that this guise gave it and
its hunters the mobility required to travel from one destination to another and avoid undue amounts of scrutiny. Some hunters took up sailing and traveled widely; others targeted monsters who fled to Europe’s docks, harbors, and bays until the Inquisition subsided.

At the time, the Acheron Shipping and Trading Guild had a long-term goal: Pull hunters back into the shadows and combat the public’s view of the supernatural. A population that believes magic is real was (and is) much more dangerous than one that believes it doesn’t. Some conspiracies, like the Malleus Maleficarum and the Aegis Kai Doru, are convinced that Acheron intentionally triggered the Black Death to wipe the slate clean. By the time the Black Death was in full swing, Acheron had protocols and resources in place to deal with the outbreak, and left Europe behind in favor of the West Indies and the Americas. Of all the hunter groups, Acheron suffered the fewest losses.

Needless to say, this strategy put Acheron at odds with other hunters. After all, Acheron had no qualms about letting innocents die, but once the Church actively thwarted its plans and attempted to infiltrate its holdings, the company’s leaders acted quickly and decisively.

Active hunters living in the 17th century have a very distinct, if not fractured, view of the Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild and its activities during this time period. By the time the American witch trials began, the Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild was all but a distant memory, for the conspiracy changed names and outward-facing occupations several times over to better fit the colonists’ needs.

The Hammer Swings

In the Middle Ages, the public’s belief in witchcraft was fervent. The trials themselves were varied and didn’t involve public executions until the Malleus Maleficarum was published in 1487.

One of the most important inventions during this time period was the movable type printing press in 1450. Without it, the Malleus Maleficarum would never have been distributed in such large numbers — and neither would Cotton Mather’s Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions in the Americas almost 200 years later. Though movable type was not a new invention, having been developed in China almost 325 years earlier, Gutenberg’s printing press allowed for the manufacture of millions of copies of books, which were then widely distributed throughout Europe.

Ironically, the Malleus Maleficarum was extremely popular and its contents influenced all witch trials going forward. The book also pitted priest against priest, for though the Church publicly denounced the Hammer of Witches, the tome’s popularity had an impact on Inquisitors and hunters throughout Europe, many of whom cautioned relying on its methodology.

Malleus Maleficarum

The group named the Malleus Maleficarum existed in a proto-form for decades prior to its official inception in 1567. Founded by a minor bishop named Ambrogio Baudolino, the formation of the Malleus Maleficarum was done in secret with a simple goal: to hunt vampires and demons. During the witch trials, the conspiracy spent most of its time honing its effectiveness. Baudolino was convinced that vampires were too smart to get caught up in the witch trials, and demons likely knew how to avoid the tactics hunters used to trap them.
Instead of testing God’s might on accused witches, Baudolino searched for other hunter groups in Italy in the hopes that a more experienced cell might have captured one of the damned. Much to his surprise, Baudolino did manage to find a demon — the Lady of Milan.

The nature of the bishop’s relationship with the Lucifuge is a secret kept between the two of them. One thing is clear, however: the Lady helped Baudolino secure a vampire to test his Benedictions. In exchange, The Lucifuge revealed valuable information about the Shadow Purge and shared her worries about the witch trials and their impact on the Vigil. Hunters who have studied the secret history of the witch trials assume that the Maleficarum’s nickname, Shadow Congregation, originates from that period.

Though witch trials occurred prior to the publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, this book altered the frequency of accusations and how witches were punished. Over 90 percent of those accused of witchcraft were female, following the publication of that book. To this day, it is unclear why the author chose to target women or what he hoped to gain by imprisoning and executing them. In Russia and Scandinavia, where perhaps the book’s grasp was not as firm, men were accused in greater numbers than elsewhere in Europe.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, citizens were swept up in a new “witch fever” and used the *Malleus Maleficarum* as justification for killing unwanted neighbors, unpopular townsfolk, and rejected lovers. Hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women, and children died over the course of 400 years all across Europe; this figure includes family-based casualties caused by the accused’s extended stay in prison. Of this number, it’s impossible to pinpoint how many monsters were tried and killed. Some hunters believe as few as 10 percent were actually guilty; others think it was high as 30. The one thing all hunters could agree upon was that the Trials were not an effective way to hunt. The cost was too high.

While witches were being burned, many European hunters, nobles, priests, and villagers examined their faiths and begged for the hysteria to end. These efforts included a sequence of events commonly referred to as the English and Protestant Reformations. Both led to England’s break-away from the Vatican and the eventual creation of the Puritan religion in the 16th century.

Hunters often felt the world around them was crumbling in ways they could not control. While the Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild prospered, other conspiracies and compacts operating in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries were overwhelmed. Torn between the Vigil, the Church, and their loyalty to the Crown, hunters struggled to make sense of it all — especially those accused of witchcraft. Witch trials were a common, everyday occurrence with a deep impact on hunters. There was no escape. For an over-zealous Inquisitor, there was no difference between a member of the Aegis Kai Doru’s pursuit of magical artifacts and a witch who created a relic. Both were equally guilty — a fact that tore through many compacts and conspiracies, forming tenuous alliances like the Silent Imperative, ushering in an era of great mistrust among hunters. Still, this did not deter all hunters from taking up the mantle of the Inquisitor. Many did. To some, it was easier to hunt in a world where morality was black-and-white, even though the truth is that living in the World of Darkness isn’t that clear cut.

While individual hunters could always choose where they wanted to live, every compact and conspiracy either avoided Europe or became entrenched in politics during the height of the trials. The Ascending Ones and the Aegis Kai Doru were both notably absent during the 17th century,
and the aforementioned Lucifuge went into hiding. While the Lucifuge’s actions were thought to be wholly understandable, the Ascending Ones set an example for the rest of the world, and other, non-European based groups followed their lead.

Avoiding Suspicion

The Aegis Kai Doru and the Ascending Ones were both aware of the events taking place in Europe and chose not to actively participate in them. It’s not clear why, but the Aegis Kai Doru actively recruited hunters in Spain and launched an expedition to Central and South America to avoid the Inquisition altogether. Some believe they were after the Fountain of Youth. Others believe the Aegis Kai Doru got their hands on a prophecy that predicted the fall of the Aztec and Mayan civilizations. Whatever the resources, their European numbers were few and far between from the 14th to the 17th centuries.

The Ascending Ones, on the other hand, had been swept up by the Ottoman Empire. Most of the group’s members were on the front lines of several skirmishes between vampires and the undying’s cults. Though few members of the Cult of the Phoenix did watch the events in Europe closely, they believed the witch trials were a fight they couldn’t win. To them, the trials had nothing to do with the supernatural and were a political excuse to target and fracture Christians. That, coupled with a growing fear of foreigners, forced the Ascending Ones to focus on self-preservation until the time was right for them to rejoin European society.

From the late 15th century up until the early 18th, witches were as commonly prosecuted as thieves. These trials were legal under the Holy Roman Empire’s rule, which lasted from 962 until 1806, and had also been prosecuted under civil law or royal decree at various times. Historians cite that the largest frequency of European witch trials took place in a 20-year period from 1610 to 1630 — 60 to 80 years prior to what happened in Salem. Though King Louis XIV put an end to witchcraft trials in France in the year 1682, another bout of testimonies and executions occurred throughout Germany during the 1660s.

New World, New Trials

The European witch trials were the twisted inspiration for the trials in the New World. It shouldn’t be surprising that the practice of accusing and prosecuting witches also occurred in the Colonies, for those who immigrated to the New World brought their Old World beliefs with them — along with monsters hitching a ride in the belly of their ships. There are well over a dozen cases on record from 1647 up through 1688, taking place in Boston, Hartford, Cambridge, and Fairfield. In 1647, for example, Alice Young was the first to be hanged for witchcraft. Years later, her daughter was also accused of the same crime. For the most part, these cases ended similarly to those tried overseas. Hunters were involved each time; not one of the trials correctly identified a monster.

The winds of change blew through the 17th century in the form of the Reformations, civil wars, and royal decrees. Unhappy Europeans from every country crossed the Atlantic Ocean to the New World, and hunters followed suit. Some abandoned their existing groups and struck out on their own, to conduct their Vigils in their own ways. Others, like the Knights of Saint George, were deeply convinced that witches had infiltrated hunter cells and investigated other hunters to
ensure their ranks were pure. No hunter, no cell, no compact, no conspiracy was immune to the far-reaching impact the European witch trials had on the Vigil — an effect that culminated in the events that occurred in Salem, Massachusetts.

The Salem Witch Trials were not the first such cases to be heard on New England’s soil, nor were they the last. What happened in puritanical Salem, however, secured its place in recorded history.

Naumkeag

Salem was originally named Naumkeag. The first settlers were a European company of fishermen in 1626 on the remains of an ancient Native American trading community near the mouth of a river. Located in what would eventually be known as the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the area north of Plymouth Colony, Salem was surrounded by traders, trappers, militia, and several Algonquin-speaking tribes including the Wampanoag, Pequot, Nipmuck, Massachusetts, and remaining Naumkeag people.

At this point in history, most tribes like the Mi’kmaq and Passamaquoddy were familiar with strangers arriving on the shores of their land, for they had already met the first non-native hunters a few centuries prior and introduced them to beings like Tsi-Noo the Soul Eater and Ne Hwas the Sea Maiden.

A Model Puritan

To be a good Puritan, you must believe that your corporeal body houses a spirit devoted to God. Your relationship to the Divine flows into every aspect of your life, including your marriage. The husband represents the male aspect of God and speaks with authority to watch over his family and guide them on spiritual matters. Women, on the other hand, focus on the material needs of the house as obedient caretakers and humble life-givers. Children have a special relationship with God and should get closer to Him through education and obedience.

You avoid alcoholism and extramarital sex, in part because you’d be publicly humiliated for your crimes. You don’t celebrate Christmas, birthdays, or any other holiday. You don’t attend or host gatherings that include idle activities involving games and theatrical performances, either.

If you find any one of your fellow Puritans engaging in undesirable acts, it is your duty to report him to your leader. While you strive to be humble and live a simple life, you do believe in the Devil and pray to thwart His influence at every turn, in yourself, your family members, and others.

To the People, the European settlers who came to Salem Town were strange and unlike the hunters who had come before. These folk believed in the Devil but didn’t know how to track, capture, contain, or kill what they claimed they feared, as early settlers weren’t equipped to hunt the supernatural. They specialized in certain trades like candle making, cobbling, or baking, but had no knowledge of the difference between a poisonous berry and an edible one. As a result, many tribal leaders took pity on the new arrivals, and believed the Puritans might not survive their first winter — considering their hunters were already aware of the monsters that stalked them in the night.
Though the Puritans did not have support from the Crown, those who left England behind were members of the gentry and sought the New World to live free from religious persecution. Among them were hunters who had also abandoned the British Isles for various reasons. Some thought it was their duty to uphold the Vigil while keeping watch over their fellow Puritans. Others tired of the internal disagreements that had continued to fracture the various Hunter groups and hoped to escape them by putting miles of ocean between the New World and the Old.

Unfortunately, some hunters found themselves in over their heads. Not only were the Colonies barely habitable, but new monsters lurked to prey on them, too. Early life in Salem Town was incredibly difficult due to a lack of manufacturing and trade in the area. Trade was a viable economy and seafarers as far away as the West Indies and the British Isles sailed to the shores of Salem Town to do business with the locals as they had with the New years before.

Local tribes taught the Europeans how to survive by planting variable crops, fishing the coasts and rivers, trapping furbearing animals, and hunting game. Local hunters shared knowledge with their European counterparts, and cells formed out of necessity as once-foreign monsters attempted to take hold in the area.

At first, Puritans treated the tribes respectfully — provided the natives were willing to learn Puritan ways. The tribes, on the other hand, became increasingly wary of the settlers, for they suffered heavy losses from strange illnesses, diseases, and the never-before-seen monsters that the settlers unwittingly brought with them.

These losses, combined with a cultural clash between the two groups, led to several skirmishes and an all-out war that devastated the local population.

**Warring Factions**

Salem forged its own destiny in the 1670s despite the outbreak of war. Salem Village officially broke off from Salem Town in 1672. The French moved further inland to explore and expand new territories, while the Dutch battled for possession of New York, and the Puritans fought in Metacomet’s War against Wampanoags.

Metacomet, who was also referred to as King Philip, led an uprising to stop colonial expansion. Several towns were either razed to the ground or severely damaged in the conflict — with the exception of Salem Town. By the end of the conflict, the local economy had been destroyed. The surrounding tribes had been wiped out by disease, sold into slavery, killed in the war, executed as war criminals, or converted to Christianity and relocated to what were known as “praying towns.”

Puritan-led praying towns were formed between the 1640s and 1670s and converted surrounding tribes, slowly indoctrinating them into colonial society. Membership was voluntary throughout the dozen towns located in the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies. While the population of these towns waxed and waned, local tribespeople primarily sought refuge to avoid the fighting and get access to Western medicines. Frontiersmen of the period, most notably trappers and survivalists, have a different view of the praying towns. They believe that the Puritans were trying to increase their ranks in anticipation of a new migration to the colonies and the threat of war. The Society of Friends, otherwise known as the Quakers, was experiencing the same harsh treatment in England as the Puritans once did. What’s more, there were rumblings of growing tensions between France and England, a fact that did not go unnoticed by the Puritans who still had ties to their homeland.
Charges Levied

It has been brought to my attention that several new arrivals to Deer Island have failed to take on a more civilized appearance befitting a proper Englishman or woman. While your argument is valid, that our strength would be greater if we were to spread out among the Natives, I cannot ignore the fact that as many as three women were spotted without a blouse to speak of.

I’m not sure what you wish to gain by respecting the local tribes for their way of life. Your sympathies lead me to believe that your allegiance to this community may be in question. If that’s the case, then I suggest you go and live among the Wampanoag. I am quite certain they’d be happy to take you.

Let me return to the matter at hand. As I understand it, the newest members have already begun to either teach or learn a trade for the betterment of all. I order you to pay them, minus a fee for their indiscretions for the following:

Public idleness, five shillings

Sex out of wedlock, five shillings

Wife beating, five shillings and time in the stocks

Loose, uncut or unstyled hair, five shillings

Speaking a native tongue, one shilling

Frontal nudity, two shillings

Eating with hands, four shillings

Once the list of requirements is made clear, begin charging them for flour, fresh eggs, and cured meats. Show them how their obedience will earn them food on their tables, warm beds at night, and the safety our town can offer them.

Yours in Peace,

Reverend Makepeace

My Dear Reverend,
I see your reasoning and it is sound. Certainly, Deer Island is much more secure with the whole of Boston to protect it than those unfortunate communities to the North. I am curious as to why you chose to discuss the matter of Deer Island but did not respond to my inquiries regarding the horrors lurking northeast of Salem Town.

To this day, I am surprised that Salem Town has rejected my proposal to build a praying town close to its borders. Mark my words, one day I believe Salem Town’s ignorance will end in tragedy. Certainly, their conflict with Salem Village will spill out into the surrounding area, but that is not what I am referring to. The Town’s strange, insulated manner confuses and worries me. Are they becoming Separatists after all? Is there some dark force manipulating the good people there?

I will heed your request, but I urge you to think carefully about what I’ve said. If you will not authorize an investigation, I fear that I must put the others on high alert. I do not believe in prophecies, either, but I do trust that God blessed me with eyes to See and a brain to tell fact from fiction. Isn’t that why you value my foresight? Because you understand that God speaks through me just as easily as He would a burning bush? One day soon, we will all turn our heads toward Salem. I pray when that day comes, we will be vigilant and true in our actions, may they be swift and for God’s glory.

Yours in Faith,
Felicity Sykes

In the aftermath of Metacomet’s War, the Puritans felt that the skirmishes they participated in were a precursor to a series of much larger conflicts. Salem-area residents reacted poorly to the destruction caused, in their minds, by the very people they had tried to help, and looked to the Bible for answers to find peace. Like the survivors of the Black Plague, these settlers sought a sign, found one in the heavens —the Great Comet of 1680. They renewed their faith by taking a stricter approach to daily life despite the existing laws against non-conformists at the time. Praying towns were abandoned, English and religious customs were reinforced, and new settlers, like Reverend Samuel Parris and his family, were welcomed from respectable cities like Boston.

Chosen vs. Unchosen
Life for a 1690s Colonial Puritan revolved around the rhythm of the seasons and strict religious practices. Most Puritans were farmers who considered themselves
Chosen, led by a Minister who interpreted God’s voice for them. Anyone who lived among the Puritans, but did not take up their faith, was considered to be Unchosen. Severe punishment was meted out for all manner of crimes — including public executions for adultery or, in some cases, swearing.

A non-Puritan hunter is at greatest risk of being punished for a crime she did not commit; it will be difficult to uphold the Vigil and the rigors of a Puritan’s daily life equally well. Unchosen hunters, people who live in the community but do not follow the mandate of Puritanical beliefs to the letter, are treated with suspicion and mistrust. Unfortunately, anyone who is not a Chosen member of the community isn’t taken as seriously as those who are, even if that individual has proven herself to be trustworthy in the past.

The cultural and economic upheaval caused by Metacomet’s War has had a profound impact on hunter groups as well. The easiest post hunters could manage was within the rank and file of local militia or traders. Since the roles of both men and women were clearly defined, leading Puritans questioned anyone who wasn’t “doing their duty” for fear that their own citizens would be sympathetic to opposing forces. As a result, Puritan hunters living in Salem find it difficult to communicate and do business with local tribes after the war.

Native hunters are just as conflicted, and are dismayed that racial and cultural tensions are running high. After all, it’s much easier to trap a witch or a vampire if hunters put the Vigil before local politics. Many native hunters who live in the area believe that European hunters are corrupt and dangerous. They, too, feel that trust has to be earned. Groups fracture into homogenous communities, while hunters who had previously reached out to tribes and settlers may find their relationships are strained. Perhaps the greatest impact Metacomet’s war had on the Vigil was that Catholic hunters are now more likely to hunt with other Catholics, English with English, French with French, and Nipmuc with Nipmuc. This tendency has not gone unnoticed by their supernatural prey and, in many ways, is working against hunters.

Because commoners fully accept that the supernatural is real and a constant threat, hunters will find they have a much easier time rousing the Puritans to destroy monsters or ostracize “outsiders” and “Satan worshippers” with relative ease — provided they can earn their trust. Since native tribes already knew that supernatural threats existed, hunters will find allies among the People too, if tribal hunters can convince their elders that outsiders uphold the Vigil, too.

Post-war unrest, a persistent belief in the supernatural, and a hierarchal approach to local politics, led to the Salem Witch Trial hysteria. All that was needed to stoke the fires of hysteria, was a smoking flintlock.

A Murky Future

Though the Trials officially began in 1692, Ann Glover was accused and convicted of witchcraft in Boston four years earlier. This trial is significant for its timing and the people involved. Cotton Mather, a witchcraft trial historian and Puritan Minister, harbored the accuser in his home afterward and published Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions in 1689. That book, which sat on the shelves of many Puritans in Salem Village, breathed life into the witch trials. It gave them a contemporary face that reaffirmed their faith in the supernatural and the legal methods they used to combat witchcraft.
Saint Agnes Eve

Though demon-worshipping and black magic were forbidden, certain forms of divination were common among the Puritans and tied them to their British ancestry. On the Eve of Saint Agnes, rites were performed to help an English girl obtain a vision of her future husband. These rites included baking a “dumb cake,” walking backward to bed, and invoking St. Agnes by sprinkling holy water mixed with rosemary, thyme, and basil under the girl’s pillow.

The residents of Salem most likely said a prayer to Saint Agnes and made a dumb cake in recognition of the holiday. The confection was so named because it required the baker to mix an unusual list of varying sweet and savory materials, in total silence. The baker, or the unwedded, would then eat and dream that night of her future beloved.

The Salem Witch Trials have a profound impact on the Massachusetts Bay Colony as a whole, in part because Salem is considered to be a capital of the colony. Hunters may or may not realize that fighting amongst themselves better serves their enemy than their cause. Some groups will never trust each other again. Others will declare war on hunters deemed not pure enough, not vigilant enough, because they use sorcery to catch monsters.

While many Puritans continue to be swept up in matters of politics, land ownership, and faith, hunters in the area have another challenge to deal with: the Shadow Court led by the Knights of Saint George. An ancient order, the Knights of Saint George are gathering their forces in Ipswich to conduct trials similar to the Salem Witch Trials in Salem Town. These trials, which are commonly referred to as the Shadow Trials, reflect the same attitudes of the Shadow Purge centuries ago.

I am sorry my darling, but I fear I will not make it home for Magda’s christening. I know not why these godly Knights, so far from home, would attack our kind and treat us as if we were Damned. I must warn you of what’s to come, for as I write this, I sail for Ireland and leave this madness behind me.

First, a confession, for I have sinned against God and abandoned the Vigil. I have received help from a vampire who took pity on me in my hour of need and, in turn, I helped her by giving her my precious blood to survive. You must understand, darling, I had no choice. There were as many as four Knights who captured, imprisoned, and tortured me. First, to verify that I was not a supernatural spy working for the Devil. Then, to see if I was truly worthy of the Vigil according to the rules of their order. Can you imagine? Their order?

I do not know if the Lady in Milan is aware of this new development, nor do I know if others will come to our aid. I cannot apologize enough for abandoning you here.
I have not betrayed your true nature, either, darling. I leave now so that you might walk free, so that you might save yourself from the terrors of the Shadow Court and find refuge in forests and trees.

Enclosed is a small sum to help you in your travels. If you find all roads closed to you, even after you beg the natives for mercy, then go to the great oak where we first met. At sundown, slice open your hand and mark the tree with your sacrifice. Do not be alarmed by what comes, for the vampire who will greet you seeks an unholy alliance. Darling, I beg of you to remember this: there is nothing in the Colonies that frightens me more than the Knights. Survive, return to me, and we will seek atonement for the rest of our lives. Die, and the Lady will cry tears of blood.

Several towns within the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which existed from 1630 through 1691, are involved in the Witch Trials including: Salem Town, Salem Village, Ipswich, Andover, Topsfield, Boston, and Wells in Maine. In 1691, the Province of Massachusetts Bay merged a much larger area into one region. Plymouth Colony, Nantucket, Martha’s Vineyard, Nova Scotia, and the Province of Maine fell into the new territory. The Witch Trials and accusations themselves took place from January through October 1692, beginning in Salem Village, and were heard by a special Court that convened in June.

At the same time the Salem Witch Trials are happening, the Shadow Court is beginning its investigation in the same region. Its mission: to verify a hunter’s ability to uphold the Vigil — regardless of association or identity — and root out hunters, native or not, suspected of using witchcraft. Though many Knights are devout and have different views on faith, the hunters who created the Shadow Court have a unified view and seek to uphold that belief. Any hunter, whether they belong to the Knights or not, may petition to act on behalf of the Shadow Trial in some “legal” capacity.

Though the witch trials began in Salem Village and Salem Town, once their jails were filled the surrounding towns, like Ipswich, were caught up in the hysteria as well. Both Ipswich and Boston, which is notable for its size, sophistication, and influence on the area, are also outlined here.

**Salem Town**

Salem Town has a long history stretching back centuries. The settlement was originally named “Naumkeag,” or “Fishing Place.” A few years later, the area took on a new name, Salem, which was the English spelling of the Hebrew word “Shalom” for peace.

The town is politically connected to Salem Village, which lies at the northern edge of Salem Town, but is also financially independent and a key trading post in the era. In 1692, the population of Salem Town is approximately 2,200, compared with 500 in the agriculturally-based Salem Village. The differences between the Town and Village aren’t just economic, however: the Village has a set of beliefs that that diverge from those in Salem Town.
A 17th-Century Chronicle

Before running a chronicle, Storytellers should talk to players about what matters to them. Hunting monsters during this time period is challenging — and a lack of high-powered weapons is only the start of a player’s problems. Adding social and political conflict on top of the hunt may frustrate players and make them feel inadequate. You can avoid that by asking good questions.

The key to planning a historical-era game is to leverage what the players want to explore against what happened in the World of Darkness. The generalities presented here are meant to give you a feel for the time period. If a player wants to fill the shoes of a swashbuckling pirate, then throw Boston Harbor and its islands at her. If a player hopes to step up as a local Judge, introduce him to the Shadow Court. If a player wants to skirt Salem entirely and head for the frontier, give him the chance to meet up with the new compact, Les Voyageurs.

The local mystery is the witch trials, but there are more stories to be found during this time period in and around Salem. Plot your chronicle accordingly.

Foreign hunters hoping to do business with Salem Town will have a much easier time than if they were to wander off in Salem Village. Salem Town is more worldly. The Town’s permanent residents are used to dealing with travelers, traders, and trappers hailing from the British West Indies and the British Isles, as well as Spain, the Netherlands, India, and China.

More services can also be found within Salem Town than the smaller, provincial Salem Village. These include pragmatic trades like carpentry and metalworking as well as labors related to certain vanities like paintings and flowers. It should also be noted here that slavery and indentured servitude are legal and many people, hailing from a variety of backgrounds, are members of the servant class. The wealthier settlers, including the local Minister, commonly buy slaves or the debts of young European immigrants. Thus, the demographics in Salem Town change depending on the day, and it is not uncommon to interact with a sailor or an Algonquin speaker.

Generally speaking, the town had not suffered much economic hardship until the war with Metacomet. In the aftermath of that conflict, the wealth of local citizens was greatly affected because of the laws and their impact on widows and widowers, Chosen and Unchosen, native and non-native. Unlike some local towns, Salem Town and Salem Village were spared from total destruction. Both barely tolerate the presence of local tribes, and regard them with suspicion due to recent events.

Locations

Salem Bed and Breakfast

Located near the edge of town, Salem Bed and Breakfast is open to all travelers who can pay for their lodgings. A sign out front, painted with a bed and a loaf of bread, invites wayfarers in for the night. The locals tolerate the establishment’s owner, the recently widowed Prudence Winters, but question why she’s closed herself off. The truth to anyone with eyes to see is quite clear: Business has been booming and the Widow is short-handed, assisted only by her teenage boys Philip and Samuel. A frequently trafficked area, customers are loyal to the Widow and her family — which is why some traders passing through prefer to camp out in the woods at night. Those who stay here for too long find themselves wrapped in local gossip.
General Supply Store

All raw materials in Salem Town are sold through the General Supply Store. Its wares are plentiful and fresh, arriving weekly from Boston’s harbor. Goods include lanterns, lye, nails, tobacco, tea, cured hams, salt, tools, plain cloth, crockery, and more. While the General Store does have a variety of dry goods, all inventory must be approved by the local Council in accordance with Puritan beliefs. Alcohol, certain foodstuffs, silks, jewelry, and other finery are not available in this store, but they may be found in larger cities like Boston. However, local goods from neighboring farms may also be found here and, if needed, repaired at an additional cost. The General Store is owned by a local merchant family named Willoughsby. Though James, Sr. and his family are wealthy, which is a sin to some within the community, they are in good standing with the Church partly due to their generous, weekly donations.

Watering Hole

The public consumption of alcohol is frowned upon in Salem Town, but that hasn’t stopped residents from “stealing” a sip at the local watering hole. Run by an old fisherman named William “One-Eye” Easton and his wife Mary, the watering hole is a shack connected to the couple’s main house. Mary, who hails from the Canary Islands, tends to her customers by day and William at night. Local Ministers have been trying to shut down the tavern for years, but as long as One-Eye keeps sweet wine, ale, and rum in stock, the Church’ll have a hard time of it. Like the Salem Bed and Breakfast, the Eastons attract a lot of travelers, once they can find the place. In polite company, most Town and Village residents won’t mention where thirsty passersby can sample the local ale.

Bit Players

Town Drunk

Albert Little was a respectable Puritan, a model Chosen, until he took up arms against Metacomet in the war. When he returned to his home on the outskirts of town — minus a leg — Little found his wife and newborn child dead. Accused of their murder, Little was eventually freed after a long and confusing trial. Unfortunately, to cover the costs of his imprisonment and trial, his home was confiscated and Little was left penniless. His disability, coupled with the loss of his wife, has left him with few options. Now, Albert sells information to strangers and spends his nights drinking at the Eastons. He is a staple in the town who, despite his near-constant state of drunkenness, has a remarkable memory. With a little prodding, Albert will reveal intimate details about anyone in town — much to the chagrin of those folk who wish to keep their secrets.

Streetwise (Salem) 3, Survival 1, Larceny 2

Experienced Scout

Jacques DuFour, who sailed from France nine years ago, lives in a log cabin just outside of town. A skilled hunter and trapper, DuFour has traveled far into Canada. Unlike Salem Town’s residents, DuFour has a mutually beneficial relationship with several Algonquin-speaking tribes in the area (like the Nipmuc). In exchange for furs and other crafts, DuFour supplies tribes with information about his clients and the Westerners who call Naumkeag home.

DuFour makes a modest income off the “English” by guiding travelers through preferred trade routes. He’s an experienced scout who only speaks when necessary. The locals believe DuFour is bewitched, for he never falls ill and has never had an accident. While no one has been able to
verify the rumors, DuFour has seen and heard more than he’s willing to share with superstitious townsfolk. **Survival 3, Weaponry 3, Crafts (Traps) 2**

**Superstitious Midwife**

Goody Ainsworth is an older woman who trained as a midwife in Yorkshire. Though she acts and dresses in accordance with Puritan beliefs, the midwife has not abandoned her heritage and unconsciously practices English folk traditions on a regular basis. These customs, which range from decorating maypoles to recounting tales of Jack-in-Irons and Jenny Greenteeth, have put her at odds with many of the sterner townsfolk.

While she is superstitious, Goody Ainsworth believes herself to be a devout Puritan and a pillar of the community. She knows everyone in town and makes it a point to introduce herself to strangers when she can. Despite her being labeled a busybody, Goody Ainsworth can keep a secret as she’s shown on a few occasions. **Occult (Folk Traditions) 2, Socialize 3, Medicine 2**

**Salem Village**

Salem Village is, for the most part, separate from Salem Town both in finances and in belief. It is considered to be an agricultural suburb when compared to the older, more well-established town and it is striving to become autonomous. The villagers’ interpretations of the supernatural — a blend of Christian and folk beliefs — have caused considerable strife and a rift within the population. If Salem Town is full of Puritans who take an orthodox approach to their religion, Salem Village has emphasized an aspect of that dogma and spun it out of proportion. Working in the fields all day, farmers attribute every natural disaster to the Devil and spend hours cleansing their crops with holy water, hoping that unseasonable blights and hardened pests will disappear with prayer.

The first accusation of witchcraft originated not from two Salem Village girls, but from their doctor, who confirmed that their physical afflictions had been caused by the supernatural. Many Bostonians believe that if the doctor had caught on to the girls’ play-acting, the Trials would never have begun.

Puritans here are hypercritical of those who live in the town, and believe that Salem Town’s residents have grown too tolerant of outsiders. In many ways, there are two Puritan-related factions living a few short miles from one another. Hunters should note that there is a heavy emphasis on Puritanical dogma in the area. Long-term residents are required and encouraged to choose which Church they’d prefer. Anyone who’s Unchosen is treated like an outsider.

**Locations**

**Miller’s Farm**

Nestled between two other homesteads, Miller’s Farm consists of a two-story house, a trio of fields bordered by picket fences, and a nearby forest that provides natural shade and a local hunting ground. The Miller’s farmhouse is a modest home built against the treeline with a small garden out back. Goody Miller can either be found tending her flowers, or out in the forest with her daughter Hope gathering nuts, apples, and berries. Daniel Miller and the couple’s four sons, Jacob, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Esau, work the fields.

The farm is a recent addition to Salem Village and its well-tended fields are always green — a fact that has made some of the other villagers jealous. Late at night, the villagers claim blue witch-lights can be seen floating over the crops. Spooky cries from the nearby forest can also be
heard as the Devil makes his way through the Miller’s fields, blowing on a trumpet, calling all nearby witches to his side.

**Witch Caves**

Deep in the forests near Miller’s Farm lies an ancient network of underground tunnels once occupied by native tribes centuries ago. The tunnels have been since used by hunters and trappers seeking shelter for the night — provided they can stomach the grisly sight of bloody handprints on its walls and bones strewn across the floor. Strange, indecipherable glyphs are carved deep into the ceiling. When the moon is full, these figures glow bright red.

Superstitious locals have named this “natural” formation the “Witch Caves.” Salem residents believe that witches seeking to avoid God’s judgment fly here to the Devil’s side to beg for His unholy protection. Most steer clear of the area to avoid being accused of witchcraft. The absence of humans in and around the Witch Caves has allowed the forest to take over, but even the squirrels and robins won’t venture here at night.

**Gallows Hill**

The grisly witchcraft trials end not with a cleansing or prayer vigil, but excommunication and death. Witches are put on display in the courts, their bodies shaved and inspected for witch’s marks. They are then tossed in jail to await the judge’s decision. After sentencing, witches are stripped of all their possessions and publicly marched to Gallows Hill to be hung at midday under the full light of the sun. Three gallows were dug into the hill overlooking the village square. Since the gallows were first built, over 60 villagers have been hung for crimes ranging from adultery to theft. Gallows Hill, which is an unremarkable patch of land, is now thought to be haunted. The Minister often visits the gallows to bless the wood in an attempt to remove whatever taint plagues the area.

**Bit Players**

**Carpenter**

The village carpenter is a Dutch man named Felix Aiken. His house, which is located next to the village church, is larger and more elaborate than the Minister’s home. He and his partner, Johannes, repair and build barns, fences, churches, and homes in Salem Town and Village. Their services are in high demand and their counsel is often sought in matters of architecture and local affairs. Of all the village folk, Aiken has the strongest connection to other merchants in the area.

Felix Aiken is a bachelor who has yet to take a wife. A pragmatic man, Aiken will listen to reason and steers clear of rumors when he can. He feels that publicly chiming in to either accuse or support any suspects will affect the health of his business. Instead, he seeks to help Salem Town and Village by encouraging newcomers to visit the fine homes, community centers, and stores he builds. **Crafts (Carpentry) 4, Brawl 2, Persuasion 2**

**Farmer’s Daughter**

Felicity Mansforth is a 16-year-old girl who lives with her parents, two siblings, and five cats on the Mansforth family farm. When she’s not gardening, sewing, or reading, Felicity takes to the woods behind Miller’s Farm. Her friend, Tenacious, chides her for spending too much time among the trees — and that rumor is beginning to spread. Tenacious is a fanciful girl, curious about English folklore, and prone to gossip. She is jealous that Felicity’s parents have allowed her to read books other than the Bible, for hers are a lot stricter.
Felicity found a naturalist’s guide in the Minister’s library and is secretly teaching herself to identify local herbs and wildlife. Her dream is to become a healer, and she feels that the names of plants and their uses is the best place to start. Recently, her mother warned her to abandon this desire, and her pet cats, for fear that villagers will accuse her of being a “white witch” — a crime still punishable by death. **Survival 2, Academics 2, Medicine (Herbs) 1**

**Night Watchman**

Throughout the Colonies, a strict curfew is enforced after the sun sets. The only resident permitted to be outside after dark is the night watchman. For Salem Village, that man is Job Caldwell, a veteran frontiersman and excellent lookout. Job is tasked with protecting the town at night by ensuring the villagers remain indoors, being on the lookout for n’er-do-wells, and watching for signs of an attack, storm, or fire.

Salem Village has also tasked Job with duties befitting a town crier. Job is not allowed to sleep until the curfew is lifted; to ensure that he remains awake, the night watchman must call out the time at hourly and semi-hourly intervals. He’ll also report news that cannot wait until morning, like inclement weather or a runaway horse. He may temporarily lift a curfew should the need arise. **Firearms (Rifle) 2, Investigation 3, Survival 1**

**Ipswich**

Established in 1634, Ipswich, Massachusetts lies approximately 15 miles North of Salem along the banks of the Ipswich River. Like Salem Town, the area was re-settled and re-named, first from Wonnesquamsauke to a new spelling, Agawam, and eventually to Ipswich. This town is significant because of its similarities to Salem Town, and the wildly divergent paths both took. Pioneers from Ipswich share the same economic wealth as those who hail from Salem Town. Both towns boast of diverse communities, the same types of commerce, and Puritanical beliefs. That’s where their similarities end, however, for Ipswich is primarily an agricultural center with a heavy concentration of Irish immigrants who grow corn, wheat, barley, and flax. Ipswich’s population is about half that of Salem Town’s and, though it is smaller, the community is not as superstitious as Salem.

Knights of Saint George

The Knights of Saint George is a hunter-based faction within the Church of England. It has been active in the Colonies since the late 1500s. Far removed from their European counterparts, Knights living on this continent have spent a hundred years classifying, tracking, and hunting down the supernatural. To spread out over larger territories, the Knights took a naturalist’s approach and splintered into small cells of five to eight members, partnering with like-minded individuals to get a lay of the land. Record-keeping within the organization employs a variety of techniques ranging from hand-carved trail markers to parchments sealed with wax and buried beneath altars.

Though the Knights have amassed a lot of information about the world of the supernatural so far, approximately two-thirds of that history is in danger of being wiped out by the Colonials and the westward expansion. What’s more, the Knights continue to lose members due to aggressive negotiations with the French, Dutch, certain tribes, disease, and magical creatures. Unfortunately, these deaths
have challenged cell leaders, for the vast majority of Knights in the New World struggle with the First Revelation.

Despite their current status and location, all Knights not only consider themselves loyal to the British Crown, they also believe they are acting in an official capacity for the Church of England. For these reasons and more, this faction’s mood has recently soured for, at every turn, another threat moves against them.

For more about the Knights of Saint George, see pp. 99 through 111 in Hunter the Vigil: Witch Finders.

Ipswich’s lesser emphasis on supernatural matters and general level-headedness leads some hunters to believe that, by contrast, the inhabitants of Salem Village have either seen or had a direct encounter with the Damned. The Knights of Saint George have proposed that the testimonies of the accused should be used to track the location and frequency of the accusations. By drawing a map, the Trials could point out a much greater threat or, as the Knights commonly believe, a hunter who’s gone rogue.

To some hunters, the accused who hail from Ipswich are being targeted because of Salem’s proximity to its jail, and not because of witches who live openly and in plain sight. The Ipswich Gaol was designed to guard high-profile prisoners and mete out unusual punishments like branding, slave labor, public whippings, and controlled starvation. Many of the accused wind up imprisoned here. Many might die here, too, depending upon what happens within the judicial system and how quickly the growing numbers of accused can be justly processed.

Locations

Ipswich Jail

Built in 1652 by the banks of the Ipswich River, the Ipswich Jail is a formidable two-story fortress built in the shape of a fortified barn. Outside the jail, a small, modest shack provides lodging for its jailer, Solomon.

All prisoners, guilty or innocent, spend time in a jail like this before trial. Though they are whipped regularly and served moldy bread and water, most prisoners don’t bother trying to escape. Anyone who’s caught is branded with the letter “B” and is sent to the stocks for a fortnight.

Nearby townsfolk avoid Ipswich Jail, for the screams of prisoners — both living and dead — can be heard outside its walls. Currently, the jail holds two dozen cells, half of which are filled with accused witches. The other half are empty.

The Dun Bridge

The Dun Bridge is a natural formation made of grey slate, silt, and granite. This stone archway allows townsfolk to cross the Ipswich River at its deepest point. Used by native tribes, settlers, and villagers alike, the Dun Bridge is a high-traffic area during the day. As soon as the sun sets, however, even the local night watchman steers clear of the bridge.

_In the time between night and day, a pale rider dressed in grey, awaits her loved one ever fair, atop a giant, spotted mare..._
Most townsfolk are quite willing to share the bridge’s haunted past — a story about a lonely woman pining for a lover who never returns. Though the stories have yet to be verified, the Dun Bridge is avoided at all costs.

Marshall Cemetery

Marshall Cemetery is one of three burial grounds in the area. Townsfolk whisper that the haunted cemetery is dangerous — even by day — and only travel here in large groups. Originally, the land belonged to an English nobleman who lost his life at sea. Before that, the site was said to be hallowed ground used in religious ceremonies. Now, gravediggers report crypts opening of their own accord, freshly dug graves spewing mud and ash, and headstones flipping upside down. The only one brave enough to try to track down the taint is a 70-year-old gravedigger named Bill Carter.

Key Players

Jailer (or Gaoler)

Ipswich’s jailer, Solomon, sleeps in a small house connected to the jail. For his trouble, Solomon earns five shillings per meal provided to the prisoners. Those fees are extracted from the prisoners, regardless of guilt or innocence, upon their release. To him, no man or woman is without guilt, and he gladly seeks to use the tools of his trade to force a confession. The tools of his trade include whipping posts, stocks, and a pillory. If need be, he’ll arrange for a public display in front of the jail at the court’s request. There, the townsfolk can throw rotten fruits and vegetables at the accused. Though Solomon can treat the prisoners the way he sees fit, the jailor does not have absolute authority and must answer to the local judges. *Subterfuge (Doubletalk)* 2, *Crafts (Torture Devices)* 3, *Brawl* 2

Gravedigger

Ipswich’s oldest resident has seen his fair share of horrors over the years. A soldier in the British army, Bill Carter first sailed to Boston with his regiment. Unfortunately, Carter took to the bottle on his second campaign and was declared unfit for duty then dishonorably discharged. Instead of returning to his native England, Carter fell in with a lot of hunters and trappers, traveling up and down the Colonies. When he could no longer stomach the life of a frontiersman, Bill Carter settled down in Ipswich but never married. A quiet fellow, Bill refuses to give up his duties though his body is riddled with arthritis. He has long since given up drinking and has yet to talk about what drove him to it. *Firearms* 2, *Brawl* 1, *Occult* 1

Scribe

All Colonial children are taught to read so that they may one day recite Bible passages as a means of defending themselves against the Devil and His tricks. Though most villagers know how to read, scribes like Elisabeth Watkins are rare. Typically, anyone trained as a scribe can work in almost any trade that requires a written record. Some scribes specialize as court reporters or work on the docks. Elisabeth, on the other hand, is a British Loyalist who records legal documents for the town, including property deeds, wills, and birth and death certificates. She is a new addition to Ipswich who recently came into possession of her late Aunt Martha’s home. Elisabeth’s skills are in high demand, and she has recently been recruited to record the minutes of the witch trials in Salem. Though she regularly attends church, she is more worldly than most of the town residents, a fact that puts her at odds with some of the locals — especially those who are angry with the Crown. *Academics (Law)* 2, *Expression (Courtroom)* 2, *Politics* 1
Boston

Boston, Massachusetts is considered to be the second capital in the region. It is situated approximately 15 miles south of Salem. Founded in 1630 by the Puritans on the Shawmut Peninsula, the region encompasses several ancient sites and has quickly emerged as a favored settlement in part because of its geographic location — a “city upon a hill.” Boston Puritans share the beliefs of others within the settlement, but primarily concentrate on core Puritan values. These tenets, which include literacy, education, and industriousness, led to the foundation of the Colonies’ premier schools: Boston Latin School and Harvard College.

Of the three settlements, Boston has a larger and even more diverse population than Salem and Ipswich. For example, other Christian believers, Quakers, Baptists, and Roman Catholics, also live within the town limits. Other residents hail from different parts of Europe — not just England. Non-believers and pagans are both punished with impunity, however. Boston ceased to operate autonomously in 1686 with the arrival of the first royal governor — who was quickly deposed two years later.

The Case of Goody Glover

Many immigrants who arrived in Boston came to the Colonies to strike out on their own and find opportunities to amass wealth and worship freely. Ann Glover was not one such immigrant. Captured by Cromwell and sold into slavery, Glover and her children eventually came into the Goodwin family’s employment years later. She was an Irish housekeeper, fluent in Gaelic, who followed the Roman Catholic faith, a wholly unpopular religion at the time. Accused of witchcraft in 1688 by a doctor who was examining Goodwin’s daughter for “fits,” she was unable to defend herself. Though Goody Glover could recite The Lord’s Prayer in her native tongue, she did not speak English well. This was deemed proof of her guilt.

Boston’s location, coupled with its weekly town hall meetings, is attractive to immigrants all over Europe. At this time, Boston’s population is approximately 13,000 and growing. It is an area that is not as isolated as Salem. As a result, the city is often the focal point for civil matters in the region, for its infrastructure is well-developed and respected. Though Boston is strongly rooted in Puritan tradition and ideology, the interference of the British Empire leads its citizens to band together and defend their liberties despite their differences. Slavery and indentured servitude does exist in the area, just like it does in Salem and Ipswich, and primarily includes household duties at wealthier estates.

My dear Goody Withersby,

I share your concern about the accusations circulating in Salem Village, for they are quickly spreading beyond the village limits. What’s more, I fear that estate owners are particularly vulnerable as families are destroyed and properties are being ransacked. I agree there is a good possibility many of the Accused will be homeless regardless of their guilt or innocence.
However, while I am sympathetic to the plight of the Accused, I am in an uncomfortable position, for the Trials are indeed a civil matter grounded in law. Though this new development makes any civilized individual uncomfortable, the Trials must play out in the courts. If I cannot judge fairly, there will be consequences not limited to, or including, an angry mob raising pitchforks and torches against us. The unfair treatment of the Accused in prison is much preferred to an attack within city limits by a rabble of farmers and fishermen.

For these reasons and more, I urge you to consider your position carefully. As a member of Boston’s high society, you enjoy some protection from the debacle to the North and should not fear yourself Accused at this time. However, should the Trials be halted unnaturally and Salem’s residents accused in a manner that agitates them, they could enflame small-minded individuals within our own city limits and be inspired to spread this hysteria.

Yours in faith,

Judge Matheson

Hunters hailing from diverse backgrounds will find it easier to blend into Boston than elsewhere in the Province. However, this does not mean that they — or their families — are exempt from scrutiny. The Shadow Trials impact Boston just as much as Salem. Politically-related topics are more commonplace in the area, and hunters will find it easier to strike up conversations about local happenings here, for Bostonians seek to forge a new destiny free and independent from the Crown. Fiercely independent, residents here aren’t sure what to think of the supernatural, for they feel that Boston enjoys a divine blessing and don’t trouble themselves with witchcraft — unless it suits their purposes.

Locations

Harvard College

Founded in 1636 and named after its primary benefactor, Harvard College began educating pupils in a house built on a single acre. Though its class size is small — only nine scholars graduated in 1642 — the institution produces highly educated and influential students. One such individual was John Sassamon, a Native American scribe and translator. Sassamon eventually worked for Metacomet and was assassinated as an English spy, touching off King Philip’s war.

As a place of higher learning, the College boasts of a large public library filled with hundreds of books. These publications range from discourses on law to primers on languages and books about witchcraft; the collection’s depth and breadth increases with each passing year. All publications distributed throughout the Colonies, including pamphlets, newspapers, and flyers, are collected here for preservation and further study.
Docendo Discimus

Based in Boston, these scholars are a group of hunters dedicated to teaching select students about the world of the supernatural. Founded by Phillip Manchester in 1657, the Docendo Discimus catalogues all events and scour court records for evidence of the supernatural. Theirs is a philosophical take on the World of Darkness, as these teachers have a fascination with the occult they keep hidden from the rest of society.

The compact’s goals are tri-fold:

Collection: Manchester possesses a hidden library built beneath Harvard College. The group collects evidence of the supernatural by interviewing witnesses, creating sketches, buying books about the occult, and by mapping the suspected trajectories of known supernatural creatures along the coastline.

Analysis: Before materials are approved, the scholars study the materials to sort out fact from fiction. Priding themselves on their intellectualism, the Docendo Discimus must reach a consensus before approving a piece of evidence as “fact.” Once that material is added to the collection, it then becomes part of the curriculum. Only “real” data is kept within the confines of the library. The remainder is burned.

Instruction: Manchester has created a curriculum based on critical thinking. He believes his hunters must learn to recognize that the supernatural world is just another reality superimposed upon our own. Though Manchester has had no direct contact with any creature — unlike his deceased brother, Benjamin — he feels his role is best served by educating new hunters.

Scholars pursue knowledge with an innocent zeal, believing that one day they will accomplish what centuries of compacts and conspiracies have not — a clear identification of the supernatural world and, more importantly, what methods work to contain it. Manchester realizes the currently available knowledge is thin, which is why his focus is on education. Eventually, he hopes to build a second tier into the Docendo Discimus, one based on taking down the supernatural with a skilled, educated precision.

Unfortunately, this newly-formed compact is currently being scrutinized by the Shadow Court, and is danger of being disbanded.

Apothecary

An apothecary in Boston is a cross between a pharmacist, surgeon, and a family physician. Patients seek and receive treatment for their ills; medicines, typically natural remedies, are prescribed and sold over the counter. Roses steeped in vinegar are used to treat headaches, honey for weak constitutions, and sweet wine for anxiety and depression. All apothecaries boast a sign above the door — a mortar and pestle — and treat any colonist who can pay their fees or trade for services. Apothecaries are trained to mend bones, deliver babies, and perform surgeries.

Jefferson Cooper’s practice is an example of how one apothecary varies greatly from another. His remedies, which he claims are a mysterious blend of “new” science and old, are in high demand. Bostonians line up for miles to receive his miracle cure. The only trouble is, he will not disclose his ingredients nor will he admit magic is at work. Cooper and others in his line of work
feel forced to couch their treatments under the guise of science. The witch craze has forced a
more empirical view — even the classifications of typical herbs and spices used by midwives
and so-called white witches are renamed to more “English”-sounding words. If apothecaries like
Cooper aren’t careful, they will find themselves under scrutiny by more superstitious folk.
Fortunately, Boston’s population requires constant medical attention. Many don’t care how their
hurts are healed, provided that they are, and the prices are reasonable.

Harbor

The Boston Harbor is a key destination during this era. Ships from across the Atlantic Ocean sail
here to drop off and pick up cargo which is then transported up and down the coastline. The bulk
of manufactured goods in the area originate overseas; merchants in the harbor accept shipments
and then redistribute them to shops within the city. Some of those merchants work for a
subsidiary of the former Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild. In Boston, however, the group
presents itself as several independently run family businesses and does not reveal they’re all
owned by the same shipping company.

The hustle and bustle on the docks presents many opportunities for entrepreneurs and anyone
looking to find work. Smugglers, pirates, legitimate merchants, dock workers, scribes,
inspectors, and soldiers mingle about the harbor, swapping stories and sharing important news.

In addition to the docks, several islands of varying sizes dot the area, no bigger than four square
miles. The size of the harbor is often overlooked, for the real business is conducted in the city,
but there are plenty of places to hide.

Key Players

High Court Judge

Judge Livingstone is a cornerstone within the community and enjoys being the center of
attention. Prone to gossip, Livingstone acts as the ultimate authority (along with his fellow
judges). Together, they interpret and establish laws as part of their duties overseeing both the
legislative and judicial systems. Though the Judge is required to follow English Common Law,
he often persuades the court to rule in favor of popular opinion.

Livingstone is a skilled interviewer who uses question and answer techniques to lure prisoners to
his desired outcome. Most courts are absent of prosecutors and defense attorneys, for only the
wealthiest citizens can afford their services. When an accused prisoner comes before
Livingstone, he first asks for an admission of guilt. If the prisoner will not confess, then he
proceeds to question the witnesses. He’ll then ask the accused for her side of the story, gauge the
reactions from the audience, and pronounce judgment. Sentencing ranges from spending time in
the stocks to public execution — even that is influenced by the public at large. Academics
(Law) 3, Expression (Courtroom) 4, Politics (Boston) 3

Dressmaker

Mary Hopkins works as a dressmaker in a shop located at the heart of Boston. She is a skilled
seamstress who specializes in designing gowns for society’s elite. Her business has recently
taken a hit as a strange paranoia has sent Boston’s respectable families into hiding. Salem is the
talk of the town, and many women fear that hysteria will spread within the city’s borders.
Hopkins, herself, has worried about her position, for she is unmarried and lives with her mother,
Alice.
Though she is having a hard time, Hopkins is extremely resourceful and has found work repairing draperies, sacks, aprons, and other garments for working-class citizens. Her new contacts have given her a fresh perspective on the trials and she is quickly accumulating gossip faster than she can share it. **Socialize 2, Crafts (Dressmaking) 3, Expression (Rumors) 3**

**Postman**

The Colonial postal system was recently centralized. Carriers, like Tom Waite, are assigned an area where they walk or ride from home to home, picking up and distributing letters and packages. Tom is known to many on his route. He’s a friendly enough sort who hails from a big Catholic family. He doesn’t put stock in superstitions and thinks the Salem Town residents are killing innocent people. However, Tom is taking advantage of “witchcraft fever” to press his own advantage.

A tried-and-true Bostonian, Tom is fiercely in favor of Colonial Independence. His work for the growing rebellion is done in secret. Tom is a skilled forger who copies letters from British Loyalists and redistributes them to the rebels. If the Governor ever found out what Tom was really up to, he’d be hanged as a traitor to the Crown. **Subterfuge (Colonial Spy) 5, Crafts (Forgery) 4, Politics 2**

**The Supernatural**

Hunters who live in this era have their hands full. Not only do they feel forced to keep the Vigil a secret, they are also influenced by recent events. Their knowledge of the occult not only makes them suspect in the eyes of superstitious townsfolk, often hunters feel conflicted about their own traditions, their own beliefs.

A number of modern-day compacts and conspiracies did not exist in this era; only a few might have proto-groups that are radically different from their modern counterparts, like Null Mysterii or Project: VALKYRIE. Notable, however, is the lack of unity among hunters in the New World. Alliances are either strained or non-existent in the Colonies. Tensions run high as matters of faith and politics intersect with centuries of history.

Some hunter groups, like the Lucifuge and the Aegis Kai Doru, face harsh times and often find themselves lumped in with witches. According to the tenets of the Shadow Court, they will likely be branded as servants of Satan and outsiders. Playing these kinds of hunters could be challenging but also rewarding, as they play “rebels” fighting against a corrupt government and innocent townsfolk to save them from themselves. There is nothing barring accused hunters, witches, vampires, and innocents from forming their own resistance, a shaky alliance that seeks to end the witch trials once and for all on American soil. Both the Shadow Court and the Salem Witch Trials already have a sophisticated structure in place to deal with suspected witches and magic-users, which means their opponents will be scattered, fighting an uphill battle.

**Shadow Court**

By day, the witch trial hysteria spreads from Salem Village to the outlying areas. By night, a different Court holds sway as the Knights of St. George seek to find and eradicate the mysterious threat plaguing the townspeople. Similar to the Judges who believe themselves to be right, the Knights also feel they are justified, doing God’s work for the Church of England. They are dissimilar in other ways, for the Knights frown on hysterical tendencies. They have set up their jurisdiction according to how Boston, a more sophisticated and metropolitan area, handles their
witch trials. They do not suffer pomp and circumstance, or sarcasm or fools, nor will they allow any propaganda such as pamphlets or books circulated.

The Knights who formed the Shadow Court have declared jurisdiction in the area, and will investigate any and all suspected of witchcraft. They believe they are helping restore order among hunters and local settlers. Any hunter may bring their grievances before the Court; any hunter may petition to become part of the Court in an official capacity. Though the Knights have an internal structure, they don’t care about titles, pedigrees, or uniforms. Their goal is to find the truth about what’s happening.

Here’s how the active conspiracies during this time period are affected by the Shadow Court. The Trials are also mentioned for those conspiracies who have a hand in them.

- *The Lucifuge* — Though the Lady has an allegiance with the Malleus Maleficarum in Europe, that relationship is fraying in the New World. Targeted for their demonic blood, members of the Lucifuge have gone into hiding from the Knights and from superstitious villagers all too willing to hang a real witch. Some have gotten so desperate that they’ve teamed up with other accused witches and vampires in a temporary truce. Others seek out allies where they can, even among those who don’t hold European settlers in high regard. Either way, most have gone on the run, heading further and further into the frontier.

- *Malleus Maleficarum* — Though the Malleus Maleficarum has a long history with the European witch trials, hunters within this organization are fractured. Some who have experience with the events overseas feel conflicted about what’s happening in the Colonies. To them, targeting hunters is counterproductive. On the other hand, others have long harbored resentment for any hunters who don’t share their views. Hunters within this group are either wholly vested in the Court, or have shunned it to conduct investigations of their own, tracking down witches and vampires who threaten the faithful. The conspiracy’s leaders focus on the Trials, for the Malleus Maleficarum wishes to avoid a widespread catastrophe.

- *Aegis Kai Doru* — In the Colonies, members of this group are suspect because of their desire to procure artifacts at all costs. If their greed does not betray them, the use of any artifact surely will. Most members of the Aegis Kai Doru here will not remain in one location. They will travel up and down the coast, visiting new immigrants to ask them about their precious family heirlooms, working when they can to procure the shillings to buy them, and garnering as many allies as they can. Some of those allies operate within the civil courts; while the Aegis Kai Doru is actively dismissing the Shadow Court, they are attempting to protect hunters from being caught up in the civil Trials.

- *Ascending Ones* — The Ascending Ones don’t have much, if any, interest in the trials or the Shadow Court. Politically, they find themselves at odds with what’s happening in the Colonies and prefer to steer clear of social interaction altogether. They take great offense at the notion that the Knights of Saint George have assigned themselves to be the authority on witchcraft in the New World. If they engage the locals, they’ll stick to the frontier or high-trafficked areas to find supplies before going out on the hunt. To most within the Cult of the Phoenix, they’d prefer to leave hunters here to their own devices, primarily because any member of this conspiracy will stick out and attract unwanted attention. Those who do get swept up in either the Trials or the Shadow Court often seek positions of authority. Some believe an old enemy may be behind the hysteria, one that can never die.
• **Cheiron Group** — The Cheiron Group was based in Boston and hunted monsters all along the coast line. This conspiracy is one of the most active groups during the era and has many guises, including Hygieia Apothecary & Sons founded in 1681, and its many subsidiaries rooted in the Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild. Hygieia operates clinically out of a need to medically treat a burgeoning populace; the company will treat anyone who can pay for services and steers clear of the witch hysteria. This has allowed the group to become entrenched in local politics and learn valuable information. Conspiracy leaders believe the Witch Trials and the Shadow Court are meaningless and not worth dealing with; they are more interested in what’s happening with the Crown and on the frontier. Members who choose to side with the Knights of Saint George are expected to report back to the rest of the conspiracy, however, and are encouraged to identify potential monsters.

In addition to the other compacts hinted at previously, two new compacts are active during this era. Their impacts on the Witch Trials and the Shadow Court are outlined in their respective write-ups.

**New Compacts**

**The Scarlet Watch**

**Blood Never Lies**

The Scarlet Watch is a secret society of vampire hunters that formed sometime in the Middle Ages in response to the Inquisition and its effects on certain families. The founding members, who felt betrayed by the Church, formed an alliance to ensure they protected each other in times of dire need. Nine hunters from Europe’s oldest families signed a pact in their own blood to watch out for one another, a blood signature that bonded them together in their common goal: to hunt down the vampires responsible for the heavy losses they suffered.

The oath the Watch signed is magically sealed. Should any family member leave the compact or forgo her obligation, another must take her place. According to the bargain that was struck, the Watch may increase its ranks with new members, but the compact must always include a single descendant from each of the original nine families or a terrible catastrophe will strike them all down. When the time is right, the Watch’s hunters are called together in the land of dreaming, to rise up and take arms against the vampiric taint. Upon awakening, the dreamers will begin acting on their intuition. Strange coincidences will reunite the Watch, as Fate reconnects these hunters and their families, until they come together per the terms of their bond.

The original Watch included wealthy merchants, bankers, lords, bishops, and landholders who hailed from Europe’s finest: Bogda, Kohler, Dupont, Horvath, O’Connor, Conti, Drake, Jansen, Warrick. Pooling together their resources, the Watch donated handsome sums to the Church and paid more than their fair share of taxes in exchange for information about vampires. In this, the Watch was successful, and the Church temporarily lent some of its own agents (through the Malleus Maleficarum) to give the Watch the tools it needed to hunt vampires.

For 50 long years, families sent their sons and daughters to hunt down bloodsuckers and murder them by the light of day. As the vampire threat subsided, members moved on, expanding their estates, forgetting about the blood oath they swore to one another.

Until today.
Now, these families find their livelihoods are being threatened once again, by the very same creatures who almost destroyed them all those years ago — but in a New World. Unfortunately, the passage of time has all but wiped away the record of how the founding members hunted bloodsuckers and their ilk. Worse, these families have drifted far apart and no longer share the same camaraderie they once did. What they share in common, however, is sacred promise to uphold the Vigil together; an oath written in blood, a promise that has been renewed in secret once every 10 years by a single volunteer.

Membership in this compact waxes and wanes with each passing era, as one threat blends into another. Though its members uphold the Vigil in times of peace and strife, the members of the Scarlet Watch are being drawn by fate to the eastern seaboard of the Americas.

To the Watch, that can mean only one thing: vampires.

**The Enemy**

During this era, the Scarlet Watch cooperates with the Shadow Court when it suits them to expose vampires; the group turns in witches in exchange for any help the Knights and their allies might provide. The Watch is, by far, the most paranoid compact during this era. Though the families are old, descendants do not share the same power or luxuries their forbearers claimed.

Some of the original family trees have branched off, incorporating new families. Now, the Scarlet Watch is primarily made up of commoners pledging to protect other commoners based on an old promise — an eternal oath that holds little meaning to the hunters of today. Soldiers and farmers, judges and executioners, dressmakers and clerics now form the ranks of the Watch. They operate in a diminished capacity; what few allies they do have care for nothing but gold.

Vampires have long memories, and bloodsuckers know when an opportunity presents itself. In Boston and the surrounding towns, vampires are actively hunting members of the Watch, to wipe the compact from existence once and for all. Some are even collaborating with one another to bring the Watch to “justice.” Others simply wait for these hunters and pick them off, one by one, when they least suspect it.

The Watch is at considerable risk during this era. Vampires stalk them in the night; by day, the Watch is trying to work with one another, to find the common thread tying them together. For some members, that means engaging in local politics or reaching out to other cells for help, advice, and information. For other hunters, however, the seeds of distrust have already been sown. The Watch is desperate to feel safe, and they will do whatever it takes to protect their lands and families from harm — even if that means turning a blind eye to other hunters who don’t belong to the Watch to save themselves.

During this time period, the Scarlet Watch’s goal is to reclaim the occult information they once had, and build an arsenal of weapons they know will work against vampires. To them, they cannot with without both.

**Status**

Within the Watch, status is not based on a hunter’s prowess, but on her connections. Hunters who have proven themselves to be trustworthy, and who have renewed the promise of their original forebears, are afforded more status than those who don’t. Hunters who signed the pact, but don’t take the Watch seriously, may choose to belong to other compacts or conspiracies. Membership is voluntary, but the threat of vampires specifically targeting certain hunters is all too real.
• A member of your family has only recently told you of the pledge your ancestors made to protect the other members of the Watch. You are not necessarily new to the Vigil, but as far as the Watch is concerned, you have yet to prove your worth. Provided you can show yourself to be trustworthy, you will impress upon other members in your community that you will keep your family’s oldest vow, despite not knowing much about it. Gain 1 dot in Resources or a 1 dot Allies (The Watch).

•• Your grandfather or great-grandmother saved a hunter from a vampire over 50 years ago. You have been aware of your obligation to the Scarlet Watch since you were a small child. You have a few friends within the Watch and feel it would be an honor to uphold the Vigil. Outside of your neighborhood, however, you are an unknown quantity. You will need to prove your worth to the long-standing members if you wish to participate in strategy meetings. Gain 2 dots in Resources or 2 dots Allies (The Watch).

•••• You can trace your family all the way back through the Middle Ages. You come from a long line of proud hunters, and you can name each and every one of them. You are well-respected by your peers; the other families not only know you by name, they are aware of your deeds and ask you for advice. You have made an impact in the New World, and families from up and down the coastline will seek you out. Gain a Merit of your choice.

Stereotypes

Knights of Saint George: Agents of the Crown may be useful to me, provided they don’t dare target my family. To ensure they don’t, I will cooperate with their foolish endeavors. The Shadow Court seems like it might be useful, but I’m more interested in using it to find out more about these Knights and the other hunters. Still, it makes me wonder if a vampire hasn’t infiltrated their ranks. Certainly seems like the kind of thing a bloodsucker might do.

Aegis Kai Doru: I have yet to see a magickal relic that will lead me to every vampire in town. What good are objects of power if they’re not useful to hunt bloodsuckers? Still, I cannot deny I’m curious to know if there is a relic that could help me run faster, jump higher, or shoot a crossbow straight into a vampire’s heart.

Malleus Maleficarum: I do not know for sure, but my grandfather told me that they helped us once, and then left us to our own devices. Why? Did they seek to damn us? Use us as bait? Why didn’t they reach out to us, to warn us that we could never stop hunting the vampires? I have more questions than answers, and that bothers me more than it should.

Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild (Cheiron Group): I recognize a few names painted on store windows. Is it possible that members of the Watch abandoned the group to cast their lot with these merchants? They prosper where I do not, and have found a way to make money to finance their hunts. That is more than I can say for myself. Still, that doesn’t mean I agree with all their methods. There are, after all, different forms of vampirism.

Les Voyageurs

Take Back The Forest

In 1534, the French began to explore and colonize the Americas in a region known as New France. While the English colonized the eastern seaboard, the French pushed westward, building forts and trading posts, and developing relationships with tribes like the Huron and Algonquin
far to the north and south. The French occupation took hold, and a new industry flourished — the fur trade.

Furs from native species, like beaver, bear, wolf, and raccoon, became hot commodities and were exported back to Europe. With fur in such high demand, the Dutch, French, English, and several native tribes (most notably the Iroquois) fought for control of the trade, culminating in a series of conflicts known as the Beaver Wars. These skirmishes were fought between the French and their tribal allies (the Erie, Huron, Algonquin, and Susquehannock) against the Iroquois; the struggle lasted well into the 18th century as the colonial landscape changed and new threats, like the English, were targeted.

Unlike other compacts, THIS group has no clear leader, no legendary founder. Where there was a demand for fur, there were hunters. Where there were hunters, there were Les Voyageurs, the forest runners, a group that formed out of necessity. Comprised of French hunters and their allies, like the Algonquin, Les Voyageurs have a unique focus: to hunt monsters and sell their hides.

Beliefs, expertise, and backgrounds vary widely among Les Voyageurs. There’s no clear structure in this company, only a single mission: to rid the land of werewolves who’ve preyed on too many for far too long. As such, Les Voyageurs have a high attrition rate (they will eventually die out as the land is settled and werewolves adapt). Their tools — mainly muskets and axes — are often ineffective.

They are loosely formed; members operate either individually or in small groups, forming more of an alliance than a strict organization with clear ranks. The longest-surviving members tend to hold the most sway.

The Enemy

Les Voyageurs operate out in the wild. Operating in tandem with the fur trade, the pelts produced by Les Voyageurs fetch high prices overseas; the money is funneled back into the organization to procure supplies and replace broken equipment. The compact’s number include hunters, trappers, scouts, woodsman, and furriers. While they have sold the pelts of rare creatures, like the occasional shapeshifter or watery beast, Les Voyageurs dedicate their lives to finding and erasing werewolves from the land.

Hunters in the 17th century use a variety of tactics to track down werewolves, and they do so with great care. Relying on traps, natural environments, and bits of werewolf lore, hunters share knowledge whenever possible to ensure that their brothers and sisters survive. Unlike other big game hunters, Les Voyageurs do not eliminate werewolves for sport. They do so because they believe that werewolves are cursed, feral monsters who cannot be negotiated with, who need to be put down. This belief, that werewolves are evil, unites them in the hunt.

Forest runners share information in Algonquin. They also leave messages for other hunters on the trails using a simple, symbolic language. If a werewolf is spotted, local tribes are warned to steer clear of the area. Though any non-hunter is welcome to participate in the hunt, provided they can prove their worth in a fight, the werewolf’s carcass will go to the group as payment for clearing the area of the threat.

Unlike other hunters, Les Voyageurs do not hunt werewolves in secret. They may not, out of respect, mention how many different types of hunters there are in the Vigil, but they are always looking to recruit given their high mortality rate.
Both the Witch Trials and the Shadow Court baffle Les Voyageurs, for they have mixed feelings about witches in general. Many forest runners — especially members of native tribes — don’t understand the Puritan’s definition of a witch. Some witches have used magick to help these hunters heal and find their quarry; to these hunters, witches are a means to an end, and it’s foolish to condemn all of them. As a result, Les Voyageurs tend to stick to the neighboring forests and only participate in the Trials when necessary.

**Status**
To gain status within Les Voyageurs, hunters are ranked according to the number of successful hunts they have participated in, regardless of whether or not they earned the kill. This system is geared toward rewarding hunters who work together, and a great amount of ceremony is attached to each tier. Hunts that capture monsters other than werewolves may be included as well, provided higher-ranked cells agree that the kill is worth counting.

To cut down on boasts or pelt-stealing, hunters skin werewolf carcasses in a public ceremony, where status is doled out during a monthly ceremony to honor the living hunters — and the dead.

• You are new to the hunt and have the least amount of knowledge about the supernatural. The kills you’ve acquired have not been verified yet, but as you accumulate more pelts, you hone your skills to increase your success rate. You are the last to sit at the dinner table, and the last to be rewarded when the proceeds of your efforts are doled out. Your hurts are patched in time; your family is eventually taken care of. Gain 1 dot in Resources (Basic Gear) or a 3-dot Mentor.

•• You are a seasoned hunter who has accumulated a decent-sized body of knowledge to hunt monsters. You and your cell are known, accomplished veterans. You train new hunters and incorporate one or two into your group. You have seen your fair share of battles, and you have told many stories about your fellow hunters. When you sit down to eat, you are seated second. You receive your fair share of the profits, after the veterans have been paid, and you have enough to fix your tools, obtain medicine, and give your loved ones a small stipend. Gain 2 dots in Resources (Weapons), 2 additional Contacts, or 2 dots in the Fame Merit.

••• You are a legendary hunter, an expert on the supernatural. You have a unique way to hunt, a sixth sense to track werewolves. Your knife is prized as a ceremonial object, and when you die your name will be whispered like a legend. You sit first at the table, you guide the ceremonies of remembrance, and you are valued as an honored protector of the land. Your skills are so legendary, you take up to four new hunters to train alongside you. Of the profits, you and your family are taken care of first. Gain 3 dots in Resources (Traps), four Allies, or 3 dots of the Fame Merit.

**Stereotypes**

**Knights of Saint George:** I have no time for stuck-up, pompous blowhards who think they’re better than I am. What are they doing to protect me? Nothing. They form this Shadow Court to root out other hunters, put my friends at risk. There are real monsters out there with claws. Maybe they should try hunting them for a change.

**The Scarlet Watch:** Hunting bloodsuckers in town doesn’t seem like that much of a challenge. What I wouldn’t give to live in a big, fancy house, worry about my kids — I may not live to see 20. Vampire comes to attack me, I can count on my fellow hunters. Can they say the same? Or are they more worried about their holdings?
**Malleus Maleficarum:** I’m not sure what to think about a hunter who bases all of his comings and goings on the Church. I came to the New World to get away from the Church’s influence and live my life freely.

**Lucifuge:** I almost feel sorry for them. Seems like they’re being targeted because of who their parents are. Is that why they’re hiding out in the woods? Sure, I’m not going to automatically trust somebody who’s got demonic blood running through his veins, but if he can hunt werewolves with me? If the son of the Devil wants to help me hunt his own kind, he’s more than welcome to.

**New Tactics**

These tactics address two limitations hunters might have during this time period. The first is to give hunters a way to sort fact from fiction through cross-examining their witnesses — an important technique in a world filled with so much grey. The second focuses on a weapons-based tactic appropriate for the time period.

**Cross-Examine**

**Prerequisites:** All: Manipulation 2, Investigation 1. Partial: Enigmas 2 or Occult 2 (secondary actor). Partial: Subterfuge 2 (secondary actor). Partial: Intimidation 2 (primary actor)

**Requires:** 3 or more

**Dice Pool:** Primary: Manipulation + Intimidation. Secondary: Presence + Investigation, Manipulation + Subterfuge or Occult

**Action:** Extended and contested

**Description:** This is a variation on the Interrogation Tactic found in *Witch Finders* (pg. 122). It is used when the cell is investigating someone accused of witchcraft to assess the likelihood of the accused having used supernatural abilities on the victim. The afflicted often claim to have seen or felt the presence of the witch before they became sick or injured, and the cell needs to find out as much evidence as possible.

A hunter cell uses this tactic to gather as much information on the target as possible. Steps to be taken include: Interviewing witnesses for clues as to the illness or bad fortune, and how the victim was able to point out the accused; talking to neighbors to discover habits and, if possible, local gossip; and investigating the accused’s home or work to look for physical evidence of witchcraft including strange plants, books on spirits or spellcraft, hex symbols and the like.

The primary actor can use this tactic in a private setting, where the cell has locked the accused away, or more often, in a courtroom where the accused is on trial. The primary actor questions the accused, using the evidence gathered by the secondary actors, showcasing any and all evidence of witchcraft and pushing for a confession from the target.

The primary actor rolls once per round of questioning. The accused subject resists with Composure + Subterfuge. The primary actor must gain a number of successes equal to the subject’s Resolve + Composure, while the subject must score more successes than the primary actor’s Composure + Empathy. If the subject reaches her target before the primary actor, it is likely the court (and possibly the cell) begins to question the authenticity of the victim’s accusations.


**Organizations:** Originally used by the Malleus Maleficarum in the European trials, this Tactic quickly spread to other hunter groups involved in investigating witchcraft.

**Potential Modifiers**

Primary actor is a Priest, Magistrate, or other profession with experience interviewing people (+1 to primary actor); hunters uncovered boring or un-useful gossip (–1 to primary actor); the accused is someone of high standing in the local community (–2 to all primary and secondary actors); accused subject honestly has no idea about any questions asked (–4 to all primary and secondary actors).

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** If the subject suffers a dramatic failure at any point in the proceedings, she believes she has cleared her name but has actually convinced everyone of her status as a witch. If the primary actor rolls a dramatic failure, he believes the subject has no connection to witchcraft and is innocent of the charges.

**Failure:** No successes are gained toward the total.

**Success:** If the interviewer’s player rolls more successes than the target’s Resolve + Composure, then the interviewer can ask a number of questions equal to his Investigation dots which the subject will answer truthfully. If the Storyteller rolls more successes for the subject than the interviewer’s Composure + Empathy, the Tactic fails and cannot be used on the subject again.

**Exceptional Success:** If the subject achieves an exceptional success, she’s cleared her name and will be released by the court. The primary actor suffers a –2 modifier to all Social rolls for a day. If the interviewer achieves an exceptional success, the subject loses a point of Willpower in the face of extreme questioning.

**To Purchase:** 13 Practical Experience, 10 for the Knights of St. George, 8 for the Malleus Maleficarum.

**Flintlock Reload**

**Prerequisites:** All Dexterity 2, Firearms 2. Partial: Crafts 2 (secondary actor) Partial: Survival 2 (primary actor)

**Dice Pool:** Primary: Dexterity + Firearms. Secondary: Wits + Firearms or Crafts

**Action:** Instant

**Description:** Flintlock muskets and pistols were the firearms of choice for most hunters in the era. Most militia members, huntsmen, and farmers had at least a passing familiarity with these weapons. They quickly became the preferred weapon to uphold the Vigil, allowing hunters to hit targets at range and often do much more damage than melee combat. However, flintlocks were not without their drawbacks. Misfires, wet powder, and long reload times all reduced their effectiveness, and against monsters there is no room for error. This tactic relies heavily on teamwork to overcome some of those challenges during a hunt.

The primary actor is the shooter, while the secondary actors handle reloading and sighting the target. An expert marksman may be able to reload on his own in 15 seconds, but that can increasingly cut into accuracy and at times place the shooter in a position of vulnerability. This tactic allows the shooter to stay in place with all attention focused directly on the target. The
The primary actor aims, fires, and hands the musket backwards to someone who trades the spent musket for a loaded and ready-to-fire weapon. This allows the primary actor to fire again quickly without moving from a set position.

The primary actor is focused solely on shooting the intended target, relying completely on the secondary actors to have loaded weapons available and watching for signs of counter-attack. The secondary actors are keeping the weapons at the ready, as well as protecting the shooter from ambush or other hazards. The secondary actors can substitute Crafts for Firearms when loading the muskets.

**Organizations:** Often used by hunters with military or animal-hunting backgrounds, this tactic is especially useful in the field against combat-capable foes.

**Potential Modifiers**

- Primary actor has cover and/or a secure firing location (+1 to primary actor; target has considerable cover or is out of range of the musket (−2 to the shooter); target is able to return fire (−1 to all primary and secondary actors).

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** If the shooter suffers a dramatic failure the musket misfires and is destroyed. If the secondary actor suffers a dramatic failure, the follow-up musket is mishandled (jammed, wet or spilled black powder) and the shooter misses an opportunity to get another shot off before the target is out of range.

**Failure:** The shooter misses the opportunity to get a second shot at the target.

**Success:** The shooter can fire again without penalty (limit 3 per round).

**Exceptional Success:** The shooter gains a +1 per rifle (limit 3 per round) as if they have had the opportunity to Aim.

**To Purchase:** 14 Practical Experience, 10 for the [trapper/huntsman Compact].

**Wandering Monsters**

Before you identify which monsters you’d like to use in this era, figure out what type of game you’d like to run. Determine where the monster’s lair is, who her victims are likely to be, and who’ll be the most likely to identify her. For example, if you want an accused monster to get caught up in the Trials, you might consider a shape-shifter who is taking the place of a dead child at a farmhouse. If you opt for a more physical game, utilize the natural environment and offer players the chance to enter an ancient cave or forest. Alternately, if you prefer a more political theme, introduce a witch or a changeling who’s using her powers to help local hunters find werewolves.

Bloodsuckers, ghosts, and witches are fairly common in the region but, depending upon where they originated from or what Dread Powers they have, may go by an Algonquin, French, Dutch, Gaelic, Latin, or other name. Misidentification is very common during this time period — not because hunters aren’t intelligent, but because there’s a marked lack of information and resources during this century. As many monsters flock to the New World, carried in the bellies of vast ships, superstitions and rumors follow in kind. Use those to enrich the mystery of these monsters as opposed to tricking your players.
These monsters are examples of antagonists that are flexible enough to use in a chronicle or in a straight-up hunt. The rules provided for them tie to the Hunter rules update and new Dread Powers found in Mortal Remains.

Unchosen, Unbidden, Unloved

Beneath Salem Town’s Church lie three glass coffins containing the perfectly preserved corpses of two 16 year old boys and one girl. Their heads have all been shaved, their eyes have been sewn shut, and their mouths stuffed with asphodel. All three are clothed in linen and leather sandals; each wears a gold pendant around the neck, a name engraved upon the flat disc: Unchosen, Unbidden, Unloved.

No human, alive or dead, knows what’s buried beneath the Church or why….

Pierre Badeaux

*When I could no longer howl out in the open, I sailed to a new land. I will do anything to be free.*

Pierre Badeaux grew up as a street urchin on the streets of Paris. He is a half-wolf, half-human hybrid orphan unsure of his parentage. When he began to change, Badeaux took to the sewers and lived beneath the city for a time until he could grasp his condition. Was he a spirit slayer? Shapeshifter? Unfortunately, Badeaux didn’t have the opportunity to test the limits of his abilities, for a vampire faction moved in and took over his sewers. Forced back onto the streets, Badeaux practiced his shapeshifting techniques to mimic the faces of passersby. His skills only got him so far, though, and as his hunger grew he resorted to large and ever more elaborate cons.

Eventually, Badeaux found the perfect mark — an old French grandmother grieving for the loss of her grandson. He kept up the ruse until he could legally assume the dead grandson’s identity and become the primary beneficiary of Grandmere Badeaux’s will. Pierre’s grandmother did pass of natural causes, and the shapeshifter grieved for her loss, as was proper. His appearances kept, Pierre booked passage to the Americas.

Once he arrived in the Colonies, Badeaux took up the life of a frontiersman and became enamored with the idea of living off the land. There, he learned he could communicate with wolves and decided to try communing with the beasts. Badeaux lived like a natural predator for less than a fortnight; as before, he ran into creatures much scarier and fiercer than him.

Now, Badeaux has moved back to Boston and is attempting to climb the social ladder. His newfound status has given him access to the books he needs to sort out his “condition.” He has abandoned his natural tendencies and aims to taste what life is like in high society. Unfortunately for him, in the upper echelon of Boston’s elite lurks a different type of predator…One that Badeaux will be hard-pressed to defeat.

**Description:** Badeaux is rail-thin, tall, and has a full head of dark hair and brown eyes. He cannot change the shape of his body — only his face — and often uses cosmetics and other trickery to alter his appearance. He is hard to physically detect because he seeks to blend in, look ordinary, not stand out. For a man like Badeaux, the only way he knows how to survive is to not draw attention to himself.
Hunters who catch Badeaux in between guises will find he’ll do anything he can to keep his secret. No matter how long it takes, anyone who’s wise to Badeaux’s schemes will find themselves accused of murder, witchcraft, or worse….

**Storytelling Hints:** Badeaux is an interesting antagonist to introduce depending upon when Hunters encounter him. In the forests, his primal nature takes over as he vies for dominance, the easiest marks being the local wildlife. The longer he’s pushed by something stronger than him, the more desperate Badeaux will become. To him, he’s not quite human and he’s not quite monster, either. One foot is in the world of the supernatural and the other in the mortal world, which is more conflicted than ever.

Unlike a Jekyll and Hyde creature, Badeaux is in full control of his faculties. He is seeking for a place where he’ll fit in — once he finds his pack, there’s no telling what he’ll do to protect his own.

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3  
**Physical Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2  
**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3  
**Mental Skills:** Investigation 2, Medicine (First Aid) 3, Occult 2 (French folk traditions), Science 1  
**Physical Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Stealth 3, Survival (City Streets) 4  
**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 3, Streetwise 4, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 1  
**Merits:** Brawling Dodge, Contacts (Locals) 1, Language (Wolf), Resources 4, Tactics 4  
**Potency:** 4  
**Willpower:** 7  
**Morality:** 5  
**Virtue:** Fortitude  
**Vice:** Pride  
**Initiative:** 7  
**Defense:** 3  
**Speed:** 14  
**Health:** 10  
**Dread Powers:** Dread Attack (Claws, Teeth) 2, Totemic Form 2, The Primal Dirt 1

**Frau Elsa**

*The Devil you know. The Devil you don’t. The Devil you cannot understand.*

Frau Elsa is a female demon who goes by many names. She was summoned into being by a German farmer’s wife to exact vengeance on the robbers who stole her husband’s life. The wife did not know what she was calling; she wanted revenge, and fell back on the old ways in her moment of need. The robbers went unpunished. Before Frau Elsa could get to them, they sought absolution from a priest and turned themselves in to the police.
For her failure, the Devil punished Frau Elsa by exacting a heavy price: instead of torture, she was to use her malice and conscript 666 willing, living souls into His service. She began in Germany. Unfortunately, her less-than-subtle arts were noticed by the townsfolk, already enflamed by centuries of belief in witchcraft.

From Germany she moved across Europe, spreading the seeds of dissent not through witchcraft, but through the guise of righteousness. Eventually, she reached the British Isles and hitched a ride on a boat to the Colonies. When she reached the Boston Harbor, Frau Elsa traveled up the coast following those who were so prideful that they couldn’t see how close they were to the Devil. Once she reached Salem Village, she had found her new home.

**Description:** In her human guise, Frau Elsa appears as a blurry reflection of the individual she is targeting. Her demonic forms vary; her targets often see what they want to see. In many cases, Frau Elsa is often mistaken for the Devil.

**Storytelling Hints:** Frau Elsa wants nothing more than to be free from her current contract so she can wreak havoc on her own terms. She is desperate to fulfill her end of the bargain and is single-minded in her goal. As an antagonist, Frau Elsa is a complex character to introduce. To some hunters, she may not seem like a threat at first. She is a whisper in the shadows, a pair of glowing eyes in the dark, a chill on the back of a hunter’s neck. The hunters may be looking for “an” antagonist that’s the cause of all their troubles, but a demon like Frau Elsa can point fingers at so many different antagonists. She can be everyone, and nowhere, all at once.

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 6, Wits 4, Resolve 4

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

**Social Attributes:** Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Investigation (Rumors) 4, Medicine (Anatomy) 2, Occult 4, Politics (Local) 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 2, Crafts (Ritual Tools) 2, Stealth (Shadows) 3, Survival (Forests) 3

**Social Skills:** Subterfuge 5, Persuasion 3, Intimidation 4

**Merits:** Retainer (Imps) 5, Resources 3, Fleet of Foot 3

**Potency:** 5

**Willpower:** 13

**Morality:** None

**Virtue:** Fortitude

**Vice:** Envy

**Initiative:** 6

**Defense:** 4

**Speed:** 12

**Health:** 12

**Dread Powers:** Blackout 2, Fluid Lessons 1, The Oldest Temptation 3, Mixed Blessings 1, Terrify 2
Story Hooks

There are a lot of opportunities in this specific era to hunt monsters with naught but a musket or axe. This time of uncertainty can also introduce an element of fear and paranoia. To hone that feeling of hysteria, these stories test hunters in the political, social, and physical spheres by highlighting the potential impact the witch trials might have on them.

Hunter Civil War

**Summary:** Certain groups enjoy massive amounts of religious and secular power as the common citizen follows Church leaders, believing he is living under constant threat. Unaffiliated hunters who do not enjoy the protection of a unified compact or conspiracy live under constant scrutiny from their neighbors by day, and face careful study by their fellow hunters at night. On the run, these hunters may be captured, interrogated, and exiled. The purity of a hunter, as seen through the eyes the Shadow Court, puts everyone at risk.

**Setup:** To facilitate an internal war between hunters, it'll be important to determine the scope of the conflict. Does this battle take place within the boundaries of Salem Town or Boston? Will non-hunters be involved, or is this strictly a “witch hunt” to root out suspected magick-users? Once the boundaries are set, then figure out the key players in the Shadow Court. Who is testing whom and, more importantly, how? Provide some rules related to the witch hunt. Will there be a physical test where an accused hunter must capture as many vampires as possible within a fortnight? What does a guilty hunter stand to lose? Friends? Family? Her life? Is this a single bout of hysteria or a more systemic problem rooted in self-righteousness?

**Tier One:** The internal witch hunt is localized to the characters’ immediate vicinity. Maybe the Knights of St. George blame the hunters for letting the witch craze get out of hand, or the Scarlet Watch has sent a few representatives to claim local vampires in the area and condemns any hunter who won’t cooperate with them. Or, maybe hunters are caught up in the local hysteria and accuse one another of witchcraft to avoid being arrested themselves. Regardless, the full extent of this event will be better felt by hunters who know all the players involved.

**Tier Two:** The arrival of fresh European immigrants, frontiersmen to the West, and native tribes migrating to the North shakes up the status quo in the midst of the witch craze. Characters are presented with multiple options to take sides in their hometown and the surrounding area. Strangers to the area with unknown allegiances present a challenge for the characters, especially when trying to discern friend from foe, hunter from witch. What supernatural creatures will take advantage of the chaos? The fear of an attack? Here, a war between hunters will take place over a larger area as characters sort out the mess.

**Tier Three:** The scope of the Shadow Court’s jurisdiction is not only known to the hunters, each has a part to play in an internal investigation. The physical scope of this type of game is the entirety of the Northeast’s coastline as the Shadow Court attempts to erase witches from Colonial soil, freeing the colonists and natives from the taint of the supernatural. Some characters may act as inquisitors, targeting any who fall suspect, others as strategists, torturers, or jailers. As the tension heats up, hunters may find themselves accused if they don’t fulfill the Shadow Court’s aims. This type of story involves multiple styles of play ranging from political to adventuresome. Consider how to balance the varying aspects of the Shadow Court by giving the hunters shared goals within the hierarchy — even go so far as to suggest the characters infiltrate the Court and take it down.
Truth on Trial

Summary: The characters hold key positions in the civil court system. Together, the group passes judgment over accused witches and other criminals by collecting evidence, hearing testimony, and listening to the villagers.

Setup: Since this is a battle that takes place in a court, the characters will be relying on their investigative skills to save the townspeople from themselves. Trials that take place in smaller towns, like Salem Village, will mean that the characters likely know the accused. These hunters are the highest form of authority in the area and can conduct the trials as they see fit. Their decisions impact many lives — do they use that power responsibly? Or do they abuse it?

Tier One: The characters are familiar with the accused witch on some level, either as an acquaintance or close friend. The victim has material evidence that the supernatural exists and she can tie that back to the hunters in some way. Maybe she witnessed a hunt and believes the characters are in league with the Devil. Maybe the hunters rescued her and she confided in the wrong person. Do the characters condemn the accused for knowing too much?

Tier Two: Over the course of the trials, another group of hunters intervenes and attempts to take over as judges. At this point in the story, the characters have already judged and dealt with several cases. The rival group has different plans for the accused, however, and their goals directly conflict with the characters'. Maybe the Shadow Court is making a move. Maybe the Cheiron Group, in the guise of Hygieia & Sons, seeks to dispose of and harvest the accused's bodies in a specific way. Maybe the rival group is looking for a specific supernatural creature and think they found it.

Tier Three: The accused is guilty of “witchcraft” but represents a much bigger threat than the hunters realize. Maybe the prisoner is a werewolf or vampire who’s acting as a scout, or who allowed herself to be caught. The prisoner cannot be disposed of by public hanging and isn’t fazed by torture. Can the characters sort fact from fiction and appropriately contain the real threat? How do the hunters save the townspeople when the accused triggers a deadly trap?

Suffering Innocents

Summary: The vast majority of the accusers and victims of witchcraft are children under the age of 13. What creature or demonic servant is afflicting the young? How do the hunters stop it before the mass hysteria spreads throughout the Colonies?

Setup: This type of story is flexible and can be introduced as the primary concept or a sub-plot. It works well regardless of whether the hunters are brand new to the area or not. Here, the characters will determine how much (or how little) they want to get involved with the townsfolk as they attempt to track down the creature that plagues the children.

Tier One: The creature plaguing the children is active in a particular area. All other reports are false trails leading to dead ends. Through careful investigation, the hunters may be able to track and trap the creature — but will they be able to convince the townsfolk only one witch is to blame? How will the characters isolate the threat and, at the same time, stop hysteria from spreading? What happens if one of the kids claims that one of the hunters is a witch?

Tier Two: A member of the Lucifuge suffers from “witch fever” and is convinced one of the kids is a dire threat to the town. The characters either know this hunter on a personal level — fellow farmer, merchant, trapper — or have heard about her many deeds. When the hunters
investigate, consider balancing how frequently clues are revealed. By leading the characters to believe there is a real threat, how will they react when they find out a hunter is so afraid of being accused, she’s succumbed to hysteria?

**Tier Three:** The supernatural threat is a respected resident of the town and is acting as a Judge. Gauge the threat level depending upon how new the characters are to the area. Hunters who stroll through Salem Town for the first time will feel like they’re intruding. Characters who’ve lived in Salem Village all their lives may not realize who the threat is until they’re swept up in the conspiracy. The children are pawns for a larger game, one that involves the hunters on a personal level. This creature knows the characters inside and out and will use innocent people to enact its revenge and make the hunters suffer.

**Inspirations**


Roleplaying games written in this vein include *Colonial Record*, *Witch Hunter: The Invisible World*, and *The Savage World of Solomon Kane*. Comics include *Salem: Queen of Thorns* and *Revere: Revolution in Silver*. Both are useful for a different take on witch-hunting and the time period.

By far, however, the richest source of information can be found in documentaries like *Witch Hunt* (2008) and non-fiction books. There are quite a few titles ranging from historical era books like *Discourse on Witchcraft* (1689) and *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693) to analytical tomes like *Witch-Hunt: Mysteries of the Salem Witch Trials* and *The Salem Witch Trials: a Day-by-Day Chronicle of a Community Under Siege*. The best and most accurate view of the time period can be discovered in historical tomes like *Social and Economic Networks in Early Massachusetts: Atlantic Connections*, *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Volume 14*, and *Writing the Past: Teaching Reading in Colonial America and the United States 1640–1940*. 
The desert dust is little more than an inconvenience to Merew-Tjaw, but to one of her greatness, even an inconvenience is an affront to the divine order. Riding camelback through the desert streets of an unfamiliar city mere hours after her disorienting, cult-sponsored awakening only adds to her considerable irritability, which is further fostered by her traveling companions, a sneering dwarf and a witless cultist.

"I'm losing patience, Annoub," says the undying woman through the gauzy cloth that encircles her still-reforming shell. She runs her thumbs back and forth over the reins of the camel, wondering how they would feel while choking the still-smiling dwarf's life from his own resurrected cadaver. "These towns are always too small. What is it this time? Fifty men? A hundred? I cannot stress how much I am displeased that my cult saw fit to awaken me for a skirmish like this. Towns will change hands with every cycle of locusts. The fact that you pay any heed to the cowardice of mortals is a disservice to all of us."

The dwarf continues to grin, his ever so slightly crooked teeth gleaming white in his coal-dark face. "Your annoyance will be a great service, my compatriot," he says with an exaggerated, formal tone. "No doubt if you are in such a great hurry to return to slumber, you will leverage your considerable power to magnificent effect, and we can all resume our peculiar duties as sponsored by the Judges. Being so distant from my own awakening and thus denuded, you won't begrudge me this bit of assistance. Especially since I've kept that pectoral so safe for you for so long."

A momentary memory pushes in the back of Merew-Tjaw's mind, of a brilliant pectoral of beaten… copper? Brass? She can't be sure, and as fast as it comes the memory subsides once more under the turmoil of her fragmentary mind.

A curse on that dwarf anyway, she thinks, a curse for his collection of relics, a curse for his flouting of the Judges, and most especially a curse for his knack for awakening before me. But she does not speak this aloud, instead muttering formless words under her breath. Her cult has raised her to defend them, and the dwarf is part of that plan; she must see to its fruition, for the moment at least.

"All the king's horses and all the king's men," says the dwarf's sycophantic idiot cultist. Merew-Tjaw almost killed him when she first saw him, but the dwarf interceded, with a claim about the cultist having prophetic visions. Having listened to his mindless babble for over a disorienting hour, Merew-Tjaw finds that she is close to killing him anyway. He's not one of hers.

The cultist, shaking uncontrollably — as he has been since Merew-Tjaw's awakening — raises one arm and points. At first, Merew-Tjaw sees the soldiers, staggered rows of them like in any war, men in the garments of the period. Hundreds of them are charging out of the deep desert to assault the gates of the town. Merew-Tjaw sneers at the force, and then the air fills with strange sounds and smells. Men fall on the sand, their blood welling out from invisible arrows. Merew turns to look for the sorcerers raining this magic down on the invaders, and in the harbor are great beasts, behemoths of metal and smoke, like cities made to float on the water. The sand in the outer defenses bursts upward like a giant hand rising, flinging men into the air.

The attackers clamber over the outer earthworks and the defenders, greatly outnumbered, fall into disarray. The sorcerous citadels in the bay watch ominously. Merew-Tjaw glances over to Annoub. The dwarf says, "They make war like the enemies of Irem."
The idiot cultist speaks in a singsong voice, “Ashes, ashes, they all fall down.” He has strangely pale skin, burned by the sun, and Merew-Tjaw notices that his eyes are unfocused, like an addict of strange alchemies. She narrows her eyes against the noontday brightness and utters a strange word whose meaning she cannot remember, but one that strikes him senseless and flings him from his camel. She descends to the sands, her bare feet reveling in the heat, the plain cloth wrappings fluttering despite the lack of a breeze, and tells Annoub, “Time for us to move on.”

The Ruins of Empire

"Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special; that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort. And, sadder still, there is always a chorus of willing intellectuals to say calming words about benign or altruistic empires, as if one shouldn't trust the evidence of one's eyes, watching the destruction and the misery and death brought by the latest mission civilizatrice."

—Edward Said, Orientalism

The sun is setting upon the old world. Soon the barge of Ra will pass into the Underworld, and then night will fall across the land. The world already feels the tremors of discontent and the coming of a time of great conflict. No empire is eternal — there is no Rite of Return for a society, not for Irem, nor for any of the pale shadows that humanity has erected in the ensuing years.

The great empires in Europe and Asia Minor are on the edge of crumbling. Their competitors and their offspring nip at their heels like jackals. Soon they, too, will collapse into obscurity, becoming mere fragments of their former glory, their mysteries and their greatness lost to time.

This situation is not foreign to the Deathless. After Irem’s sudden disappearance, the ancient dead awakened to a world shaped by the influence of their former culture, but with each Sothic Turn that influence became increasingly distant. The destruction of old kingdoms and the rise of new social orders is familiar even to those who have little memory of their past existence.

Even so, this interruption comes with startling changes. Interlopers raid the tombs of mummies in unprecedented numbers — pale-skinned thieves from far beyond the boundaries of old Irem. The technology of this world is nothing short of miraculous. At the last Sothic Turn, Roman Aegypt used tools of iron and bronze, leather shoes and stone roads. Now the teeming mortals boast command of lightning from the sky, voices from the ether, fire and explosions from the products of the earth. It is a time in which craven men may command the power once held only by the mighty priests and wizards of a bygone age, yet they feel no sense of awe at the miracles that they grasp. To the philosophers of this era, there may be no gods at all, and this nihilistic idea that both the advances of science and the chaos of warfare serve no master and no Judge is troubling to the Deathless.

Most disturbingly, many of the Deathless find themselves transported to far shores. Away from the familiar river valleys and deserts of northern Africa, the lands of distant countries are strange, often humid and cloying. While their social structures are different, for an ancient cultist from the labyrinthine society of Irem, the customs and laws are easily learned. By means of new transportation, though, on rail or on wing, the bodies of the dead — and many of their key relics
are disinterred and moved wholly to far shores. Even the threat of curses and the physical intervention of cults is not always enough to stop the wholesale confiscation of corpses.

At the beginning of this 20th century, the Deathless awaken in unprecedented numbers, a century before the next Sothic Turn. Their brief sojourns are sparked by the many invasions into their tombs, both due to the presence of foreign adventurers and the increased demand for protection by the mummies’ cults. With the arrival of the next full Descent nearly upon them, the Deathless of this era increasingly make provisions to spread their influence through the industrialized world.

Theme: Unlife Among the Ruins

The Ruins of Empire era spans roughly 1893–1924, a period of great turmoil in the modern age. In western Europe, the British Empire is contracting, and its reach will soon wane. The nations of Europe fall into the clutches of the Great War in 1914, and this disaster rapidly drives those nations into near collapse, with long-lasting repercussions that will boil to a head a generation later. In the Middle East, the Ottoman Empire is a paper tiger, and the weight of the Great War will finally sunder it and give rise to new nations with its passing.

Mummies that arise in this era are watching the world collapse around them. To many Deathless, this provides a certain sense of satisfaction: All of the technological toys and so-called “civilization” of the modern world cannot prevent the collapse of humanity back into paroxysms of brutality. Guns, bombs, automobiles, and radios may not have been invented in Irem, but these devices do not seem to make the humans of this age in any way superior to their historical predecessors. Unfortunately, this also means that mummies are increasingly awakened by cultists threatened by the onslaught of war. When soldiers march into the valleys of northern Africa once again, the cults in Egypt’s modern cities quietly call upon their protectors, who are not so easily dissuaded with bullets. In the midst of this strife, the governments of Britain and France impose their own attempts at rule in Egypt as an attempt to counter the Ottoman alliance with the Central Powers, and nationalists in Egypt who remember older, traditional rites use their Deathless allies to protect themselves from the overreach of foreign imperial powers.

The descent into the Great War mirrors the Descent of the Deathless. At the opening of the 20th century, the promise of the industrial world as a place of bounty and wonder is imprinted upon the consciousness of people from the technologically-developed nations. The crushing war that follows drives home the point that from these heights, the fall is precipitous. This similarity is not lost on mummies who find themselves repeatedly awakened during this period, as their cults grow increasingly desperate or ever more relic-hungry Egyptophiles disturb their relics.

While the Deathless are always servants of their Judges, the world at the dawn of the new century challenges this notion, too. The tumult of trench warfare and the imperialist spread of the European powers strains ideas of faith: How could any god permit the massive slaughter of the era, and what does it mean when gods are powerless against the invasion of colonialists who displace their ancient role in society? For mummies, this is not a matter of faith; the cycle of visiting the Underworld confirms essential truths about the mummy’s role in the world and the presence of supernatural authority to guide the scions of Irem. Increasingly, though, even the tenets of faith are crumbling — and in these ruins, too, the Deathless see both questions and opportunities.

Mood: Curses Great and Small
For Deathless who awaken into the early 20th century, the arrival of foreign powers, the Great War, and the strife that surrounds Egypt and the Ottoman Empire place a great strain on their personal activities. Though the mummies remain (mostly) faithful servants of the Judges and the cults that protect them, the sheer scope of the political and military conflicts that surround them forces the Deathless into new ways of thinking about their world. For some mummies, this means taking advantage of the sudden surge of interest in all things Egyptian, and relocating their cults overseas. For others, these sweeping changes are little more than a backdrop to the personal anguish suffered by those seeking blissful repose or even the elusive hope of Apotheosis.

Mummies in this era watch the world’s Descent, as the nations grapple with each other and their lifeblood spills on the fields of war. Countries lose their identities and vanish like an Iremite dream. For the Deathless this is no great change; Irem had its share of military conquests and wars. But it raises the question: Is the world itself trapped in a cycle of Descent? Will civilizations crumble, their fire guttering and slumbering for ages before new ones arise?

Though mummies are used to being outsiders in the societies to which they awaken, in this modern world they are quite a bit less strange than some of the people with whom they associate. Groups like the Theosophical Society, the Rosicrucians, and of course LDI all have roots in this era, pursuing ideas or magics that, to the Deathless, look like distorted afterimages of the magic of Irem.

If Apotheosis exists for the Deathless, does it also exist for the world? And if not, is humanity itself doomed to a constant cycle of self-destruction? In The World of Darkness, almost certainly.

What This Is — And Is Not

The Ruins of Empire is a primer to provide you with useful ideas and new rules to fuel Mummy: The Curse games based in this period of empires in decline. The focus here is on how the Deathless interact with the emergence of the modern world from the ashes of war and the collapse of old imperial powers. To that end, this era focuses on settings as they are of interest to the Deathless, and upon rules useful to building Mummy characters who can interact easily with this era, a full century before the next Sothic Turn.

The historical material here touches on high points of the era, and provides an outline of places that may make for interesting chronicles. These ideas can serve as a jumping-off point for your own references. You can easily find much more comprehensive historical information through the Internet or the library.

Settings: The Western Empires

The Ruins of Empire era focuses predominantly on two world powers: the British Empire and the Ottoman Empire. Both are world-spanning civilizations that, at the opening of the era, appear to be unassailable and mighty, but by the end of the Great War find their power broken.

While mummies can (and do) head to all corners of the world, both before and during this period, the prime areas of importance for most of the Deathless lie in these two centers of proud cultures.

Britain — The Victorian and Edwardian Eras
In 1893, the British Empire is in the tail end of the Victorian era. This is a time of unprecedented stability and prosperity for the British. Industrialization has improved the income of the working class, though it has also brought hazards of pollution and dangerous labor. Much of Britain’s wealth comes from its colonial policies: Wars fought against other European powers determine who will control the fate of lucrative gold mines, coal, gems, and spices from Africa and India. The indigenous populations of those continents, of course, find themselves yoked under the influence of the colonizing European powers, often at gunpoint.

At home in Great Britain, the Victorian mores of the age provide a rigid society with a firm adherence to the ideals of industrial and scientific progress, propriety, decorum, and the supremacy of British culture — along with a degree of noblesse oblige, in the form of the duty of the civilized world to bring order and civilization, often with Christianization, to the “less developed” parts of the Earth. Naturally, the subjects of the Empire have their own ideas about this process.

With the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, the Empire enters its brief Edwardian phase, which in many ways follows the Victorian trends. This time marks the beginnings of many technologies that are recognizably modern, such as the widespread use of the automobile, the development of the radio, and the pioneering of manned heavier-than-air flight. This summer of the Empire ends when Britain is ensnared in the devastation of the Great War, a period of destruction that simultaneously unifies the country with nationalist sentiment, cracks the stability of the Empire by increasing calls for independence in British colonies abroad, and overthrows the structured, rigid codes of Victorian society.

To the Deathless, of course, Britain is much like Irem after the Pact of Ubar. While its soldiers fight in wars abroad, the battles in its heart are political struggles between Whigs and Tories, architectural duels between Classical and Gothic Revival. Its sorcerers are certainly no match for the Shan’iatu, but from their hidden laboratories they release killing vapors, exploding shells, and devices that can sense or communicate with outposts many miles distant. Gold and luxuries flow into the coffers of Britain from its subjects abroad. Like Irem, it too must decline, though in this case the Deathless may be present to see the fall.

While few Deathless find themselves in Britain proper upon first awakening in this era — not many had reason to make the trek from Roman Ægypt to the far-flung lands of the Picts during the last Sothic Turn — the gloomy island kingdom is an eventual destination for many mummies whose tombs are invaded or relics stolen away. With British archeologists spiriting away large numbers of relics and mummies for “safekeeping” in museums, Deathless often have little choice but to follow. Worse still, unwitting tomb robbers sometimes destroy relics (or die near them!) without understanding the forces that they command, leading to the creation of many Amkhata. Some of the mummies disinterred by tomb robbers may be Sadikh, and given their value to the Deathless, one may feel compelled to traverse oceans in order to track down a missing companion.

A British Timetable

Just so that you know what to read about for your chronicle, here’s a concise table of important dates and events for Britain during this era.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>British Era</th>
<th>Important Events</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Victorian Era</td>
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Of interest to the Deathless, the British hold significant sway throughout much of Africa. British interests rule directly or indirectly over Sudan, Egypt, and South Africa, as well as several other parts of the continent. At this time, the British have been present in parts of Africa for a century, and several wars have cemented their presence. To the Deathless, this would mostly seem to be a petty series of squabbles between natives and foreigners, but the British engage in a program of raiding the tombs of antiquity and sending vast numbers of vessels (and mummified corpses!) abroad. This program of relocation began, though, with an enemy of the British Empire.

The roots of modern British Egyptology probably lie with Napoleon Bonaparte, who invaded Egypt in 1798. In addition to securing trade routes and thwarting British interests, Napoleon’s army acquired a large number of Egyptian artifacts, which were sent to France as curiosities. In 1799, Pierre-François Bouchard uncovered the Rosetta Stone, which provided the key to unlock the hieroglyphic language. In 1801, the Rosetta Stone fell into British hands when their army took Alexandria (then, as now, the home of the Arisen-famed Prince of Glass). Within the next several years scholars managed to translate the inscriptions on the stone, copied in hieroglyphs, demotic, and ancient Greek, and then used this to build the beginnings of a dictionary of the hieroglyphic language.

This ushered in a new study of Egyptian sites and records. In short order, both scientists and thieves plundered the sites of antiquities. In 1822 Claude Lelorrain used explosives to remove the ceiling from the Temple at Dendera; the ceiling fresco subsequently sold to the king for a monumental sum and was placed in the Louvre. This set the tenor for future expeditions of Egyptologists, who often sought wealth as readily as they did knowledge — and even the “enlightened few” hoping to preserve the antiquities often saw the capture and expatriation of artifacts as a duty to bring them into “civilized hands,” under the assumption that European cultures and technologies were better stewards of such artifacts. These sorts of daring and damaging exploits accelerated, and in so doing, pressed into the tombs of the Deathless.
Sudan

Situated on the east side of north Africa, with the Sahara as its southern border, Sudan is an African nation that spent much of the 19th century under Ottoman control, but at the opening of The Ruins of Empire it is the site of the Battle of Omdurman in 1898. This clash between British forces and Mahdists (a local group of nationalists who enforced Sharia law) ended with a British victory, after which the British established a governor-general to administer the country, ostensibly as an Egyptian appointee but in reality as a British colony. By 1914 Sudan is officially recognized as part of the Kingdom of Egypt and Sudan, rather than a subject province of the Ottoman Empire, a state of affairs that lasts until 1956. Starting in 1924 the British — in a manner similar to the division of India and Pakistan — push to divide Sudan into a predominantly Muslim population in the north and a non-Muslim, English-speaking population in the south.

Mummies will recognize Sudan as a point of interest because its location places it inside or near-to the purported borders of lost Irem. While Sudan may not have the grandiose pyramids and temples for which Egypt is famous, the country was actually a ruling body over Egypt in the 8th century BCE, a time that some Arisen might hazily remember from just after the Sothic Turn of 910 BCE. In this heyday, the Kingdom of Kush took over the Egyptian dynasty, an act that almost certainly had repercussions for cults and mummies still situated in that area.

Sudan is a locale consumed with war, even before the Great War begins. Khalifa Abdallahi ibn Muhammad attempted to expand his territory with attacks on Ethiopia in 1887 and Egypt in 1889, both of which failed; he dies in battle in 1899, paving the way for the takeover of Sudan. When the British take control through their Egyptian governor, the local populace recognizes this as an attack on their sovereignty and a further attempt to erode the Islamic underpinnings of Sudanese law and society. As a result, there are many opportunities for the Arisen to take advantage of unrest, so long as they are careful to fit into the expectations of the populace (or just don’t care what mere mortals think of them).

Egyptomania Strikes

Thanks to the exposure from Napoleon’s sortie and the subsequent reports from visitors to Egypt, the European populace quickly became enamored with the romance of Egypt. For some, the country represented a proto-civilization, an organizational model of the earliest ideas behind the creation of a society. For many others, Egypt represented a mystical ideal, one that could be interpreted as an alternative to technological civilization. The pervasive belief in mummy’s curses, Pharaonic powers, ritual spells, and even Aten worship all drew in people seeking supernatural answers in an increasingly industrialized world. Naturally, very few of those people would ever discover the truths behind such distorted legends; some would go on to form rogue cults and harmless mystical fraternities, while others became somewhat more forbidding groups such as the LDI (see Mummy: The Curse, p. 204) and the Rosicrucians (see below).

The rise of Egyptomania leads to a patronage system. Wealthy aristocrats seeking vanity treasures employ archeologists — or, sometimes, men of more dubious provenance — to uncover Egyptian treasures, which are smuggled back to Europe for display in private collections. The Egypt Excavation Fund, founded in 1882, raises money for the express purpose of funding European scholars to travel through Egypt and produce scholarly papers, often with a particularly Eurocentric bent; the Society changes its name after the Great War to the Egypt Exploration Society, but its mission remains largely unchanged.
European countries jockeying for influence in Egypt attempt to secure rights to dig sites or collections. Predominant among these competing interests are Britain, France, and Germany. In each case, the countries attempt to puppet the Egyptian government, both for military purposes and for their own cultural cachet.

To the Deathless, this intrusion of European explorers all seems a bit vainglorious and absurd. Most of the European Egyptologists of the period seek out artifacts on the premise of keeping the largest collection for their own national pride, a situation that the Arisen see as looters comparing their illicit hoards for prestige among thieves. The servants from Irem don’t care if the patrons behind the looters are wealthy, influential, or educated; their duties require the collection of vessels and the safeguarding of tombs. Stopping the robbers may, however, require going to the source, and so a mummy rising in response to a call from a cult or a violation of his remains might well travel to Europe to track down and subvert or eliminate the aristocrat who had the temerity to finance such an inauspicious venture.

Crossing the Channel

Before the beginning of the Great War, entering Britain is not a particularly difficult feat. The Deathless understand basic principles such as currency and borders; it’s just a matter of acquiring this currency to cross those borders. The largest hindrance is time — traveling from Egypt to Britain in 1893 likely means taking a ship across the Mediterranean Sea, passing through several countries by train, then taking a boat across the Channel to England. (The ferries don’t yet have the technology to carry train cars, and the underground channel tunnel is still a century away. Telegraph communication across the Channel, however, is possible.)

Even with money a non-issue, the Arisen will certainly raise some eyebrows in continental Europe: Because none of the Deathless are ethnically Caucasian, they stand out quite a bit from the rest of the populace (see Mummy p. 19). While the servants of Irem may not pay much credence to the issue of ethnicity and skin color, many of the continental Europeans do. Slavery has only been abolished in Britain for a few decades at this point, and issues of race and class distinction are still paramount. Making travel arrangements, securing documents, and in some cases even finding a berth may present frustrating challenges. Naturally, a mummy can confront these with wealth, strength, guile, or magic, but the more blatant the mummy’s response, the less likely it is that the trip will be successful — even if a mummy succeeds in securing passage by force or threat of force, each further step will present more resistance. The best option is for the mummy’s cult to help arrange passage, and this can be particularly eased if the mummy also seeks patronage.

Since the explorers from Europe are keen to collect artifacts, legends, and prestige from “mysterious Africa,” the Arisen and their cults can pose as local guides, mystics, or historians in order to secure patronage. Naturally, many of the Deathless would chafe at such an arrangement, but this does have the great advantages of subtlety and of opening society doors that would otherwise be closed to a so-called savage.

Once the Great War begins, traveling to England becomes a dicier proposition. Britain takes its borders much more seriously once the War is on, and any traveler must pass a battery of questions, examinations, and background checks. The military can choose to arbitrarily restrict or deny travel to any foreigner, on the basis of war security. Affinities such as Blessed Soul and Divine Countenance can help to push this process along, but rumor holds that Queen Victoria established her own cabinet for matters occult, and if this is true then the use of Affinities and
Utterances risks drawing attention. While mortal sorcerers are little more than an annoyance, no mummy needs to waste time dealing with petty would-be rivals, especially when they have the ear of the royal government.

**Stories in England**

Whether searching for a stolen vessel, pursuing another mummy, or fighting against a rival cult, a mummy in England has much to experience. England is, itself, the site of many ancient supernatural groups; while the Deathless might consider them petty compared to the magnificence of Irem of the Pillars, some of them can still be dangerous for the Arisen. After all, how can a mummy fulfill his purpose if he’s trapped in an otherworldly maze beneath a mound deep in the forest?

Some interesting story hooks that present themselves for mummies traveling to England in this period include:

- Several vessels transported back to England are accidentally broken or destroyed, perhaps during a storm, or in a break-in, or during a house fire in a richly-appointed manor with a private collection. This in turn creates several lesser Amkhata. The mummy first awakens to track down the stolen vessels, but then must deal with the Amkhata after arriving in England.

- A mummy arises prematurely to discover that enemies are closing in on her; her cult is already badly denuded or wiped out, and her foes (other mummies, Shuankhsen, or some unknown rival) are closing in on her tomb. Recognizing the cultural divide in Europe, the mummy arranges to travel to England as a servant — not an especially glamorous position, but a familiar one. By taking on this humble guise she manages to avoid notice for a time, but she must reconcile this with the burning drive of her Sekhem, pushing her to finally engineer a confrontation with her adversary.

- A mummy in Khartoum (the capital of Sudan) awakens to the call of her cult, who hope to use her power to expel British foreign involvement and to strengthen the Mahdi cause. Much to their dismay, they discover that the mummy is not particularly enamored of the religious fervor of the Mahdi, but is nevertheless bound to their agenda. Does the mummy care enough about this unfamiliar religion to resist the call of the cult and risk a rapid Descent, or does she seek to reconcile the Mahdi faith with her own understanding of Duat? A female mummy in particular would face resentment and anger, at least until she makes her power known.

- In a pastiche of *The Secret Garden*, a trio of lonely children find a hidden garden in a manor house, where the emotionally distant owner of the manor has secured certain vessels that he acquired in his youth. Though he does not realize it, the curses from these objects have led to emotional traumas and deaths in his family; the children, unaware of this, have taken to playing in the garden among the relics, and the magic of the relics has given them a small measure of magical fulfillment — making coincidences seem to happen, causing animals to behave unusually docile, or offering illusionary glimpses of the fantasies that the children play out. When the Deathless arrives to reclaim the relics, it becomes clear that the curses and powers have infected this entire household; does the mummy steal away the relics and leave the children with shattered memories and mundanity, or wipe out the affliction by stooping to murder of the innocent?

- Awakened by her cult after moving to England previously, the mummy learns that one of her most valuable cultists has vanished under strange circumstances. The other members of the cult
say that the individual went to a mystic site, hoping to find evidence of a relic, but vanished in the middle of the night. The two other cultists who went along can offer only unusual descriptions of “beings of smoke and fire” or “roiling darkness that seeped out from the ground.” With the mummy arisen for the purpose of finding the missing cultist, investigation turns up evidence that the individual was kidnapped by some sort of supernatural entity, perhaps taken beneath the hill. How do the Judges offer guidance to the Deathless when they find themselves in the twisted magical labyrinths of another culture’s ancient world of spirits and faeries? (Storytellers might look for inspirations in Changeling: The Lost or Mage: The Awakening, though it’s important to keep an eye toward the mummies’ central focus on the quest for memory and identity, in which these are conundrums from another culture rather than supernatural fighting matches.)

The Ottoman Empire — The Sick Man of Europe

The Ottoman Empire reigns over much of the Middle East, parts of Africa, and southeast Europe. The Ottomans have pioneered advances in optics, rocketry, steam engines, and flight, sometimes even earlier than their counterparts in Europe. Their society, having recently gone through several reforms, separates religious law from secular law, affords equality before the law for all people regardless of social class and wealth, decriminalizes homosexuality, and boasts several modern factories and a modernized military service. But much of this will soon be in the past.

When the colonial powers begin their expansion into Africa, the Ottoman Empire is already well-established there, but age has taken its toll. The Empire is heavy with debt and has suffered disastrous defeats in military campaigns against Austria-Hungary and Russia, which have carved off several independent states. Though the Empire is modernized, with progressive civil laws and a standing army, it is unable to prevent the encroachment of other European powers upon its territory. Britain in particular assists the Empire, sending troops to conflicts in Cyprus and Egypt, then remaining firmly entrenched in those territories and exerting further control.

At the start of The Ruins of Empire era, the Ottoman Empire is considered a weakened but still dangerous territory, like an aging tiger that is slow but still has claws. By the end of the era, the Empire is gone, dissolved by the pressures of the Great War, replaced with several splinter states and the newly-formed Republic of Turkey.

When the dust settles, the foundations are laid for many countries that we recognize as parts of the modern Middle East — Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, and Saudi Arabia were all in territories previously controlled by the Ottomans.

An Ottoman Timetable

The Ottoman Empire is in the throes of disintegration in this era; here’s how things fall apart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ruling Era</th>
<th>Important Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Abdul Hamid II</td>
<td>Beginning of Hamidian Massacres (ethnic cleansing of Armenians, until 1896)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bulgarian insurrection in Macedonia</td>
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<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td></td>
<td>Young Turk revolution (reformers, Turkish separatists, and European influences) restores earlier version of the constitution, limits power of the Sultan; Bulgaria declares independence</td>
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1909 Mehmed V Countercoup (monarchists and hard-line Islamists) attempts to reverse the Young Turk revolution, but fails
1914 Ottoman Empire enters the Great War as one of the Central Powers, with Germany
1915 Deportation and massacre of ethnic Armenians in the Armenian Genocide (also, brutality against other ethnic minorities, including Greeks); Russian advance during Caucasus campaign
1916 Arab Revolt begins, Arab nationalists attempt to break apart from Ottoman rule, with support from British and French elements looking to destabilize the Empire
1918 Mehmed VI Turkish war of independence begins; occupation of Constantinople
1922 Sultanate abolished
1923 Republic of Turkey forms
1924 Office of Caliph abolished

Constantinople

The capital city of the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople, lies at the gateway between the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea, which leads to the Mediterranean. The city has been continuously inhabited since antiquity, and served as a center of trade and government for Rome and the Byzantine Empire before its conquest by the Ottomans. For significant portions of the Middle Ages, it was the largest and most cosmopolitan city in Europe, where traders from across the continent converged and Muslims, Christians, and Jews all congregated in relative peace.

By the time of The Ruins of Empire, Constantinople is a grand city in the process of modernization. Though the Sultan is conservative, the promise of wealth and the benefits of industrialization are a potent lure. The city is a contrasting mix of medieval construction and nouveau architecture. Much of the flat land along the shore is covered in whitewashed square buildings with tiled roofs, and the occasional dome among them. Older or more impressive structures are surrounded by sets of four towers, and a modern bridge for automobiles crosses the inlet. The harbor is regularly choked by ships and sea-trade — large steamers as well as the occasional lateen-rigged boat.

Of interest to the Arisen, Constantinople has been continuously inhabited since before recorded history. It is quite possible, in fact, that a mummy might have made the journey to the city at nearly any point in history before the modern era. At the last Sothic Turn, in 551 CE, Constantinople was the capital of the Byzantine Empire under Justinian I, and any Arisen drawn into the politics of that era would likely have found the trip straightforward. Though the city’s population suffered under plagues and invasions, it remained a center of the Mediterranean world, and thus an ideal place from which a mummy could form a cult with significant political reach. For those mummies who remained involved in smaller, more local politics, Constantinople would still be a place known due to its comparative magnificence.

During The Ruins of Empire, Constantinople follows the theme of the time. At the outset, it looms as the capital of a once-mighty Empire, soon to vanish. By 1918, Ottoman forces have been routed, and British, French, and Italian troops occupy the city. The last Sultan leaves in
1922, and shortly thereafter, the sun sets on the Ottoman Empire; the newly-formed Republic of Turkey places its capital in Ankara.

These themes make Constantinople a focal point for Mummy stories in this time period. Vessels acquired from the northern coast of Africa could easily make their way into the hands of traders or aristocrats in the city. Cults with significant Reach might find that they must bribe, intimidate, or co-opt bureaucrats in the capital in order to proceed with their aims. As the Ottoman Empire crumbles, some provinces like Bulgaria break away, while others like Sudan come under the sway of European powers. In either case, a cult may find itself dislocated or relics removed; a cult may also call upon its patron to defend it from invading forces, or engage in brutal sectarian violence against one ethnicity or another, in a war of cultural extermination that the mummy may find puzzling and possibly revolting, yet mandatory. The Karakol Society (or Sentinel Association) secretly works for Turkish independence in the city itself from 1918 up until the society is rooted out by the occupation in 1920; members or allies of that society could easily be cultists hoping to protect their patron from digging by officious invaders who suspect a tomb of being a secret meeting place for revolutionaries.

Though Britain, France, and Italy did send troops to occupy the city, it was not a military occupation in the dramatic “bombs and fires” sense. Rather, the commanders of the occupying forces drafted several treaties in conferences with the aim of removing the Sultan and all opposition forces, and dividing the Ottoman Empire into occupation regions under foreign (Christian) governments overseeing the various local (Muslim) governing bodies. The occupying forces rounded up various officials and rebels, many of whom were exiled to Malta, but in large part kept the city intact, with a stated goal of re-opening the Bosporus Strait, protecting the Armenian populace, and denouncing Turkish nationalists. Thus, the city was a dangerous place for its inhabitants, but it avoided the massive destruction visited on other cities in the Great War due to the introduction of artillery.

Slavery, Genocide, and Imperialism

During the years leading up to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, many events transpired that modern readers would consider atrocities. Specific ethnicities were rounded up and deported or executed; slavery persisted until as late as 1908; fundamentalism and nationalism led to extremism. From the outside, colonial ambitions by Western European nations exerted enormous pressure upon the states in and around the Ottoman territory and in Africa. Entire countries were carved up arbitrarily, sometimes as a deliberate policy of “divide and conquer,” often with the result of inflaming various tribal conflicts or splitting up families. The European interests in the area also resulted in dual or tripartite agreements about how to split up the Middle East with an eye toward colonial conquests and trade routes, often promising specific lands in exchange for allies — Britain promised an Arab homeland in exchange for the aid of Arabs in the Great War, and promised a homeland for Jews in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the later British Mandate of Palestine, which naturally led to, shall we say, problems later.

These topics are, naturally, quite sensitive to many people. Although the era is a period rife with these difficulties, and they can contribute to a rich tapestry of stories, make sure to discuss such topics with your game group before you
introduce them. Some people may have strong feelings on these matters and possibly even find them unsuitable for their entertainment.

Stories in the Ottoman Empire

Although in the modern age the Ottoman Empire is no more, during the Ruin of Empires era it is an ancient husk of its former remembered glory, much like mummies themselves. Ottoman territory historically ranged across southeast Europe, parts of north and east Africa, and throughout the Middle East, making it a pervasive influence even for mummies who never traveled far from the lands of the Nameless Empire. The proto-Arabic, Islamic, post-Byzantine flavor of the Empire can provide a striking contrast to games set in Britain or Egypt, which might feel more familiar to players used to Victorian settings or adventures in Cairo and the surrounding deserts. The Empire’s political structure plays very well for Mummy games, as local towns handle their own politics, overseen by a loose civil structure leading up to the sultan, so a mummy’s cult could easily co-opt an entire town without drawing too much attention from the national level. Arisen whose cults become engrossed in the schemes of Topkapi Palace will find it a rich haven of intrigue, with the sultan and his conservative advisors, the influence of the sultan’s harem from one wing of the palace, and a parade of foreign advisors sent to modernize the army but whose suggestions are dismissed by military generals interested in maintaining the status quo. Even as the Great War turns against the Ottomans, the sultan remains insulated by his advisors, and does not seem to understand that his Empire is about to be dissolved. Naturally, this is a wonderful backdrop for Arisen activities, such as:

• The mummy arises in Constantinople, only to discover that his cult has converted to Islam. While the mummy may not care about this relatively new religion, the cult has other ideas — alternatively terrified and fawning — because they’ve come into contact with a competing cult of traditional Iremites. The character’s cult has awakened the mummy with instructions to destroy the other cult, including their mummy patron, a directive that pits the Arisen’s duty to obey the cult against the sacred reverence for the duty of Irem.

• A member of the Karakol Society who is also an initiate of the cult awakens the mummy in 1918, demanding aid in the secret Turkish resistance. When the mummy asks for more specific instructions, the cultist insists that the mummy stop the British invaders. Killing British soldiers is ultimately a fruitless endeavor; the mummy will run out of Sekhem before destroying enough of the army to halt the advance, and will only draw suspicion. The player must find some way to fulfill the demand of the cult while remaining unobtrusive enough to avoid becoming the center of a full-scale military effort by European forces.

• The mummy arises near Ankara, as Turkish forces fight for a free Republic, but also while the Ottoman Empire attempts to suppress or exterminate other ethnicities. The cult is riven between members who see the protection of a new Republic of Turkey as paramount, and those who believe that they must carry out a pogrom to ensure a pure heritage. Now the mummy must navigate the treacherous backstabbing of her own cult, with some members working to purge undesirables while others constantly dive into revolutionary battles.

• The mummy is observed by a young writer in Constantinople, who is trying to write a novel to convey the intricacies of his characters’ emotions while mirroring what he sees as the stagnation and decline of Ottoman society. The writer is part of the Servet-i Fünun, or Scientific Literature movement, a group of writers working to establish a pan-Turkish identity through modernized
writing with the goal of jolting social sensibilities into reform. Shocked by the effect of Sybaris, the writer is unable to conceptualize the reality of the Arisen, so instead he transforms his impressions of the mummy into characters in his novel. In 1900, Mehmet Rauf publishes his novel, *Eylül*, which details the psychological descent of a quartet of characters locked in a downward spiral of love affairs and secret anxieties that threaten to destroy their health and their lives. Once the mummy reads it, it is clear that the themes of inability to express love and depression at the bleakness of the future reflect the denuded state of the Deathless. Does this analysis spur some of the Guild of Scribes into action for fear that the novel contains underlying metaphysical truths, or perhaps turn an Arisen reader to Apotheosis, with a mind to escaping the constant numbing servitude of endless lives?

- Rising in Topkapi Palace in Constantinople in the late 1800s, the mummy discovers that his cult has been mostly exterminated, and the only remaining member is in the sultan’s harem. Though she is loyal, she is also trapped in the harem wing of the palace, subject to the intrigues of the court, and desperate to call upon the mummy for protection — and also to steal away a relic held by the sultan, which is causing the increasing paranoia of Abdul Hamid II. Obviously, the mummy cannot be seen in the harem apartments without causing alarm, and actually approaching the sultan directly could cause more problems than it solves. If only there were some way to get the gilded copy of the Qur’an away from the increasingly erratic sultan without arousing excessive suspicion….

**Egypt — The Old Home**

Of course, while the European influence on Egypt is pervasive in this era, Egypt still has a rich historical culture all its own. Dealing with European imperialists may be necessary, but the Egyptians are much closer to what mummies remember of the Nameless Empire, much more accommodating, and much better informed about the history and customs that mummies hazily recall.

Besides which, a typical mummy doesn’t exactly fit in at the local British country club.

At the outset of the era, Egypt is under the thumb of British controllers, although it has spent its last century as a nominal part of the Ottoman Empire. With the start of hostilities in 1914, the British accelerate their program for influence over Egypt by propping up a new sultan, to counter the influence of the Sultanate of the Ottomans, against whom the British are pitted in the Great War. Nationalist and independence movements occasionally flare up, but it is not until much later that Egypt gains its liberation from imperialism.

**The Department of Antiquities**

After the plundering of Egyptian treasures by Napoleon Bonaparte, the Egyptian Viceroy Said Pasha decreed the formation of the Department of Antiquities in 1858. In an ironic twist, the first director appointed was Auguste Mariette, a French academic. Mariette oversaw the opening of the first museum by the Department of Antiquities in Cairo in 1863. Thereafter, in a deliberate blow to the British, French interests continued to oversee the Department of Antiquities for a century. The Department became the official branch of the Egyptian government concerned with the search for tombs and artifacts. From time to time, the Department would become embroiled in political conflicts over the assignment of discoveries, or the gifting or repatriation of certain artifacts.
Due to its central role in the collection and distribution of artifacts, the Department of Antiquities is something of a clearinghouse for Arisen in search of vessels. Though objects do not commonly go missing from the museum at Cairo, the Department keeps records of permits for archeologists working in the field, and of various discoveries. The Department also oversees the business of recovering artifacts that have been stolen or sold under suspicious provenance. As a result, the Department has a significant store of knowledge regarding all manner of vessels. Of course, there’s no way to tell which items are actually vessels and which are simply mundane treasures of the ancient world — but an Arisen or cultist who’s hunting for a specific object, or wants to know who found it, can probably learn of that from the DOA.

In 1893, at the opening of The Ruins of Empire era, the head of the Department is Jacques de Morgan, a French miner with experience in the Caucasus, Stonehenge, and Persepolis, with some especial experience in disinterring graves. It’s likely that in the World of Darkness he has at least some suspicion of the actual supernatural power that lies beneath the sands in Egypt, having already dug through the mystic remnants of several other cultures. De Morgan’s particular focus is on digging up evidence of a proto-dynastic civilization that predates any of the Egyptian tombs and pyramids that he unearths during his digs; little does he realize that he’s chasing evidence of Irem of the Pillars. When he leaves the service of the DOA in 1897, it’s to head to Persia in hopes of digging up evidence of an even earlier civilization. His later work is hounded by concerted attacks by brigands — possibly cultists mixed in with looters — and by an increasing inability to concentrate on the mundane details necessary to run an excavation, perhaps as a result of mental damage from a cursed relic.

When Jacques de Morgan leaves, his replacement is Victor Loret, an Egyptologist who discovers several tombs but leaves only a few years later, in 1899. Loret proves to be an able teacher and scholar but less effective as an administrator. He does manage to take detailed notes about the tombs of several New Kingdom Pharaohs such as Rameses III and Amenhotep III, and bequeaths these notes to his student, Alexandre Varille. Subsequently, his notes pass into the private collection of the Varille family, to be locked away until auctioned off in the 21st century. Loret also uncovered the tomb of at least one priest, so Arisen in this time period might suspect that his writings include more than just pictures of New Dynasty funerary trinkets.

Following Loret, the DOA comes under the purview of Gaston Maspero, a linguist and archeologist who had, in his early years, worked with August Mariette — the original director of the organization. Maspero proves to be an able administrator, and he works hand-in-hand with the Egyptian government to expand their storage facilities, promote anti-looting laws, crack down on known tomb robbers, and build a much more comprehensive understanding of the hieroglyphic writing system. Even so, Maspero understands that the trade in antiquities is so pervasive that completely abolishing it may be outside the scope of his resources, and thus he focuses primarily on protecting specific artifacts of particular value rather than attempting to halt all sales (a policy which, of course, could be beneficial to a mummy seeking to move a vessel without drawing too much attention from the archeological enforcement arm of the government). Maspero also mentors a young British student who proves to be a quick study, and suggests to certain noble patrons that this student would be an excellent guide for future digs in Egypt. That student is Howard Carter (see below). Maspero retires in 1914.

Succeeding Maspero is Pierre Lacau, a philologist who proves a bit more difficult than his predecessor. Lacau changes policy so that he or the DOA retain complete control over all antiquities, even able to decide whether the archeologists are allowed to keep any of the artifacts
that they discover. He notably butts heads with Howard Carter, as he oversees Carter’s work and often makes demands that Carter finds unpalatable. In a *Mummy: The Curse* chronicle, Lacau is less interested in the mythology of origins or languages, and thus is unlikely to be a cultist; rather, he is a bureaucratic difficulty for Arisen trying to recover vessels from tombs or hoping to disinter their allies.

Lacau serves as head of the DOA until 1936, after the time of *The Ruins of Empire* chronicle. It is not until 1953 that the DOA has an Egyptian at its head.

**The Museum of Egyptian Antiquities**

In tandem with the Department of Antiquities, the Museum of Cairo is constructed as a local repository for artifacts unearthed in the many digs across Egypt. The Museum also serves as a physical center of operations for scholars and Egyptophiles. Anyone hoping to undertake a dig will begin at the Museum, in order to deal with the Department of Antiquities, and end there, to place artifacts into the safe care of the museum’s curators.

At the start of the period, in 1893, the Museum is located in Giza, the site of a relocation after flooding of the Nile damaged several artifacts at the prior facility. (The unintentional destruction of these artifacts also contributed to the formation of several lesser Amkhata.) In 1902 the Museum is relocated again to Tahrir Square in Cairo.

The Museum in Cairo is a two-story building, with the lower floor holding small artifacts from a variety of periods and the upper floor hosting valuable jewels, mummies, entire tombs’ worth of artifacts, and (later) the famous treasures of Tutankhamun. Naturally, the Arisen may scent a vessel or two in this place; it would be almost impossible for the museum not to house several, whether by accident or by design. Getting to such a vessel, though, is a bit trickier.

The museum is typically guarded by Egyptian police, and the Department of Antiquities takes its job very seriously. Every artifact is catalogued, so an artifact that goes missing will generally be quickly noticed, and the museum will bring the considerable resources of the government to bear in tracking down the thief, often by distributing information about the piece to other governments in hopes that the art thief will be unable to bring it to market. For mummies, this is less of a concern — the vessel likely isn’t going up for auction in some seedy venue — but the mummy and any associated cultists may find that the previous owners are a bit more dogged in their pursuit of vessels than any typical mortal, partly because many of the museum’s directors have at least a passing familiarity with occultism, and partly because some of the museum’s Egyptian employees are also cultists or magicians in their own right.

Any mummy who decides to splash through the museum in a paroxysm of Sekhem-fueled violence is likely to meet a quick return to the Underworld via efforts from the police, and possibly from a relic wielded by one of the employees. Even if nobody’s sure exactly what the Arisen is, a cursed alabaster knife in the hands of a dedicated cultist can still pose a problem. The biggest reason not to rampage through the museum, though, is that everybody in the occult world knows that it’s a resting place for vessels, which means that everybody is watching it. A mummy who exercises anything but the lightest touch with the museum will become the target of every petty sorcerer within a hundred miles, not to mention drawing down the attention of every rogue scorpion cult and Shuankhsen who happens to hear about the deed. Other mummies, too, would doubtless hear about this, and would move quickly to neutralize anyone who drew such attention to their secret society, with a special interest toward collecting any relics that the interloper might
have discovered. The rest of mummy society would consider such an act both reckless and arrogant, and probably an affront to the Judges; any mummy unwise enough to attempt it would become *mumi non grata*.

This also explains why no one mummy sets up a cult to take personal control of the museum: it’s simply too high-profile, and would draw too many challengers. Having the resources of the museum would be valuable, but probably not worth the price of potentially losing one’s entire cult to enemies.

**The Pyramids and the Sphinx**

Perhaps the most famous monuments of Egypt are the pyramids at Giza and the Sphinx. Of course, to the survivors of Irem, these are but pale shadows of the glory that was the City of Pillars, but that city is long gone, perhaps in Duat, perhaps lost to time. Nevertheless, these monuments remain, showing a legacy *almost* as potent.

The Arisen, of course, are no strangers to these structures. Even by the time of the second Sothic Turn, the Pyramid at Giza and the Sphinx were old. The remains interred in the pyramid at Giza, though, were looted long before *The Ruins of Empire* era. While the Great Pyramid may capture the imagination, to the mummies of Irem it is simply a showpiece, albeit a welcome distraction to occupy the minds of would-be occultists and avert their gaze from the cults functioning in their midst. Early in their eternities, many of the Deathless found the extensive necropolis at Giza a welcome (if sometimes uncomfortable) reflection of the works of the Shan’iatu, and likewise a ready source of minor vessels. In the era of ruins, Giza is the center of much exploration, and every would-be Egyptologist starts with a visit here, just outside of Cairo; even so, the Arisen can often follow the flows of kepher to find what mere mortals cannot (see *Mummy: The Curse*, p. 145).

The Sphinx is a different matter. While suspicion exists that the face of the Sphinx was recarved, the entire structure creates the appearance of a tremendous Amkhat, albeit with a human head instead of combining two animal forms. Few among the Arisen can remember the specifics of this statue, as it was likely built before the first Sothic Turn and, thus, while most of the Arisen were deep in their first henet. What the Arisen *do* know is that the Great Sphinx at Giza shows the characteristics of being a powerful structure, possibly some kind of masonic ritual site. The Tef-Aabhi say that it is a perversion of *heka*, a construct that absorbs Sekhem in order to sustain itself and whatever unholy cause created it. If it is indeed related to an Amkhat cult, the Great Sphinx was built on a scale never encountered since. Mortals coming near the Sphinx seem to act with drunken disregard, as if affected by the curse of a relic. Mummies suffer an even greater danger: Like a relic that drains off unnecessary Sekhem, the Sphinx steals away that brilliant energy, but it does so on a massive scale. Simply being within physical sight of the monument is sufficient to call for a Sekhem roll at every sunset; scoring any successes on the roll causes the loss of one point of Sekhem, as the energy is drained away. Utterances and Affinities related to commanding locations, such as Palace Knows its Pharaoh (*Mummy*, p. 124), simply *do not function* within a mile of the statue, but still drain their usual cost in Pillars if a mummy attempts their use. If the Sphinx is the representation of some greater Amkhat, that creature has not been seen in this age — yet.

**The Great War and Its Players**
Casting a shadow over this entire era is the Great War, spanning the period from 1914 to 1918. The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary by a Yugoslavian national triggers a diplomatic crisis, as Austria-Hungary threatens Serbia, which in turn triggers the world-spanning web of alliances pitting the Allied Powers against the Central Powers. Several of the European nations that enter the war do not come out the same — or at all.

For some of the Arisen, the Great War seems eerily familiar: It is a conflict that engages the entire known world; there is nowhere to escape, and the strange sciences of the modern age deploy weapons that devastate entire cities. Those Deathless who have fleeting glimpses of the Nameless Empire see similarities to the battle against the Ki-En-Gir and the Pact of Ubar (see *Mummy*, p. 19). To other mummies, this conflict is a nuisance, as it scatters cults, destroys power structures, shatters fragile vessels or spirits them away in thievery, and often brings the mummy to a quick Descent with violations of the tomb.

For the mortals who surround the Deathless, the Great War is terrifying. Even if one of their mummy patrons can crush skulls with bare hands and survive the attacks of handguns and rifles, there’s no stopping entire armies that can wash into towns with machine guns and poison gas. Mummies can and do lose entire cults to the press of the war, forcing them to rise again and again when their corpses are disturbed or their relics looted, only to have scant time to get their bearings and try to find some place where they can rebuild.

Characters in Europe during the war will find that the fighting in the west stabilizes on the aptly-named Western Front, east of Paris, with the Germans and the French battering each other in trench warfare for literal years. On the Eastern Front, conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Empire leads to significant reversals for both groups; the Ottoman Empire’s invasion of the Caucasus is repulsed and the western powers eventually invade (as noted previously) and dismantle the Empire, but Russia undergoes the October Revolution in late 1918 and transitions to the Soviet state, with the transition complete by 1922. Germany loses much of its territory, and Austria-Hungary dissolves and ceases to exist in 1918. The Prussian Kingdom, once a powerhouse of Ruhr coal and conservatism, was absorbed into the Weimar Republic — sometimes better known as the German Reich.

While the Great War isn’t the only thing going on during *The Ruins of Empire* era, it is certainly the focal point. The war relates to everything involved thematically in this time period: The decline of once-great powers, the destruction of cities, the first modern war with machine guns, chemical weapons, tanks, and air power. For humans in the trenches, it seems like the war will go on forever; for mummies, the war seems to change the world in an eyblink. Of course, the reshaping of would-be empires and lines on a map mean little to the Deathless, but the reality sinks in as the casualties mount in the trenches: The world has veered in a direction far from what the Nameless Empire was like, and that old world might never come again. The days of client villages in which a mummy is a godlike force to be reckoned with are over — the mummy might be able to make changes locally by wielding brute strength and Sekhem, but reshaping the course of these new politics is outside the grasp of most of the Arisen. Once again, the Deathless are reminded that they are workers, not rulers.

Each player in the Great War brings its own special horrors to the table for the Deathless. Britain and the Ottoman Empire have been previously explored. Germany and Austria-Hungary, along with the Central Powers, lose the war; Austria-Hungary dissolves, but Germany winds up pushed into a punitive treaty, paying massive war reparations to France. The tremendous burden on the
economy later pushes a surge in nationalism that contributes to the rise of the Third Reich and the next world war. While the Deathless may not have a specific opposition to fascism, as the Shan’iatu were a near-fascist magocracy, the situation becomes awkward for Deathless in central Europe, as rising nationalism increasingly casts them as outsiders on the occasions when they awaken and deal with mortals.

Worse than the destruction in Central Europe (to the Deathless, at least) is the situation in Russia. The October Revolution is, as far as most of the Arisen are concerned, a guild uprising against their appointed masters. This is, of course, only a step away from a nauseating notion like rebelling against the Judges and the Shan’iatu. To mummies, the rise of the proletariat and the creation of the Soviet Union strikes an uneasy chord: On the one hand, the mummies were once guildsmen and workers themselves; but on the other, they are pledged in service to a greater power, and the Soviet state smacks of heresy against the faith of Irem.

Worst of all is the situation at home, in Africa. For previous turns, the Arisen have counted on the stability of regimes in the area. Names change — Egyptian, Greek, Macedonian, Roman — but the familiarity of a great, world-spanning empire with a sense of purpose has remained constant. Now, the combination of the disintegrating Ottoman Empire and the imperialist meddling in Africa and the Middle East has upended this constant. The laborers of Irem are second-class citizens in the remnants of their own homes. The archeologists of the “developed” countries even question whether the monuments of the past were even built by the native peoples at all, as if only their countries could build anything of importance — all while they remain ignorant of the heights of sorcery and art that Irem commanded. This state of affairs is arrogant, unjust, and perhaps above all, it is hubris. The Arisen deal with the Judges of the afterlife and lived in an age when the gods of Irem displayed true power to mortals. Now, outsiders scoff at these ancient religions, calling them “superstition,” and they violate sacred ground and steal away treasures and culture, calling it “progress.” Little wonder that dreadful stories spring up of mummy curses and attacks among the interlopers, as the anger of the Deathless at such treatment causes an obvious response to the tomb-robbers from afar.

**War Stories**

Deathless who arise during the Great War can partake in a range of stories that showcase the horrors unleashed by the modern sorcery of science. While a mummy would certainly not be caught in the rank and file of some army, fighting trench warfare, the mummy’s goals might intersect with the military ambitions of an enemy force, with predictable results.

- Soldiers stumble into a small village and immediately set about intimidating the villagers, who of course happen to be part of the mummy’s cult. When the mummy awakens, the villagers beg the mummy to deal with the soldiers, which she easily does; but one of the soldiers has a strange relic. Orders found amidst the carnage detail that these soldiers were sent to meet with another group that is collecting archeological relics and art treasures, and the mummy is suddenly left with the difficulty of finding a way to recover these other stolen vessels from a military encampment surrounded by barbed wire and Maxim guns. (See the film *The Keep* for inspiration, even if it is set in World War II.)

- The mummy decides to head away from the wars to a more stable society — the strange new land of the Americas. Securing passage on a steamer ship from Africa or Europe is not especially difficult, but the trip is too long for the mummy to remain active for the entire journey. The mummy could risk having the cult re-awaken him mid-journey, which could be a risky endeavor
in such a tight space; or bear the indignity of traveling as a cadaver in a box. Once arrived, the mummy can set up a cult in a new location far from the war, but customs officials and military inspectors all conspire to make the transition difficult. In the New World, racism is still rampant, and the mummy and his cult will face problems integrating. And once there, what next? The New World has its own strange vessels, made by the now-extinct (or nearly extinct) indigenous people. Some of the central and south American empires long gone also attempted to create mummies. Could the influence of Irem have already stretched so far, from ages so long ago? Will Thor Heyerdahl’s later hypothesis of oceanic travelers crossing from Africa to South America prove to be perhaps not so far-fetched, even if his conclusions are erroneous?

• The mummy awakens to a Descent triggered by a tomb invasion, but mysteriously there is nobody present in the burial chamber. Investigation soon shows that chlorine gas was leaked into the tomb, and the cultists who were there have died in grotesque fashion. Though sealing the flesh will prevent the mummy from dying, the mummy must escape the tomb before the gas kills him, find the attackers, and somehow make the resting place safe again.

• Pursuing a relic thief, the mummy learns that the thief is an unwitting mail carrier for one of the military powers. The carrier travels by motorcycle, delivering packages and orders as directed by his army’s leadership. To re-acquire the relic, the mummy must catch up to the messenger, which means traveling through No Man’s Land, into the heart of military territory, and into the trenches at the front. Machine guns and grenades may be only a minor nuisance to the mummy, but precious relics are often much more easily destroyed. Perhaps influencing the officers in charge of the messenger corps would be a safer means to deliver the relic back into the mummy’s hands?

The Deathless: Guilds During the Fall

Because The Ruins of Empire era occupies a time period between Sothic Turns, mummy activity happens in fits and starts. The wholesale violation of many tombs and robbery of a great number of vessels does stir a disproportionate number of Deathless, which provides some degree of unified guild activity, but it is to a degree less than that encountered during one of the transits of Sirius. Nevertheless, the advent of the Great War forces every guild to re-evaluate its position on mortal affairs.

See Guildhalls of the Deathless for more intimate information about the various guilds and their agendas; the details presented here can provide some additional relevant information for the era.

Maa-Kep: Building Downward

The Maa-Kep of the Ruins era are just as vigilant about heresy and just as committed to a unified guild front as always. The guild not only watches other mummies for signs of ideological corruption in an age of godless philosophies, but actively seeks out places where such problems might crop up. For this reason, the Maa-Kep are busy in the process of becoming quite widespread, moving their tombs and their relics to distant locations. While most mummies would consider it an annoying chore to have to pack everything up and move to England or the Americas, the Maa-Kep see it as part and parcel of their business: Better that they get a foothold there first and keep an eye on any other mummies who wind up in the same place, rather than playing catch-up later. As a result, the Maa-Kep who have the opportunity are busy sending forth their minions to places abroad in order to prepare new domiciles. At least one high-ranking member of the guild has also taken on a risky project of dubious legitimacy — contacting lower-
ranking guild members’ cults and instructing them to awaken their charges with orders to move the cults to new locales. Naturally, this is something of a perversion of the authority of the guild, but aren’t some evils necessary in the name of security? (This pseudo-heretical project is abandoned at the end of the Great War, when most cults are too weakened and disorganized, and resources too scattered, to make this kind of manipulation practical.)

While the Maa-Kep are working to make a unified world government in hopes of drawing the Shan’iatu back, the disintegration engendered by the Great War shatters many of their ideals. To the Engravers, this is a terrible sign: Can humanity really be yoked under one master when that master is war? The Maa-Kep hoped to usher in a return of the Nameless Empire by finding the government most suited to ruling the whole world, but all of the nouveau experiments of the modern era collide in disaster. To avert total catastrophe, the Maa-Kep must nudge the war to a conclusion, either by pressuring for peace or by forcing the issue through the destruction of one side or another. Unfortunately, the powers that gain the advantage are distant, foreign nations, hard to understand or influence. A few disenfranchised Engravers mutter that perhaps the Shan’iatu will return if all of humanity is engulfed in the flames and the whole of the human race is sentenced to Duat, but never where the guildmasters might hear such things.

Working from the Bottom Up

To address the problem of the Great War and the collapse of empires, the Maa-Kep do what any good mason does with a flawed project: Tear it down and start over. The Ottoman Empire, for all that it’s local, is clearly in decline; down it must go. The European obsession with colonialism means that they overreach their influence and create more problems than they solve; time to destroy the reach of those empires, pruning their tendrils back and forcing them into retreat. If nobody’s up to the challenge of ruling the world, the Maa-Kep decide, then everyone can start over again.

To this end, the Maa-Kep of the Ruins era wind up actually fostering revolutions. Not that they would ever encourage people to oppose the will of their masters — instead, the Maa-Kep encourage nationalist parties, conservative ideals, and isolationism, all policies with strong authoritarian streaks and a tendency toward inward focus. By doing so, they hope to push nations back into a period of internal stabilization, instead of external exploitation. As is often the case with Maa-Kep agendas, though, this one teeters between opposing forces. Isolationism and conservatism would normally lead to insular behaviors, but the zealotry of national dogma creates ideas of cultural superiority that lead to countries imposing their “developed” and “civilized” ideologies on others. As a result, each Maa-Kep must chart a personal course in how to pursue these agendas, determining whether to support colonial powers or indigenous ones, democratic governments or autocratic ones, or nobody at all.

The Maa-Kep tendrils of influence are uncertain, primarily because of the limited time and reach available during this era, but they focus predominantly on the areas where their power is the strongest, in the Middle East and northern Africa. This, of course, means that the Maa-Kep are also deep in the midst of the conflicts of the era, as British and French archeologists are busy unearthing Deathless tombs in the area, and the crumbling of the Ottoman Empire leaves territory in Egypt, the Sudan, Libya, and Tunisia vulnerable to the march of European troops and bureaucrats.

Making Trouble
Because the Maa-Kep see themselves as the quiet guardians not only of mummies but of mummy society and the lost glory of the Nameless Empire, they have a tendency to poke their noses into the business of other Deathless. Of course, this is all done in the guise of friendship — just checking up on other mummies, looking out for their cults, making sure that none of their precious vessels have been lost, and so on. This also means that the Maa-Kep send their cultists not only to look into other mummies, but to follow the diaspora of artifacts and cadavers that result from archeological inquiries. The Engravers’ network becomes quite widespread, with fingers reaching across the oceans. Usually, a Maa-Kep keeping an eye on someone or something like this will send only one or two cultists. If the cultists disappear suddenly, the watchful mummy either withdraws from contact (since it’ll be easy enough to pick up the trail again in another century) or, if the prize is valuable enough, becomes involved personally.

As part of their self-proclaimed mission to watch other Arisen for sedition, the Maa-Kep also peek into which nations other mummies settle in or influence. A mummy who goes to the trouble of moving his cult and tomb to Russia must have a reason for doing so; is it a sign that the mummy is sympathetic to the ideas of a proletarian revolution? If a mummy attempts to prop up the struggling Ottoman Empire, does that mean that she is a supporter of the latecomer (by Iremite standards) religion of Islam? Nearly any choice could indicate some heretical predilection, and the Maa-Kep helpfully seek out other mummies, aid them in their projects, and take notes on any possible connection that might be a sign of unorthodox beliefs.

Making Sense of It All

As part and parcel of recording everything that other mummies are doing, the Maa-Kep came to the realization that their fallible memories will occasionally need assistance. Though they started their library project in the 9th century AD, the Unread Record (see Guildhalls of the Deathless, p. 11) moved to Libya during the Napoleonic invasion. In 1912, this territory becomes Italian North Africa, after the Ottoman Empire loses it in war. The Maa-Kep, used to thinking of their hidden library as inviolate, see this as a moment of concern (or, some might say, panic). In an unprecedented show of trust, the Maa-Kep allow a select number of mummies to assist in the protection of the library, primarily by obfuscating its location and importance. As compensation, they allow any trusted mummy who aids them to ask one question from the archivists — no perusing of the library directly, of course; not that it would be useful, given that the entire library is ciphered. After the crisis passes, the Maa-Kep quickly close access to the archives once again. A meret of Deathless in search of information about the past activities of other mummies — or perhaps even themselves! — could potentially petition the Maa-Kep for information in exchange for services during this turbulent time, or make a back-end deal with the Sesha-Hebsu to acquire copies of some of the records there.

Note that the Unread Record is, at present, located in high desert just west of the border between what will be modern-day Libya and Egypt, at least 90 miles from the nearest stable water source, without any nearby roads, train lines, or airways. This means that access to the physical location of the library is generally limited to very determined travelers who have the means to survive crossing the desert for several days on foot or camelback.

Mesen-Nebu: Transforming Economies

The Ruins era lies directly in the midst of the time of colonialism and imperialism, with western European powers sending their soldiers and corporations to settle the lands of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Of course, the ultimate goal is the same as always: the accumulation of wealth
and power. To the Alchemists, this is a transfer of Dedwen. The imperialists are, by right of recognition, claiming the objects and ideas of value from their subject lands. To the Mesen-Nebu, this is the simple process of extracting Dedwen.

The imperialists, however, do not truly understand Dedwen. They hoard their wealth uselessly, waste their strength in petty wars, and constantly seek to cast their own age-old, tired structures onto other cultures. The Alchemists have no patience for this sort of foolishness, so they step in to claim the Dedwen as their own.

The Alchemists’ goal of recapturing Dedwen that conquerors miss causes their motivations to seem erratic to outsiders. A Mesen-Nebu could assist imperialists in their conquest of indigenous people, then immediately rob the conquerors of all of the wealth that they pillage. Those outside the guild see these as contradictory acts: Who are the Alchemists supporting, the European newcomers or the descendants of the old country? To the Alchemists there’s no conflict; they don’t back anyone, because they support only the flow of Dedwen.

Where other guilds see turmoil, the Alchemists see a chance for profit. If these countries and their wars are going to change the world, reason the Mesen-Nebu, that transformation will be an opportunity to search out new ways of collecting Dedwen. Whether in gold, spices, labor, or in the strange new political structures that meld the power of the masses together, the Alchemists will have their due.

Black Blood of the Earth

The lands of the old Nameless Empire are killing fields for the nations in the throes of the Great War, but those lands hold an even more valuable substance. The precious oil needed to run the great machinery of civilization is found there in abundance. Coal, too, is valuable, as it fires the trains that carry merchandise (and later, military materiel) across the world. At the start of the Ruins era, the automobile and the aeroplane are recent innovations, but their incredible utility shows that Dedwen has entered a new stage. The technological inventions that require petroleum will drive the prosperity of nations for the age to come, and the Alchemists are no strangers to rising trends. The Mesen-Nebu place their bets where the most productivity will come to fruition: with whoever will exploit these newly-recognized resources. In some places, like the Caucasus, that means backing the upstart invading nations; in others, like the Arabian peninsula, it means adopting new technologies and putting them in the hands of traditional tribal structures. Once again, the Mesen-Nebu see no conflict, as they are not invested in the politics of who’s in charge, but rather in the business of harvesting the end results once skilled labor is put into place.

Perhaps more so than members of any other guild, the Mesen-Nebu take it upon themselves to infiltrate the societies and governments of other nations. They don’t care about who’s running the government or why the politics have fallen out in a particular way; rather, they look for the ideologies that lead to successful nations. By the definition of the Alchemists, this means countries able to tap the Dedwen of their resources and their people, no matter how crudely. Thus, in countries where revolutions destroy works of art or civil strife leaves thousands dead, the Mesen-Nebu quietly wait in the wings to swoop in and clean up when the cycle of violence exhausts itself. Countries that organize their populations, pull wealth from the earth, and create new and lasting works — like the Eiffel Tower (1889), the Suez Canal (1869), or in the literary movements of the late Ottoman Empire, or the avant-garde artistic movement — attract the attentions of the Mesen-Nebu, who quietly insinuate themselves in places where they can become intermediaries in the flow of Dedwen. This means that Mesen-Nebu in this period have
cults involved in industrialization, antiquities trades (all the better to get their hands on actual vessels!), and the blossoming new forms of modern art and media.

Where Blood Runs Gold

Because the Mesen-Nebu pursue Dedwen when the opportunity arises, they almost inevitably become involved in the various conflicts flaring up around the globe. Indeed, moving into those hot zones provides the Alchemists with the opportunity to sweep up valuable pieces when the conflict dies down, before either of the combatants can organize and conduct their own pillaging. As a result, not only do the Mesen-Nebu cults engage in industrial development and art movements, they often become patrons to mercenaries or military groups. The raiding bands of Emir Faisal and T.E. Lawrence in the Arabian peninsula almost certainly contained agents of the Alchemists, ready to abscond with both valuable devices and artistic works from the Ottoman trains.

In order to finance their operations, the Mesen-Nebu pursue the inventions of the increasingly sophisticated world of investment: stocks, corporations, insurance, international trade. As always, the Alchemists don’t directly bother to get their hands dirty; besides, who could understand all the terminology of shorting stock, seigniorage, and securities? But there is something else coming — something that will bring entire economies closer to Dedwen. The Mesen-Nebu haven’t sniffed it out yet, but the death of mercantilism and the failure of colonialism mean that the old systems of hoarding gold and silver are no longer sufficient. There’s value in the exchange even without the gold, a way to reward and recognize excellence in craftsmanship or leadership or innovation without showering the gifted with treasures. That’s right, the Mesen-Nebu are in the process of becoming bankers. After all, a banker can turn anything to gold.

This is not to say that the Alchemists are boring stay-at-homes counting their money, though. As any Alchemist knows, transitions happen when states are in flux — when tension between what was and what is, or between things that are of different essential natures, creates change. That’s why the Mesen-Nebu are found at the edges of wars, carefully watching the outcome of shifting borders and the collapses of nations. Out of each victory, something new is built, and there is a glimpse of excellence. Out of each failure, something old crumbles, and Dedwen is released.

Sesha-Hebsu: Recording the End of Divinity

Although the Scribes usually confine themselves to record-keeping and judgment, those who awaken in the Ruins era find themselves confronted with a horrifying proposition: a world bereft of meaning. The new forms of philosophy and literature in this modern era concern themselves with heretical notions that the Sesha-Hebsu can barely bear to record, ideas like the notion of a godless world, a world in which meaning is subjective instead of assigned by pharaohs and Judges, a world where art is not glorification but rather designed to create unease and discord.

Of course, the Scribes would never admit to any doubt on their side. The Scroll of Ages will continue, as it always has, without interruption. The Scribes themselves are a reflection of that: endlessly continuing, always recording. Since the Rite of Return shows no signs of ending, why should the Scroll of Ages? Thus, the Scribes take all of these modern notions of philosophy as passing fads, albeit with enough adherents to be of some concern to social stability.

Reconstructing the Past
While the Scribes continue to pass judgment on other Arisen, the difficulty increases greatly in the Ruins era, simply due to the acceleration of tomb robberies and the destruction of ancient texts. Repositories that the Sesha-Hebsu had considered inviolable now fall before the determined chisels of foreign explorers, and in some cases valuable scrolls are lost forever when grasping hands, unaware of the delicacy of these treasures, accidentally destroy them. Of course, the most important documents remain protected with magic and secreted away in the close recesses of the Scribes’ own tombs, but the pillaging is still noticeable. Worse still, the Scribes know that their imperfect memories mean that there may be lost records that nobody remembers losing.

With this in mind, Scribes of this era find themselves rising with the specific task of recovering lost records. In some cases this means simply murdering unprepared archeologists who break into their tombs, but as often as not it means chasing down stolen vessels and records after a panicked cult raises the mummy once they failed to dissuade relic-hunters. In the worst cases, old papyrus records are destroyed by careless hands (or burned as worthless) while various treasures are scattered amongst a wealth of collectors, forcing the mummy to spend precious time tracking down who purchased which treasures, which ones were actual vessels, and where to go to retrieve them.

In order to best perform these duties, Scribes pursue knowledge of both languages and cultures. For the most part, the Sesha-Hebsu don’t feel that modern cultures have much to add to their understanding of jurisprudence; rather, understanding the language lets them know how people of a particular culture think, and understanding the culture lets them know why people act a certain way. Armed with this understanding, the Scribes can determine who the power players are in any conflict, what they seek from the tombs of the Deathless, and where they will take the treasures that they steal. Naturally, some motivations are timeless: Greed is all too well understood. By determining which adventurers are seekers of knowledge, though, the Scribes can separate the wheat from the chaff when it comes to recruiting new members into their cults. Further, by studying the forms that modern cultures have taken, Scribes can develop a greater understanding of the River of Truth (as described in Guildhalls of the Deathless, p. 41).

Copying Greatness

With the help of their new confederates, the Scribes have a massive undertaking at hand. Rather than spend all of their time chasing down records in distant corners of the Earth, the Scribes have taken up the quill to make copies of their most important records and seed them in separate libraries in distant locations. While the Engravers have a secret record in one place, the Scribes have realized that keeping all of your papers in one tomb is a liability in this new world where artillery can smash cities and bombs can lead to firestorms that leave only ash for miles around. To that end, many of the Sesha-Hebsu who arise to chase down stolen texts or vessels end their Descents by relocating their tombs and cults.

Of course, having one’s records stashed in various far corners of the Earth is only an advantage if a system remains in place for communications. Scribes awakened in this era take advantage of indices, kept nearest them in their tombs, that detail the locations of other Scribes and their archives. This way, even if a given Sesha-Hebsu doesn’t have access to some snippet of information, she knows who to track down and contact in order to gain it. In keeping with their central duties, Scribes will make copies of their records and send them to other guildmates upon
request, using one of the significant innovations of the modern era — rapid, intercontinental parcel delivery.

Though the Nameless Empire and many of its successors had their own mail services (the Egyptian, Roman, and Byzantine Empires had public courier services that used the excellent roads of their day), the advent of motor-driven transport, telegraph, powered flight, and steam- or oil-driven sea trade allows parcels to travel more quickly and reliably, which eases the Scribes’ task of sending copies of their work to other locations. To ensure reliability, some low-ranking members of the guild take on the role of ba-shai, or couriers. Tasked to deliver copies and parcels with legerity, the ba-shai are considered low-ranking members of the guild (because they are trusted more to carry words than to write them), but increasingly valuable as the guild continues its diaspora. Even during this period of turmoil, the ba-shai enjoy certain benefits as mail carriers, including immunity from being searched or stopped by other mummies, except by the order of a higher-ranked Sesha-Hebsu. (Of course, this same immunity could allow a ba-shai to carry certain contraband, such as heretical documents, without being stopped — but only if protected by a corrupt Scribe, who contravened any requests by outsiders to stop and search the mail….)

Su-Menent: The Surgeon Generals

The tools of the blossoming modern age give the Su-Menent new hope in their unbeating hearts: Mortals are finally taking halting steps in the understanding not only of medicine, but of the living shell. The terrible trials of the Great War and the deprivation endured in genocide and colonialism push the human condition to breaking points rarely before seen. For once, the Su-Menent are not merely repeating funerary rituals over stolen cadavers; now, they again have the opportunity to search into the origins of those rites, to practice on people killed in various forms of agony, and to discover how the twisting of the spirit affects the vessel of flesh.

Of course, the Su-Menent do not necessarily glory in this kind of grotesquerie. Rather, it is a clinical form of study, a means to the end of practicing the same excruciating tribulations that the Shan’i’atu used in their greater rituals. While no right-thinking Shepherd would ever dare to compare himself to the great sorcerers who built the Nameless Empire, the hope is that a greater understanding of death and the funerary arts might help the Su-Menent to reveal a fragment of the glory of Irem, and that such a shining moment would draw the attention of the Shan’i’atu from wherever they are, to return and bring their reign back to the world, or perhaps to carry their most faithful servants to Duat for a new existence beyond the shackles of the flawed world of flesh.

Whenever their cults raise them in a panicked response to invasion or war, the Su-Menent take to the fields of battle like carrion crows, gathering not only corpses and tools of death, but the bodies of their own cultists, killed in the clash of cultures. Naturally, such cultists are always given a reverent funeral — promises of great rewards in Duat, adulation for their service, a name that will live forever in memory (at least until the next time the mummy rises) — but then they disappear into the inner sanctums of the Shepherds, there to become subjects for the next rituals and experiments.

Building a Better Killing Machine

To the Shepherds, the atrocities of the early 20th century are hardly atrocities; they’re just business as usual in empires with large populations of slaves and have-nots. The ethnic
underpinnings of many of the conflicts are largely dismissed out of hand; the Su-Menent don’t much care what excuses people are using for mass murder this time around, so much as they are interested in how people are finding new ways to do the deed.

Thus, the doctors also become disciples of the gun. Without any pesky prohibition to “Do no harm,” the Su-Menent look to the new methods of mass killing almost as divine revelations. Did the Shan’iatsu kill by the score, by the hundred, by the thousands? Of course. Did they do so by raining hot metal, choking fumes and noxious diseases upon their subjects? Difficult to say, as fragmented as the memory of the Arisen is now; certainly worth further investigation.

The other side of this funerary coin is, of course, the role of the Su-Menent as priests. While they are priests by rote, it is still an important duty, as intermediaries between Duat and the physical world, and as keepers of tradition. Though the Su-Menent involve themselves in the collection of bodies from the battlefields, they are cautious in their exploration of the new warfare of this world. A priest may use the falchion in executing a sacrifice, but that does not mean that the priest is a swordsmith. Instead, the Su-Menent who study the new means of killing delve into the significance of the deaths. The technology of the gun may be a fascinating study, but more important to the Shepherds is how it makes killing casual. Similarly, the use of poison gas is mildly interesting, but the true value is in the way that it can kill hundreds or thousands of people in an area simultaneously, without having to stab or shoot each one. And the song of artillery, of course, represents not just the ability to break up enemy soldiers’ formations, but the means to destroy a people’s temples, homes, and symbols along with their bodies.

Fortunately for the death-priests, most of them don’t have to travel very far to see these in action.

Keeping the Lamp Lit

Of greater concern to the Su-Menent is the problem of encroaching heresy. Not only does the modern era have a riot of various religions, but the rising tide of science increases the skepticism of the masses. Dealing with this problem means sneaking into various groups and co-opting them. Instead of bringing outsiders into the cult, the Shepherds spread their cult ideas to other groups, knowing that certain fundamentals may survive the ages, ready to be called upon a decade, or a century, or a millennium later in a debased form that can be corrected with the proper guidance.

To this end, the Su-Menent insert their tendrils into the latest fad — philosophical gentleman’s societies. The Theosophical Society, Anthroposophical Society, Rosicrucians, Silver Star, Golden Dawn, and Freemasons (everything that draws the attention of jaded or socially-climbing gents of the Gilded Age) all become subjects of exploration for the Shepherds, and some groups feel a heavier touch than others. Naturally, this also brings the Su-Menent into conflict with the supernatural patrons (or parasites) involved with these organizations. In some cases, this conflict becomes direct, with the Deathless engaged in combat with sorcerers, vampires, and their ilk; in most cases, though, the organizations undergo schisms as various members experience “secret revelations” or find that the establishment of a new, distant chapterhouse suits the purposes of their new mentors and advisors. (The Su-Menent also make an attempt at infiltrating Islam through the Ottoman sultanate, but this attempt fails for several reasons — partly because of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and partly because the Islamic community of Constantinople proves to be supernaturally protected in some fashion, whether by faith or by the agency of some other creature.)
Ideally, of course, the Su-Menent await the day when the Shan’iatu will return and reveal their glory, and the gods of Irem, once more.

**Tef-Aabhi: A Djed to the Heavens**

The new materials of the blossoming 20th century may be unproven tools, but they are certainly not worthless ones. The Fathers of Idols are mildly impressed by the development of materials that can build modern structures: canals lined with concrete, skyscrapers with steel skeletons, synthetic tools built from plastics. As always, though, the material is less important than the builder. Pyramids and colossi of the ancient world were built with only stone and copper. It is the vision, the guiding hand, that wields the tool.

The builders note with some interest the rise of philosophies like individual empowerment, the idea of humanity without gods or even humanity as gods. Though many of these ideas tread the line of blasphemy, the Tef-Aabhi also recognize that broad swaths of the population now have access not only to stability but to education, travel, and leisure. Of course, this comes on the backs of the poor and less fortunate, especially those in colonized countries, but *that* is nothing new.

The rise of an industrial middle class gives thousands of people new opportunities to excel. Their excellence takes strange forms, be it in development of economic and political theories or in the invention of devices to further automate their world and expand their reach — and their entertainments. As always, the downtrodden masses are generally unable to grasp this level of new development, but the birth of concepts like free time and mass media open doors to new forms of art.

And what art! Spires made of twisted steel; paintings designed to evoke emotions with only blurry, indistinct images; pictures that capture the all-too-real images of both beauty and ugliness; gilded mosques that reflect the glory of their spirituality. Construction of edifices like the Great Mosque of Giza, damaged in the Great War and restored in 1925, shows the lengths to which the new world will go to rebuild the old.

Many of the Fathers of Idols see the rise of new art movements such as Les Nabis, Pointillism, and Secession style as examples of the free thinking of the modern age. By understanding not only what messages artists hope to convey with these styles, but why artists choose this Art Nouveau, the Tef-Aabhi glean knowledge of the current social changes sweeping the continent and beyond. In earlier ages, artists crafted their icons to glorify pharaohs, priests, and gods. Now artists reject politics, overturn social mores, and create art designed to break away from convention and to shock the senses — or even, in some cases, to create art divorced from any meaning at all, with a message that rejects convention.

Still, even the work of Gustav Klimt and Alphonse Mucha cannot halt admiration for the old world. The Gothic Revival in Britain hearkens back to earlier architectural styles, and the influence of Historicism in art remains strong in Europe. To the Tef-Aabhi, this shows that even while humanity sees a rise of bourgeoisie with industrialization, that new wealthy elite hearkens back to a time of Classical ideals — a time of a lost, grand empire.

For the Father of Idols, the time is coming for the creation of a new Irem — or rather, something greater than Irem. Now, instead of the alchemy of bronze and the cutting of stone, a new Irem might be forged on steel, coal, and synthetics.
The Grand City

The Tef-Aabhi have plans (as they always have had). In earlier ages, the limits of communication, travel, and language made it impossible for an empire to span the world; couriers couldn’t reach the capital in time for emperors to respond to changing battles on the frontier, cultural clashes meant that meetings with neighboring powers often turned into war, and the sensitivity of early agriculture to weather patterns meant that a bad plague or drought could cause an entire kingdom to collapse. The technology of the 20th century makes many of these problems much more manageable: Telegraph, radio, and (eventually) telephone provide international communication, train and air travel speed people around the globe in days, and new approaches to farming and medicine help to contain the spread of famine and disease (in the west European parts of the world, anyway). It could finally be time to build a new city — a grand city, one that can point the way to a better future, a city built as much on heka as on concrete.

For a time the Tef-Aabhi entertained some notions that Constantinople might be that city, but its many sackings and eventual decline show that it is a poor choice. What will be the new modern design? London? New York? Cairo? Cape Town? Each Tef-Aabhi has an idea of what city might make the foundation for a newer society, and they spread cultists to their chosen models to better oversee the plans needed to turn those cities into examples of order and prosperity. Of course, most Tef-Aabhi are loath to leave their hoary and peculiar tombs, but sometimes the vagaries of warfare leave no choice, in which case a fresh start in a rising city may mark a better beginning.

More than just cities, though, the Tef-Aabhi of this era begin examining social planning on a large scale. The founding of the League of Nations in 1914, though it meets a fairly quick and bitter end, sparks an interest in the idea of planning an international society, not just through military or magical conquest, but through economic and diplomatic command. Individual Masons watch carefully as the October Revolution of 1917 and the independent Turkish Republic formed in 1923 showcase the formation of new social structures. Here, the mortals align their heka to work toward a new identity. The Communist uprising that forms the Soviet Union is a massive social shift, one that shows remarkable promise in the proletariat seizing their own identity. By the same token, the Turkish revolution is a war of identity and self-determination. The rise of labor unions fits perfectly with the Tef-Aabhi vision, as a brotherhood of fellow workers following a common cause for protection of mutual interest while pursuing professional excellence. It may well be that the Grand City is not a city, but a Grand Society, with its heka molded not by streets and buildings, but by ideologies and visionaries.

The Cult of Centuries

Tef-Aabhi have a problem: Long-term planning and cult turnover don’t mix. Fall into henet for a few centuries, wake up, and suddenly everyone’s forgotten all of the rules and they’re babbling about strange religions in strange languages while wearing strange clothes and bringing you useless garbage offerings. Plus, they spend all of their time on bizarre projects that can only be seen as the result of fever-addled brains that have misinterpreted orders over successive generations.

The Masons circumvent this problem as best they can by building to last. In earlier Turns, this meant constructing lavish tombs full of stone-carved instructions in Iremite or ancient dialects, all with an aim toward keeping the cult ideologically on target. In this new era, the means to store both relics and information rapidly change. Archeologists start as treasure-seekers, hunting artifacts for their wealthy patrons, but experiences with the destruction of priceless antiquities
lead to the discipline developing the means to handle and store very old texts and materials. Modern methods of printing also mean that it's easier than ever to disseminate information, or to print special copies of books for use by a cult without relying on pesky translation errors or transcription problems.

Furthermore, the rising rate of literacy means that most cultists don't require personal instruction. While indoctrination is important from a cultural perspective, it's possible to simply provide written directions that almost anyone in the cult can read. This is a major boon, especially in an era of safe-deposit boxes, time capsules, and estate orders. Now the mummy can not only leave detailed instructions, but be sure that they aren't lost when the current head of the cult dies. Of course, instructions deliberately lost or destroyed are another matter, but mummies just become used to making examples of that sort every few centuries.

Once again, the fledgling academic fields of psychology and sociology come into play. While the Tef-Aabhi are not really in the business of making religions, they are doing the next best thing: Creating ideologies that grip people and bring them in line with the mummy's agenda. Tell them what they want to hear, then tell them what you want them to hear, as the saying goes. The line between the two may be a fine one, but the rise of understanding of how people think and how groups work gives mummies and their confederates a much clearer method for bringing the right kind of people into the fold.

With all of that in mind, the Tef-Aabhi find the Ruins era a fertile ground for recruitment. People displaced by politics, colonialism, and warfare seek the comfort of a new home, or an ideology or in-group that promises protection and stability. Mummy cults, for all of their oddness, can provide both to people who are ready and willing to serve. Given that the mummy himself may not even show up during the cultist’s lifetime, what is there to lose? Join up, come to meetings, get a hand during troubled times — and if things go really badly, the cult has an actual supernatural protector who will turn your enemies into spattered viscera against the wall. In some places, where entire towns of displaced people flock for sanctuary, the cults have to turn away prospective members simply because there are so many people ready and willing to serve if only it will offer them a modicum of protection!

Stories of Ruin

The descriptions of what the various guilds are doing during the Ruins era are, of course, designed to inspire you with story ideas for your chronicles. Each guild’s signature focus lends itself well to particular horrors, so you could easily center a story on a Tef-Aabhi attempting to break into an art museum and steal a piece of nouveau art in order to better study and understand it, or visiting a European metropolis like Paris or Berlin to meet and study with modern artists. Su-Menent will find themselves drawn to battlefields and war stories, and could be instrumental in the development of anesthesia, antibiotics, and modern medicine. Mesen-Nebu may infiltrate themselves into conferences designed to formalize trade deals or the usurious loans that the European powers foist off on countries such as Egypt and Sudan. In each case, there are a riot of historical figures with whom the mummies might interact, and flashpoints of history that they might impact.

If running a Ruins chronicle on its own, of course, the mummies might well change the course of history. The other variation is to use these points as
flashbacks for a mummy recovering memories in the course of a modern-day chronicle. Did your mummy study psychology with Sigmund Freud? Ride with T.E. Lawrence and Faisal? Lurk on the fringes as Willis Carrier invented air conditioning in 1902? Think about what your mummy considers important, what his or her Guild values, and how the intersection of two aligns with events in the Ruins era, and you have a hook for a story ready to go.

Character Creation

Mummies in the Ruins era follow the same guidelines for character creation given in Mummy: The Curse, for the most part. After all, they’ve been through all of this before, and they will be around forever, so not much has changed for them.

When building a mummy character for this era, follow the usual system of purchasing abilities and skills, applying the mummy template, and spending points on backgrounds, Utterances, Affinities, Memory, and Pillars. You need only a few small changes for this specific time period.

Skills in the Era

Brawl

Keep in mind that in the Ruins era, martial arts have not spread widely into western Europe. Mummy characters will probably not encounter Asiatic martial arts unless they travel east, or have an unlikely encounter with a trained character during the Great War. Boxing itself is still seen as a rough, lower-class sport; this image changes slowly as the U.S. Marine Corps adopts boxing as part of its close-combat training regimen during the Great War and as boxing becomes part of the Olympic games. Of course, pugilism was not unknown in Irem, Egypt, and the later empires in which mummies Arose, but in this particular point in the timeline mummies are unlikely to be specialized in any Asiatic forms.

Computer

The most important change to skills for this era is the absence of the Computer skill. Although some of the raw ideas of computing exist thanks to the Babbage engine, the Jacquard loom and the work of Ada Lovelace, the electronic computer hasn’t been invented yet. Characters who study the early mechanical elements of computing and number theory are studying Science and possibly some of the mechanical Crafts involved in construction of such devices.

Enigmas

Instead of the Computer skill, characters of the Ruins era should use the Enigmas skill, described in the introduction. Enigmas covers the study of riddles, puzzles, and brain twisters. For mummies and their cultists, this skill handles tasks like deciphering the meaning of strange glyphs that aren’t Iremite or hieroglyphic; figuring out the meaning behind a cryptic phrase; or looking into the strange traps left behind in a mummy’s tomb and trying to find out how to get inside without getting killed.

Characters who focus on Enigmas tend to be mystery-solvers, whether the armchair variety or the sort who go out into the world to experience them first-hand. A smattering of this skill is common among senior cultists, and among mummies who delve deeply into interpretation of dreams, unclear memory fragments, or what pronouncements they can remember (or think they can remember) from the Judges.
Note: Don’t confuse the Enigmas Skill with the Enigma Merit. The former represents the ability to solve conundrums; the latter means that your character is a conundrum.

Firearms
The Firearms skill still functions as expected for a modern chronicle, but keep in mind that many of the automatic weapons of the modern age don’t exist yet. The terror of the battlefield in trench warfare is the Maxim machine gun, and the rifles used by militaries during the Great War are typically bolt-action affairs that require the wielder to work the bolt with each shot. Pistols in this era include both revolvers like the Colt M1892 and semi-automatics such as the M1911, depending upon the exact year. The submachine gun is invented during the Great War, but does not see widespread use until World War II; assault rifles have not yet been invented.

Medicine
Penicillin isn’t discovered until 1928, so antibiotics do not yet exist in the Ruins era. This means that, for people without benefit of supernatural healing, surgery, childbirth, and infection are all serious problems. Anesthesia does exist, but it is still proceeding through many processing steps; cocaine is used as an anesthetic in 1898, opioids in 1900, and synthesized cocaine derivatives by 1900 and onward. Heart surgery and organ transplants are technologies of the future, as is the discovery of DNA.

Science
The scientific revolution is well underway, with its works quickly advancing the state of industry. Studies in plastics, petrochemicals, number theory, observational astronomy, and electricity are well underway. By contrast, the transistor doesn’t exist yet; electronic devices still use vacuum tubes. Radio is a common means of hearing the news, but radios are still big and bulky. Television doesn’t become commercially available until the 1920s. RADAR won’t exist until World War II.

In this era, scientists will find great strides happening in chemistry, with the development of synthetics of all kinds — dyes, rubber substitutes, plastics, and medicine. Physics is still working out theories of electromagnetism and doesn’t yet have an understanding of nuclear forces (the Standard Model won’t exist until much later); most physics ends at electricity, magnetism, and classical forces. Biology is still working under many flawed assumptions, as DNA has not been discovered (although inheritance is known); evolution is a new concept; and the taxonomic classification of various animals still leans toward examination of their physiology, because there is no way to trace common ancestry via DNA or mitochondria. Dinosaurs have been discovered, but are still considered lizards and not well understood, with many misclassifications based on improperly assembled skeletons.

The scientific discipline most likely to cross paths with mummies is, of course, archeology. Antiquarianism helped to give rise to this study, but in this era, archeologists are as likely to be hobbyists who have too much money as they are rigorously trained professionals from a university. Naturally, mummies tend to despise the kind of work that archeologists of this era do, since an archeologist will “helpfully” remove a vessel from a tomb and send it overseas to sit in a glass case on a display in someone’s private collection because “it belongs in a museum.”

Merits
The *Ruins* era is a difficult time to situate a full-scale chronicle of *Mummy: The Curse* because it takes place just prior to a Sothic Turn. Naturally, cults can and do raise mummies outside of this timetable, but experiencing a full three decades is nearly impossible, given the rate at which Sekhem bleeds off. To some degree, this is part and parcel of a *Mummy* game; mummies live only in eyeblinks, missing the essential moments of life and turns of history. Still, this can be a challenge, and the new merits presented below may help to mitigate this to some degree.

**Ba-Shai (••)**

*Prerequisite:* Guild Status (Sesha-Hebsu) ••

You are one of the *ba-shai*, a courier from the Guild of Scribes. While alive, your job duties included delivery of important documents and associated parcels, in addition to copying and translating texts. Now that you are Arisen, this sort of task is somewhat beneath you...except when it comes to important relics of the guilds, or even bodies of other mummies.

While you are engaged in carrying a parcel at the behest of your guild, you are politically immune from being stopped or searched by other mummies or their agents. It does happen from time to time, but it causes a great deal of political strife, so most Deathless respect this protection. This protection can be waived by a higher-ranking member of the Sesha-Hebsu, though they are loath to do so without extreme circumstances.

From time to time you may be called up by your cult at the behest of one of the Sesha-Hebsu guildmasters in order to fulfill your ancient duty of copying a text, vessel, or other important artifact. This is, of course, an excellent way for a Storyteller to start a new story.

**Cadaver’s Quiet Touch (•)**

*Prerequisite:* Mummy.

Your touch does not cause other mummies to rise while they are in a death cycle. You can safely touch, pick up, or manipulate the corpse of another mummy while its soul is in Duat, without causing it to burst into a sudden paroxysm of violence.

This Merit is especially useful if a mummy is assisting another mummy in relocating a tomb — but it has, in the past, been used by a mummy to abscond with the corpses of others in order to blackmail them or put them in a difficult position to arise.

**Early Ariser (• to •••)**

Due to an eager soul, or a twist of the magic in your particular Rite of Return, you have a tendency to wake up early when a new Sothic Turn is about to arrive. You gain all the benefits of the Sothic arising — once your Sekhem rating reaches 1, your last point does not drain away due to time. If you are killed before the normal Sothic Turn actually arrives, though, you do not automatically awaken again once the Turn happens. In effect, your Sothic Turn starts slightly before that of other mummies.

The amount of lead time that you get depends upon the dots in this Merit:

- • 1 year
- •• 10 years
- ••• 50 years
For a *Ruins of Empire* era game, the Storyteller should consider giving this merit as a free bonus to mummies who are central to the story, so that they can awaken early for the time period and remain active for the duration of the chronicle. Keep in mind too that mummies who arise early thanks to this Merit might even stay active all the way into the modern age and the new Sothic Turn, if they avoid dying once their Sekhem drains to its minimum.

**Interstitial Lives (*****)**

While most mummies live only in the fits and starts of their summons and Sothic Turns, you sometimes arise for unclear reasons. Perhaps the Judges decided to send you forth on a special errand. Maybe your Rite of Return was so powerful that it fills you with excess Sekhem beyond that normally imbued by the spell. Possibly, your *ba* and *ka* refuse to remain in Duat, and force their way back into your corpse at odd times.

With this merit, you occasionally awaken at odd times, unconnected to a specific purpose, outside of a regular Sothic Turn. When you begin a new Descent uncalled, you treat it much like a Sothic Turn — you do not have a specific goal to achieve, beyond the general elements laid out by your Judge, your guild, and your decree. Unlike an awakening during a Sothic Turn, you can run out of Sekhem over time and eventually die again, so time is something of a factor — but you are not necessarily beholden to performing at the behest of a cult or murdering tomb robbers.

Your interstitial lives are especially vague in your damaged and spotty Memory. Recalling moments from interstitial lives while you proceed through a “normal” Descent requires a Memory score of 5 or higher, and at a score of 5 you only recall sporadic flashes — just enough to let you realize that you have some flicker of existence outside of the cycle common to the Deathless. Only with a Memory score of 7 or more can you recall specifics from other interstitial moments. (This does not apply to your memory of things that have happened in an interstitial life that you are currently experiencing, of course.) Flashbacks from interstitial lives can be sudden and unexpected, and also confusing to a mummy who does not expect a memory of an off-cycle Descent spent without a clear purpose.

Your rising into an interstitial life happens when strange forces coalesce — that is, when the Storyteller has an interesting tale to tell, but chooses not to invoke your cult or the other trappings of Arising. While in Duat, you may attempt to rise prematurely, pitting a roll of your Willpower pool against a difficulty of your Memory rating. If you fail, you cannot try again until a full year has passed. If you succeed, the effort to refill your Sheut with Sekhem costs you a Willpower dot. Rising in this fashion does cause you to begin a new Descent filled with Sekhem, though.

**Visions of Dead Gods (****)**

For reasons not wholly understood, you have strong memories of your encounters with the Judges in Duat. While most mummies find the Underworld a mysterious place, one for which they have the least recollection, you have regular flashbacks to the face of your Judge, sometimes including decrees that it has made to you (in the Iremite language, of course).

These visions can provide a mummy with specific direction — you have a much better idea of your purpose with each Arising, as compared to other Deathless. This direction can be a help or a hindrance, of course, as the Judges often send mummies on cryptic errands without regard to any personal agenda on the part of the mummy.
Because of your visions, you have a very literal belief that you are performing divinely-appointed tasks. When you fulfill a goal that your Judge (that is, your Storyteller) has given you via a vision, you refresh all of your Willpower, just as if you had engaged in your Virtue. You can do this up to once per scene, in addition to gaining the benefits of your Virtue. Every time you increase your Memory, you immediately gain another vision, which comes with an associated task (and the opportunity to increase your Willpower).

In addition, you sometimes simply know (as decreed by Fate, i.e. the Storyteller) when someone makes a false claim regarding the Judges. This could be a case of another Arisen lying about its purpose, or a sorcerer trying to convince you that he shares the agenda of one of the Judges. While this sense is not constant — simply making arbitrary statements about the Judges does not give you any idea of what they want — when it does occur, it is infallible.

Affinities

The introduction of new technology in the Ruins era causes some mummies to discover heretofore unknown Affinities. In particular, mummies discover that they seem to have some level of protection against the new electronic and photographic records of the era, and against the toxins deployed during the Great War.

Face Without Witnesses

Prerequisite: Ren ••

Effect: The explorers cracking open mummies’ tombs in this age often bring cameras to gather photographic evidence. Later, the craze surrounding the tomb of Tutankhamen and the mummy’s curse will form the basis of many cinematic forays. Mummies interacting with these media sometimes discover that they do not “catch” quite right. With this Affinity, the mummy’s visage is almost always distorted when captured in photographs (whether on film or, later, by digital means). This usually takes the form of shrouding the face with a blurring effect, though some element of the mummy’s true, desiccated nature is usually apparent. If desired, the mummy can appear normally at no cost; this requires only the most momentary, minimal effort. Unwitting photographers may chalk up an errant photo of this sort to bad exposure or poor developing process.

Form of the Sybaritic Need

Prerequisite: Sheut ••

Effect: The Arisen gains a new Sybaris form (see Mummy: The Curse, p. 148): Enticement Sybaris. When the mummy’s soul manifests, mortals who glimpse the mummy’s true nature find themselves fascinated and attracted, even in spite of any repulsiveness or inhumanity that they might glimpse. The sheer unnatural power of the mummy’s soul stirs something in mortal onlookers, and they crave the opportunity to serve, to please, and to abase themselves.

Roll for Terror Sybaris when appropriate, but instead of being overwhelmed with terror or anger, mortals find themselves quivering with longing mixed with fear. A mortal affected by Enticement Sybaris will not attack the mummy, but instead may become smitten and overwhelmed, with difficulty behaving rationally and trouble reconciling the combination of revulsion and desire. The usual penalties to dice pools and fading of memories still apply, though the distorted memories of the event tend to cause a different kind of unease. A mortal struck by Enticement Sybaris is a victim of the mummy’s power and would never think to so much as
touch the object of this supernaturally-amplified nauseating desire, without the mummy’s express command; the Sybaris turns mortals into fawning adorers, both repelled and drawn to the eternity that lies behind the mummy’s eyes.

Note that while the manifestation of the Sybaris is different, what a mortal envisions is not. The mummy may still appear as a desiccated corpse surrounded by a wreath of flames, writhing serpents, or a heron’s wings with sharp-bladed edges. The Enticement Sybaris simply causes the image to represent something both fearsome and strangely attractive to the viewer.

**Sovereign Breath**

**Prerequisite:** Ka ••

**Effect:** The lungs are one of the four cardinal organs of a mummy, and with this Affinity the mummy finds that his lungs (or what’s left in his hollow torso) are incorruptible — at least, while in a Descent. Any inhaled gas with a Toxicity rating below twice the mummy’s Ka score has no effect whatsoever. Thus, the mummy could freely roam the trenches of the Great War, or shrug off the effects of chloroform without effort. (Modern mummies will also discover that this prevents any form of cancer or other respiratory problems brought on by smoking, but this is largely irrelevant to them.)

Note that the mummy may suppress this Affinity as desired, such as to enjoy the effects of a cigarette.

**Chronicles of Ruins**

The *Ruins* era is not only a time of adventures for mummies and their cohorts, it’s the period that helps to establish what mummies are in the popular consciousness. The discoveries in Egypt during this period fire the imagination, and in a few short years those stories turn into movies and books carrying distorted interpretations of the Descent. For *Mummy: The Curse* players, it’s a perfect time to embrace those stereotypes. Your mummy can rise from a violated tomb and take up a role pretending to be a priest of an old native religion, become embroiled in the warfare that grips the world, slip into the high society of the Victorian and Edwardian eras as an exotic foreigner, hunt down mysterious relics while pursued by Austrians and Ottomans and Prussians — there’s no shortage of things to do, and there’s no reason that mummies in this era shouldn’t do them in a big way. Especially for mummies in war-torn countries or in the colonized parts of Africa and the Middle East, there’s nothing stopping them from a casual exercise of power. People are dying in strange and horrible ways all throughout this period, so rumors of walking dead and cursed tombs simply add to the cachet of legends surrounding the undead.

**Building Your Pyramid**

The Pyramid chronicle style (*Mummy*, p. 241) is an excellent choice for chronicles set in the *Ruins* era. Because this era happens a century before the next Sothic Turn, it’s unlikely that several mummies will all wake up at the same time with a loose, formless sort of personal agenda; new Descents in this period generally stem from tomb violations and cult summons, with the occasional outlier who is an Early Ariser (as noted in Merits, previously). Playing a mummy, some members of the mummy’s cult, and some hangers-on who have run into this unexpected brush with the supernatural can give a much more focused experience, in which the mummy is central to many of the supernatural goings-on and serves as the underpinning of the group’s agenda (by driving forward the goal with which she arose). Cult members themselves
have freedom to engage in other pursuits, like getting wrapped up in the tumultuous politics and warfare of the day.

A variation on the Rotating Pyramid scheme is to build your characters collaboratively, but then have a different player take the role of the lone central mummy with each new Descent. This way, changes to the mummy’s personality work in naturally as part of the process of lost memories. Each player has a turn to play the central mummy for a single story, while everyone else plays members of the cult. In such a chronicle, the players should all work together to create a cast of characters sufficient for everyone to have a role that they enjoy. The players can collaborate to build the single mummy; then each player can make a mortal character who is connected to the mummy in some way, so that everyone has a character to play regardless of who’s in charge of the mummy during a given story.

Another possible variation is to have a rotating pyramid in which one central mummy (probably one with the aforementioned Early Ariser merit) is always present, but other mummies rotate in and out of the cast — often because the central mummy has pressurized their cults into summoning them. In this style of chronicle, the central mummy figure can become quite potent by amassing experience over the course of several stories, but each player has an ancillary mummy to play from time to time in order to have a chance to play a mummy that’s customized according to the player’s desires.

Of central importance to these chronicles is the notion that you don’t have to have supernatural powers to have a good story. Players who are used to comparing their character sheets and adding up points to determine who’s a “winner” in Darkstalkers slugfests may reject the notion of playing a mere mortal in a supernatural chronicle, but mortals in a Mummy game have a very specific advantage that mummies do not: They are beholden only to themselves; no supernatural compulsions force them to deal with cryptic issues from the Underworld. Thus, mortal characters can pursue adventures, romances, and intrigues that most mummies would consider Sekhem-withering distractions. To build a chronicle for these characters, then, you must consider the intersection of the mummy’s interests and the mortals’. Both sides need each other — the mummy needs mortals as confederates during the death cycle, and the mortals need the mummy for sheer supernatural power. Connecting the two means deploying challenges that put the characters in positions where what they want is something that they can only get through the agency of the other party.

Challenging the Future

Although Mummy: The Curse has a set mythology and backstory, much of that lies in the far distant past. Players in the Ruins era can easily change the course of early modern history. Perhaps the mummies decide to prop up the Ottoman Empire, in order to repel foreign colonialists and spread stability through the region. Without the destruction of that Empire, the Republic of Turkey might never form; a powerful Ottoman Empire could prevent the tensions that led to the hostility of Britain and the Americas against Libya, Iran, and Iraq. The creation of Israel might never happen or happen differently, if a revitalized Empire refuses to allow Britain to parcel out its lands. Or the mummies might intervene in the course of the Great War, assassinating generals or leaders of various nations in a heavy-handed attempt to change its outcome. The Central Powers could remain intact, with Austria-Hungary a separate entity from Germany, and Bulgaria reabsorbed into the Ottoman Empire. In such a schema, Russia would
have a smaller Soviet Union because it would not have as easy a time annexing the Balkan states, while Germany might lack the population and industrial base to turn into a military power later.

It’s a game with immortal creatures from a vanished pre-recorded empire. Tweaking history is part and parcel of that game.

**Allies and Adversaries**

Mummies in the *Ruins* era will find that making new allies outside of their cults requires significant effort. In earlier days, people lived in comparatively small towns, and suborning a few local families was enough to build a personal legend that was whispered around hearths. In the interconnected industrial world, the sheer teeming masses mean that influencing an entire town or city is hardly practical unless the mummy somehow suborns a ruler or other leader — itself a difficult proposition, since the mummy will not always be available to helm the rudder of state.

Adversaries, though, are plentiful.

**Last Dynasty International**

As described in *Mummy: The Curse* (p. 204), Last Dynasty International is a mystical conspiracy that takes the form of an international corporation, ostensibly creating new pharmaceuticals, but actually harvesting Sekhem from mummies for its supernatural rejuvenative properties. During the *Ruins* era, LDI isn’t a corporation yet; it’s a conspiracy between the Three Gentleman and a renegade scorpion cult, based out of Egypt, slowly infiltrating the local government and building its wealth on the back of trade — mostly exports from Egypt to England to enrich that Empire. The Great War tears the cult apart, but the specifics are left to the Storyteller to decide upon.

Even though LDI isn’t a corporation yet, it’s still a cult with dangerous information. The Three Gentlemen are certainly not mummies, but through the aid of their cult they are able to make the leap to refining mummy essence in order to preserve their own immortality. How did they first refine mummy Sekhem? Was their first captive one of the players’ characters? An ally? An enemy (even so, someone who can’t be left in the hands of mortals)? How do they maintain their alliance with Muhammad Ali Pasha — blackmail, threats, or shared greed? What happens when the Amkhat that the cult routinely creates start hunting down relics in the tombs of the players’ mummies? And what happened to the mummy who originally founded the cult?

Mummies who cross paths with any of the Three Gentlemen or their henchmen are in for a bit of a surprise. By the start of the *Ruins* era, the Three Gentlemen have already crossed paths with mummies several times, and they have a crude but effective formula that they later parlay as the Cell-Scrub treatment. Naturally, they’re eager to get their hands on as much Exudation as possible, and that means that they’re dangerous in the extreme. Notably, the Three Gentlemen themselves already know that tackling mummies is outside the bailiwick of mere mortals — so they leave it to their less-intelligent employees. A mummy who crosses paths with the Gentlemen will find herself cunningly stalked until she can be cornered by a very large group of henchmen, preferably with some kind of leverage, like a hostage or a threat to blow up a favorite tomb or relic. The Gentlemen also aren’t above using their pull in the government; bribery and extortion will go a long way to cause no end of headaches for the mummy, from police harassment to shutdowns of her cult’s facilities and confiscation of any money or treasures that happen to be in circulation outside of a tomb.
Even if the players’ mummies manage to get their hands on the Three Gentlemen, there’s no guarantee that this solves the problem. Any number of unscrupulous subordinates could step in to take the place of one of the bosses, should the worst happen. And of course, through the miracle of Revivatar, death isn’t what it used to be. Rumor holds that Adam Drake, Esquire, has already died once; and though he’s not eager to repeat the experience, he’s certainly the wiser for it.

**Revivatar:** This miracle fluid requires five units of Exudation for one dose. The fluid takes the form of a golden gel that is applied by rubbing it over the subject’s torso (specifically, over the locations of the four cardinal organs — heart, liver, lungs, and stomach). Applied within a few hours of death, it returns a mortal subject to normal life. Well, mostly.

Revivatar doesn’t always work, and even when it does, it doesn’t always work quite right. The decedent must make a Willpower roll, with a difficulty equal to the number of hours already dead. Success means that the subject returns to death’s door, at the last Health level. Subsequent rest, therapy, and medical treatment are necessary to heal back to a semblance of normalcy.

Returning via Revivatar is a harrowing experience. The subject automatically loses one dot of Willpower. If the subject scored fewer than five successes on the Willpower roll to rise, additional problems happen; the Storyteller should choose one problem for each success short of five (that is, if the subject scored three successes, the Storyteller would choose two problems):

- The subject loses a physical Merit, such as Strong Back or Stunning Looks, due to damage and permanent scarring.
- The subject gains a derangement.
- The subject suffers the loss of one dot from an attribute — a loss of Stamina could be due to the severe injuries; loss of Dexterity due to scarring; loss of Intelligence due to trauma; and so on.

It’s possible for the subject to suffer from any of these effects more than once, of course, on a poor (but successful) roll.

Revivatar doesn’t work on the undead, and nobody has tested it on animals. It could theoretically function on a sorcerer, should the Three Gentlemen happen to have some handy and happen to want to use it on a sorcerer, an unlikely set of coincidences at best.

Revivatar has a shelf life of only seven years, and it must be stored in extremely specific conditions; the Three Gentlemen usually try to keep a single dose on hand at any given time, but even that is difficult.

**The Rosicrucian Order (AMORC)**

In 1915, Harvey Spencer Lewis forms a new branch of the four-century-old Rosicrucian society. The Rosicrucians claim to keep the secret practices of an ancient Egyptian priesthood dating back to 150 BCE, and Lewis succeeds in becoming a man of great influence. In keeping with their professed origins, they have an extreme interest in all things Egyptian, and the Rosicrucians recruit members from among the prominent European and American Egyptologists of the day.

Though it would seem at first that the Rosicrucians are a rogue cult, nobody claims credit for their existence, and much of the usual lore held by rogue cults simply isn’t present among the Rosicrucians. They don’t seem to have any notion of a vanished precursor civilization, nor a particular affinity for serving the interests of undead patrons. What they do have are a dedication
to a universalist philosophy of philanthropy, the occasional practicing sorcerer, and a huge collection of vessels.

Lewis, in 1921, raises funds from members of the Order to finance the excavation of the temple city of Tel el Amarna. In return, he receives a large number of artifacts from the excavation, which go into the Rosicrucians’ collection. Over the following years, additional artifacts flood into the museum in San Jose, where the Rosicrucians keep the massive collection catalogued and protected. While the museum also contains some replicas, it holds thousands of pieces, many of which still keep traces of Sekhem. Unfortunately this also means that the occasional curse strikes a researcher or member from time to time — but as many of the relics are simply locked away in temperature-controlled cases, they do not often have an outlet for their powers or curses.

The Rosicrucians have chapters all across Europe and the Americas, as well as in Egypt. Opinions about them vary from person to person: Some people see them as harmless idealists, others as a dangerously secretive cult. In the world of Mummy: The Curse, they are a wild card: Their goals will sometimes align with and sometimes oppose those of mummies, they possess enough sorcerous knowledge to be useful, but they are not part of the grand plan and history of Irem. (Indeed, the Arisen would likely consider them naïve, in spite of their skills.)

Personalities of Note

Instead of providing exhaustive character records for every significant mortal, we’ve included a list of some particular people who might serve as focal points for interesting Mummy stories. The descriptions highlight elements of the personality and history of each individual that might pique your interest, so that you can decide who you’ll choose to research via the Internet or your local library.

Emir Faisal

At the opening of the Ruins era, Faisal is one of many leaders in the Arabian peninsula. As a son of the Sharif of Mecca, he has a strong hereditary claim to leadership, one that he cements by joining the Ottoman parliament. In 1916 he meets captain T. E. Lawrence of the British military, and the two form a union that will spark the final collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

Faisal is unusual among some of his countrymen in that he seeks a new Arabian state to replace the Empire, but he does so in the name of politics and identity rather than a specific branch of religion. After he and Lawrence capture Damascus and precipitate the collapse of the Ottomans, he becomes the new king of Syria in 1918, then king of Iraq in 1921. During this time he is a strong proponent of modernization, looking to build infrastructure in the countries of the Middle East to foster trade relations and a stronger sense of community between the disparate groups that live in the desert.

Faisal can be an interesting hook in a Mummy chronicle because he is a pragmatic man with strong leadership skills, exactly the sort of person that a mummy would want to influence in forming a new society in the Arabian peninsula.

Howard Carter

During the beginning of the Ruins era, Howard Carter is 18 years old, gathering information from tombs in Amarna. For the next few years, up until 1899, he uses his artistic talents to record copies of wall reliefs from temples in Deir el-Bahari. He becomes chief inspector for the Antiquities Department, but leaves over a dispute in 1904, then labors for nearly two decades
with limited results. In 1922, his benefactor, Lord Carnarvon, announces that Carter has one more season of digging to find something worthwhile. What Carter finds changes the face of Egyptology to the world at large.

In late 1922, Carter’s team finds the tomb of Tutankhamun in the Valley of Kings. This tomb, highly intact and filled with glorious treasures and works of art, cements Carter’s reputation as a premier archeologist and the discoverer of the most iconic find of its time. The world press publishes glowing accounts of the treasures discovered, which fires the imagination of millions of readers worldwide. The tomb of the “boy king” becomes the central representation of ancient Egypt in the public mind, and Howard Carter is celebrated for his role as the discoverer.

After his discovery, Carter retires to part-time work, assisting in identifying artifacts and securing pieces for museum collections.

For mummies in the Ruins era, Carter is a key figure simply because his discovery catalyzes public fascination with the treasures and glories of mummies’ tombs. Previously, mummies and their tombs were considered dry, barren, and quaint. After 1922, Carter opens people’s eyes to the world of art and grandeur associated with mummies. Even the connection to a “false mummy” — Tutankhamun was a later Egyptian royal, not an Iremite guildsman — provides a reflection of the glory of Irem. This awakening spurs fascination that makes people more apt to join mummy cults.

Jacques de Morgan
As Director of Antiquities for Egypt until 1897, de Morgan oversees foreign interests in archeology and the collection of artifacts. He is an experienced miner and excavator, having already worked in Malaya and later in Susa. Any artifact that isn’t stolen or smuggled almost certainly passes under his scrutiny before it leaves the country. Not that this stops him from sending artifacts abroad — a situation that leads to repercussions later, when Egypt re-establishes itself as an independent country, as many of those artifacts must be repatriated. De Morgan is systematic in his approach and manages to unearth artifacts that were missed by previous digs, by rigorously cataloging each step and establishing maps and breakdown zones of dig sites in accordance with techniques that he learned while mining for metals.

For mummies, de Morgan is a crucial figure because of his authority over digs in much of colonial northern Africa. If the mummies seek a particular tomb, relic, or archeologist, de Morgan is the man to meet. Though he is of a scientific bent, he has his own theories about early Mediterranean civilization, and he becomes increasingly erratic in later years, possibly as a result of a brush with the supernatural.

Mehmed Rauf
The Turkish writer of the modernist novel Eylül is a figure of penetrating intellect, forging a new form of literature in the wake of the collapse of old, stratified forms of poetry favored in the Ottoman Empire. Though Rauf only writes one novel, it is seen as a watershed in Turkish literature, focused on the psychology of characters and their deep-set thoughts and feelings. Rauf abandons the prosaic styles of the time and, as part of the Edediyyat-ı Cedide or New Literature movement, pioneers what could be characterized as a modern novel.

Mehmed Rauf is a useful ally for mummies because of his role in establishing part of the new artistic movement of the Turkish revolution. His circle of associates helps to build the ideas and
writings that transition from the remains of the old Ottoman Empire to the new Republic of Turkey.

**Mehmed Vahideddin**
The final sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Mehmed VI presides over a series of disastrous military campaigns that leads to the Empire’s dissolution. Raised in the harem in Topkapi Palace, he has an isolated childhood that segues into a rigorously structured education designed to protect him from outside influences or dangers. Though he is intelligent and politically savvy, his predecessors have left the Empire in a poor state; once the British and Russian militaries trounce the Ottomans on the field of war, he is forced into a series of concessions. Further undercutting his position is the activity of Turkish nationalists who agitate (eventually successfully) for a new Republic of Turkey. In 1918 he is forced to surrender unconditionally, and the Ottoman Empire is quickly dissolved and partitioned off according to Allied interests.

Mehmed VI is a dynamic figure on the losing end of history. For mummies his story is a familiar one, of a leader attempting to navigate treacherous waters but outmaneuvered by the stagnation of his Empire and a series of humbling reversals. Mummy characters could become involved in stories attempting to prop up the sultan in order to stabilize the Empire and repulse European invaders, or to speed him to his demise in hopes of establishing their own preferred catspaws in the ensuing chaos.

**Mustafa Kemal Atatürk**
A military officer in the Ottoman Empire, Mustafa Kemal serves in the army from 1907 until the dissolution of the Empire in 1918; even in his early years, he is a member of a secret reform movement inside of the army. After the Ottoman Empire collapses, he works for the establishment of independent Turkey, as a military leader fighting to expel foreign invaders. He orchestrates several successful campaigns and becomes such a popular leader that when the Republic of Turkey forms in 1923, he becomes its first president.

Mustafa is a reformist and a modernist, strongly interested in developing Turkey technologically and establishing it as a new center of culture and trade. He is keenly aware that, if his fledgling country becomes riven with intercne conflict, it will simply fall into the machinations of European imperial powers. To stabilize the new country, he leans on many of the reformist ideas circulating among the Young Turk movement and looks to a secular Turkish identity as a unifying force. The Turkish Congress, in recognition of his leadership, grants him the surname Atatürk, or “Father of the Turks,” as an exclusive honorific.

Mummies involved in the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of the Republic of Turkey will likely cross paths with Kemal or his army. Mummies could alternately praise his pragmatic approach and his political maneuvering, or be disturbed by the secular principles upon which he forms the new society.

**Nezihe Muhiddin**
Born just before the beginning of the *Ruin* era, as a young woman Nezihe lives through the turmoil of the Ottoman collapse and becomes a citizen of the Republic of Turkey. Though the Voting Rights Bill of 1909 had given women the right to vote during Ottoman dominion, women’s participation in the political process and in higher education was limited. Working as a journalist, she sees the revolutionary process and the formation of the new nation of Turkey first-hand, and this galvanizes her to remain active in politics. She forms Kadınlar Halk Fırkas, the
“Women’s People Party,” in 1923; though Turkey does not officially recognize the party, she uses her political clout to continue to press for women’s political equality.

Although women do have the ability to vote before Nezihe founds her party, the Women’s People Party is the first organized attempt to create a voting bloc from women. In addition, Nezihe writes several feminist books, exploring progressive ideas about the role of women in Turkish society and the struggle to capture personal agency.

For mummy characters, Nezihe is a galvanizing figure. She has a wide-reaching view of the issues that surround Ottoman and Turkish politics, and she is not afraid to speak out about them. She is also a skilled organizer and writer, able to motivate with her powerful stories. A mummy who tries to make her into a cultist might find that she is a bit more self-possessed than most mere mortals.

T. E. Lawrence

Made famous by the book lionizing his exploits and later the movie Lawrence of Arabia, Lawrence is a British intelligence officer with experience in the Arab world. He is picked to foster a revolution to slow the Ottoman advance, and he does not disappoint. In conjunction with several other intelligence officers and an alliance of Arab irregulars under the titular command of Emir Faisal, Lawrence engineers a series of raids on Ottoman railroads; the Arabs carry off all they can loot, and the Ottomans are left stretching their forces across miles of desert in a vain attempt to stop the raiders.

Lawrence is a dynamic personality, at once charismatic, resolute, and decisive. He is also an excellent tactician and strategist, as shown both by his ability to paralyze Ottoman logistics and his capture of Aqaba and later Damascus (though the city actually fell shortly before he personally was able to arrive). He is also a masochist, with a penchant for surviving torture and beatings (both consensual and otherwise).

Mummy characters will certainly hear about Lawrence’s exploits as the Great War drags on. In the World of Darkness, his various personality quirks may well be the result of exposure to Sybaris during his early years as an archeologist in 1910–1914.

Inspirations

The collection of inspirational works below focuses on historical sources, with a few pieces of fiction sprinkled in to tantalize. Understanding The Ruins of Empire era means understanding the context of the collapse of empires in Europe, the period of colonization that led to massive upheaval in Africa, and the horrors of the Great War.

Akcam, Taner. The Young Turks’ Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire. Princeton: Princeton University Press (2013). A (rather horrifying) accounting of Ottoman documents relating to the forcible relocation and extermination of Armenians; not for the faint of heart, but useful in understanding the backdrops of the religious and ethnic tensions of the time (which have led to modern conflicts).

Balfour, Arthur James. Letter to Baron Rothschild. 2 Nov. 1917. British Library. The “Balfour Declaration” is a document that leans upon the British policy for defeating the Ottoman Empire — by turning various regional powers against each other, making promises to both sides, and pushing for British support among whoever emerges as the victor in the local conflicts. The Balfour Declaration specifically calls for the settlement of the area of Palestine, which naturally
leads to conflicts that are still felt today. Although support in the British government for such a program was low, the tactic of leveraging various kingdoms against one another was a key element of British strategy.


Erickson, Edward J. *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War*. Greenwood press, 2000. A contemporary compilation of Turkish sources that provides some insights into how the Ottoman Empire fared before its end during the Great War. A useful resource for games set in the Empire during the War, or for characters who may have experiences with the Ottoman military.

Lawrence, T. E. *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. London: Oxford Times, 1922. Lawrence’s account of the Arab revolt of 1917-1918. A look into the revolt through the lens of Lawrence, and a look into the thoughts of Lawrence himself.

*Lawrence of Arabia*, David Lean, Sam Spiegel, 1962. A dramatized and cinematic version of the adventures of T. E. Lawrence in Arabia. Though elements are heavily fictionalized, the film is a cinematic *tour de force* and a must-see for, well, pretty much anyone. Peter O’Toole portrays Lawrence as a driven man, at times overcome by the gravity of the acts that he commits in the name of his signature vision.


*The Night of Counting the Years*, Shadi Abdel Salam, General Egyptian Cinema Organization, 1969. An Egyptian feature film set in 1881, showcasing grave robbers selling a cache of mummies on the antiquities market. Though the dialogue is in Arabic, the sense of what’s going on in the film is still established well enough for a non-speaking viewer to get an idea of the plot, and the movie both portrays Egypt during that turbulent time and features the Antiquities Service.
Rauf, Mehmet. *Eylül*. Istanbul: Âlim Matbaası, 1901. A principal example of the Turkish “New Literature” movement, based on the premise of creating a prose psychological novel. Arguably, a showcase of the transition from the old Ottoman Empire’s poetic literature to the modernist forms of the new century, following the examples coming out of western Europe.

Treaty of Versailles, 28 June 1919. The Treaty of Versailles ends the Great War, and famously forces Germany to engage in payment of reparations, which naturally becomes part of the focus of Germany’s later military ambitions (in order to get out from under its crushing war guilt obligations).


Zurcher, Erik J. *Turkey: A Modern History* (3rd ed.). London: I. B. Tauris, 2004. An academic resource that covers the development of Turkey from its Ottoman roots to the modern era, and an excellent initial source for a Storyteller or player looking to know more about the impetus behind the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey.
The five of them sat in the darkness. The barn provided some protection against the wind and dust, but the air was still thick with grit. When the wooden walls creaked, the five of them wondered if they had just traded the risk of exposure and dust pneumonia for the risk of being crushed when the walls finally gave way.

Mrs. Fitzpatrick owned the barn, but she had allowed Morton, one of the sheriff’s deputies, to pass out responsibilities. Sarah Fey, just a traveler passing through, had helped Mrs. Fitzpatrick to find rags and straw and use them to plug up the chinks and knot-holes in the dry boards that formed the walls. Morton had directed the last two outsiders, the salesman and the hobo — Josiah and Charlie — to look for the lantern that Mrs. Fitzpatrick said was kept in the barn and then to light it. Charlie had proven to be completely useless at lighting the lantern once it had been found, shying away from the flame of Josiah’s tiny lighter as though it could hurt him.

Once the barn was made as comfortable as could be, there was nothing to do but wait. Morton and Mrs. Fitzpatrick gossiped about mutual friends and acquaintances while the rest huddled silently in the opposite corner.

Josiah was the first to hear the sound and voice his concern. “I think there’s someone out there.”

The barn fell silent, except for the sound of the driving wind outside. Then everyone could hear it — a faint scratching at the wooden slats, the faint suggestion of words, spoken too quietly to carry above the wind, and a piteous hacking cough.

Morton demanded that he be the one to go. He wrapped Mrs. Fitzpatrick’s shawl several times around his face, then, sheltering his eyes with his hand, went out into the storm.

The four of them waited. The storm did not let up and Morton did not return.

Mrs. Fitzpatrick went next, insisting that Morton must have simply lost his way and be wandering in circles. She went out into the storm and also did not come back. The three who remained gathered closer around the lantern, except for Charlie, who kept a respectful distance from the flame. Whenever he even looked at the flame, he gathered a fold of his ragged clothes between his dirty fingers and squeezed it anxiously.

“I’m going to go out and look for them,” Josiah said eventually.

“Are you an idiot?” Sarah asked.

Josiah shook his head. “No,” he replied, “but I have faith in God to protect me.” He reached into his leather case and brought out a little snub-nose revolver, which he carefully loaded. “God and the Colt Manufacturing Company.”

Then Josiah was gone. They waited. At length, Sarah turned to Charlie and said, “At least there wasn’t a scream, or a shot.”

“The others didn’t scream,” was all Charlie could say.

Both of them jumped when Josiah came back into the barn. He was panting, trying to simultaneously hold his gun in one hand, something else in the other hand, claw the grit out of his eyes, and bar the door behind him. Sarah leapt up to help him, and soon all three of them were back around the lantern.
Before anyone could ask what had happened, Josiah dropped the thing he had been holding into the circle of the light. It was a human hand, bloodless and tattered as though it had been gnawed away from the wrist by tiny, relentless teeth.

Then the chattering laughter came, easily carrying above the sound of the storm. It sounded as though it were circling the barn, scratching on the wooden walls and cackling.


Sarah and Josiah looked at Charlie, who shrank away from them.

“It wants you,” Josiah said.

Charlie nodded.

Sarah started to pray, quietly, under her breath. Her voice barely carried above the sound of the storm, but whatever was outside could hear, and it began to mimic her as well.


“Come on, man,” Josiah said, suddenly, turning away from Charlie. “There’s got to be something we can use to bar the door. If we can last until the storm ends…” He trailed off, grit his teeth, and made himself to continue. Charlie could see him doing that peculiar human thing where he forced himself to think of something he had realized. “If we can last until the storm ends, we’ll be all right.”

“No,” Charlie said. He rose to his full height. For the first time, Josiah and Sarah saw how big he was — enormous and covered in ugly knotted muscles. “I’ll go.”

Josiah shook his head. “You can’t. That thing, it’ll —”


Josiah wordlessly pressed his gun into Charlie’s hand. Charlie looked at it — dwarfed in his enormous fist — and put it in his pocket.

“Bar the door after me.”

“We will.”

Then Charlie walked out, alone, into the black blizzard.

A Handful of Dust

“In other periods of depression, it has always been possible to see some things which were solid and upon which you could base hope, but as I look about, I now see nothing to give ground to hope — nothing of man.”

— President Calvin Coolidge

During the 1930s, while the entire Western world suffered from a period of economic dysfunction called the Great Depression, parts of America, Canada, and Mexico were struck by an accompanying ecological disaster. Agricultural practices used in the previous decades had
destroyed the grasses that kept the topsoil in place, and when the drought came, the topsoil blew away in huge black clouds. Not only did the combination of economic depression, drought, and famine eliminate all possibility of agriculture — turning cities into refugee camps — but the dust storms themselves were severe enough that they could be deadly. People caught in the dust storms could die of asphyxiation as the fine grit invaded their lungs. Even if they survived the dust, they could die of pneumonia in the weeks that followed.

The Great Depression was a difficult time for much of the world, but the Midwestern states affected by the Dust Bowl were struck particularly hard. The breakdown of the urban infrastructure had an impact on many Americans on a daily basis. In the Dust Bowl, however, the landscape underwent a nightmarish transformation. Entire communities dissolved overnight as the weather and the land itself seemed to rebel against their way of life.

Like all events that shake up the world of humans, the Dust Bowl had a profound effect on the supernatural beings that live alongside humanity. For those who are more or less human and live within human society, the Dust Bowl was a painful and dangerous time. Of all the supernatural creatures inhabiting the World of Darkness, the Promethean experience resonates the best with the Dust Bowl. The Dust Bowl was the Promethean experience writ large. During the Dust Bowl, the American Midwest — once the breadbasket of the nation — turned into a blasted wasteland. Both Prometheans and the scattered survivors of the Dust Bowl long for the possibility of redemption; both fear that instead of making them stronger, the experience will destroy them.

Talking the Talk
People in the 1930s mostly talked like they do today. There were a few differences, of course. As a general rule, if it sounds a bit old-fashioned — but not entirely outlandish — to your ears today, it was probably common lingo in the 1930s. At the same time, a lot of things we say today, we still said back then. The word “fuck” for example, has been with the English language for about as long as there has been an English language. Informants were still called “narks” in the 1930s; they might have called something expensive “pricey,” or called something sexually explicit and improper “raunchy.”


For best results, use period slang sparingly. Remember that in all eras, people mostly just say what they want to say, dropping in slang terms that they either favored, personally, or saw as particularly appropriate to the occasion.

Naming your characters works more or less the same way. Biblical names were popular in the 1930s, but Biblical names have always been popular in America. In addition to many modern names, consider using names that seem “old-fashioned” today, like Morton or Bertha.

Hope and Despair
Humans are rugged creatures. As a species, we refuse to surrender. When things are at their hardest, we are often at our greatest, rising above our selfish instincts. We come together, support each other, and build great things out of the ashes of our past glories.
The story of the 1930s — the Great Depression in general and the Dust Bowl in particular — is a story about despair. Bad economics, bad agriculture, and bad luck combined to create a situation in which thousands of people lost their homes, livelihoods, and even lives. Faced with such utter hopelessness, many gave in. They abandoned their homes and families and turned on each other, becoming vicious and selfish and trying to find profit — or at least survival — in the misery of their fellow humans.

But others did not. Faced with despair, they looked for hope. Where they couldn’t find hope, they invented it from scratch. Some communities were shattered, but others came together even more tightly than before. Some individuals lost all care for others and fought only for themselves, but others continued to welcome and assist each other for as long as they could. For every story of greed and depravity, there are other stories of selflessness and heroism.

In this way, the Dust Bowl mirrors the dichotomy that every Promethean experiences. Despair is everywhere, but it contains the seed of hope.

Wasteland

The Dust Bowl transformed the American Midwest into a wasteland. Before the drought, the Midwest had been mostly prairie: dry, arid, but not properly a desert, the fragile topsoil held in place by hardy grasses, the occasional trees sucking moisture out of the dirt with deep, broad networks of roots. It was not always a forgiving environment, but it was definitely a lively one. Prairie dogs and other small mammals foraged among the grasses and were preyed on, in turn, by eagles, coyotes, foxes, and other predators.

But the humans who lived there overreached their bounds. They plowed too aggressively, let their fields lie fallow in the winter, and failed to adapt the farming techniques they had learned from their ancestors — techniques originally produced in Europe and perfected on the East Coast — to the drier climate of the Midwest. The soil turned into dust and blew away on the wind. Dirty rain and black snow fell as far away as the Capitol, and what was left behind was not enough to support life. The crops died, the grasses died, the trees died. The herbivorous animals died or fled and the carnivores died or followed them. The humans were faced with the same choice: Stay and starve, or leave their homes behind.

While the Great Depression caused cities to rot, half-finished structures standing like skeletons and ill-maintained buildings bearing broken windows, graffiti, and layers of bills, the Dust Bowl turned the once-fertile Midwest into a literal wasteland. The topsoil dried up and blew away, leaving miles of bare, dusty plain, studded with dead trees and dead crops. People abandoned their homes, leaving the structures and any belongings they couldn’t carry with them to be slowly devoured by the dust. Where people remained, they were usually malnourished and desperate.

The Long Road

During the Dust Bowl, tens of thousands of people were forced out of their homes. Some were farmers who had to watch their land become completely non-arable. Other members of agricultural communities — the craftsmen and laborers who had serviced the farming communities — also watched their livelihoods disappear, and many of them took to the road. The Great Depression saw many homes and businesses claimed by banks, themselves struggling to remain afloat, and the conditions of the Dust Bowl exacerbated this situation.
Many of these unfortunates became migrant laborers, following the work from place to place. Some of these men and women had been farmers or farm hands, and they understood the patterns of planting and harvesting. Like modern migrant workers, they knew enough to plan their movements back and forth across the face of America so that they could be in one state in time to find work for the raspberry harvest and in another in time to pick oranges or reap wheat. More than a third of these migrants were white-collar workers, however — teachers, lawyers, and businessmen — who were forced onto the road by the general economic collapse. These people didn’t have the same skills as displaced farm workers; they either learned fast, or failed to thrive.

Migrant workers were often unwelcome. They were viewed as taking jobs away from locals — which was sometimes true, because they were so desperate they were often willing to work for very little pay — and were accused of harboring criminals and carrying diseases.

America has always had a thread of cultural Calvinism, and this worked against the migrants. Many Americans assumed that the migrants must be somehow sinful or morally deficient; if they weren’t, wouldn’t God have done something to protect them? Some Americans, foreshadowing some of today’s religious fanatics, even went so far as to claim that America as a whole deserved the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. The migrants, as the most obviously suffering Americans, were therefore the most sinful.

Many of these migrant laborers joined the ranks of hobos. A hobo was an itinerant worker — hobos saw their eagerness to work as what set them above tramps, who traveled but did not work, and bums, who did neither. Hobos got from place to place by stowing away on freight trains, often by clambering up onto the rails. Unlike most migrant laborers, hobos were usually not looking to settle down; although not all of them were itinerant by choice, they had adopted and took pride in this lifestyle. Hobos were almost all single men, some of whom had abandoned their families. Although hobos had been a part of America ever since the advent of freight trains, the economic collapse of the Great Depression and the ecological collapse of the Dust Bowl caused many more men to take to the road in search of work.

A hobo had to face many threats, ranging from violent railroad employees attempting to chase him off trains, to bad weather, disease, and malnutrition. Hobos prided themselves in being willing to take on odd jobs, but that didn’t mean that all hobos were good workers. Many of them had personality issues or substance abuse problems which contributed to the decision to take to the road in the first place. Hobos adapted by creating a simple code language, which they would scratch or paint on surfaces to advise other hobos of what they might find. There were hobo symbols to indicate ideas as diverse as whether or not a town was friendly to hobos, which doctors would treat a hobo for free and which would require payment, where a hobo might find work, and what campsites had easy access to clean water. It is easy to imagine that in the World of Darkness, hobo subculture might also have signs to indicate what sorts of supernatural threats might exist. Like most subcultures surviving on the bottom of the economic chain, hobos are more vulnerable to supernatural depredations than others, and might have learned to be less ignorant in order to survive. There could well be hobo symbols to indicate “many vampires here” or “strange things in this house — stay away.”

Hobos also had an ethical system, fully codified in 1889. The hobo code of ethics encouraged hobos to do what they could to help their fellows, both by improving the attitude of settled people towards hobos as well as by directly assisting other hobos. An ethical hobo was instructed to look for work when he could, set a good example so as to encourage towns to treat other
hobos well, try to stay clean, value items given to him as charity and pass them on to other hobos when they weren’t needed anymore, protect children from molestation and encourage runaway children to return home, and so on.

**Come Look at the Freaks**

During the 1930s, America was fascinated by medical curiosities. Different experts point to a wide variety of causes for this trend. Some believe that it was a result of the gradual dissemination into the culture of the theory of evolution. As Americans struggled with the knowledge of humanity’s place in nature, they found “freaks of nature” — humans whose interrupted or malformed development demonstrated their dependence on natural cycles — increasingly interesting. Alternately, perhaps the survivors of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl just wanted to look at people who were even less fortunate than themselves.

Ironically, some of these freaks were able to live very well on the proceeds of their shows. Although there were cases of sideshow performers — especially those with mental deficiencies alongside their physical differences — living in virtual slavery, “contracted” (or sold) by their parents to sideshow promoters who then kept the lion’s share of their “client’s” fees, many freaks were able to negotiate extremely favorable contracts. They were valuable, rare, and irreplaceable performers.

People with these sorts of deformities were also more common in the 1930s than they are today. The Environmental Protection Agency wasn’t established until 1970; no one was studying the mutagenic and teratogenic properties of household chemicals and industrial byproducts. Many more Americans suffered malnutrition, even during pregnancy, and no one knew enough about the beneficial properties of folic acid to recommend it to new mothers. This was before the era of sonograms; most parents didn’t even know if their child was male or female before it was born. Even if they might have been willing to abort a drastically deformed child, they would not have had the option.

Other freaks were made rather than born. Tuberculosis could cause the lungs to cave in, bending a person in half. World War I had left behind many wounded veterans — the G.I. Bill of 1944 was still more than a decade away — some of whom invented more dramatic stories for their various disabilities and displayed themselves as freaks. Other survivors of workplace injuries and farming accidents did the same.

Some freaks were merely performers who relied upon the audience’s hangups and biases to terrify, amaze, and disgust them. For example effeminate men might create costumes that were half suit, half evening dress and perform as “half-and-halves.” While some of these performers were actual hermaphrodites and others may have been transgender, most were simply masculine women or men with sparse enough facial hair to carry off the disguise. Some performers covered themselves in ordinary white glue in order to appear “lizard-skinned,” or attached doll parts to ordinary infants to make them seem as though they had extra limbs. Even the “genuine” freaks exaggerated their unusual characteristics: The fat women were rarely as fat as they claimed, and the giants were often not quite as giant as their advertisements would lead others to believe. They used stage magic — tricks of light, makeup, and positioning — to make the show more impressive.

Most freak shows supplemented their line-up with unusual performers who fit the theme of human and natural oddities. Contortionists, sword swallowers, fire-eaters, blockheads — who
pretended to pound nails into their heads by taking advantage of the common misconception that the nasal cavity goes up, rather than directly into the head — snake-charmers, heavily pierced or tattooed performers, and geeks or “wild men” were all common additions to a freak show.

What Has Come Before

The Dust Bowl came about because of a perfect storm of economics, ecological factors, and human arrogance. The drought that struck the Midwest in the 1930s was unavoidable, but the choices that made it a national tragedy, rather than just a bad year, were entirely human.

The primary cause of the Dust Bowl was agricultural practices unsuited to the environment. The Midwest is an arid environment, almost a desert. A few years of unusually intense rainfall inspired the entirely fictitious belief that “rain follows the plow,” an extension of the manifest destiny that held that European settlement somehow led to weather conditions conducive to European agriculture. The topsoil is naturally dry and powdery, but held in place by the Midwest’s famous grasses. When farmers burned the grasses away to make room for their crops, they endangered the soil. The problem was compounded by the practice of leaving the fields entirely fallow during the winter, which allowed the top-soil to become even looser and more desiccated.

The Dust Bowl cut the heart out of the American Midwest. It extended far enough north and south to affect parts of Canada and Mexico. Although the drought itself didn’t reach as far as the East Coast, enough dust remained in the air that the snow in areas as far away as New England sometimes had a reddish tinge.

Agriculture came to a grinding halt. The economic consequences spiraled outwards, worsening the effects of the Great Depression already in progress. Alone, either the Dust Bowl or the Great Depression would have been a serious hardship; together they were devastating. Entire communities vanished practically overnight, their inhabitants forced to take to the road. The ranks of America’s migrant workers and hobos swelled vastly. Because so many of them came from Oklahoma — a largely agricultural state hit especially hard by the Dust Bowl — America took to calling these new homeless “Okies,” regardless of where they came from.

Perils of the Age

Dust storms, malnutrition, and disease stalked the ravaged Midwest during the Dust Bowl. Prometheans may be durable, but they still need to eat and breathe and can still — albeit rarely — become sick. More importantly, human relationships are always important to a Promethean’s journey. How the Dust Bowl affects a Promethean’s human friends can be a valuable source of drama.

Dust storms can be incredibly dangerous. As a rule of thumb, the number of minutes a character can survive a dust storm unscathed is based on her Stamina score. If the character spends this time in combat or other strenuous physical activities, she breathes as though her Stamina were one point lower.

Stamina Time
- 15 minutes
- 30 minutes
- One hour
- Two hours
Four hours

When their time is up, characters start to choke. Each player must make a Stamina + Resolve roll every five minutes for his character to remain active. A failed roll results in a cumulative –1 penalty to all rolls, including future Stamina + Resolve rolls. Once the penalties exceed the character’s Stamina, she falls unconscious. Either way, the player must pass a final Stamina + Resolve roll with a penalty equal to the total number of times he rolled to remain active. Failure indicates that the character comes down with a case of pneumonia.

Dust storms affect Prometheans in the same way that they do humans, though Prometheans are unlikely to develop pneumonia, or if they do, to suffer from it for very long (see p. 164 of Promethean: The Created for details).

The rules for thirst, hunger, and disease can be found on pp. 175-176 of World of Darkness. Foraging (see the Survival Skill on p. 77 of World of Darkness) in the Dust Bowl is challenging; the Midwest in the 1930s is both an arid environment (–2 penalty) and — in the first years of the drought — a foreign environment (additional –2 penalty). Additionally, proper medication and medical equipment could be hard to come by in many parts of America during the Great Depression, especially in the areas affected by the Dust Bowl. If you are using the God-Machine Chronicle rules revisions, a dust storm is an Extreme Environment that inflicts the Blinded Tilt (p. 208 of the God-Machine Chronicle) on anyone caught in one.

Life in These Hard Times

The 1930s was an era indisputably different from our own. From the gaps in their technologies and the ways they impacted human lives to the people the majority failed to see as fully human, this era seems very hard and cruel from the comfortable vantage point of the present.

Science and Technology

America began to be electrified in the late 1800s. By the 1930s, electricity was seen as a basic convenience in most urbanized parts of the United States. Roughly 90% of urban dwellers had electricity in their homes and businesses. Most rural areas — such as those hit hardest by the Dust Bowl — still operated without electricity. Only 10% of rural communities were electrified. Bringing electricity to these communities was one of Roosevelt’s New Deal schemes, but in the 1930s, the New Deal and the end of the Depression were a long way off. Even in electrified communities, candles and oil lamps remained common in most homes because the electrical grid was nowhere near as reliable as it is today.

Electroshock Therapy Redux

Chances are that in a game set during the Dust Bowl, Prometheans have no easy access to electricity. In a city, a Promethean might need to break into a home or business to find an electrical outlet. Out in the countryside, she might need to vandalize someone’s car to get at the battery or pray for a convenient lightning storm. Given the possibility that the storm will kick up a “black blizzard,” however, that might be a foolish thing to wish for.
Although the West’s cultural obsession with electricity — which characterized the 1850s — had faded somewhat by the time the 1930s rolled around, it was still a pretty magical phenomenon. A clever Promethean might be able to find a traveling salesman hawking “headache-curing caps” or a similar device, which used a tiny battery to run a small current through the wearer’s skin. Although it’s unlikely that these devices did any good for humans, a Promethean might be able to drain the battery for a little healing.

The Storyteller should play up this difference. Easy access to electricity can make Prometheans seem indestructible in a modern game. While they still enjoy Promethean durability in a game set in the Dust Bowl, the lack of electricity can enhance the feeling of isolation and precarious safety that is part of the Promethean condition.

By modern standards, the medical technologies of the 1930s were woefully inadequate. Although doctors understood germ theory, they couldn’t do much about major infections. The only antibacterial agents available were sulfanilamides — chemicals originally used to dye leather. Although they were relatively non-toxic to humans, sulfanilamide allergies were also common. The Food and Drug Administration lacked sufficient authority to regulate medicine, which resulted in many deaths before the bureau’s powers were expanded in the late 1930s, only a year before the end of the Dust Bowl.

Americans in the 1930s were still subject to many diseases that have since been eliminated, or at least chased away from North America. Although doctors had developed many techniques to slow its spread and progress, tuberculosis was still a danger. The most striking disease of the 1930s, however, was probably polio. A viral infection that attacked the nervous system, polio usually caused flu-like symptoms before being defeated by the body’s immune system. Some people with polio, however, developed partial or complete, permanent or temporary paralysis of one or more limbs, or even the entire body. Children were less likely to develop paralytic symptoms than adults, but when they did the consequences could be much more serious. Limbs paralyzed by polio could become deformed as the frozen muscles exerted pressure on the growing bones.

Between the scars and deformities that could be left by polio and tuberculosis, and a lack of interest in studying the causes of birth defects — most families still had many children, and the odd deformed or stillborn child was still viewed as expendable, one of the perils of reproducing — the streets of the 1930s could be a very different place. One was more likely to encounter someone with a twisted limb, a crushed chest, a club foot, or a cleft palate than in America today. The relative frequency of these deformities probably contributed to America’s fascination with freaks. People with unusual bodies were a lot more common in the 1930s than they are today, and many of them were willing to leverage their disabilities into fame and fortune, or at least economic security and a place of value within their community.

Many other technological conveniences that we take for granted today were present in the 1930s, however. Although America’s love affair with the automobile wouldn’t really begin until after the Second World War, cars and trucks were not at all an uncommon sight. Telephones were as common as electricity, which is to say that they were ubiquitous in urban centers and rare in the country. Guns had replaced melee weapons as the preferred instrument of murder, and were cheap and common. As a rule of thumb, many modern conveniences were just a little more
expensive in the 1930s than they are today, and as a result, they were also rarer. For example, a modern upper middle-class family in America might own two cars — one for each adult to commute in. An equivalent family in the 1930s might have a single car, which they would drive infrequently (to save on wear and tear, and gas).

The Long Struggle
America’s past can be defined as a long war over who is allowed to participate fully in our society, and who is relegated to an outside or subservient role. We have a long way to go even now, but looking back at the 1930s presents a stark picture of just how far we have come.

A Woman’s Place
It’s easy to simplify America’s sexist past by characterizing women as undervalued, second-class citizens who enjoyed no legal or social protections. This attitude isn’t entirely incorrect — all the informal societal power in the world doesn’t compare to cold, hard legal protections and access to money — but it isn’t completely accurate, either. Accurately representing the role of women in America in the 1930s requires a more nuanced view.

In the 1930s, women were viewed as having a specific role as the creators and protectors of the domestic sphere. Their job was to maintain the home, raise children, and act as arbiters of moral virtue. Men, on the other hand, were expected to operate in the public sphere — the world of work, finance, and politics. In a functional family, anyway, both men and women could expect their roles to be valued and both suffered censure when they attempted to cross over into the other’s world. Of course, as actors in the public sphere, men enjoyed more financial, legal, and political power, which led to inequalities that we are still combating to this day.

Barring unusual individual maliciousness, women could expect to live as contributing and relatively unmolested members of society, provided they stayed within the narrow boundaries society ordained for them. As long as women remained in the domestic sphere or a few appropriately “feminine” or “nurturing” careers — teacher, nurse, and social worker to name a few — and intruded into the public sphere only with appropriate male escorts, they could expect to be left more or less alone.

As soon as a woman dared to step outside these boundaries, however, she was in immediate danger. A woman alone in the public sphere, without a man for permission or protection, was frequently harassed or even assaulted. The general public might not have condoned these actions, but they viewed them understandable, a natural consequence of a woman intruding into a place where she didn’t belong. Unless they could prove that the crime somehow surpassed the normal polite limitations on this sort of behavior — for example, a woman who had been sexually assaulted establishing that she had an unimpeachable reputation and had every right to be where she was when she was attacked — women could expect a very limited legal response. Rape wasn’t legal, but bad girls got what was coming to them. Even when physical assault wasn’t a factor, women in the public sphere could expect to be treated with a wearying condescension. Most men would assume that women didn’t know anything about money (beyond the basics needed to buy household supplies), business, automobiles and other machinery, and so on.

Society placed limitations on men as well, but these limitations were much gentler. A man who expressed too much an interest in cooking, clothes, or raising his young children might be subject to some social stigma, but at the end of the day, he still had the money and the power to protect himself.
In a sense, however, the Great Depression was easier on women than men. Men were socialized to view themselves as bread-winners, responsible for going out into the world of work and returning with money. Women, on the other hand, were charged with maintaining the family. When a man lost his job or had to accept a pay cut, his identity as a man was threatened. When a woman had to cut corners to make ends meet, finding a way to stretch fewer resources to feed and clothe the same number of people, her identity as a woman was reinforced.

Gender expectations showed their ugliest and most violent face when it came to the treatment of homosexuals. Although America went through a more liberal phase in the 1920s, when openly gay actors and actresses openly spoke of their desire to be taken seriously and accepted for who they are, the end of the Roaring Twenties and the beginning of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl brought out the worst. Americans turned their back on acceptance. During the 1930s, homosexual activity was viewed as an illness at best and criminal at worst. Police enacted sting operations to catch homosexuals. Because women — at least, good women — were viewed as less sexual than men, gay women were sometimes able to escape violence or imprisonment, but they still lived in fear of discovery.

Prometheans are certain to find gender roles extremely confusing because they are based more in biases and learned behavior than they are in reality. A male-bodied Promethean doesn’t know that he is a “man.” Even when he finally learns that he is expected to behave in certain ways because of his physical makeup, he isn’t likely to find it intuitive. He will have to learn about maleness one piece at a time, choosing to accept or reject each part individually. While modern America isn’t exactly friendly to people who defy the gender binary, most men and women enjoy more room to maneuver than they did in the 1930s. While violence towards transgender or non-gender-conformist people is still depressingly common in the modern day, it was more common in the 1930s.

Female-bodied Prometheans face an even more difficult journey. Without a home to claim or male protectors, they risk becoming the target of harassment or even sexual violence. Although many Prometheans have nothing to fear from human attackers, being attacked can be a harrowing experience, especially for a Promethean, who might not really understand what is happening. Worse, this can lead to a cycle of violence that could exacerbate Disquiet, leading the Promethean into a situation that escalates to the point that she is in real danger. When a female-bodied Promethean comes to understand the limitations placed on her by her surroundings, she might seek out male-bodied Prometheans for the express purpose of pretending to some respectable relationship.

White America

America’s race problems were even worse in the 1930s than they are today. The African American community was still segregated, a legacy of slavery, which America had left behind less than a hundred years earlier. Politicians still publicly spoke of America as a white nation; for example, as the Depression worsened, some agitated for black workers to be fired from any job that an unemployed white was willing to do. Other groups — including Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos — also suffered disproportionately from the economic downturn and ecological devastation because discriminatory social and business practices had kept them from securing the money and power they needed to protect themselves.

The definition of “white” was very different in the 1930s. Some groups that are largely considered “white” today — such as the Jews — were considered distinct, foreign, suspect, and
most importantly, not American. The Irish managed to fall under the auspices of whiteness, but remained an inferior sort of white and still subject to discrimination.

The idea that America was a “white” nation is key to portraying the 1930s. It wasn’t that most Americans had anything against Asians, Latinos, Jews, or anyone else. It was that they viewed America as having a racial identity. As a result, the lion’s share of America’s resources should go to its “native” people — the whites. All others were in America on the sufferance of its true, rightful inhabitants, and should not expect an equal voice in politics or an equal share of the economic benefits. The groups that bore the brunt of these attitudes varied from place to place. On the East Coast, it was mostly Jews and Irish who were viewed as the undeserving “other.” On the West Coast, it was mostly Asians of various nationalities. Native Americans and African Americans faced difficulties everywhere.

Part of the reason that America’s black population suffered so much malignance from the dominant whites is that they represented an alien population that could not be limited and had no home to return to. Those who saw America as a white nation couldn’t cope with a population of “native aliens” who were an inextricable part of America’s past and future, but didn’t — in their eyes — really belong.

When the Dust Bowl began, World War I (called simply the World War or the Great War) had only been over for 12 years. Many Americans had been touched by the war, from veterans who might still bear physical or mental scars, to those who had lost friends and loved ones on the battlefields of Europe. One of the side effects of the Great War was a hostile attitude towards the people who had been America’s enemies, especially Germans. German Americans saw their language removed from university curricula and books in German removed from libraries and sometimes even burned. Companies that referenced the nationality of their founders, like Germania Life Insurance, changed their names, and the German origins of foods, dog breeds, and other cultural imports were obfuscated as well. Germans were banned from volunteering for the Red Cross, and some German Americans were even killed by mobs. Many Germans reacted by Americanizing their names. Although much of this sentiment had faded by the time the Dust Bowl began, German Americans sometimes remained wary of their fellow Americans. Anti-German sentiment remained part of America’s culture until well after the end of the Second World War, almost a decade after the end of the Dust Bowl.

Understanding why humans of one skin color don’t belong, while humans with a different skin color do, is a lesson that a Promethean might take a long time to understand. It won’t take long, though, before she looks at her own mottled skin with a creeping sense that she, too, doesn’t belong. Of course, a Promethean who tries to buck hundreds of years of human cruelty is setting herself up for a difficult Pilgrimage (not that there’s any other kind), but where that goes next is up to the player and the Storyteller.

Sympathy for Our Devils

Unless your troupe has agreed to avoid those themes entirely, roleplaying in America in the 1930s involves portraying people with problematic beliefs. Even if none of the players are interested in playing a racist, sexist, homophobic, or nativist character, the Storyteller will probably have to put some of those people on the stage.
Portraying someone honestly means understanding him, with all his complexities. To put a character on the stage who is in some ways a decent person, and also to some degree sexist, homophobic, and racist, you need to have an idea of where these beliefs come from and how he views them as compatible the rest of his worldview.

Like any antagonist, bigots should be more complex than “that jerk who makes the player’s life difficult.”

The Great Depression

The Great Depression itself looms over any game set in the Dust Bowl. These two catastrophes are deeply interrelated. Without the Dust Bowl, the Great Depression would have ended much sooner; without the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl might have been nothing more than a series of bad harvests. Together, however, the two phenomena wrecked an entire region and ruined thousands of lives. To understand life in the Dust Bowl, one needs to have at least a passing understanding of the Great Depression that surrounded it.

Economists still debate exactly what caused the Great Depression. Some point to Black Tuesday — Tuesday, October 29th, 1929 — when the stock market crashed. Others believe that Black Tuesday and the Great Depression were caused by the same underlying issues. Either way, Black Tuesday was the beginning of a worldwide economic downturn. Prices dropped, but unemployment soared, and international trade ground to a near halt. Conditions continued to worsen throughout the early 1930s, reaching their nadir in 1933.

Rural Areas

During the 1930s, America’s rural population was mostly based on farmers and the skilled laborers, craftsmen, and merchants who took advantage of the farming industry. While there were also mining towns, artist’s colonies, and other communities, rural American life still centered around farming. The needs and challenges of rural America were different from those of urban America, and the Great Depression affected them very differently.

When wholesale prices dropped, this included the price of food, which affected the farmers who produced that food. While farmers were struggling to pay their debts — most of them acquired during the economically exuberant 1920s — struggling banks were more than happy to call those debts in.

As a result, rural Americans had more reason to feel like the rest of the country had simply turned on them. From their point of view, they were still living as they always had, growing food the way their ancestors had, and then suddenly the people weren’t buying the way they had before, and the banks were circling like sharks. Men in suits were showing up, claiming that the papers they brought with them gave them the rights to land that had been in one family for generations. Most farmers didn’t understand the complex economic forces behind the Great Depression. All they knew was that suddenly the world was turned on its head. Rural Americans often became hostile and xenophobic, blaming their troubles on city-dwellers, the government, immigrants, and other nations. There were even cases of local judges being attacked by mobs of farmers, and threatened with death if they refused to stop enforcing foreclosures.

Ironically, rural Americans actually had it better than urban Americans. City-dwellers were reliant on the increasingly decrepit and dysfunctional infrastructure for necessities of life, like
food. Farmers, on the other hand, were more likely to have the skills and resources to create these necessities for themselves. As long as they could avoid having their land claimed by their creditors, they could wait out the worst of the Great Depression.

Of course, the Dust Bowl dashed that hope for many farmers. When drought and erosion destroyed their farms’ ability to produce, they were often forced to give up their long fight against foreclosure, abandon their homes and livelihoods, and take to the road as migrants.

Even when the Dust Bowl provided rural Americans with a more concrete cause for their suffering, many of them still looked for someone to blame. It was easier to find a scapegoat than it was to accept that what was happening might not be anyone’s fault or — worse yet — that their own farming practices had brought them to this state.

Urban Areas
The most striking effect of the Great Depression on urban areas was mass unemployment. At the height of the Great Depression, more than 20% of workforce was unemployed. Even those who were lucky enough to have jobs were often working for low pay, since the combination of a hirer’s market and general economic malaise kept wages down. The construction and manufacturing industries were hit the hardest, while food and clothing industries remained relatively healthy — the economic downturn created a drop-off in the demand for new buildings and materials, but people needed eat and clothe themselves, and spent what little they could meeting those needs. Service, sales, and government jobs also survived.

Overall, this meant that it was the poor, unskilled, and uneducated who bore the brunt of the Great Depression. Everyone suffered, but construction workers, factory workers, miners, and the like suffered the worst. No one’s jobs were secure, and many middle-class families found themselves facing hardship, but it was the working poor who saw their jobs evaporate. The cities became depopulated as more and more jobless Americans took to the road.

While the Dust Bowl caused America’s Midwest to transform from a fertile plain to a dusty wasteland, the Great Depression wrought a terrible change on the cities as well. The drop-off in tax revenue forced cities to abandon new construction projects and let existing structures go as long as possible without repairs. Maintenance didn’t stop altogether, but sidewalks were dirtier, buildings shabbier, broken windows more common.

Rich and Poor
Most modern histories of the Depression and the Dust Bowl focus on the experiences of America’s most vulnerable. The 1930s are sometimes depicted as a total disaster, a period of total social and economic breakdown. This is a dramatic and evocative narrative — and this chapter is guilty of using some of this language, too, for just that reason — but it isn’t entirely accurate.

While the Depression wasn’t “business as usual” for anyone in America, many families were able to to cut back on some expenditures and get by. America’s middle class had to struggle and do without, but they generally survived without significant or permanent harm to their standard of living. America’s rich, as usual, got by just fine. Maybe they vacationed locally instead of Paris and had to sell off some of their cars or yachts, but they were never in any real danger.
A Depression-era game should make some concession to the fact that rich people never felt the worst of it. A train roaring across the Promethean’s path, wealthy people staring out the windows eating good food, might drive the point home nicely.

What Comes After

Fortunately, the Dust Bowl eventually came to an end. The rains came, new policies came out of Washington, a war started in Europe, and the world began to move on. The period of hardship — which left an indelible mark on America’s national consciousness — had come to an end.

World War II and the New Deal

Historians, economists, and politicians still argue about what actually ended the Great Depression. Most agree, however, that it was either FDR’s New Deal, the start of World War II, or a combination of both. The New Deal was a set of economic policies designed to jump-start the floundering economy. The New Deal included a wide variety of economic reforms and regulations intended to increase the public’s confidence in the government and the banks. Perhaps most importantly, the New Deal included policies to reduce the number of foreclosures, which aided urban and rural Americans alike.

The most famous parts of the New Deal were the ambitious public works projects, many of them designed to simultaneously benefit and employ those hardest hit by the Great Depression. These projects included building new schools and government buildings, creating public art, extending the power grid to cover rural areas, and others. Some New Deal projects — planting trees and grasses to block the wind and hold down the soil, and employing teachers and scientists to educate farmers on crop rotation and caring for the soil as well as their crops — were intended to directly combat the Dust Bowl. The people employed in this way had money to spend, which helped local businesses, who could in turn use this money to hire more employees, creating a self-perpetuating upward cycle.

Despite promising initial statistics, history will never know for sure if the New Deal would have continued to work as intended, because in 1941, the United States entered World War II. The government used World War II to foster patriotic feelings and bolster the economy. Many Americans who would otherwise have been out of work were drafted into, or volunteered for, the armed services; and even those who didn’t or couldn’t fight were often able to find work assembling weapons and war machines.

It is easy to imagine Prometheans being caught up in the New Deal, World War II, or both. In a sense, both the New Deal and World War II make a fitting end for a Pilgrimage. It is easy to imagine a Promethean putting his great strength to use creating objects of beauty and use for the humans around him, and finding humanity amidst the honest labor. Or, alternately, becoming human — with all the fragility and mortality that comes with it — and still stepping willingly into what many consider America’s last just war.

For younger Prometheans, not yet ready to become human, the end of the Depression could be a poignant moment. Watching the humans around her shake off the dust and despair of the 1930s while she remains a monster could be hard for a Promethean, pushing her to work even harder on her transformation while reminding her that she is being left behind.
The Rains Come

1939 also saw the end of the Dust Bowl. The rains finally came, bringing vitality back to the parched plains. Those who had managed to hang on to their land were, generally, rewarded for their tenacity. With the end of the Dust Bowl came the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and start again, this time with farming practices that wouldn’t leave the topsoil quite as vulnerable.

Unfortunately, the Dust Bowl had a lasting effect on America’s farmers. For one thing, many of those who had lost their land to foreclosure or abandoned it to seek work as migrants were in no position to reclaim it now. Although the New Deal had improved their situation somewhat, it didn’t necessarily give them the money they needed to buy back what they had lost. Other farmers were slow to adopt new practices, and their land continued to lose topsoil. Without topsoil, they could not grow crops or turn a profit on their land, which they continued to lose to taxes and foreclosure.

Some of the same factors that saved urban America doomed rural America. Rural America started losing its sons and daughters to the cities. It began with exciting new business and industry opportunities brought about by the New Deal, continued with World War II and, following the war, America’s rapid urbanization. Many farmers who had fought to keep their farms through the Dust Bowl and struggled to learn how to keep them viable afterwards ended up losing them in the end because their children simply didn’t want them. The farms ended up being sold, sometimes to the same banks that had already claimed so much land through foreclosure. It was the end of the era of the family farm and the beginning of industrial farming.

For Prometheans in urban areas, the Great Depression ended with the birth of a new era. It wasn’t perfect, and it was born amidst war and inequality — but it was still a new beginning, a return to hope and optimism.

Rural Prometheans, on the other hand, witnessed the death of a way of life. The Dust Bowl broke the back of an entire society. Prometheans who lingered in the Midwest saw a generation gamely trying to carry on and regain what was lost, but ultimately those people found that none of their efforts could save them from the march of history. Prometheans who came into humanity in the Midwest, as this way of life fades away, struggle to find a place in the world, since many of the things they thought they knew about how humans live may not apply in the cities, factories, and battlegrounds that their futures hold. Whether such characters are able to nevertheless apply the wisdom of their Pilgrimage, however, is up to the player and the Storyteller.

The Supernatural

While America sank into the Great Depression, the supernatural beings that share the Earth with its humans had their own trials to face. Nobody could remain completely untouched as drought and famine ravaged the Midwest and the world economy continued to stagnate. Some supernatural creatures went to ground, surviving as best they could or leaving the country for friendlier climes. Some, either out of regard for the humans they cared for or concern that a food source would dry up, helped their communities as best they could. For the most part, though, there was nothing they could do. Vampires slept beneath the black earth, werewolves hunted across the plains, changelings eyed chain gangs and carnivals carefully, and mages tried in vain to reverse the drought.
Among all the supernatural inhabitants of the World of Darkness, though, it was Prometheans who bore the hardest burdens during the Dust Bowl. Other supernatural beings were more likely to have the money, influence, or supernatural ability to insulate themselves from the worst of the Depression. Prometheans, though, awaken to a whole new world that they don’t truly understand. Most of the time, a Promethean’s creator is only a little wiser than the new Created. Prometheans must go out into the world in search of humanity, usually with little more than the rags on their backs and whatever they can beg or steal from the humans around them.

Like America’s human inhabitants in the 1930s, Prometheans must survive by their wits and their luck in a harsh and hostile new world. If they are lucky, they can make friends with others of their kind, like hobos riding the rails together; and if they are not, they must survive alone in the dusty ruin of a better age.

**Pilgrims in the Time of Dust**

The Dust Bowl is an ideal setting for *Promethean: The Created*. The Depression and the Dust Bowl forced ordinary humans to live like Prometheans. They wandered from place to place in a blasted wasteland, their relationships strained and on the edge of collapse, and all of this imposed by circumstances beyond their control and understanding.

*Promethean: The Created* is a game about misery. Each Promethean is tortured by his own incomplete nature, dominated by dangerous mood swings, and plagued by a gradual understanding of human culture and morality. The effects of Wasteland and Disquiet externalize this condition, forcing it on everyone around the Promethean. And if that weren’t enough, even a Promethean who is wise and clever enough to avoid falling prey to the fear of humankind and entanglements with the World of Darkness’s other semi-human inhabitants is hunted by Pandorans. The only possibility of escape is redemption. However, most Prometheans have to take it on faith that becoming human is even possible, and the way to redemption is littered with the corpses and monstrous parodies of those who failed.

At the same time, *Promethean* is a game about hope. Unlike some of the World of Darkness’s other tortured inhabitants, Prometheans have a way out. All Prometheans are on the road to becoming human, though some may be distracted, even for years, and others might never reach that goal. As long as the Divine Fire still burns in a Promethean’s heart — and it takes a great deal to extinguish that fire — the way is open. Even the most degraded Centimanus can turn his back on that dark path and try again. Prometheans can even cultivate relationships with particularly strong-willed humans, once they learn how to manage the Disquiet and work around the Wasteland.

The Dust Bowl brought out some of the worst in humanity. Brought low by desperation, Americans abandoned their families, took advantage of people who had been their neighbors, and lashed out at outsiders. As humans often do when times are tough, Americans indulged in racism, classism, and xenophobia, as well as the more personal vices of drugs, alcohol, and sexual exploitation.

For others, the Dust Bowl brought out the opportunity to show their best. Communities pulled together. People with barely more than they needed themselves organized their friends and neighbors to take care of those who had it even worse. As always, many humans rose to the occasion, helping their communities to survive in the face of economic and ecological disaster.
Prometheans always witness the best and worst in humanity. Their own natures push weak humans to behave even more poorly than they might otherwise. Strong humans, on the other hand, have the opportunity to rise above their natures and treat this strange, unnatural creature compassionately.

When times are hard and humans face down the best and worst in their natures, this question is brought into sharper focus. Are humans worthwhile or not? Are we rising out of a past of barbarism and cruelty, or is the human project doomed from the start? Prometheans and times of social and economic disruption both cast light on this question; together, they create the opportunity to tell truly striking stories about the strengths and foibles of human nature.

It’s also important to remember the way that the style of the Dust Bowl — its themes and visuals — connects to the experiences of Prometheans. Prometheans wander in an endless Wasteland of their own making, separated from ordinary humans by the effects of Disquiet and their own cultural ignorance. The Dust Bowl turned America into a wasteland, and the Great Depression turned people against their friends and neighbors.

**Wasteland Within, Wasteland Without**

On some level, the Wasteland is *Handful of Dust*’s least cerebral, most visceral theme. The Wasteland effect is an externalization of what a Promethean is: a dead and withered thing, ruined, scattered throughout with the wreckage of what came before, but with the potential to grow again into something new. The wasteland of the Dust Bowl makes this theme more real, more present, and forces everyone — not just Prometheans — to deal with it.

Some Prometheans might be able to exploit the Dust Bowl for their own convenience. The general ruination of the environment makes it easier for Prometheans to settle in one place for longer. After all, they can’t make things much worse, can they? With the ability to stay in one place comes the opportunity to build deeper and more complex relationships with humans, but it also increases the likelihood and danger of Disquiet.

Eventually, the Dust Bowl ends. If a Promethean’s Pilgrimage does not end with it, he might have to make the choice to move on so that his human friends can enjoy the end of the long famine and the return to real life.

**Milestones**

**Minor Milestones**
- Witness for the first time one of the dramatic side effects of the Dust Bowl (a black blizzard, red snow, etc).
- Take advantage of the ecological disaster to settle in one place for a while.
- Survive a black blizzard without shelter.
- Scavenge in the remains of a completely depopulated community.

**Significant Milestones**
- Help humans to survive a black blizzard.
- Settle in one place long enough for the effects of the Wasteland to become noticeable despite the ongoing drought.
- Go into the wastes in an area particularly hard hit by the Dust Bowl.

**Major Milestone**
• Help a community to survive without disbanding in the face of the drought.
• Acknowledge the ongoing consequences of the Wasteland by leaving a settled existence.

Becoming Human?

The Dust Bowl casts a different light on the quest for humanity. Prometheans are uniquely suited to survive the conditions of the Dust Bowl. Where humans require food and water, Prometheans can survive on scraps of organic matter, like wood and leather. The conditions of the Dust Bowl can cause many Prometheans to wonder if becoming human is really worth it. A Promethean might struggle and suffer for a hundred years, and for what? To die of starvation or disease? Spend her days in a bread line and go to bed hungry? Work at back-breaking labor for insufficient pay? What’s the point of becoming a creature who can enjoy real and genuine connection with others if everyone is too focused on survival to care? What’s the point of becoming a living being who can experience the miracle of childbirth, only to see those children die of pneumonia, polio, or malnutrition? Maybe it’s best to step off the road for a while and see if things improve. Maybe it’s best to abandon the journey altogether and just enjoy the power, durability, and long life that comes with the Promethean condition.

The desire to do good is even more insidious, because it preys on the potential humanity that elevates a Promethean above the clay and corpses he is made from. With so many humans suffering all around him, it could be easy for a Promethean to become entangled in their lives. A Promethean can fool himself into thinking that he could be a sort of guardian angel for the humans around him. He barely needs to eat, so he can stand in line at a soup kitchen and give most of his food to someone who can use it more. He has the potential to become incredibly strong and can endure nearly unending punishment, so why not work so that others can save their strength? Many Prometheans do this sort of thing as part of their journey, learning valuable lessons about compassion and heroism; but when a Promethean abandons the path entirely and uses compassion to cover his own fear of what comes next, he does a disservice to himself and to the humans he wants to help. The Dust Bowl is a human-made disaster, and humans are the ones who have to drag themselves out of it.

Milestones

**Minor Milestones**

• Forgive a human who harmed or betrayed you.
• Witness wealthier and more secure humans taking advantage of the poor or migrants.
• Speak to humans who have given up hope thanks to the effects of the Dust Bowl and the Depression.
• Interact with a human who is actively trying to prevent other humans from giving up (ie. a soup kitchen volunteer or mission worker).

**Significant Milestones**

• Convince a Promethean who has given up to resume the Pilgrimage.
• Inspire hope in humans.
• Save a human’s life from the consequences of the Dust Bowl.

**Major Milestone**
• Resume the Pilgrimage after having given in to despair.
• Help a human to survive the consequences of the Dust Bowl in defiance of terrible odds (or other humans).

Alone on the Road
In the 1930s, a dusty outsider going from town to town is nothing new. Although hobos prided themselves on being fit members of society, many of them were mentally ill or struggled with addiction — the sorts of people who couldn’t hold down normal jobs and regular lives. As a result, a Promethean’s oddities might be overlooked, both by the hobos and the settled humans who see him as one. A Promethean could easily join a group of migrant laborers, a small group of hobos, or even take up with a traveling carnival (more on that later). A lone Promethean could pose as a hobo making his way alone. The classic hobo was a single man, so Prometheans who are lucky enough to have male bodies have a somewhat easier time posing as ordinary migrants. However, the Dust Bowl displaced men and women alike. While women weren’t usually hobos — and were less likely to travel alone — a woman making her way from place to place in search of work wasn’t too unusual a sight.

Hobos also invented the hobo code, marks that they left behind to warn the hobos who came after them about the situation they were walking into. Despite having never been formally codified and being used by hobos across the entire North American continent, these marks are surprisingly consistent. Hobo marks can indicate the attitude of a town — whether it’s friendly or hostile to hobos — or the character of specific homes, such as a cat indicating a nice lady, a cross showing a doctor who will treat hobos for free, or a stylized shovel and ditch indicating the home of someone willing to pay for household chores.

Hobo marks and pilgrim marks may have some history in common, though no one knows for sure which came first. Did America’s hobos pass their symbols along to Prometheans, who then gradually spread the marks they had learned to Prometheans across the world? Or did America’s hobos first learn to read a few of the simpler pilgrim marks, then invent their own?

Milestones

**Minor Milestones**
• Escape the domination of a powerful character (i.e. your creator) by taking to the road.
• Avoid something dangerous — like a nest of Pandorans — thanks to stories heard at a hobo campfire.
• Learn to read hobo marks.
• Go several months living only on what you can earn (cash or barter) by making your way as a migrant laborer.

**Significant Milestones**
• Adhere to the hobo code despite the threat of injury.
• Use hobo marks to help mundane hobos to avoid a supernatural danger.
• Join a group of hobos and be accepted as one of them.

**Major Milestones**
• Become an important hobo, respected by others in the community.
• Settle down in one place for more than a few weeks.
“Step Right Up!”

The culture of sideshows and freaks is an ideal place for Prometheans to hide. The power of Azoth to disguise a Promethean’s disfigurements is great, but many Prometheans still go through their existences with traits that humans might mistake for the sort of congenital deformities common in sideshows. A Frankenstein made from male and female parts could easily display himself as a hermaphrodite, while another with mismatched parts could pretend to be microcephalic or a “pin-head.” A Promethean with malformed or artificial hands or feet could display herself as a “scorpion-girl,” or person with electrodactyly. Freak show audiences were not picky, and very few of them were knowledgeable enough to distinguish between “natural” and “unnatural” deformities, so many Prometheans invented novel acts based on their bodies’ unusual characteristics.

Prometheans could also find a home among the other performers and hangers-on associated with a sideshow. Many Transmutations can help a Promethean to put on a good show, from catching the crowd’s attention with Mesmerism to enduring pain and hardship with Corporeum to creating flares of fire and lightning with Electrification and Vulcanus. A Promethean who has yet to develop an instinctive sense of what is socially appropriate could be a gifted geek or wild man, menacing the crowd and biting the heads off chickens. Similarly, a Promethean could find it easy to master the skills of a sword-swallow or blockhead. Promethean fire-eaters are unheard of, however.

Prometheans who lack interest in or talent for performance could also find work as roustabouts, the skilled or unskilled laborers who helped to maintain the sideshow and/or associated carnival. Traveling shows are especially hospitable to Prometheans. The constant traveling mitigates the danger of the Wasteland, and the gradual turnover of crew and performers can limit the effects of Disquiet. Prometheans are free to interact with visitors to the show without any fear of Disquiet building to any significant extent.

Freak shows provide a Promethean with a wealth of potential milestones, and a context to interact with many humans, including performers, roustabouts, and the audience. Freak shows are a particularly good place for Prometheans to seek out human contact, because the performers and managers are already used to meeting the needs of humans with singular bodies and brains. Interacting with freaks could give a Promethean an interesting perspective on humanity, learning how even those struggling with deformities and disabilities still value their lives. One Promethean performer could learn to take some pride in her unusual body and the abilities it gives her; another could reject being displayed as an oddity as an insult to his dignity and leave the show. All of these could be steps on the path towards humanity.

A carnival is also a good place for a Promethean to hide her Ramble, whether it’s in the form of a journal entrusted to a friendly human, a message scratched onto the inner wall of a wagon, or even a testament buried somewhere along the carnival’s route. Prometheans know that traveling carnivals attract their kind, and they are sure to take advantage of that to leave their words behind for those who will come after them.

Milestones

**Minor Milestones**

- Accept a job in a freak show or traveling circus.
- Use a Transmutation, Promethean-specific Merit, or other quirk of the Promethean
condition to amaze and delight (and horrify and disgust) an audience.

- Contribute to the carnival by working harder and longer than an ordinary human could.
- Convince the rest of the circus that a Promethean deformity is actually a mundane scar or deformity.

**Significant Milestones**

- Take on a responsibility in a freak show or traveling circus that requires interacting with humans and successfully avoid (or manage) the Disquiet for a specified length of time.
- Form a friendship with a circus performer who uses her injury or deformity to perform as a freak.
- Demand a raise from the circus management — and get it.

**Major Milestones**

- Help the circus to survive a major threat to its continued existence.
- Become one of the ruling aristocracy of the circus (a skilled performer, specialized laborer, artist or manager).

### Chronicle Seeds

The Dust Bowl opens up a huge variety of possibilities for **Promethean: The Created** stories. What follows are a few story hooks that some troupes might find interesting.

**“Come One, Come All, Witness the Created Man!”**

Americans have always been fond of grand spectacle. Before television brought spectacle into America’s living rooms and the spread of the automobile brought Americans to the spectacle, the traveling circus was king of the road.

The Dust Bowl made this form of entertainment even more popular. People had little to spare, but they were desperate to spend what they could on anything that could take them away from their exhausting and dreary existence trying to scratch a living out of the dusty soil. Desperation also swelled the ranks of carnies and performers — the tougher it got, the more people were willing to turn to more marginal ways of surviving.

As has already been discussed above, a circus is an ideal place for a Promethean to hide. However, what happens when someone else is already hiding among the freaks and carnies?

**Ismael Hawker and Jacobi Jones**

Ismael Hawker has been around since the beginning of the Dust Bowl, and a performer in the Carnival of Wonders and Curiosities since shortly thereafter. Ismael was originally a geek, grunting and biting the heads off chickens for the amusement of the crowd, but has since created a unique act that combines his extraordinary strength and durability with his unsettling aura.

Ismael is an Extempore — a Promethean without a creator, formed by the uncontrolled power of nature — and the Progenitor of a new Lineage (the Hollow, described in greater detail below). Ismael knows deep in his dry and dusty bones that the rains will come, one day, and that Divine Fire that animates him will be drowned. He has believed fervently that he can become human ever since he met another Promethean who told him it was possible. Ismael is convinced that if there really is one last secret that stands between him and humanity, he will find it in, or while traveling with, the circus.
Jacobi Uriah Jones has owned the Carnival of Wonders and Curiosities for five years. For him, it is the latest — and probably the last — in a long line of moneymaking schemes designed to separate the gullible from their money. Along with the rest of the staff and performers, the rides, and the attractions, Ismael came with the circus.

Jacobi could tell from the very beginning that something was odd about Ismael. Eventually, Jacobi convinced Ismael to reveal his secret nature. Since then, Jacobi has been hungry to learn more; Ismael, on the other hand, no longer trusts his employer. He believes — quite rightly — that Jacobi is determined to find some way to exploit the Divine Fire for his own benefit.

As a result, the two are locked in a cold war that has consumed most of the last several years. Jacobi maneuvers on one side, desperate to find some way to manipulate Ismael. Ismael, on the other hand, refuses to leave the circus until he has learned what he needs to become human before the rains come to snuff him out.

Over time, the circus has become populated by many of Ismael’s children, making it a singular and bizarre show. It’s a great deal for Jacobi, since the Promethean laborers and performers are willing to work for little or no pay as long as they continue to have the opportunity to interact with humans.

**Jacobi Jones’s Final Trick**

Although he looks hale and hearty for a man in his late middle years, Jacobi is not. In fact, he is dying. A long life of abusing his body with cigars and alcohol, contracting venereal diseases, and generally living without a thought to the consequences has cost him dearly. It isn’t anything in particular, it’s everything: His heart and lungs are weak, his bowels trouble him, his hands shake, and he is sometimes incapacitated by blinding headaches. Jacobi doesn’t know whether it will be a stroke, a heart attack, kidney failure, or something else that finally kills him, but he knows that when he dies, it will really be for all the sins he has committed in his long and unpleasant life — and he doesn’t have that much longer.

Jacobi Jones has always been convinced that because he is smarter than everyone else, the rules don’t apply to him. Why should death be any different?

After five years of traveling with Ismael and watching him create two Prometheans, Jacobi is convinced that Ismael is the key to immortality. As both a liar and a snob, Jacobi rarely believes that others are telling him the truth; even when he does believe them, he can often convince himself that he knows better, anyway. He vacillates between being convinced that Ismael is lying when he tries to explain that Prometheans aren’t simply immortal and magically powerful versions of the people their bodies were in life, and thinking that Ishmael just doesn’t know his own potential. Jacobi is deep in Disquiet, as well, but the primal, painful longing that Ishmael’s Disquiet causes has simply reinforced Jacobi’s need to live.

In the meantime, Ismael and Jacobi have a congenially tense relationship. Both of them know that some kind of confrontation is coming, but they have traveled together for too long to really hate each other. Once in a while, they even experience a moment of regret, remembering how much more friendly they once were. However, the rains are coming for Ismael, and death is coming for Jacobi, and neither of them feels that they have the time for sentimentality.

**Caught in the Middle**
Like all traveling circuses, the Carnival of Wonders and Curiosities is basically a traveling city. It has its own internal politics and economy. Below is a brief description of a few of the circus’s inhabitants, including Ismael’s Promethean creations.

• **Henry Dray**: The “chief foreman” of the circus’s support staff — called “roustabouts” — is a big, heavyset man who still speaks with the shreds of a deep Southern accent. Henry views himself as the circus’s protector. He knows that Jacobi is much smarter than he is, but views himself as more sensible and, ultimately, a better and more compassionate person. People don’t bring their problems to Jacobi; they bring them to Henry. Henry eventually investigates anything unusual happening in the circus. His first priority is the safety and well-being of the circus’s employees.

• **Madeline Dray**: Henry’s wife Madeline used to perform in the freak show, but she has since retired. Now she cooks and provides basic medicine for the circus’s inhabitants. She is a slender woman, very graceful and well mannered. If Henry looks after the carnies’ material needs, Madeline has taken it upon herself to solve their emotional and social problems, frequently acting as a mediator for offended parties. Madeline’s role in the freak show was a “half-and-half.” She was born male, but identifies as female, and found some comfort in expressing herself as between the two genders. Most people at the circus don’t know about her past — the high rate of turnover has removed almost everyone except Jacobi and Ismael who ever knew Madeline Dray as Maxwell Spinelli the performer or Madeline/Max the sideshow attraction — and Madeline and Henry are eager to keep their secret.

• **Crocodile Jack**: This “lizard man” is actually a survivor of the Great War. A combination of burn scars and exposure to chemical weaponry have deformed his face and given his skin a bizarre scaly appearance. Although he never expected to find himself making a living by exhibiting his scarred body, he still tries to behave with as much of the honor and dignity of a United States Marine as is possible under the circumstances.

• **Verne Hinge**: Verne is one of the roustabouts. He’s a borderline functional alcoholic who only keeps his job because he can sometimes be counted on to be sober when needed and because Henry continually advocates for him. What makes Verne extraordinary is that he has a shadow of Jacobi’s gift. During that brief window between being drunk and blacking out, Verne can sense the Divine Fire, which he sees as a blazing white (for Pyros) or sickly green (for Flux) aura. For the time being, Verne identifies this as one of the side-effects of his drinking, but as the circus has more contact with Prometheans, Verne may come to more problematic conclusions.

• **The Bone Girl**: One of Ismael’s creations who is still with the show is the Bone Girl. She appears as an incredibly skinny — almost emaciated — human female in her late teens. The Bone Girl is, of course, a Promethean and, like her creator, a Hollow. The Bone Girl’s performance is a weird mix of strip tease, contortion, and exhibition. As she dances, she reveals more and more of her scrawny frame, twisting her bony limbs in impossible ways. She also covers her body with inked-on patterns that tell bizarre stories drawn from her patchy memories of her body’s past life, bits of broken folk tales, and her own strange imagination. Jacobi bills the Bone Girl as “a savant, a modern day Medea bringing wisdom from beyond the veil of death.” The Bone Girl herself is withdrawn almost to the point of autism. She listens a great deal more than she speaks, and understands more than almost anyone gives her credit for.

• **Galileo**: The first of Ismael’s creations, Galileo is a big man with broad shoulders and a wide stance. Galileo’s body died of thirst, and it shows in his permanently cracked lips and red,
irritated eyes. Galileo is canny and worldly, even more so than his creator. Galileo is sometimes frustrated that Ismael remains with the circus, even though Jacobi has shown himself time after time to be untrustworthy; but as long as Ismael stays, Galileo will stay, too, to protect him. Galileo is the circus’s fortuneteller. His outsider perspective has made him talented at the cold read, though he sometimes draws inspirations from the cards themselves. Galileo used to use a standard tarot deck, but now prefers the strange, surreal cards that the Bone Girl made for him. It certainly gets a mark’s attention when Galileo says that his significator, the Prince of Knives, is crossed by the Engine.

Ismael Hawker

“You don’t have the first idea what you’re messing with, Jacobi.”

**Background:** Ismael doesn’t know if he really is the first person to die as a result of the Dust Bowl, but he feels like it should be true. His body’s former life is a total mystery to him, so he doesn’t know if he died of thirst or starvation or dust pneumonia or a broken heart.

Ismael spent the first year of his existence as a Promethean wandering the desiccated wilderness of Oklahoma before he first joined Jacobi Uriah Jones’s Carnival of Wonders and Curiosities. He has been with the carnival ever since. His identity within the carnival has evolved with time — first a particularly weird and disturbing, but talented, green performer, and increasingly a seasoned and valuable member of the community — but except for a few Prometheans he has befriended, learned from, or taught over the years, he has no identity outside it.

When Ismael first joined the circus, he and Jacobi became friends quickly. Jacobi displayed an unusual resistance to the Disquiet, which relieved the young Ismael greatly. Even though that friendship has become strained with time, Ismael is unwilling to abandon it entirely. It’s the first friendship he ever had, and he is attached to it.

On the other hand, Ismael is a hands-off parent to his creations. As far as he is concerned, they can and should look after themselves as soon as they have mastered the basics of movement and speech. His creation, Galileo, has taken on responsibility for teaching his “siblings” more about the world.

**Description:** Even though he no longer performs as a geek, Ismael still looks like a wild man. His hair is unruly, his brown skin deeply lined, with dust permanently ground into the creases. His light brown eyes however, almost hazel in the right light, burn with intelligence. Ismael’s eyes, rather than his body, hold the hunger that characterizes the Hollow. They are intense, eager to take in the entire world. More often than not, Ismael remembers to move and talk like a civilized man — he even wears suits and puts on sophisticated manners — but when he loses control he reverts to bestial behavior.

**Storytelling Hints:** Ismael is anxious, eager for stability, and struggles to control his appetites. He is resistant to the depression that hovers at the edge of his consciousness, but when he falls, it is almost total. At his best, he is capable of acts of extreme self-sacrifice in the name of those he loves, but at his worst he is capable of almost solipsistic selfishness.

**Lineage:** Hollow

**Refinement:** Mercurius

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes:  Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 6
Social Attributes:  Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills:  Academics 2, Enigmas 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 4, Occult 4
Physical Skills:  Athletics (Endurance) 4, Brawl 3, Drive 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 2, Survival (Dust Bowl) 4
Social Skills:  Animal Ken 3, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation (Bestial) 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 3
Merits:  Allies (Carnies) 4, Elpis 3, Languages (German, Spanish), Repute 3, Resources 2
Willpower:  7
Humanity:  9
Virtue:  Hope
Vice:  Wrath
Initiative:  5
Defense:  2
Speed:  10
Health:  11
Azoth:  6
Bestowments:  Hunger
Transmutations:  Alchemicus — Identification (•), Degradation (••), Fortification (••); Corporeum — Autonomic Control (•), Regeneration (••); Disquietism — Scapegoat (•), Alembic (••), Soothe Disquiet (•••); Vulcanus — Sense Flux (•), Sense Pyros (•), Share Pyros (••), Fire Grasp (•••)
Pyros/per Turn:  15/6
Jacobi Uriah Jones
Quote:  “Step right up, one and all, step right up! Come and witness wonders the likes of which have never been seen. We will tingle your spine, delight your eyes, and terrify your bowels. Step right up!”
Background:  Jacobi Uriah Jones was the son of German immigrants, born and raised on a Pennsylvania farm. Far smarter than his peers, Jacobi grew up arrogant, assured of his own superiority. He knew that he was destined for greatness — university, business, politics, it didn’t matter. His intellect gave him an edge, and he was determined to exploit it.

The Great War ruined all that. Jacobi watched his family throw away all signs of their heritage. They changed their name, discarded family heirlooms, and even tried to change how they walked and spoke, all to seem less German. Jacobi knew then that he had no interest in using his intelligence to contribute to society. This country didn’t deserve him. He would simply look out for himself, and the consequences be damned. Instead of any noble pursuit, Jacobi turned his intelligence and charisma toward more selfish ends.
Since then, Jacobi has gained and lost several fortunes working as a con artist, a freelancer for organized crime, and a more or less legitimate businessman, though he has never shied away from shady business practices. The Carnival of Wonders and Curiosities is probably his last scam — though truth be told, it’s not a bad way to retire.

**Description:** Jacobi is only in his late fifties, but he isn’t a healthy man. A life of smoking, drinking, and hanging around with the wrong sort of people — there’s a bullet lodged somewhere in his ribcage — has taken its toll. While Jacobi isn’t on his last legs, his days of leaping over fences and winning fistfights are obviously over. He has blond hair — fading to gray around the edges — and very Germanic features. Jacobi is always well dressed, with immaculate tailored suits and a selection of silver-headed canes, which he uses as props, rather than supports.

**Storytelling Hints:** Is it true that Jacobi chose a conman’s life out of resentment, or was he always just a selfish bastard? It doesn’t really matter anymore — he has embraced this life whole-heartedly. Jacobi is unashamedly amoral, and his personal philosophy is based around the idea that the world is a pile of shit with no meaning or hope for improvement. If that’s all the world is, the best one can aspire to is to be the king beetle, enjoying its tenure atop the pile for as long as possible. Jacobi knows full well that his sordid life does not exactly constitute a stint as “king beetle,” but at least he gave it his best, and there’s something meaningful in that.

**Dice Pools:**

- **Silver Tongue (9 dice):** Jacobi is a veteran con man and he is good at bringing others around to his way of thinking. It’s remarkable how quickly he can smile, straighten his posture, and turn from somewhat oily and disreputable-looking to a friendly, genuine, and charismatic version of himself.

- **A Long and Sordid Tale (12 dice):** Jacobi maintains a variety of contacts among the dregs of society, including con men, criminals, hobos, and others. These people either owe him favors or are gullible enough that they can be convinced that they owe him favors.

**Story Hooks**

- **The Circus Comes to Town:** The easiest way to use the material described above in an ongoing Promethean story is for the Carnival of Wonders and Curiosities to arrive wherever the characters are, and letting Azothic radiance do the rest. Between the lessons a throng might learn from a Promethean as old as Ismael and the possibility of getting caught up in Ismael and Jacobi’s cold war, this circus could be either an opportunity or a disaster for young, less canny Prometheans.

- **The Children of Ismael Hawker:** Some troupes might want to jettison some or all of the Prometheans described above and insert the players’ characters in their place. The players take on the role of Prometheans Ismael has created or, if some of them want to play Lineages other than the Hollow, taken under his wing. As the battle of wills between Ismael and Jacobi comes to a terrible conclusion, Ismael’s creations must struggle to survive and find their own way.

- **Fresh Blood:** Having seen what one Promethean can do for his circus, it could make sense for Jacobi to try to recruit more. A traveling circus is a good place for a Promethean to hide, after all, and hasn’t the Carnival of Wonders and Curiosities already proven itself by providing a home for more than one Promethean? However, Jacobi is a dangerously greedy man, and his agenda is
certain to bring trouble to any Prometheans who join the circus. Ismael has proven very stubborn, but new Prometheans might be easier to manipulate.

- **Jacobi Scorned:** The last few times that one of Ismael’s children has tried to leave the circus, Jacobi has tracked them down and dissected them, reasoning that he can learn something that Ismael is unwilling to just tell him. Finding one of these grisly corpses could attract a throng of Prometheans to the circus. If Ismael were to discover these murders, it would destroy his last remaining sympathy for Jacobi and possibly drive him to violence.

- **The Magician:** Jacobi Jones is a liar and a thief, but the character described above only steals from his fellow mortals. What if Jacobi had the audacity to steal from the gods? What if he were a mage? As a wizard, Jacobi could have the power to enslave Prometheans. He could have any number of malicious intentions towards them, including experimenting on them, stealing the Divine Fire, or just using them against his enemies. Above all is Jacobi’s hubristic desire to exploit Ismael and other Prometheans to find a way to immortality. Alternately, to avoid the complications inherent in a crossover game, Jacobi could simply be some kind of alchemist with a few powers similar to Promethean transmutations.

### The Hollow

Everything has turned to dust. The land, the sky, the hopes and ambitions of men — all dust. The Hollow are the Prometheans who have risen out of that dust. But the Hollow have not come to wallow in despair. They are creatures of intensity. They will rebuild the world, starting with themselves, or they will grind themselves back into the dust from which they came.

To make a new Promethean, a Hollow must find a corpse that has died of deprivation. Hunger and thirst are the most likely candidates, but despair — deprivation of hope or any reason to keep on going — will do as well. The creator must make sure the corpse is even emptier than it was before by salting it, removing a few organs, or simply leaving it in the sun until the corpse has dried out a little. The creator must anoint the corpse’s brow, chest, and hands with a handful of dust.

All this is just to prepare the corpse, however. In order to imbue it with the Divine Fire, the creator must place a spark of her Pyros into a drop of water and place it on the corpse’s lips. With that touch of hope, the new Hollow is awakened.

Hollow Prometheans are defined by their hunger. As their name implies, they are empty, but they are aware of that emptiness and want to fill it. They want security, prosperity, fullness — humanity. Some Hollow learn to distract themselves from their real hungers with human things like food, alcohol or other drugs, or even sex. However, only progress towards humanity can really sate the hunger for long. Hollow also tend to be anxious about the future and prone to deep depression.

When the Torment takes control, the Hollow are dominated by her hunger. She tries to glut herself on whatever she craves, and lashes out violently at anyone who gets in her way. At other times, Tormented Hollows sink into depression and try to isolate themselves, but they are no less violent towards anyone who disturbs their sulk.

**Progenitor:** The first Hollow is Ismael Hawker, described above. He was born with the Dust Bowl and will, he believes, disappear with the rains, if they ever come. Ismael woke up alone, with no one to guide him, and has become convinced that he is an Extempore — a Promethean
born from the furious elements, in this case the raging black blizzards and drastic ecological crash of the Dust Bowl — rather than a “normal” Promethean.

Other Nicknames: Skeletons, Beggars

Appearance: Hollows wear their hunger on their skin for all to see. One Hollow might always have chapped lips, denoting thirst, while another might be skinny to the point of emaciation, and a third might have a distressingly intense gaze. Hollow Prometheans have very little commonality beyond that; in these hard times, anyone can die of deprivation.

Disfigurement: When a Hollow’s disfigurements appear, he becomes inhumanly gaunt with pale or ashy skin, chapped lips, and eyes so bloodshot they appear to glow red. His flesh draws back from his bones, dry and flaky, and may even rip so that onlookers can see through the gaps between his ribs.

Hollows rarely stink when their disfigurements are apparent. Their bodies are just too desiccated.

Humour: Sanguine and melancholic — Hollows are defined by spiritual hunger, a desire to possess and consume, but they have to constantly fight to hold deep depression and anxiety at bay.

Element: Earth and air — the Hollows are born of an age of drought. The earth itself has betrayed humankind, turning their hopes into so much dust floating on the wind.

Bestowment: Hunger

Refinement: Hollow Prometheans are angry and hungry creatures. As a result, they tend to gravitate towards the Refinement of Tin. Hollows who feel secure and confident that their needs will be met might end up following any of the Refinements, though they tend to end up with Refinements that promise an immediate reward in terms of the power they need to maintain their security: Cuprum, Ferrum, and Aurum, in particular. Mercurius — and the more esoteric Refinements described in *Magnum Opus* — are too abstract to keep a Hollow’s attention for long.

Character Creation: Hollows are made to survive all the rigors of life in the Dust Bowl, but whether that means that they are physically rugged, schemers, or smooth talkers varies from Hollow to Hollow. Whatever their specialty, Hollows tend to favor the Resistance Attributes: Composure, Resolve, and Stamina. When it comes to Skills, Hollows tend to be extremely practical. They usually focus on one or two strategies for survival and master that strategy before branching out. Hollows are almost never generalists.

Concepts: Traveling salesman, industrious migrant, sideshow freak, hobo, dirt farmer, miner, blizzard chaser, hired hand, beggar.

Quote: “Please. Just a drop. You can spare a drop from that jug. You can spare it, you son of a bitch.”

Hunger

Hollows are creatures of devastating hunger. They are empty, devoid of flesh, blood, and soul — or at least that’s how they feel. A Hollow can open himself up, sucking in pain, death, and rage from those around him, and take temporary solace. He can’t hold it all for long, though.

Cost: 1 Pyros
**Action:** Instant

**Transmutation Cost:** Manipulation $ \times 7$

The Hollow can activate this power whenever he or someone near him (within 20 feet) is attacked. The Hollow’s player rolls Manipulation + Occult to activate this power. This is a reflexive action.

**Dramatic Failure:** Azothic backlash temporarily opens the target’s eyes to the truth. The Promethean’s disfigurements become visible to the target for the rest of the scene, and any humans present must immediately check for Disquiet.

**Failure:** The Hunger does not take hold.

**Success:** The Hollow absorbs any damage from the attack, and converts it directly into Pyros or Willpower, in a combination the player chooses. The Hollow (or the intended target, if the Hollow absorbs the damage from someone else) doesn’t take the damage. At the end of the scene, the Hollow suffers all accumulated damage. If the majority of the damage was bashing, he takes it all as bashing. If the majority was lethal or aggravated, he takes it all as lethal damage. The Hollow can absorb multiple attacks in a turn, but the player must activate the power and roll for each one.

**Exceptional Success:** As above, but at the end of the scene, the Hollow suffers only bashing damage, regardless of the original type of damage.

**The Hollow Children**

The Hollow are creatures of the Dust Bowl and the Depression and have no place in the modern America. What happens to them when the rains fall?

Some of them are ready. When the rains come, they mark the end of their Pilgrimages and the beginning of their human lives. They shrug off the dust of the road and walk forward into a brighter future.

Others are overwhelmed. The world changes around them, and they can’t change with it. The rains come and they are washed away, their Divine Fires snuffed out. Those few Hollows who survive the rains without becoming human are almost all trapped in an endless, broken Pilgrimage. The ritual that creates new Hollows stops working once the rains fall. It doesn’t create Prometheans and it doesn’t create Pandorans; it does nothing. Those Hollows who never got around to making creations of their own are stuck wandering the Earth until something kills them or their Divine Fires finally gutter and go out. Unlucky Hollows created in the fall of 1939 — just before the rains fell — could still be around in the year 2039, or even later.

Most of the surviving Hollows leave the USA, hoping that they can find redemption in some other arid and desolate corner of the world. They are never seen or heard from again, and the Rambles of America’s Prometheans say nothing more of them.

**Dust Devils**
Sometimes, when a Hollow tries to make another of her kind, something goes wrong. The body starts to twitch, but the twitches don’t gather together into rational movements. The body rips itself apart as the Flux inside it grows, eventually collapsing into several writhing whirlwinds. These are Dust Devils — Hollow Pandorans.

A dust devil is a small whirlwind ranging from about three feet wide and six to ten feet tall to more than 30 feet wide and thousands of feet tall. They are formed by swirling updrafts of air caused by warm, sunny weather. The name “dust devil” comes from the fact that they are strong enough to pick up dust or sand, becoming visible as well as tangible, though they are rarely strong enough to harm people or property.

Most cultures view dust devils as at least slightly sinister: ghosts, evil (or at best just vengeful) spirits, or minor demons. A pillar of dusty wind that seems to rise up for no earthly reason, swirling around, growing larger and larger, before finally blowing itself out and vanishing is just creepy.

Unlike many other Pandorans, Dust Devils don’t have the attention span to capture Prometheans for later consumption. Dust Devils prefer to simply incapacitate a Promethean, eat their fill, and then wander off. The cleverness and cruelty of these creatures means that a Promethean who survives the feeding might find himself pinned to the tracks by railroad spikes though his ribcage, without the thumbs to pull the spikes free, or at the bottom of an abandoned mine shaft with no eyes and gnawed-off stubs for feet. Although Dust Devils don’t have the attention span to come back for their captives later to finish the job, they do seem to take it personally if those captives escape, and attack them more aggressively if given the opportunity.

Dust Devils — especially, but not exclusively, those who have consumed a ghost — are fascinated by humans. They are outsiders looking in on humans, and they find what they see weirdly compelling. When it comes to their actions, however, Dust Devils are inconsistent and capricious. The same Dust Devil that suddenly decides to help a human by blowing debris against the window to warn her of prowlers outside might then harass her by hiding important objects or ruining her sleep with unearthly moaning.

When it comes to Prometheans, on the other hand, these Pandorans are consistently malicious. Like all Pandorans, Dust Devils covet the Divine Fire and hate Prometheans for possessing it. However, their fascination with humans sometimes leads them to ignore the Promethean whose aura awakened them for a little while, taking advantage of their activity to watch and harass humans or digest their ghosts.

A Dust Devil has two distinct forms. When a Dust Devil pulls itself together to create a single body, it looks like a ragged homunculus made of dust, dirt, corn husks, desiccated wood, and the bones of small animals. Dust Devils rarely have perfectly humanoid forms. They usually incorporate some alien or animalistic elements. Some even have plantlike traits.

Most of the time, however, Dust Devils look like their namesakes: pillars of swirling wind, dust, and other detritus. Dust Devils use their “whirlwind” forms to cover ground more quickly.

**Dormant Form:** A dormant Dust Devil looks like a greasy pile of dirt. Dust Devils resist being scattered or cleaned up — even if swept up or strewn around the room, the pile will reform.

Dust Devils have an option available to them that other Pandorans lack. Pandorans in their whirlwind forms are immune to dormancy. Perhaps it is because of their strange Extempore origins, or perhaps it is because humans — especially the humans of the American Midwest
during the Dust Bowl — are already used to seeing dusty whirlwinds, but whatever it is about a human’s regard that forces Pandorans to become dormant simply slides off Dust Devils.

**Bestowment:** All Dust Devils posses the Arid Discorporation (★★★★★) and Ghost Eater (★★) Pandoran Transmutations.

**Sublimati:** Dust Devils often become sublimati when they consume a ghost. All Dust Devils develop a heightened sense of purpose while they have a ghost trapped inside them, but for some this state lingers even after the ghost is gone. Other Dust Devil sublimati come about for the same reasons as other Pandorans.

Dust Devil sublimati are no less alien and capricious than than their non-sentient cousins, but they are much more driven. They become obsessed with people, places, objects, and ideas. They gather collections — red things, teeth, keys, pieces of paper with writing on them — and spend hours admiring their collections. Then, for no reason, they abandon their collections and move on to something else. More disturbingly, they do the same thing with Prometheans. One Dust Devil sublimati might start a collection of Prometheans of a certain Lineage or Refinement, or Prometheans with bodies of a certain sex, or even with certain hair color, or eye color, or some trait that is only meaningful to the Pandoran’s mad, idiosyncratic sensibilities.

Like normal Dust Devils, sublimati are just as likely to move on completely at random, leaving their collection of unlucky Prometheans stranded somewhere dangerous and inaccessible.

**Weakness:** These Pandorans are creatures of the arid, drought-stricken Dust Bowl. Water forces a Dust Devil to take on a solid form and affects them like acid. A wet Dust Devil takes two points of aggravated damage per turn — automatically, no attack roll required. A truly drenched Dust Devil takes four points of aggravated damage per turn, and immersing a Dust Devil in water deals eight points of aggravated damage per turn, almost certainly killing it. Even a dormant Dust Devil can be brought low by nothing more than a housewife with a pail of soapy water intent on clearing away that pile of greasy dirt cluttering up the corner of her garage. Fortunately for Dust Devils, in the areas worst hit by the Dust Bowl, many people had more important things on their minds than housework.

Furthermore, Dust Devils are warded off by healthy vegetation. A Dust Devil cannot cross a line of germinated seeds and cannot move through thick undergrowth. If a character wields living plant matter as a weapon — a branch freshly broken from a living tree, for example — then her attacks deal aggravated damage.

These weaknesses are why Dust Devils do not persist for long after the end of the Dust Bowl. Between the end of the drought and the return of agriculture, Dust Devils have nowhere to flee. There might be a few aging creatures in the arid parts of northern Texas or Arizona, but every year rains and encounters with Prometheans take their toll, and without the Hollow, no new Dust Devils are created to replace them.

**The Fort Cobb Devil**

“*Can’t catch me! Can’t catch me!*”

**Background:** Times are tough all around, and the hardy folk of Fort Cobb, Oklahoma didn’t expect to be spared. When the banks came sniffing around, calling in debts, when the topsoil lifted up in the wind and blew away, the people of Fort Cobb did their best to shoulder their burdens and carry on.
As time passed, however, things got worse, and it became apparent that Fort Cobb was destined for more than its fair share of trouble. The town was wracked by strange fevers that passed through month after month, incapacitating the town and taking one or two souls with them each time. Some of the wells went dry and others were tainted, becoming bitter and poisonous. Even the nearby stream sometimes turned black and bilious, the fish washing up on the banks with strange tumorous growths distorting their bodies.

The strange black man who came to town last spring said that he could help them — something about an evil spirit that he said he could deal with. Since he disappeared, though, things have gotten worse. Some of the older inhabitants of Fort Cobb fear that the town is haunted — cursed, even — and with the strange winds and the mocking voices that everyone hears, even by day, even the most skeptical townsfolk are beginning to wonder if they might be right.

The Fort Cobb Devil was born in the first dry summer of the Dust Bowl, and has been tormenting the town ever since. The “strange black man” was an Ulgan Promethean, which the Fort Cobb Devil tricked into a cave and then trapped with a carefully orchestrated cave-in. The Fort Cobb Devil visits him once in a while, flowing through the stone to bite off little pieces of flesh and Pyros to sustain itself. Mostly, however, the Pandoran is delighted by the side-effects of the Ulgan’s Wasteland, which brings more and more spirits and — better yet — ghosts to Fort Cobb.

**Description:** As a dusty whirlwind, the Fort Cobb Devil is little different from any other dust devil, except a little thicker, a little grittier, and with a malevolent aura that puts animals on edge and terrifies the town’s more superstitious inhabitants.

When it pulls itself together to form a body, the Fort Cobb Devil is the size of a large toddler with a roughly human-shaped body. Its head is a raven’s skull and a doll’s head peeks out from its chest, partly submerged in the dirt and grit that forms its body. Various animal teeth form the fingers on its left hand; its right hand is made of gnarled and desiccated plant roots.

The Fort Cobb Devil can speak in an eerie, high-pitched voice. It isn’t truly intelligent, though, and its vocalizations have more in common with echolalia — obsessive repetition — than actual speech. Like a parrot, it is often capable of getting its point across by stressing certain words or repeating a phrase whose meaning it has memorized.

**Storytelling Hints:** The Fort Cobb Devil isn’t really all that malevolent, but it does like to watch people squirm. There’s something fascinating about the way they behave under pressure. The Pandoran doesn’t really understand that it is hurting people when it poisons their water or infects them with yet another disease, but it does so love to watch them try to pick themselves back up again.

The Promethean is different. He tried to get in the Devil’s way, so the Pandoran retaliated by tricking him and binding him under the earth. The Pandoran still visits him once in a while, but only because he is so delicious. The squirming humans in the town are much more interesting.

The Fort Cobb Devil hasn’t eaten a ghost yet, but with all the ghosts coming into the town now, it’s only a matter of time. The Pandoran likes to spend most of its time swirling around in the dusty graveyard on the north side of town, waiting for the ghost that feels right.

**Mockery:** Dust Devil

**Rank:** 3
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 2  
Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2  
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3  
Mental Skills:  
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Larceny (Pranks) 3, Stealth (Lurking) 4  
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Terrifying) 2, Intimidation (Unearthly Noises) 3, Subterfuge (Imitation) 2  
Willpower: 5  
Vice: Envy  
Initiative: 7  
Defense: 4  
Speed: 7  
Size: 3  
Health: 5  
Transmutations: Pandoran — Small Stature (•), Flux Within the Shade (••), Lithargous Body (••), Withering Touch (••), Fever Dreams (•••), Plague Cibation (•••)  
Bestowment: Arid Discorporation (•••••), Ghost Eater (•••)  
Pyros/per Turn: 10/1  
New Pandoran Transmutations

Most of the Transmutations described below are intended to flesh out the Dust Devils above, providing the game mechanics to back up their unique abilities. The “Withering Touch” Transmutation is also detailed because it gives Pandorans (and Prometheans following the Refinement of Flux) the ability to do something that is truly horrific to the survivors of the Dust Bowl: attack the vitality of the land itself.

Withering Touch (••, •••, or ••••)

Pandorans are imbued with Flux, the fire of entropy and decay. A Pandoran with this Transmutation can focus Flux outwards, creating an ultraviolet flame that causes organic matter to decay.

Cost: 1 Pyros  
Dice Pool: Strength + Resolve  
Action: Instant

This Transmutation can only be used to damage objects made of once-living matter, like wood or leather. Promethean flesh counts, as do the bodies of vampires. The Pandoran inflicts one point of Structure or lethal damage per success, bypassing Durability (but not armor).
The four and five-dot versions of this Transmutation can be used to attack living organic matter (i.e. flesh) and operate just like the two versions of the Crucible of Flesh Transmutation described in Promethean: The Created, p. 246.

The four-dot version of this Transmutation can also be used to blight a field making it incapable of supporting plant life. The effects of this use of the Transmutation are left up to the Storyteller. The Pandoran can poison a well, spring, or other source of water in much the same way. Successes indicate how deep the poison goes — each success poisons the waterway for one month — with a Toxicity equal to the Pandoran’s Rank. Damage is rolled once per day.

**Ghost Eater (•••)**

All Pandorans can infect the physical world with their corruption, but some are so potent that they can even reach into the immaterial world. Although they cannot affect spirits, they can easily interact with ghosts, which have an affinity with the chaotic, entropic energies that animate Pandorans. A captured ghost grants the Pandoran power, strength, and focus.

**Cost:** 1 Pyros

**Dice Pool:** Strength + Resolve – Resistance

**Action:** Instant

Pandorans who develop this Transmutation have an inherent ability to see ghosts. The action described above represents the Pandoran’s effort to consume the ghost. If a Pandoran successfully captures a ghost, it gains the following benefits:

- **Heightened Intelligence:** The Pandoran adds the ghost’s Finesse score to its Intelligence. If this increases the Pandoran’s Intelligence to 2 or more, the Pandoran can be considered a *sublimatus* until the ghost finally dissolves. Sometimes — at the Storyteller’s discretion — the Pandoran remains a *sublimatus* thereafter.

- **Ephemeral Flesh:** The Pandoran gains the benefit of the Ephemeral Flesh Bestowment (see Promethean: The Created, p. 116).

- **Ghostly Powers:** The Pandoran can use any Numina that the ghost possessed (see the World of Darkness Rulebook, pp. 210-212, for a description of some Numina — other World of Darkness books contain more options). These powers always cost 1 Pyros to activate.

- **Secrets of the Dead:** The Pandoran knows everything that the ghost knew in life, though the degree to which its alien intellect can make sense or use of that knowledge varies.

A ghost trapped inside a Pandoran lasts for one day per point of Willpower (the ghost’s, not the Pandoran’s) after which time the Pandoran’s chaotic Flux breaks it down completely.

**Arid Discorporation (••••)**

The Pandoran’s body breaks apart into tiny motes of dust, bones, and other debris, swirling about under its own power.

**Cost:** 2 Pyros, 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** None

**Action:** Instant
This Transmutation operates almost identically to the Vaporous Form Transmutation described on p. 249 of *Promethean: The Created* — including immunity to Dormancy and the ability to move through obstacles and cause Disquiet in humans and animals — but with a few key differences.

A Pandoran under the effects of Arid Discorporation remains in control of its movement. Rather than using the Transmutation merely to travel to a specific location, declared when the Transmutation is activated, the Pandoran remains in full command of itself and can move about as it sees fit. The Pandoran also remains fully aware of its surroundings. A Pandoran in the form of a Dust Devil can even manipulate objects, albeit at Strength •. The dust storm’s Strength is insufficient to do direct harm, though it might be able to flip a switch or knock a jar off a shelf and onto someone’s head.

A Pandoran using this Transmutation can only move at its normal Speed score, and cannot improve its Speed by running.

This Transmutation lasts until the Pandoran voluntarily ends it. Some Pandorans — especially Dust Devils — enjoy spending most of their time as swirling funnels of dust because it gives them the opportunity to observe humans.

**Story Hooks**

• **The Saviors of Fort Cobb:** The Fort Cobb Devil and the situation described above is one way to use Dust Devils. The characters could easily pass through Fort Cobb on their way through Oklahoma. To further complicate the situation, one or more of the characters could have milestones waiting for them in Fort Cobb, like living humans who knew the people who once inhabited their bodies. Alternately, the Ulgan who is described above as the Pandoran’s victim could, instead, be a Centimanus manipulating the monster to his own ends. Depending on how many years into the Dust Bowl your story is — and the power level of the players — the Storyteller might want to scale the Fort Cobb Devil up or down in rank.

• **A Friendly Ghost?:** A Dust Devil approaches the throng with a strange story to tell. The creature claims that not only has it consumed the ghost of one of the Promethean’s component bodies, but it the soul’s strength of personality was such that it was able to wrest control of the Pandoran. It wants the Promethean’s help finding enough Pyros to sate the creature’s hunger and keep its automatic functions from dissolving the ghost inside. In return, it promises to share the details of the life of the Promethean’s body. Is the Pandoran telling the truth, or is the throng the victim of a Dust Devil *sublimatus* running a long con?

• **The Ghost-Eater:** A Promethean might want to consult the wisdom of the dead for many reasons. While a Promethean is not, in any way, the person whose flesh she is made of, many Created have a hard time realizing this. Few Prometheans (outside the rare Refinement of Silver) have any capacity for interacting with ghosts. A “friendly” — or at least briable — Dust Devil could provide a throng with a way to access the memories of the dead, provided they are willing to pay the Pandoran’s price and consign innocent ghosts to destruction in its gullet. Of course, any Promethean could simply learn the Ghost Eater Transmutation, though delving into the Refinement of Flux always leaves the Promethean changed.

**The Traveling Salesmen**
He comes to town in a white truck decorated with a black sun. He sells all sorts of things out of the back of that truck: jewelry and farm equipment and medicine and books, and all at prices that everyone can afford. But nothing ever turns out as it should, and not long after he leaves, the blood and screaming starts.

The Dust Bowl does strange things to a person’s mind. Humans emerge from the black blizzards telling stories of screaming ghosts and howling demons, but in the light of day, dry and unpleasant though it be, those stories seem less credible. Prometheans know, however, that creatures wander the Midwest that defy explanation.

Mr. Henry Thomas Dusk — the traveling salesman — is one of those creatures. Is he a qashmal on some extended and incomprehensible mission? A fae spirit inflicting alien “justice” on humans? An angel, or a demon, or something else entirely? Only Henry Dusk knows for sure, and he isn’t telling.

Mr. Henry Thomas Dusk

“Don’t fret, my boy. I have exactly what you need, right here in my truck.”

Background: This being’s ordained role is to punish mortals for surrendering to their Vices. Why has it come to this particular town? That is something for Mr. Dusk itself to know, and no other. Perhaps some mortal here has already given into his or her Vice in a particularly cruel and deviant way and deserves to be chastized. Perhaps the town itself has committed some kind of communal sin and needs to be taught a lesson. Or perhaps this town is in danger of falling into Vice in the future, and this is a preemptive strike.

Description: Mr. Dusk drives a white truck decorated with a black sun on the hood and side-panels. Ornate lettering announces the arrival of “Mr. Henry Thomas Dusk’s Miraculous Emporium.” The truck holds all manner of subtly magical wonders. It is certainly larger on the inside than it is on the outside.

Mr. Dusk itself appears as a tall and handsome man in his early 40s. He is somewhat travel-worn, but still healthy and vigorous. Mr. Dusk dresses conservatively, in a severe black suit, and wears a tall top hat. However, his friendly eyes and comically waxed mustache create an altogether unintimidating effect.

When Mr. Dusk takes his true form, man and truck merge together into a single terrifying whole. Mr. Dusk’s true form is a humanoid torso emerging from the neck of a truck-sized reptilian body with slick black scales. Six restless wings emerge from the creature’s back, moving constantly, even when it is at rest. The human body atop the dragon’s neck is unmistakably Mr. Dusk’s, though young and hale, rather than old and weathered, and completely hairless.

Storytelling Hints: It is Mr. Dusk’s responsibility to gaze into the hearts of mortals and see the cruelty and venality there, and it relishes the opportunity to punish them. Sometimes being polite and ingratiating with humans exhausts Mr. Dusk, but it knows that it cannot chastise them with the chaos they deserve unless they invite it into their town and its creations into their homes.

When Mr. Dusk encounters humans of particularly strong Virtue, it reacts with a mixture of frustration, watchfulness, and grudging respect. It is compelled to reward such a person with gifts that help her to survive (see below), but it eagerly awaits her fall from grace, hoping that it will have the opportunity to exploit her flaws and render monstrous judgment.
Mr. Dusk is an alien creature that doesn’t really understand the sins that it punishes. The term “proportionate response” isn’t in its vocabulary, and it is equally happy to punish mortals for crimes both grand and petty.

**Attributes:**  
Power 5, Finesse 6, Resistance 5

**Willpower:** 10

**Virtue:** Charity

**Vice:** Wrath

**Initiative:** 11

**Defense:** 6

**Speed:** 21 (species factor 10)

**Size:** 7

**Corpus:** 12

**Numina:** Animate Firetouched (as the Vulkanus Transmutation; 11 dice), Clockwork Servant (as the Pandoran Transmutation; 11 dice), Command Pandoran (11 Dice), Echidna’s Blessing (11 Dice), Fever Dreams (as the Pandoran Transmutation; 11 dice), Firebringer (as the Mesmerism Transmutation; 11 dice), Flux Within the Shade (as the Pandoran Transmutation; 11 dice), Just Gift (11 Dice), Materialize (11 Dice), Plague Cibation (as the Pandoran Transmutation, four-dot version, 11 Dice); Pyros Drain (11 Dice);

**Echidna’s Blessing:** Echidna’s Blessing is resisted by the target’s Stamina. If it is successful, this Numen renders its victim monstrous, imposing strange physical mutations. The victim is afflicted with Pandoran Transmutations (dot ratings totaling Mr. Dusk’s Power). If the victim does not normally possess a Pyros score, these powers are activated with Willpower rather than Pyros. Nothing prevents Mr. Dusk from using this Numen over and over again, rendering its victim increasingly vile.

These mutations last until Mr. Dusk leaves town. If a human has more than twice his Morality rating in Pandoran Transmutations, he cannot return to his normal form and is rendered freakish forever.

Mr. Dusk uses this power on humans who have already given in to his cursed gifts (see below), rendering them into monstrous parodies of themselves. Mr. Dusk has a cruel sense of humor, and tends to gift his victims with mutations that mock the Vices that drove them to this state. For example, someone seduced by a mirror that played on his vanity (and Pride) might find his entire body rendered pustulant and stinking except for his perfect, smooth-skinned face.

**Just Gift:** Mr. Dusk activates this Numen when selling something to one of his victims. The roll for this power is opposed by his victim’s Composure.

Just Gift imbues the item with strange and wonderful powers, the details of which are up to the Storyteller. However, the power is always tied to the victim’s Vice or some other flaw in his or her personality. For example, a mirror given to encourage someone’s vanity (and Pride) might allow him to enjoy the benefits of the Striking Looks (****) Merit for any day in which he spends more time gazing into the mirror and attending to his looks than he does attending to the needs of his friends and family.
Once the victim has started to become dependent upon the item’s gifts, it becomes more demanding. The mirror might go from merely requiring that its user indulge his Pride by ignoring his obligations to requiring him to lash out at others, asserting his superiority. The item continues to become more and more demanding — lashing out at others might turn into physically harming them, or gazing into the mirror for hours and ignoring obligations might turn into skipping meals to stare adoringly at the mirror — until the victim has become a slave to the item and his Vice.

At the same time, the powers granted by the item grow as well. The item might go from merely granting the Striking Looks Merit to giving a huge bonus to Social dice pools, or even giving the user access to mind-controlling abilities resembling Mesmerism Transmutations. Storytellers with can also use the powers in other World of Darkness book for inspiration.

It’s important to remember that Mr. Dusk’s *modus operandi* is to sell these cursed wonders to everyone in town. Even if only two or three people give into their Vices and become monsters, it is enough to create chaos.

Mr. Dusk sometimes gives away presents that feed on their user’s Virtue rather than her Vice. These objects are usually oriented towards protecting the bearer from the chaos that is about to erupt in the town — such as a necklace empowered by Temperance that allows its bearer to become invisible or a pistol that fires with terrifying effectiveness as long as its Just bearer is acting in defense of others — as more and more of the inhabitants give in to their Vices and become monstrous parodies of themselves. Mr. Dusk will grudgingly give these presents to mortals who impress it with their virtuous natures.

Both kinds of items — cursed items empowered by Vice and blessed items empowered by Virtue — remain potent even after Mr. Dusk departs the material world.

A Note on Traits

The traits given are for this being’s true form. When it materializes, it usually takes on innocuous and purely human shapes.

To reflect this form, Mr. Dusk should have Size 5, which reduces its species factor for Speed to 5 (and, correspondingly, its final Speed score) and Corpus to 10.

Mr. Dusk prefers to stay in an innocuous form when dealing with humans, but it is not above taking on its terrifying true shape and wreaking some old-fashioned, Old-Testament vengeance when it is necessary.

Story Hooks

• **The Magic Mirror:** What gives an unfair advantage to a human might be just enough to help a Promethean along in his pilgrimage. However, the cost — indulging in Vice — remains the same. When a friend of the throng — or perhaps one of its members — finds one of the magical items Mr. Dusk left behind and quickly becomes enthralled, the throng must seek out the salesman and ask him to withdraw his power before it’s too late.

• **Trial by Fire:** Although Mr. Dusk is usually sent to test and punish humans, it is entirely possible for it to be aware of the Prometheans in the town and have devised a test for them, as well. This test could take the form of a cursed item, sold to a Promethean or merely left where he or she could find it, or perhaps just a scenario devised to force the throng to push the boundaries
of their humanity. The reward could come in the form of a blessed item, or a milestone, or a clue as to where to travel next on the Pilgrimage.

Inspirations
The Dust Bowl has captivated Americans for a long time. Modern Americans grew up with grandparents who survived the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, and whether it made them generous or stingy, eager to find the joy in everyday life or impossible to please, it left an indelible mark on their psyches. The Dust Bowl fascinates us as a time that Americans had the opportunity to be their best, and their worst. As a result, there is a wealth of media, both fiction and non-fiction, to inspire Storytellers and players alike.

Literature
Almost anything by John Steinbeck serves as quintessential Dust Bowl literature, but *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath* come highly recommended. If you haven’t read them since high school, give them a look (or watch the movies).

*Out of the Dust* (Karen Hesse) is a novel telling the story of an ill-fortuned family in the Dust Bowl. The novel is interesting in that it is told entirely in free-verse poems.


Movies
Although much lighter in tone than most Promethean games, *O Brother Where Art Thou?* does a great job of portraying the culture and — in its own way — the desperation of the Dust Bowl.

The documentary *The Dust Bowl* is nonfiction, but Ken Burns brings the time period to life. Storytellers who want to explore the historical realities of the Dust Bowl might find it interesting.

Television
*Carnivale* only lasted two seasons, but the themes and atmosphere are perfect for a Promethean game. The general air of ignorance — most of the characters seem to have very few hard facts about what’s going on — is particularly well suited to a Promethean game.
It’s a nasty business, ghosts, and no mistake. Even for those who face the steely jaws of death and come back, it’s a nasty, dangerous, and sorry business. Matter of fact — especially for those people. And I should know, because I’m one of ’em.

Sgt. Ned Poindexter’s my name, and I’ve been a Kauwaka — that’s what locals call a Sin-Eater — for going on twenty years. I dare say I’m probably the only one of the Bound here in God’s own country that’s been through as much as I have, and I can tell you it’s been all-go from start to finish.

Back then, before the war, in our proud little West Coast town of Klynham, you wouldn’t think that ghosts and spirits and the horrors of the “Mystic East” would be the subject of much conversation, and you’d be right. All of it was going on right under our noses, but it didn’t poke its bloody head up until Salter the Sensational came to town, the murderous devil. We put pay to him, or so we thought, but the body that ended up tossed in the rubbish tip was just the earthly vessel of something much more sinister.

It was back then, too, that I was beaten near to death by the Lynch gang, those older boys who were responsible for everything delinquent in Klynham. Oh yes, to everyone else my recovery seemed like a foregone conclusion, but let me tell you something — that was almost the end for me. If it hadn’t been for the Macrocarpa Man, you’d be reading my name on a headstone in the bone yard on the road to Te Rotika.

The Macrocarpa Man was probably a West Coast gold miner or flax cutter or something like that, about a hundred years ago, but he’s none of that now. Now he’s an atua, part ghost, part spirit, part something else. The way he appears to me, he’s all burned up and smoking, arms and legs like twisted tree branches. Even when I’m not drawing on his power, I can smell ash and soot and murder on my breath, taste it like I was breathing it in.

At any rate, he brought me back, helped me recover, became a part of me, gave me powers from beyond the grave. Even after Salter was dealt with, by misfortune more than competence, I knew that I’d seen the tip of the iceberg. I was just a kid, but years rolled by after that where I spent sleepless nights putting an end to one murderous ghost after another, all of them coming in to town by the rails. Those bloody trains, carrying ghosts and the dead to small towns like ours, dropping them off to cause mischief and mayhem, bringing misery and ruin.

Once I realized it was the railways that were the problem, you can bet I did what I could to put a stop to it. I got a job on the train to Openerho — to the freezing works and let me tell you that’s not a pleasant place — and later, to Wellington and then the main trunk line up and down the North Island between Auckland and the capital. I met more poor beggars like me, Bound to spirits of vengeance and redemption and darkness and luck. Showed a lot of them how to do what I’d been doing, and I’m certain we held off more than we missed.

When the war came, and our boys shipped out to fight Jerry and Mussolini’s fascists, I went with ‘em. I saw hell, and the dead that spill out of it, but even that nightmare wasn’t enough to darken my spirits. It wasn’t until I got back to New Zealand, a veteran of foreign wars, that I realized just how bad things were getting. Gates to the underworld, those spots we used to open up and shove the dead back into, were blocked, or gone. More of us were cropping up, season by season. And I lost a bunch of us, too. Too much sin for the Sin-Eaters.

It’s a dark, unforgiving, and miserable business, this. I wouldn’t wish it on anyone. I sometimes wish the Macrocarpa Man had just left me there to die in the shed, like the Lynch boys would
have liked. But then, me and the boys stop another kēhua from setting fire to a school full of kids, or talk a taniwha out of sinking another ship, or kick Salter the Sensational’s specter out of another lousy body, keeping a young girl from being his next victim. And I figure, no worries. I’ve got a few more years left.

It’s a nasty business, all right, but it’s my bloody business. Kia kaha, ngā iwi!

God’s Own Country

*Give me, give me God’s own country! there to live and there to die,*

*God’s own country! fairest region resting ’neath the southern sky,*

*God’s own country! framed by Nature in her grandest, noblest mould;*

*Land of peace and land of plenty, land of wool and corn and gold!*

—Thomas Bracken, “God’s Own Country”

*God’s Own Country* frames the experience of playing *Sin-Eaters* in New Zealand of the 1950s, a time of post-war prosperity and growth, concealing a maelstrom of spiritual and supernatural unrest beneath. For almost 200 years, the rich sacred traditions of the indigenous Māori people have been forcibly integrated with European beliefs and cultures. As a result, the cycle of life and death has been disrupted; the cenotes and gates to the Underworld are choked with restless dead, angry ancestors, and belligerent spirits. The Gauntlet is weak, and powerful nature spirits that feed on this unrest and conflict are growing in strength. This Dark Era brings its own Themes and Moods to complement or build on those of the core *Geist: The Sin-Eaters*.

**Themes**

The core theme of *God’s Own Country* is that of Colonialism, especially as an expression of *Geist: The Sin-Eater*’s theme of Transition. The Māori are no longer a predominantly rural and tribal-centered people; they are born, grow old, and die in a country dominated by European settlers. As a result of the Treaty of Waitangi, relations between the New Zealand government and the iwi or tribal coalitions of the Māori are better, on the surface, than in most colonized nations. Even so, the Māori culture has been forever altered, and this in turn generates deep-seated unrest, isolation, and resentment.

Similarly, descendants of white European immigrants, or Pākehā, run into conflict with Māori cultural beliefs and embody the culture of oppression, despite having no active desire to continue their forebears’ colonial attitudes. This is in large part because the Pākehā, not the Māori or other Polynesian members of society, enjoy the strongest benefits of New Zealand’s progressive society in the 1950s. Pākehā ghosts often carry the full weight of these attitudes with them, long after death.

A related theme in the post-war period of the 1950s is Loss. Many New Zealanders, including a significant number of Māori, fought and died in World War II. Their campaigns in North Africa, the Middle East, Italy, and the Pacific alongside Allied forces made widows and orphans of those they left behind. All of that lost potential stands in stark contrast to the progress being made in the years that follow. What would have happened if those men and women had returned home? How much stronger could the nation be had they not left their homes and families?
Even those who returned from the war carry this theme of loss with them into this next decade of prosperity. As New Zealand rebuilds and recovers, and new government initiatives herald an increase in employment, education, and innovation, war veterans remember those who fought alongside them and died. Shell-shocked and, in some cases, brought back from the dead by battleground geists, these veterans of World War II have great difficulty integrating back into peacetime.

On a cultural and spiritual level, loss is felt deeply by many in the Māori community. During this period of New Zealand’s history, Māori tribes experience great upheaval, with families beginning a migration from rural communities and into urban centers such as Auckland and Wellington to improve their lives and earn money. Although new communities are created in the process, the loss of immediate sacred and cultural connection to ancestral homelands is a tangible and long-lasting consequence. Spirits and ghosts are unfettered from long-established sacred ties, and become twisted and angry.

**Mood**

The dominant contrasting mood of *God’s Own Country* is **Trepidation**. Far and away from the Day of the Dead carnivale mood of the core **Geist: The Sin-Eaters** setting, New Zealand in the 1950s is tense with unease and uncertainty. While the Bound are indeed given a second chance at life, and thus compare this with the bleakness of death, the real contrast lies with a prosperous yet sleepy provincial atmosphere that covers an impassioned, bloody confluence of spiritual tension beneath it like a makeshift bandage. New Zealand may seem peaceful, even idyllic, but at any moment a violent outburst, horrific crime, or nation-shaking disaster can break this peace and create shockwaves through the Underworld.

Depending on where any story is set, this mood of contrasts may be more or less obvious. In the urban centers, where hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders live and work close to one another, the undercurrent of spiritual anguish surfaces more often. The tragedies it causes are just as often covered up again, however, leaving few visible scars. Perhaps the New Zealand Herald mentions it below the fold on the front page, or the newsreels let moviegoers hear about it for all of five minutes.

On the other hand, in a small rural community along the West Coast or in the South Island, where the most exciting thing to happen to anyone is an out-of-town visitor or a new movie serial playing in the theater, a crime of passion or a horrid accident breaks the peaceful illusion for much longer. A story centered on such an event involves everyone in the town. Investigators from the big city interrupt daily routines. The absence of those who die is felt for months, even years.

The mood of **Isolation** is parallel to this one. New Zealand is a small country, all things considered, but when you understand that every rural or urban center is separated from the others by railways, stretches of water, or dirt roads, the illusion of distance is enhanced. It can take a while for word to get around. Main trunk lines for the telephone system can fail or need repair. New Zealanders have no television — not until the next decade — and even the mail can take as much as a week depending on how far it has to go. The country is poised on the edge of great change, but during the 1950s, anywhere you are in New Zealand certainly feels like a long way from anywhere else.
The Bound of New Zealand are isolated, too, not just because of geography but because so many fewer of them live here than in practically any other civilized nation. Their connections to krewes in Europe and the United States, even Australia, are few. They are on their own, and the sheer weight of their duty may soon overwhelm them if they can’t find some way to reach out to each other and, perhaps, across the divide of nations.

A Brief Lexicon of the Bound

Because God’s Own Country takes place in a time and place other than the modern USA, many colloquial terms used by the Bound are different. Here’s a short list of mostly Māori words that have been co-opted by New Zealand’s Sin-Eaters.

Atua: A word for God, gods, or powerful ancestor spirits. Geists are referred to as atua by tohunga who have become Sin-Eaters, and it is a common word used to refer to them; other powerful entities, including angels, are also referred to as atua.

Godzone: From “God’s Own Country,” a phrase used since the turn of the century to describe New Zealand. The Bound use it to refer to the collected spiritual and physical nation.

Iwi: The Māori word for tribal group, used specifically in New Zealand politics and by Māori to identify which tribe they are belong to or descend from. Traditionally, your iwi also tells you which great canoe (waka) your ancestors arrived on from Hawaiki. For Kauwaka, an iwi would be the term for a Tier Three krewe (i.e. a Conspiracy) but there are none of this size in New Zealand in 1954.

Karakia: Chants or prayers used in Māori traditions. In the Sin-Eater lexicon, it refers to the Ceremonies known by the Bound.

Kauwaka: Literally, spirit canoe. This is a word that is used to describe a medium or one who channels spirits; it’s the term tohunga use for the Bound, and has been adopted by Sin-Eaters in many cases.

Kēhua: The Māori word for ghost. It applies in almost all cases to standard ghosts of Rank 2 or greater, but not to geists. Particularly malevolent or wicked ghosts, often those associated with disease or plague, are known as aitua.

Mana: The Māori term for Essence or spiritual power. Places, people, and objects may possess mana, especially those with significance and influence. Any ephemeral creature or supernatural being with spiritual resolve similarly possesses it. For Sin-Eaters, mana associated with the dead is equivalent to plasm; otherwise it is subsumed within Willpower.

Marae: A carved meetinghouse, the central location in any Māori community. It’s where funerals (tangi), weddings, spiritual education, important tribal meetings, and so forth are all held or conducted.

Mauri: The Māori term for a person’s essential “life spark” or animating force, as apart from their wairua. Animals, plants, and even inanimate objects can be considered to have mauri, depending on the context.

Pā: The Māori term for fortified village or settlement, often a hillfort. Many pā sites are now little more than terraced hills, and archaeologists excavated a great number of them in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Others have been incorporated into modern townships or left simply
as places for sheep and cattle to graze. In Twilight, some pā are still entirely visible as ghostly echoes.

**Pō:** The Māori term for night or darkness. Kauwaka use it as a term for the Underworld.

**Rēinga:** The afterlife, often assumed by Europeans to be the equivalent of heaven in Māori. This is where your wairua is supposed to end up after it separates from the body and travels north to the tip of the North Island at Spirits Bay.

**Tangi:** A funeral. Māori traditions governing the conduct of tangi vary from iwi to iwi, but the intent is to ease the spirit’s transition after death and bring closure for the whānau of the deceased.

**Taniwha:** An elemental or nature spirit of great power, usually inhabiting lakes and rivers. They are able to interact with ghosts as well as other spirits, making them potentially very dangerous. Some have consumed vast numbers of ghosts to increase in Rank, especially following natural disasters that they may or may not have had a hand in.

**Taonga:** An heirloom, treasured item, or birthright. In Sin-Eater parlance, a Memento. Many iwi have taonga that possess considerable mana and spiritual power, much of it unknown of by their owners. Such items are often weapons, god-staffs, carved hooks or symbols crafted from whale bone or greenstone, and even entire meeting houses (whare taonga).

**Tapu:** A location that, through the blessings and karakia of a tohunga or from some great event or supernatural influence, is considered sacred. This is essentially a Condition that prohibits certain behaviors, inhibits or enhances supernatural effects, and generates great mana.

**Tikanga:** The collected rituals, laws, and traditions of the Māori. When used by the Bound, it also includes the knowledge and understanding of karakia, or Sin-Eater Ceremonies.

**Tohunga:** A skilled expert, usually referring to a priest or individual skilled in the rites and traditions of Māori sacred culture. Tohunga are taught from an early age and possess great mana.

**Wairua:** The soul or inner self. When somebody dies, their wairua separates from their body and passes along the path of spirits or Te Ara Wairua to Spirit Bay (also known as Te Rerenga Wairua) at the tip of the North Island, then to the afterlife. It is clear that one’s wairua is different from a kēhua or ghost that remains afterward; the Bound experience the rare sensation of their wairua returning to their body after merging with an atua or geist.

**Whānau:** A person’s family, including unrelated friends and associates. The term has become used by some Sin-Eaters to describe their group, in place of the word “krewe.” When specificity is needed to distinguish it from other uses of the word in conversation, the term is extended to whānau atua or “god family.”

What Has Come Before

It’s 1954.

Around 600 years ago, Polynesian explorers arrived in great canoes called waka, or so the legends say. They hunted, they settled, they made war on one another, and they gathered stories and tales of their ancestors together. They were the forerunners of the Māori, and they called their land Aotearoa — Land of the Long White Cloud.
Over 300 years ago, Dutch explorer Abel Tasman sighted Aotearoa from his sailing vessel, and set forth to map its coastline. Some of his crew encountered the Māori in a sheltered bay in the northernmost island, and were killed. Tasman’s men shot back. He left, and later named the islands New Zealand.

Less than 200 years ago, Captain James Cook made sail to New Zealand in the Endeavour. He completed the maps Abel Tasman started, and was the first of many other sailors and explorers, seal hunters, and gold miners. They brought civilization, education, Christianity, and settlers. They brought dogs, pigs, vermin, disease, muskets, and more war.

A little over 100 years ago, the tribal chiefs of the indigenous Māori people of New Zealand signed a treaty with the representatives of the British Crown at Waitangi, an act that lead to the annexation of the island nation by the British, and eventually to sovereign independence and entry into the British Commonwealth. It did not stop the fighting, but it marked the first effort toward ending it.

More than 50 years ago, women gained the right to vote, the nation became a Dominion, and the Tohunga Suppression Act was enacted to force the Māori to accept modern medicine instead of tribal healers and cultural traditions.

A generation ago, New Zealand’s armed forces shipped off to fight in the Middle East, Turkey, and Europe. They die in Gallipoli, the Western Front, and at the Battle of the Somme. They were buried, row on row, their graves marked with poppies. The nation remembered. Nationwide radio service and electricity are ushered in.


Last year, the Queen of Great Britain, Elizabeth II, visited New Zealand on one of her first tours of the subject nations in the British Commonwealth. She was newly crowned, young, and very popular. During her time here, the worst railway disaster in the history of the nation took place.

A Nation of Conflict

The Treaty of Waitangi remains a contested document, given that it covers not just the transition of Māori lands to British ownership, but parcels out fishing rights, tribal land, and other matters that were at the time of little importance to the Māori but which have become highly significant. It was also signed twice, once in English and once in Māori, and the two documents are not identical. The Māori translation, for instance, never fully ceded sovereignty of the Māori to the Crown.

As a form of constitution or founding document, the Treaty sought to end the constant conflict in New Zealand between the Māori and the British Crown, largely by bringing the country under British rule. It is important to understand the role this document plays in the ongoing undercurrent of spiritual tension that boils beneath the otherwise peaceful surface of society. Even the dead recognize the laws of the living, to some degree. However, the mana or power of the Treaty has made it more than just a document. It binds and links together places of power and persons of authority, often in ways that were not expected. It is both a reason that the nation knows peace, and a reason that the nation could at any moment rise up in spiritual and mortal unrest.
Of course, conflict is not just between the natives and the colonists. The Māori Wars were for the most part fought between tribal groups, or *iwi*. Powerful and charismatic chiefs formed alliances and fought against each other, emboldened by the new technology brought to their land by the Europeans. Muskets made even the smallest and least populous tribal groups capable of causing great harm to their enemies. It would be a mistake to think that the Māori are a united group, just like it would be foolish to think that all Europeans get along.

**A Nation of Progress**

New Zealand is a small nation, but innovation and advances in technology and society are hallmarks of its history leading up to the 1950s. It was one of the first nations in the world to grant women the right to vote (in 1893). It is home to Ernest Rutherford, a pioneer in physics and chemistry. Many argue that New Zealand aviator Richard Pearse flew a controlled flight before the Wright Brothers. And its labor unions and workers rights movements were well ahead of their time.

In 1954, however, the greatest technological and social advances are yet to take place. Television won’t be introduced for another six years, for example. The Treasury won’t adopt the first computer until around the same time. Capital punishment has yet to be abolished. New Zealand has no international airport or a major oil refinery. Women, Māori, and children have rights that are yet to be recognized.

And yet, it is certainly true that for the bulk of the working and middle class of New Zealand, history has delivered unto them a nation of great progress and prosperity. Compared to the rest of the world, New Zealand is above average in 1954. This, one might argue, makes the tempest of spiritual energy surging beneath the surface all the more dangerous.

**Where We Are**

*God’s Own Country* takes place in a snapshot of New Zealand in the middle of 1954, some months after the famous Tangiwai Disaster, the Royal Visit of Queen Elizabeth II, and around the time of the murder of Pauline Parker’s mother by Pauline and her close friend Juliet Hulme. Life, death, and the outside world are not far from the public consciousness.

Familiarity with other countries in the 1950s, such as Great Britain or the United States, certainly informs the manner of dress and global cultural changes that have influenced New Zealand and its larger neighbor Australia. However, while that serves as a useful baseline, much about mid-20th century New Zealand exists to set it apart.

**The Tangiwai Disaster**

Late in the evening of December 23rd, 1954, the night express train from Wellington to Auckland approached a bridge over the Tangiwai River, located in the center of the North Island. Only minutes before, a lahar — millions of cubic feet of water, ice, and mud — had slammed into the pylons of the bridge, weakening it enough that when the train passed over it, the structure collapsed, sending the passenger cars plunging into the river. At the time, it was the eighth-worst railway disaster in the world, and certainly the worst in New Zealand’s history. 151 of the 281 passengers died, and news of the wreck took days to reach the rest of the country because of the Christmas holiday. The lahar was reportedly caused by the giving way of Mt. Ruapehu’s crater lake, but natural disasters such
as this are also attributed to elemental spirits such as *taniwha*, angered by the actions of mortals.

**Population**

New Zealand is a small Pacific nation of approximately two million people. About 120,000 of them are Māori, and even fewer than that are Pacific Islander or of some other ethnic group. English and Māori are the official languages, and Christianity is the dominant religious tradition, mostly Protestant with some Catholic. New Zealanders of European descent come from families that were established two or more generations ago, most of whom came from England, Scotland, or from Scandinavian countries. Immigration has slowed, and the post-war “baby boom” has resulted in significant domestic population growth, especially among the Māori.

The Māori are a Polynesian people who arrived in New Zealand in the 13th century and established an indigenous culture related to those of Samoa, Hawaii, Fiji, and Tahiti. Their name essentially translates to “normal” or “ordinary.” Māori traditionally claim tribal relationship to one of several *iwi* or tribal groups, further divided into *hapū* (sub-tribe or clan) and then into *whānau* (extended family). More and more Māori live in the cities following World War II, as labor and industry thrive and become more appealing than rural life.

White New Zealanders are known as *Pākehā*, a Māori word that may or may not be interpreted favorably. A popular explanation of the word is that it derives from the legend of *pakepakehā*, a mythical humanoid race of supernatural fair-skinned beings, though some white New Zealanders suggest that it is an insulting term connected to pigs. Regardless of its etymology, *Pākehā* is the name the Māori people use for those who are light-skinned and not Māori or Pacific Islander.

The largest population centers are in the North Island, including Wellington, the nation’s capital. About 70% of the population lives in these cities and the surrounding towns. Auckland is the most populated urban center, and continues to grow and expand as the first state highways are paved around it.

**Geography**

New Zealand may be divided into two major islands, the North and the South Islands, with Stewart Island thrown in right at the bottom. Overall, New Zealand is roughly the same length as Great Britain, although with its southern mountains and glaciers it invites comparisons to Denmark or Norway as well.

The New Zealand climate is mild in the north and much colder in the south. Auckland, the largest urban center, enjoys mild rainy winters and moderately warm summers. Wellington, at the bottom of the North Island, is much windier and colder; Christchurch, located roughly halfway down the South Island, sees snow. When immigrants from Scandinavia arrived in the South Island to work as laborers in the 19th century, they hardly noticed any change in the climate, and indeed Scottish settlers in Dunedin felt that they had exchanged one blustery cold land for another.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, most of New Zealand was covered in native forest. Over the past 200 years, logging and the spread of civilization has thinned out these woodlands, and in places they have been replaced by imported pine forests principally used for paper and lumber. Marsh and swamp lands were reclaimed, fields cleared for grazing livestock and farming, and dams built on rivers to harness electricity. Even with all of this environmental impact, New
Zealand in 1954 is full of untouched wilderness, majestic mountains, and shining rivers and lakes. The average New Zealander is unlikely to see much of it in his or her daily life, but for many years it has been a compelling draw for tourism and an inspiration for literature.

As an island nation, New Zealanders are never too far from the sea. The coastline offers countless bays, inlets, coves, and estuaries. The coastal waters are clear and bright in the summer months, dark and often stormy in the winter. Fisheries make up a considerable percentage of the nation’s food industry, and fishing rights are a key element of the Treaty of Waitangi’s provisions. Māori folklore is rich with aquatic and oceanic imagery; the monsters and great beasts of legend are taniwha, or water spirits, and even the Māori word for the spirit or soul, wairua, is derived from the word for water, wai. Recreational water sports, beach vacations, and fireside tales of shipwrecks and sea monsters are a part of New Zealand culture.

In contrast to the cold southern climate and the abundant waterways and coastal regions, New Zealand is a product of volcanic activity, and sits astride the boundary of the Indo-Australian and Pacific plates. The North Island hosts numerous volcanic fields, such as the Taupō Volcanic Zone in the center of the island, which include three volcanic cones that remain active, and the Auckland Volcanic field, where more than 40 craters and cones make up the land upon which the city of Auckland rests. The latter hasn’t experienced an active eruption in over 600 years, but the Taupō field and several offshore islands are constantly rumbling or letting off steam. This, too, attracts tourism, but invites considerable danger as well. One of the North Island’s most popular destinations in the 19th century, a part of Rotorua known as the Pink and White Terraces, was literally destroyed overnight when Mt. Tarawera erupted in 1886.

Earthquakes are also common in New Zealand. The islands were nicknamed the Shaky Isles by early settlers who were shocked to experience tremors that knocked over buildings and caused livestock to flee. While the occurrence of temblors and other seismic events is no more frequent than in other locations along the Ring of Fire, such as California or Hawaii, they are nevertheless a cause for great concern in such cities as Wellington, Hastings, and Napier. In fact, in 1931, an earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale devastated the city of Napier and the surrounding Hawke’s Bay region, killing 256 people and injuring thousands of others.

Story Hook: Aftershocks

A magnitude 7.3 earthquake struck Tauranga in the North Island’s Bay of Plenty in September of 1953. There were no recorded fatalities, but the records are wrong. A handful of tourists — including at least one Greek man whose family had died in a similar earthquake a month earlier and halfway around the world — were killed by falling rocks. Miraculously, they walked away from the rubble, alerting nobody to their apparent death and resurrection. They are each Bound, joining a growing whānau of Sin-Eaters driven by their geists to bear witness to volcanic and seismic events. What greater purpose does this serve? Are their atua tied to disasters of the past, or is there a sinister element of premonition tied to their return to the land of the living?

Culture

New Zealand culture is fundamentally similar to that of Great Britain in terms of food, drink, sports, and other cultural associations. The key difference is in dialect and in the adoption of various Māori traditions. An English immigrant would find life in New Zealand to be provincial
and perhaps a little backwards — New Zealanders would not find this surprising, as the English immigrant is clearly altogether too posh and stuck-up and should relax and have a beer.

With the signing of the ANZUS agreement in 1951 by Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, the influence of American culture is on the rise. Music, movies, and literature from the USA have begun to make inroads in what was for the last hundred years almost exclusively a society fed by British culture. This new surge in American ideals has brought with it American fears, as well — communists, rock n’ roll, and juvenile delinquency are the concerns of every corner gossip and champion of morals.

Māori culture is of course quite different from that of the European settlers who now make up the dominant population. Every iwi has its own regional stories and folklore, but all Māori share common ancestral customs that in the 1950s have blended together along with certain mythic threads from early Christian missionaries and educators to produce a somewhat homogeneous set of traditions. Māori communities, even some of the urban ones, center around the marae or meeting house; here, elders and officials conduct tribal business, celebrate special occasions such as funerals and weddings, and impart education and spiritual practices to those young Māori who remain interested. Sadly, a great many Māori have left their heritage behind, or at best travel to a marae only on the occasion of a death in the whānau.

Family life in the 1950s for Pākehā and those Māori who have grown up apart from traditional communities is typical of most English-speaking countries. Children attend school from around the age of five until they pass their exams in high school or leave to take up an apprenticeship or find other work. Most adults marry early and have families with two or more children, with mothers staying home while fathers work. This has changed in recent years, especially with the post-war boom in labor and industrial work and the need for women to play a larger role in the workplace.

Stores and businesses are always closed on Sundays, and very few are open on Saturdays, usually just the morning. Everything — even the public houses — closes up at night. This creates a sharp distinction between night and day as far as commercial activity goes; unless you’re a drunk or a policeman, it’s unlikely that you’ll be walking the streets after hours. Of course in small rural towns many of the adult men are at the local pub drinking into the wee hours, the publican keeping watch for the police. So it goes.

New Zealand has a thriving artistic tradition, including a great number of Māori craftsmen who create the carved wood, greenstone, and bone items that European travelers are so enamored of. Poets, vocalists, and musicians are also numerous, and become local celebrities. Every town in New Zealand has one or two offbeat writers or artists who capture the spirit of their community in prose or song.

During the 1950s, with the influence of the USA, young performers such as Johnny Devlin (AKA “The Satin Satan”) give older generations fits and lead to cries of moral corruption of the youth. Newspapers point to the prevalence of so-called “milk-bar cowboys” gathering in city centers, riding motorbikes and wearing leather jackets. These “bodgies” are the biker gangs of the day, carrying out anti-social behavior and alarming the population with motorbike races and the consumption of liquor.

An official report in 1954 claims that these bodgies are responsible for all manner of problems in society, although anyone who reads it with the perspective of history might note that crime and
misdemeanors on the streets of urban New Zealand are, in this era, a good deal less widespread following the war than they had been in the 20 years prior. This does nothing to make the authorities happier, but it does shine a light on the progress and optimism that characterizes the surface level of society. Deep below, of course, isolated incidents of horrific violence, brutality, and murderous passion wait to erupt.

The best example of teenage murder is of course that of Pauline Parker and Juliet Hulme, who conspired to murder Pauline’s mother in the early winter months of 1954 (June 22nd, to be precise). This incident took place in Victoria Park, Christchurch, and shocked the nation. It was, perhaps, remarkable in that it was so widely publicized despite the snail’s pace of information, and that two young girls carried it out. As is often the case, similar murders and assaults have and continue to take place in towns and cities throughout New Zealand, buried or covered up by officials who don’t want to incite a mob of rioters or a storm of controversy.

**Story Hook: Daughters of Heaven**

Swept up in sensational news reports of the Parker–Hulme case, the characters learn of the existence of many other cases of violence carried out by young women and girls, unreported or hidden from the media. Over the course of many years, time and again, ghosts of people killed by young women remain trapped by anchors in fantasy worlds the girls have created, locked into delusional phantasms the Bound can see but others cannot. The only way to free them lies in convincing their teenage killers to release their own hold over the bright, optimistic fantasies and take on remorse in their place. Can the characters resolve these situations while staying out of the spotlight? Is there some larger conspiracy at work to bring about this cruel fate, and if so, what happened with the Parker–Hulme case to bring it to the light?

**Government**

New Zealand is a constitutional monarchy, established in 1852 as a result of an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Prior to that it was a colony; since that date it has acquired successive degrees of independence from Britain, most recently in 1947 with the Statute of Westminster Adoption Act. New Zealand recognizes Queen Elizabeth II as Sovereign, although she acts under the advisement of a Parliament and is represented in New Zealand by a Governor-General.

Every three years eligible voters elect new Members of Parliament from one of two or more political parties in a national election. The party with the most elected members and thus the greater representation in Parliament is considered to lead Government, with the other party standing in Opposition. The ruling party also elects one of its members as Prime Minister, who in turn works with a Cabinet of Ministers to run the country. New Zealand’s current Prime Minister in 1954 is Sidney Holland, leader of the National Party.

The Governor-General acts as the representative of the monarch. His role is largely signatory and tied up in formal traditions; he does not have a role to play in the daily conduct of government. Governors-General in recent years have all been military veterans, such as Baron Freyberg (the previous Governor-General) and Lord Willoughby Norrie (the current one). Bearing the Seal of New Zealand, the Governor-General summons and dismisses Parliament in the Queen’s stead, but like many other functions this is largely a formality.
Local electoral districts have a Member of Parliament to represent them. Towns and cities also have mayors and councils to carry out important local government duties. Because New Zealand is not a federation but a unitary government, the creation and assignment of regions is up to the central government, not vice versa. For this reason, over the years as certain populations increase and cities expand in size, regional boundaries have similarly altered and changed. This has meant that, often, rural areas have become grouped into the same region as an influential urban center, pulling discretionary funds away from smaller towns and allowing city politics to dominate. Visitors to smaller towns and farming communities never hear the end of this; cunning politicians figure out a way to make the farmers happy rather than ignoring them.

Story Hook: The Eternal Mayor

George Herbert Foster, mayor of a small town several miles away from Upper Hutt, near Wellington, has been mayor for over 30 years. It’s a common joke among the people of his town that he hasn’t aged a day since he won political office, but he’s done such a great job of running the place that nobody really bothers to put two and two together. After all, he’s survived so many unfortunate accidents — that fall from the train, the car that lost its brakes, and the collapse of the stage at his sixth inaugural gala. Surely he’s just living a charmed life. Or is something else going on here? And what became of all the political opponents he’s faced off over the years? They seem to vanish off the face of the earth.…

With its system of districts, territory authorities, and counties, the political division of New Zealand is somewhat complicated and the various areas are too numerous too list. Generally, an area with a significant population such as Auckland, Wellington, or Christchurch has more pull in government simply because it has more people and more votes. Other areas rely on their important resources or particularly vocal Members of Parliament to achieve influence and notice. At the end of the day, however, New Zealand is still a much smaller nation than its global peers. What affects one part of the country affects the others, no matter how indirectly.

Story Hook: The Royal Tour

Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, Prince Phillip, have been engaged in a tour of New Zealand for months. They bring not only their considerable entourage, but also a host of attendant spiritual power — what the kēhua of New Zealand recognize as mana. This is directly influencing the sovereign balance of the nation’s spirits, already stirred up by the many blockages and ghostly conflicts spilling out of the Autochthonous Depths and Avernian Gates. The seething mass of potential chthonic energy is trying to find outlets — the Tangiwai Disaster, caused by a lahar washing out a railway line, might have been one such instance. The player characters need to follow along in the wake of the Royal Visit, correcting or settling what they can, before something even worse takes place.

Economics

The currency of New Zealand in 1954 is the New Zealand pound (£), equivalent to that of Great Britain and many other Commonwealth nations. The pound is divided into 20 shillings (s), each of which is divided into 12 pence (d). Shillings and pence are commonly listed as numbers divided by a slash, so that eight shillings and sixpence is written as 8/6 or “eight and six.” The
Reserve Bank of New Zealand issues coins as well as bank notes. Coins come in denominations of ½d (a ha'penny), 1d (penny), 3d (thruppence), 6d (sixpence), 1s, 2s, and 2½s. Bank notes are issued in 10s, £1, £5, £10, and £50.

The average weekly wage in 1954 is about £8; and with everyday items such as a loaf of bread in 1954 costing around 7d or a dozen eggs 2s, households that budget well might keep the larders stocked. Entertainment, such as a movie at the local cinema or a ticket to a football game, costs a few shillings. The really expensive household items were appliances, such as washing machines or refrigerators. Even in 1954, only about half of New Zealand homes has one of these, more in the cities and fewer in rural areas. Iceboxes, wringers, and other earlier methods of washing clothes and preserving food are often more prevalent.

New Zealand exports are largely comprised of sheep, wool, dairy, timber, and other domestic products. This in part helps the government maintain state subsidies for many consumer goods and even housing; the welfare system provides benefits for widows, orphans, low-income families, the elderly, the sick, and many others. The previous Labor Government established social security legislation and other welfare reforms that, under the current National administration, have remained in place. Post-war prosperity feeds into every area of the economy, and most families have seen an overall increase in how far they can stretch their income on a weekly basis.

Notable Locations

Although sightseers and tourists might rattle off whole lists of places to visit in New Zealand, few of them have any real bearing on daily life for its residents. Hot springs and geysers in Rotorua; fiords and glacier lakes in Queenstown; and long white beaches and peaceful forest glades along the Coromandel Peninsula are best left for holiday vacations.

Instead, the following locations are of interest either because of their geographic and demographic importance or as noted landmarks. Further research and inquiry about them or, for that matter, the tourist spots mentioned above, is encouraged.

City of Auckland

Auckland is located on an isthmus between two harbors, on land that was formed from a volcanic field that has produced more than 50 volcanoes. Lava flows and expanding volcanic cones shaped the landscape long before the Māori settled here, excavating and terracing some of the mounds to use as fortified pā (or villages). Out in the Auckland Harbor, the dormant volcanic island of Rangitoto may be seen from almost every elevated point in the city; it last erupted centuries ago, but serves as a reminder to Aucklanders that they live on borrowed time.

With the largest population in the country, Auckland was the nation’s capital for 25 years following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. Although this title was subsequently given to Wellington, Auckland has remained a key population center and home to arts, industry, commerce, and transportation. During 1954, Auckland leads the way in adopting newer approaches to motorized transport, with many of its residents choosing to eschew trains and trolley buses in favor of motorcars as a means of getting to and from work.

Waikato

The breadbasket of the North Island, the Waikato region is dominated by farming communities and small towns along the Waikato River and its many tributaries. New Zealand’s dairy industry
is at the forefront in this part of the country, notable for its wide, flat expanses and a distinct lack of coastline. Hamilton, the largest inland city in the country and the population center of the region, straddles the river and serves as a central stop for the long trip from Auckland to Wellington by rail.

Waikato was the location of many battles during the period of the New Zealand Land Wars, fought between Māori tribal groups and British (and later New Zealand colonial) armed forces a generation after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. The wars were primarily fought as a means of establishing central control over the region and unseating the Māori King. While the wars failed to do this, the Māori King has no actual sovereign power and is considered only a figurehead by the government. Even so, Koroki Mahuta, fifth in line of Māori kings, maintains his reign over those Māori who accept him here in the Waikato.

Hawke’s Bay

This region of the North Island is notable for being the location of one of the first meetings between Europeans and Māori following Captain James Cook’s expedition to make sense of Abel Tasman’s maps. Its two main population centers are the city of Napier, site of the nation’s worst natural disaster in 1931, and Hastings, its twin city and one of the fastest growing cities in the country in the 1950s. Napier has a major seaport, and exports of apples, pears, stone fruit, wool, and especially wine are all made through here.

Tongariro, Ruapehu, and Ngauruhoe

Located at the center of the North Island, these three peaks are the culmination of over 200,000 years of volcanic activity. They continue to be active, as evidenced by occasional steam venting, mudflows, and minor quakes. Despite this, they are a popular destination for skiing and getaways, for their slopes are covered in snow year-round and they are convenient to most of the North Island’s population centers. The volcanic field that they belong to stretches east, west, and north, encompassing many other geothermal regions as well.

The entire area is traditionally regarded as tapu (or sacred) as a result of a declaration by Chief Horonuku of the Ngāti Tūwharetoa in 1887, thus ensuring that the area would become a national park and preserve. Accordingly, and partially on account of threats of volcanic eruption, it remains untouched by more than the lightest of civilization and development.

City of Wellington

Located at the bottom of the North Island alongside a natural harbor and beside Cook Strait, the body of water that separates the North and South Islands, Wellington is the nation’s capital and seat of government. Power shifted to here in 1841 as a result of concerns that the South Island’s growing population, principally driven by a gold rush, might form a separate British colony. It is now the second largest city in the country and the location of many important government buildings and offices.

Wellington, like Auckland, has been expanding over the past few years. After the war, the suburban Hutt Valley area began to accommodate new worker families. Efforts to bolster the inter-island ferry system have shown marked improvement in travel from the North to the South Island and back. Still, Cook Strait is treacherous in bad weather, and Wellington’s port of entry has seen its fair share of shipwrecks and disaster. High winds and a history of severe earthquakes — one in 1855 measured 8.2 on the Richter scale and raised a section of the harbor permanently up out of the water — also cast something of a pall over what is otherwise a prosperous city.
City of Christchurch

The third-largest city in the country and the largest in the South Island, Christchurch is famous for its cathedral and for being the departure point for several Antarctic expeditions. It lies on the Canterbury Plain, halfway down the eastern coast of the South Island and near the Banks Peninsula that juts out into the Pacific. With cold winter nights and mild summer days, Christchurch's oceanic climate and weather patterns make it much cooler than the other larger cities.

Established by a Royal Charter, Christchurch has a strong Christian heritage that is perhaps best displayed in its cathedral, built over a period of 40 years from the laying of its foundation stone in 1864 to the completion of its transepts and sanctuary in 1904. Earthquakes have repeatedly damaged it, most recently in the 1930s. It remains a focal point for Christians, especially those belonging to the Church of England.

Outside of agriculture, dairy, and related industries, Christchurch is also one of the nation's leaders in heavy engineering, producing steel for major public works like dams and span bridges. In the post-war era of development, this makes Christchurch an important player in the growth of the economy and infrastructure.

Otago

This southern district encompasses a large area of alpine mountains, fertile wine-producing valleys, and the major city of Dunedin, home to the University of Otago. The University was the first in the nation, founded in 1869 by Scottish settlers who likewise built up the city around them in honor of their Northern Hemisphere homeland.

Otago features a climate that is comparable to the north of Great Britain, with snowy winters and cool summers. This is no doubt why it attracted the Scots, but migration to Otago was also encouraged when coal and other natural resources were first discovered in the region. While in the 1950s the city is still growing and not as populous as others “up north,” the university and its medical school ensure that Dunedin will remain an important urban center for many years.

Included in the region are the tourist town of Queenstown, home to sparkling lake waters and chalets that bring comparisons to Switzerland. Only a handful of miles away from this rich destination, however, sheep farms and coalmines make it clear that this is, like most other tourist spots, the exception rather than the norm.

Story Hook: Seacombe Asylum

Built in the 19th century in response to growing demand for the treatment of mentally ill patients, Seacombe Lunatic Asylum is a sprawling Gothic monstrosity located some 20 miles north of Dunedin. Turrets and cupolas ring its outer walls, and a single tall observation tower dominates the property. While the hospital’s founder Truby King established policies that seemed progressive at the time — fresh air and exercise as treatments, having the patients work on a communal farm rather than remain locked up in cells — Seacombe is nevertheless infamous for its often brutal treatment of those unfortunates who come to be here.

Seacombe’s most famous resident, who in 1954 remains a patient undergoing routine electroshock treatments, is the writer Janet Frame. She admitted herself seven years ago and only escaped a lobotomy because of the publication of her
short stories. Other less-famous residents are over 40 ghosts, anchored to the asylum by strong emotional fetters. Most of them are the ghosts of women who died in a horrific fire that consumed a hospital ward in 1942. Together with an unstable foundation that will eventually cause tragic collapses of the building’s foundations, it seems clear that Seacliff Asylum is a knot of powerful ephemeral activity and an ideal destination for those Bound operating in the South Island — whether they go there as patients or investigators.

What is to Come

It’s the middle of the 1950s in New Zealand, a time of great prosperity and innovation, of population growth and internationalism. The National Party has the reins of government, which it will continue to hold until the end of the decade. Indeed, for the next few years, New Zealand’s idyllic illusion of peace and progress holds firm, at least to outside observers and the international community.

However, when the decade draws to a close, the nation’s newest ally in the global community, the United States of America, exerts the powers of the ANZUS treaty. When war begins in Indochina, the USA enters into conflict with the communists of North Vietnam. Although actual ground troops aren’t sent until 1964, 10 years from the date of this Dark Era setting, the political and social threads of involvement in the war extend much earlier.

This is New Zealand’s first major international conflict without its traditional ally, Great Britain. Despite limited initial protest to the conflict, by the time hundreds of dead and wounded began to come back from South-East Asia the opinion of the average New Zealander will be heavily swayed against any further involvement.

Closer to home, the arrival on New Zealand’s shores of television brings a sweeping change to society and, in turn, the spread of information. Even more so than radio, when TVs begin to appear in the early Sixties, New Zealanders feel connected to a wider world. This only underscores the horror and dismay at the Vietnamese conflict, as images and footage of the fighting appeared from time to time. But it also brings a new wave of entertainment, both from Great Britain and from the United States.

Transportation continues to be a booming industry, although with the rise of the motorcar and expansion of air travel, the railways begin to decline in use and popularity. These new avenues of getting from place to place come with their own problems, of course, from strikes and union issues to crashes and fatalities both on highways and in the air. In 1963, a DC-3 airliner crashes in the mountain ranges near the Bay of Plenty, killing all aboard. Five years later, the ferry Wahine en route to Wellington from the port of Lyttleton on the South Island strikes a reef in the midst of a cyclone and 50 passengers are killed; it remains the worst maritime accident since the wreck of the HMS Orpheus 100 years earlier.

Throughout the remainder of the 20th century, New Zealand continues to expand its horizons and establish stronger relations with the rest of the world. Isolation becomes a thing of the past, but in its place the quaint pastoral image of an island nation, the jewel of the Pacific, is surely dulled by international incidents, further tragedy, disputes over nuclear vessels, and war in the Middle East.
From the point of view of the Bound, of course, joining the global village can only open up the opportunities for a second chance at a life worth living in the pursuit of greater ambition. In 1954, however, they are not there yet, and the only path toward that brighter future lies through a maelstrom of spiritual warfare and conflict that escapes history’s account. Before New Zealand can open its borders to greater prosperity and greatness, the Bound must address the wounds of the past and dig up the anchors that keep the worst of the nation’s ghosts in place.

The Supernatural

With a sacred tradition that extends back for hundreds of years, Aotearoa not only boasts a substantial number of Avernian and Shadow Gates but also many manifested and incarnated spirits. Hawaii, Fiji, Samoa, and other Pacific islands have their own specific peculiarities, of course — Easter Island, for example, has a number of yet unsolved spiritual mysteries — but in the mid-20th century God’s Own Country rises above the Pacific in loci, gateways, and dangers hiding in Twilight.

Perhaps the most important supernatural phenomenon that affects how New Zealand in the 1950s produces stories for Sin-Eaters is the Maelstrom. This is discussed further in this section, but the gist of it is simple: As a result of tremendous emotional energies that have built up over time, bled off from the living and their pursuit of prosperity or fed by cultural conflict, a section of the Underworld has effectively migrated over into the realm of the living. Dangerous psychic storms arise around the nation as a result, forming bottlenecks in the Avernian Gates to the Underworld proper.

Āwhāwhiro: The Maelstrom

To the experienced Sin-Eater or tohunga, the Twilight world of New Zealand is constantly buffeted by the ghostly remnants of tropical cyclones long past. These ephemeral storms strike the shores of New Zealand in what amount to seasonal surges, doing their part to keep many of the nation’s ghosts and spirits from traveling far beyond the boundary waters. Because they are associated with Whiro, the atua of evil and malice, they are known as Āwhāwhiro. Most Sin-Eaters call the storms the Maelstrom.

Some believe the Maelstrom to be a by-product of huge Avernian sinkholes, or soul-stuff whirling out of the Underworld. In truth it is an incursion of the Underworld into the physical, cloaked in Twilight, creating an emotional backlash fueled by grief, suffering, and pain rather than a true meteorological event. Indeed, with so many doorways to the Underworld blocked in recent years, as more and more ghosts fail to descend the negative energy they carry with them from their deaths is only getting stronger.

Āwhāwhiro affects spirits that have passed through the Gauntlet as well. Many oceanic spirits such as mighty taniwha are capable of seizing the reins of these storms and bringing them onto land, with the consequences in the mundane world being periods of fear, paranoia, emotional unrest, or even actual physical disasters. Fortunately, other taniwha, partnering with certain tohunga in coastal regions prone to the Maelstrom’s worst, keep these storms at bay. This happens almost entirely unnoticed by the living, but as Māori are forced to migrate toward the cities and the dead choke up the small towns and seaside communities, efforts to keep the storms from landfall are becoming more and more difficult to maintain.

Sin-Eaters are most likely to encounter trouble with the Maelstrom if they go out to sea, either on an ocean liner to another Pacific Island nation, Australia, or even the United States. Some
Kauwaka report to their whānau that traveling during such a Twilight storm makes them physically ill, if not anxious or agitated. Many find that their Manifestations are harder to produce, degeneration chance is stronger, and the Synergy between the Kauwaka and their atua or geist is weakened. Ceremonies that affect ephemera or Twilight, and especially the Cold Wind or Passion Keys, are useful in protecting the Bound from the ravages of the Maelstrom.

Travel by air is much less likely to produce dramatic results, but the Maelstrom seems to extend at least half a mile upwards when it is at its most turbulent. Sin-Eaters taking international flights by airplane report feeling as if their souls were being ripped out of their bodies as their geists fight to remain coherent. With sufficient readiness and protection, outcomes like this are rare.

Āwhāwhiro also occasionally manifests in the form of volcanic eruptions or earthquakes, alongside those events in the physical world. Those can persist for much longer in Twilight, or perhaps even go entirely unnoticed to the living but wipe out Twilight structures and entities with ephemeral rivers of lava or temblors that reduce ghostly buildings to rubble.

Āwhāwhiro

Āwhāwhiro is a Level 2 Extreme Environment as found in the God-Machine Chronicle, p. 213. It affects only Shadow, the Underworld, and Twilight, manifesting as a hurricane-like storm within those realms. Affected characters suffer a −2 penalty to all actions. Characters subjected to Āwhāwhiro for a number of hours equal to their Stamina suffer two points of bashing damage per additional hour they are exposed to the Maelstrom. Spirits within Āwhāwhiro are afflicted as appropriate.

In addition, Āwhāwhiro strengthens Avernian Gates and makes it much harder to open them or create new ones with Keys. Characters who attempt to open or close gates in Āwhāwhiro receive an additional −2 to their attempts.

Āwhāwhiro can be temporarily calmed by tohunga who perform the Lull the Winds ceremony.

Although Geist: The Sin-Eaters has not been revised to include the God-Machine Chronicle rules revisions, the inclusion of Āwhāwhiro as an Extreme Environment is a minor change that translates easily into Geist without requiring further rules adoption.

Lull the Winds (••)

The spirit winds of Āwhāwhiro buffet everything they touch unceasingly, cutting through spirits and Sin-Eaters alike with raw, razor-edged rage and grief. A Sin-Eater with this ceremony, however, can calm the storm for a brief time, chanting the winds to sleep within the sound of her voice and giving a brief respite to those trapped within the Maelstrom.

Performing the Ceremony: The Sin-Eater must be affected by the storm of Āwhāwhiro. Taking a carved wooden bowl, the Kauwaka must fill it with water to the brim. She must then stir the water, creating a vortex in the middle, while chanting to the winds who she is and who her geist is, affirming her authority. At the end of this, the tohunga must pour flaxseed oil with aromatic herbs into the water while expressing sympathy for the storm’s pain. The oil calms the water into stillness, calming the storm at the same time.

Dice Pool: Psyche + Presence
Action: Extended (target number of 5)

Time Increment: The Sin-Eater can roll for this ceremony once every minute.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: All successes are lost. The storm intensifies to a Level 4 Extreme Environment, raising difficulty levels and damage accordingly. The Sin-Eater performing the ceremony must make a Synergy roll to avoid discord.

Failure: No successes are gained.

Success: Successes are gained. If the target number is reached, then the storm subsides within a 50-yard-diameter circle for 10 minutes per point of Synergy the Sin-Eater currently has, and all Āwhāhiro-based penalties are removed.

Exceptional Success: Successes are gained. If the target number is reached, the storm is calmed for 30 minutes per point of Synergy and the Sin-Eater also regains a point of plasm.

Kēhua: Ghosts of New Zealand

Māori folklore has it that when a person dies, his wairua separates from his body and travels north to the very tip of the North Island, at a place known as Spirits Bay. There, it departs the land of the living and joins the deceased individual’s ancestors in Rēinga, or afterlife. Some tohunga have differing thoughts on the matter, but whatever the case, tribal custom has it that the living never see this aspect of the dead again.

An individual person is more than her wairua, however. The emotional spark, or mauri, lingers after death and carries with it all of the pain and suffering of the living body. It becomes a kēhua, and must be sent on its way before it creates problems for the deceased individual’s whānau. Family members gather at the marae (meeting house) to hold a tangi (funeral), at which point those familiar with the proper karakia and prayers dispense with the kēhua’s negative emotions, allowing it to properly move on.

Obviously, the Pākehā residents of New Zealand have their own customs that their ancestors brought from Europe. At a dead person’s wake, friends and family gather to share their memories of their beloved, priests commit the soul to the afterlife and judgment of God, and so forth. Tales of the ghosts of dead white people concern those who were not properly consecrated, or had something they had to remain behind for. It’s the standard tradition, largely unaffected by the geographical relocation.

All of this is to say that the people of New Zealand, whether Māori or Pākehā or of some other ethnic background entirely, have their way of saying goodbye to the souls of the dead. The problem in New Zealand is that for at least the last 50 years or more, none of this has made a lick of difference.

Every passing year since the turn of the century, ghosts bearing all of the emotional energy of the living have lingered longer and longer, incapable of passing through Avernian Gates, forming chokeholds at mortuaries, graveyards, and the places where they died. Not everyone that dies stays around; there’s no good way to know for sure, but it’s at least more likely if the person who died was emotionally-charged at the time. The majority of these ghosts are Rank 1 ephemerals whose sole function seems to be as Essence-farms for the more powerful and dangerous kēhua, who establish dominion in Twilight and form strong anchors.
Most active kēhua are at least Rank 2, but may gather even more Essence despite having not passed into the Underworld. The conditions in New Zealand are such that the dead seek to avail themselves of the prosperity of the living, and in doing so only intensify their own longing for connections to that living world. Some more actualized ghosts realize that they can steal or harvest Essence from lesser ghosts and from places of great sacred potency or tapu, and thus come in conflict with spirits who have reached across the Gauntlet to do likewise. Ferocious battles between monstrous kēhua who have transcended their former existences and creatures such as taniwha have been blamed for natural disasters, widespread sickness, a rise in violence or depression, and so on.

Tohunga and other experts in the supernatural or occult have traced most of this to an imbalance in the nature of the Avernian Gates in New Zealand and the Pacific region overall. While ghosts have definitely been around for as long as any tohunga knows, the introduction of Western customs and traditions, and possibly even the importing of non-native spirits, souls, and mana has led to blockages — or, perhaps, an inability — for most of the dead to properly enter the afterlife in any meaningful sense. Of course, the real reason is that the Avernian Gates have spewed forth a dominion of the Underworld that acts as the ideal catalyst for building up negative emotional energy and empowering kēhua and other Essence- or plasm-fueled beings.

**Systems**

Overall, kēhua follow all of the standard rules and use the systems presented in the *World of Darkness* rulebook and *Geist: The Sin-Eaters*. The primary exception is that since a large section of the Underworld seems to have migrated up to the mundane world’s Twilight in the form of the Maelstrom, and subsequently blocked off many Avernian Gates to the rest of the Underworld, ghosts are able to feed off Essence without entering the Underworld and thus grow in power in the land of the living without the need for Anchors or Fetters.

*Kēhua* without an Anchor or Fetter are more likely to congregate or Manifest in places of tapu, in remote areas, or along passages or conduits from one populated center to the next. As a result, rivers, railways, and roads are where an intrepid *Kauwaka*, tohunga, or ghost hunter is most likely to encounter unanchored or unfettered ghosts. Through the use of abjurations, Sin-Eater Ceremonies, and Manifestations, these kēhua may be weakened, driven off, or perhaps fettered to objects or anchored to remote locations to keep them out of the way. Ideally, an Avernian Gate is created and forced open to admit these restless ghosts, but the Maelstrom’s presence makes that much more difficult.

*Kēhua* who do have Anchors, Fetters, or have managed to Possess a living host are capable of drawing not only on those usual channels for Essence but also to feed on lesser Rank ghosts as well. It is therefore in their best interests to create situations that promote accidents, murders, sickness, and worse; beneficial or well-meaning ghosts are rare, or at the very least are confined to urban areas where the need to go above and beyond the normal channels to gather Essence is least.

**Kauwaka: The Bound**

New Zealand doesn’t produce a great many Sin-Eaters, but when an *atua* does approach somebody at death’s door and gives her a chance at a new life, the newly created *Kauwaka* is immediately immersed in an active supernatural world. With the Maelstrom keeping so many of the dead out of the Underworld, empowering the more malicious or ambitious of them with
abundant Essence, *atua* function as a form of opposing force when partnered with a willing mortal vessel.

*Kauwaka* are brought back to deal with the funereal mess that the living have created over the years, to settle the restless dead, and to drive back the worst of the denizens of the Underworld. Many make the decision to do something else with their lives, of course, but their *atua* always reminds them of the price that must be paid to do so. Their Manifestations and Ceremonies are essential tools in this undertaking.

**Atua**

Not all *atua* are so heroic in nature. Many may even have once been *kēhua* who attained such power and influence that they were transformed in the process. Some go on to seek worship as minor gods, or at the very least command the respect and reverence of crazed mortals. Māori folklore is rich with examples of hero-deities, potent gods, and elemental powers that are, in retrospect, clearly examples of *atua*. Others bind themselves to dying mortals in an effort to create Sin-Eaters who will further their own petty causes, with the Maelstrom but a backdrop for their ambition. Some malignant geists, or whiro (named after the *atua* of that name credited with secrets and wickedness), directly subvert the activity of the remainder of the *Kauwaka* in New Zealand and are perhaps their most dangerous opponents.

An *atua* isn’t necessarily a “Māori geist.” Large numbers of them were probably once European ghosts, for example, and some Sin-Eaters are veterans of foreign wars who acquired their geists before they came back to New Zealand. Even these geists adjust or adapt to New Zealand’s supernatural climate. Occasionally, friction arises between the *atua* that brings back the Sin-Eater from the dead and the new host; other times, there’s a distinctly foreign attitude that gives the Sin-Eater cause to worry.

Because of New Zealand’s unique situation regarding the Underworld and the Maelstrom that has arisen from it, many *atua* are free agents, acting without a mortal vessel and Manifesting from time to time in the form of ancestral spirits. In such cases, whole groups of mortals, believing the *atua* to be a god, angel, or some other divine emissary, act according to these “visions.” The Reformed Theosophical Suffrage Society, an organization led by covert Sin-Eaters, has made unearthing and wiping out these cults a priority in the 1950s.

**Whānau**

Groups of *Kauwaka* are known as *whānau*, not krewes; this is a Māori loan word, used even by Pākehā Sin-Eaters or those who arrived from other shores. With so few active *Kauwaka*, organized *whānau* are rare also. Two of the most notable *whānau* are the Railway Battalion led by Sgt. Ned Poindexter, and the Reformed Theosophical Suffrage Society, which was originally a Victorian-era occult women’s group that in the last few years began to accept men. Other *whānau* come together and then disperse, usually on account of their founding members meeting their final fates or, in some cases, degenerating into the Wretched after struggling against their personal *atua*.

New Zealand has no active *whānau* of a size greater than Tier One. There’s no reason why a group couldn’t grow in size and numbers, other than pure demographic limitations, but as of 1954 the largest *whānau* still only have memberships in the single digits. This gives players and Storytellers room to expand, grow, or build upon the “normal” state of things for their own
God’s Own Country chronicle. True to Māori linguistic tradition, a Tier Two group would be known as a hapū; a Tier Three group, should it ever arise, would be known as an iwi.

Whānau have the same basic qualities and characteristics of krewes, including rites of initiation, a loose relationship with one another, and a shared channel by which they codify and recognize spiritual matters and the power they reap from the Underworld. One thing they all have in common is an association with one or more Māori iwi, customarily through a partnership or relationship with a tohunga. From time to time, purely European-centric whānau are formed with no Māori traditions or loanwords adopted. Such groups tend to grow more isolated than any others, and either link up with another whānau or dissipate after years or even months.

The Railway Battalion

The New Zealand Railways Department operates over 100 branch lines throughout the nation, connecting every populated area and employing thousands of workers. The railways are the premier method of transporting goods as well as travelers, and their presence is a part of everyday life for even rural Kiwis out in the sticks. The North Island Main Trunk is easily the busiest and most profitable branch of the railways, and it is along this stretch of over 400 miles of track that the whānau of Sin-Eaters known as the Railway Battalion carries out its vigil against murderous ghosts and malignant spirits.

The Battalion formed in the early 1930s prior to World War II, under the leadership of Edward “Ned” Poindexter, a young railway conductor who had been dealing with dangerous train-riding ghosts for several years on his own. A chance meeting with two other Kauwaka, including a former tohunga named Henare Te Raupata and a middle-aged ex-serviceman named Willy Askwith, led Poindexter to declare a “club” dedicated to monitoring the railways and using their powers as Bound to counter threats from the “other side” (or “Pō” as Te Raupata would call it.) Poindexter left the whānau in the hands of Te Raupata for several years while he fought overseas in Italy and North Africa as part of the New Zealand Army, but on his return he took up his leadership role once again and has held it ever since.

The Railway Battalion has accumulated considerable knowledge and first-hand experience of dealing not only with kēhua and clusters of Rank 1 ghosts (“sweeping out the cars” as they call it) but also ephemeral entities of many kinds, such as taniwha, the body-jumping abmortal Hubert Salter (AKA “Salter the Sensational”), and various mystical maladies that threatened to spread from one urban center to the other. Poindexter has established useful connections with officials in the New Zealand Railways Department, including General Manager H.C. Lusty, who is himself a previous victim of ghostly terrorization (and was rescued by Poindexter’s companions).

Any Kauwaka who travels by train in the North Island (and to a lesser extent in the South) stands a good chance of meeting up with one of the Railway Battalion’s key members or their mortal assistants or associates. Word travels swiftly along the tracks, and so player character Kauwaka may be given the opportunity to meet Poindexter or one of the others in a story that runs along the rails. Ned may not know everything there is to know about the Underworld, but he’s as close as you can come to an expert in New Zealand on the Twilight world of rail transport.

Sgt. Edward “Ned” Poindexter

Quote: Don’t be a mad fool. Yuh can’t take on a whole carriage full of spooks by yerself, for Chrissakes. That’s why we’re here. That’s why we’re the Railway Battalion. We do it together or
we die again, and this time, no grave-dirt ghoul’s going to come back and pick us up to fight on. We do it together.

Background: Ned grew up in the small town of Klynhm, along the West Coast of the North Island. The son of a so-called “antique dealer,” he and his family dealt with an alcoholic uncle, desperate poverty, and finally a serial killer named Hubert Salter who arrived in town bringing dread and corruption with him. During the period in which Salter was preying on local girls, Ned and his boyhood friend Les ran afoul of the town’s juvenile delinquent gang, the Lynch Mob, who were interested in Ned’s pretty older sister Pru. During an attempt to protect Pru’s honor, Lynch and his cohorts beat to Ned within an inch of his life.

The *atua* known as the Macrocarpa Man made a bargain with Ned: He would bring the boy back to life, and help him exact justice on the Lynch gang, but in turn he would be called upon to use his newfound powers against creatures such as Salter. As it turned out, Hubert Salter was actually a form of disembodied spirit that leaps from body to body, filling that vessel with sadistic desires and psychopathic urges before exhausting it. Although Ned (with the help of his drunk uncle and older brother) put an end to Salter’s reign of terror in Klynhm, it wasn’t the last time Ned would have to deal with him.

When Ned was old enough, he signed on to the railways as an assistant conductor and general-purpose laborer, climbing the ranks and broadening his experience of the world outside his rural upbringing. He dealt with more ghosts, most of them anchored to train carriages, sections of track, or even possessing passengers. Over time he formed the Railway Battalion and, once he returned from the war, set about establishing a larger network not just of additional *Kauwaka* like himself and his friends Willy and Henare, but those whose lives he had personally saved and then recruited.

Appearance: Ned is a skinny, awkward looking *Pākehā* man in his late thirties. He’s been a Sin-Eater for over half his life, and the emotional and physical toll is evident in his sunken blue eyes, constantly messy brown hair, and the creases on his forehead. He’s clean-shaven, although he has let his sideburns grow out more than he probably should. When on duty, he’s smartly-dressed in official NZ Railways uniform — dark woolen coat, blue shirt, cufflinks, pressed pants, peaked cap — but on his off days he can be seen leaning on a pub counter with his sleeves rolled up and a cigarette dangling from his lips.

Ned’s *atua* is a shadowy, smoky figure with limbs like twisted tree branches and eyes that smolder in the hazy darkness of his face. Known as the Macrocarpa Man — it refers to a species of cypress introduced to New Zealand from California in the 19th century and used as windbreaker trees on farms — this *atua*’s power is expressed mostly as resilience, strength, and resolve against the furious storms of the Maelstrom. To those who can hear or understand the Macrocarpa Man, his basso voice and slow, ponderous choice of words underscore just how tough this old tree really is.

Storytelling Hints: Ned has seen horrific things in his life, starting from when he was a teenager and through World War II to now. He has overcame great obstacles with a steely-eyed determination that seems iconic for the “good keen man” of New Zealand in the ‘50s, but underneath that he feels his identity slowly eroding the longer he does what he does. Whole days go by in which Ned’s personality is subordinate to the Macrocarpa Man, giving his fellow *Kauwaka* in the Railway Battalion cause to worry about him. When he’s called on to be himself, however, Ned usually rallies.
For the past six months, Ned has experienced great feelings of guilt for not being able to stop the Tangiwai Disaster that claimed so many lives in December of 1953. For all the times that he and the other Railway Battalion members have driven off a machine-antipathic kēhua or a taniwha upset at a river bridge being erected without the proper karakia performed in advance, Ned feels this failure keenly, for he was assigned to that train only to take leave hours before in order to spend Christmas holidays with his extended family. Ned hasn’t spent time with his family since, doubling down on his commitment to his supernatural duty.

**Archetype:** Gatekeeper

**Threshold:** The Torn

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

**Mental Skills:** Investigation (Crime Scenes) 3, Occult (Ghosts) 2, Politics 2, Science 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Firearms 1, Larceny 4, Stealth 3, Survival 2

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Railroad) 4, Subterfuge 4

**Merits:** Contacts (Pub Owners, Railways) 2, Fighting Style: Boxing 2, Resources 2

**Willpower:** 8

**Synergy:** 5

**Virtue:** Fortitude

**Vice:** Gluttony

**Initiative:** 7

**Speed:** 10

**Size:** 5

**Defense:** 3

**Health:** 8

**Psyche:** 5

**Manifestations:** Boneyard 4, Oracle 3, Rage 2

**Keys:** Cold Wind, Industrial, Pyre-Flame

**Ceremonies:** Krewe Binding, Listening to the Spectral Howl, Lull the Winds, Warding Circle, Warding the Household

**The Reformed Theosophical Suffrage Society**

New Zealand was the first nation in the world to grant women the right to vote, after years of efforts on the part of organizations such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. In 1893, after a failed attempt by the sitting Premier to overturn a proposed suffrage bill, women cast their votes for the first time. Instrumental in gathering support for this historic moment were certain
women involved in the Theosophical Society, which was itself progressive in that it had women in prominent positions. The Society, a spiritual movement founded by Madame Blavatsky 20 years prior, embraced numerous esoteric traditions and synthesized them to promote enlightenment and knowledge. In New Zealand in the last decade of the 19th century, it was also very influential among those who pulled the strings of power.

In part to promote suffrage and also to align greater forces toward the benefit of women, a splinter group of the Society arose known as the Reformed Theosophical Suffrage Society (RTSS). The group’s founders, Amelia and Geraldine Bancroft, quickly made enemies among the occult scene in Wellington who included several highly placed politicians. Weeks before the election and passage of the bill, a conspiracy to poison the Bancrofts at a ladies’ luncheon partially succeeded; Amelia succumbed to the venom, but Geraldine appeared to cling to life. In truth, a spider-like atua known as the Elder Katipō brought her back as one of the Bound, and Geraldine’s wrath against the conspirators was swiftly exacted. One by one, occultists opposed to the suffrage bill dropped dead or fled the country. On Election Night, Geraldine was able to finally release her sister’s kēhua and see the bill’s passage.

In the years following, Geraldine acquired more and more knowledge and understanding of the truths underlying Theosophy and related spiritualist traditions, as well as native Polynesian and Māori insights revealed by the Elder Katipō. She recruited more women and eventually some men to the RTSS, subtly altering its mission to counter the use of spiritual forces against progressive groups and keep such manipulation out of the national government. She also sought out other Kauwaka, mentoring them and giving them access to her inner circle. When she finally died in 1929, the RTSS was lead by a group of six Sin-Eaters, all channeling Bancroft’s own idealized belief system.

On at least three occasions, the RTSS has fought malicious intervention by occult groups, including an effort by alchemists to replace the Prime Minister with a homunculus. Each time, the RTSS has suffered a degree of setback, but a period of recovery follows. The most recent crisis facing the Society came in 1951, when dockworkers went on strike in what became the nation’s longest and most contentious labor dispute. As “wharfies” protested against unfair pay and the ruling National Party took the hard line against them, tremendous negative energy was stirred up, invigorating certain malignant spirits and weakening the Gauntlet; a taniwha in Wellington Harbor was only just beaten back by a group of tohunga backed by the RTSS. The Society’s inner circle was divided however, and after five months of near-constant battle against conflicting ephemeral backlash the RTSS fell apart. The dockworkers were demoralized and finally accepted defeat, but not before the RTSS expunged or lost half of their members.

Today, the Reformed Theosophical Suffrage Society is a shadow of its former self. Only three Kauwaka currently hold office as the inner circle, and none of them have been active as Sin-Eaters for longer than six years. One of them, Phyllis Leahy, is the current vessel for the Elder Katipō, the very same atua who bonded with Geraldine Bancroft 60 years ago. With a new national election coming up in November of 1954, this new leaner and younger Society hopes to keep the country’s government free of any new supernatural influence. With the Maelstrom growing month by month, this may prove to be an almost insurmountable challenge.

Phyllis Leahy
Quote: We cannot let the Powers beyond the Veil govern our lives. We must be armed with Knowledge, steeled by Faith, and principled in Unity against wickedness, ignorance, and patriarchal conspiracy, whether alive or dead.

Background: Youngest daughter of a wealthy Wellington family, Phyllis Leahy saw little hope for independence in her future until she began experiencing precognitive dreams. Knowing her family wouldn’t understand, she turned instead to the Theosophical Society, leaving home at the age of 18. She was swept under the wing of a local Society director, Ernest Geddy. She and Geddy were romantically involved for a short time, but the other members of her chapter were increasingly suspicious of her talents. After lacing her headache medicine with strychnine, the chapter’s members were shocked when she turned up alive the next day, apparently unharmed. The *atua* Elder Katipō had brought her back much as it had once brought back Geraldine Bancroft, and using her new Manifestations Phyllis revealed the corrupted chapter members as poisoners. The greatest betrayal, however, was that Geddy had aided them in their plans, something her visions hadn’t revealed to her. She turned them all over to the authorities, heartbroken but now driven by a new purpose.

Phyllis reached out through channels that the Elder Katipō had helped establish decades ago, and discovered the Reformed Theosophical Suffrage Society. When the Society’s inner circle learned about her *atua*, they immediately gave her entry and waived the initiation period. Phyllis was active during the 1951 dockworker’s dispute and ultimately sided with the government, whom she felt were supporting the nation’s best interests. This put her at odds with others in the inner circle, but Phyllis was able to invoke the Elder Katipō’s seniority against the *atua* of the others. A fierce battle with *kēhua* near Auckland at the tail end of the dispute forced her to end the life of Sin-Eater Leonard Masterson, who had been exploiting the *kēhua* to foment more unrest on the waterfront. When the smoke cleared, other *Kauwaka* had died or left, leaving Phyllis in charge of what remained of the Society.

Appearance: Phyllis is a dark-haired, green-eyed *Pākehā* woman in her late twenties. She is pear-shaped and rare to smile, instead defaulting to a look of consternation or worry. When she represents the Reformed Theosophical Suffrage Society, she dresses exclusively in black dresses or smocks, with a shawl and very little jewelry or accessories. Outside of the Society, she tends to keep her clothing muted and plain, albeit expensive.

The Elder Katipō is Phyllis’ *atua*. It is an enormous, spindle-legged black spider with a bulbous abdomen marked with red *moko* (or tattoos). The katipō spider is a relative of the black widow, one of the only poisonous native species in New Zealand; the Elder Katipō embodies this unique predatory aspect together with a haunting, alien countenance. When the Elder Katipō speaks, however, it is with an old woman’s voice, soft and confident, rather than savage or primal.

Storytelling Hints: Phyllis is young, but no longer truly comfortable among the youthful. Indeed, she never really was, despite being the baby of her family. She is neither shy nor lacking in confidence. She is always concerned about the situation at hand, serious and deliberate. It is through her actions that her resolve is typically measured, and her actions are never undertaken impulsively.

Phyllis embraces Theosophy’s synthesis of spiritual traditions, and her identity as a *Kauwaka* brings her even closer to ghosts in general, so she often talks directly to spirits and ephemerals. She enjoys being the go-between when *kēhua* need to reach out to their living relatives, or when spirits must communicate to those who have angered or upset them.
The bond between Phyllis and the Elder Katipō has heightened her personal aura of authority and influence to the point that she can walk into a room and immediately position herself as one of the negotiators or arbiters of any disagreement or conflict; usually, she likes to isolate any ambient kēhua or spiritual echoes first and find a way to bring them into harmony with the living that they share space with. A side effect of her talents in this area is that Phyllis rarely attends meetings or gatherings that aren’t directly affected by her work as a Kauwaka. She’s afraid that she’ll simply end up as the chairperson or organizer by default.

**Archetype:** Necromancer

**Threshold:** The Stricken

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

**Social Attributes:** Presence 5, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics 3, Crafts 2, Investigation (Hauntings) 3, Medicine 2, Occult (Ceremonial Magic, Spiritualism) 4, Politics (Suffrage) 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 1, Stealth 2, Weaponry 1

**Social Skills:** Empathy 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize 4, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Allies (Suffragists) 3, Contacts (Occult) 1, Inspiring, Status: Reformed Theosophical Suffrage Society 4

**Willpower:** 6

**Synergy:** 7

**Virtue:** Prudence

**Vice:** Wrath

**Initiative:** 5

**Speed:** 10

**Size:** 5

**Defense:** 2

**Health:** 9

**Psyche:** 5

**Manifestations:** Caul 2, Oracle 4, Shroud 3

**Keys:** Passion, Stillness, Stigmata

**Ceremonies:** Dumb Supper, Krewe Binding, Lifting the Scales, Pass On, Plumbing the Depths, Speaker of the Dead, *Tapu Invocation* (p. XX)

**Tohunga:** Experts of the Sacred

Every indigenous culture has its priests or shamanic practitioners, and the Māori are no exception. The keepers of Māori lore, tradition, and spiritual practice are known as tohunga, although the specifics of this knowledge will differ from iwi to iwi, from tribal group to tribal
group. One tohunga may carry with him the collected stories and folk tales of his forebears, using them to keep these narratives alive for the next generation, while another dedicates his life to instructing the young in rites designed to protect their community from malevolent forces.

In *God’s Own Country*, tohunga represent a potential background and status for Kauwaka, a means of expressing the spiritual potency and expertise that a Sin-Eater might have access to through channels that are shaped by Māori tradition. This does not mean that all tohunga are Kauwaka. The majority of them are the equivalent of mystery cult initiates, religious leaders, or educators, armed only with lore and status within Māori society.

Kauwaka who bear the title of tohunga may be of any adult age and from anywhere in New Zealand, but they must be Māori. No Pākehā tohunga exist, although it is certainly possible for a New Zealander of European heritage to have studied the lore and make use of rites and karakia that the tohunga use. The difference is that tohunga claim legitimate status and are thus granted significant mana, and their understanding of these ceremonial traditions extends beyond the academic.

In early pre-European Māori society, the tohunga safeguarded not only customs and traditions, but the spiritual, social, and physical well-being of the iwi. When the Pākehā arrived, some tohunga welcomed the new cultural exchange, especially with European religious leaders or academics; others, however, fought against any influence that the West may have brought to Aotearoa. To this day, many karakia rites and spiritual practices are kept hidden from Pākehā, even though those who know them are dying out, unwilling to share their knowledge with an unworthy young population or with those who might expose the sacred secrets.

A tohunga undergoes years of education, training, and practice. He is required to observe tapu, although he can lift, alter, or affect such sacred spaces; he is usually required to abstain from certain everyday activities, although in this day and age few tohunga are as orthodox as all that. If the tohunga is a Kauwaka, he is recognized as a vessel or medium for his atua, and the atua is always an ancestor or other indigenous geist. When a tohunga dies, his atua frequently seeks out a replacement, and always within the tohunga’s immediate hapū. Some Kauwaka who bear this title have the same atua as their grandfathers, and their grandfathers before them, skipping generations at times but carrying the ancestral lore onward.

**Systems**

In game terms, “Tohunga” may be a Profession for the purposes of the Professional Training Merit (Asset Skills of Academics and Occult, the equivalent of a Religious Leader), which is sufficient for most; certainly, 90% of tohunga are adequately handled in this manner, and most Kauwaka who are also tohunga won’t need anything more than this, as their own Manifestations and powers as one of the Bound cover the remainder of their spiritual talents.

Tohunga who are not Kauwaka may have Supernatural Merits such as Medium, Omen Sensitivity, or Unseen Sense (Spirits or Ghosts). Obviously, Kauwaka may not have any of these Merits as they are technically supernatural creatures and all such Merits go away when the character becomes a Sin-Eater.

Being a tohunga is one requirement for placing, lifting, and otherwise altering a Condition of Tapu on an area, item, or person. Kauwaka who possess the Warding Circle or Warding the Household ceremonies may accomplish something similar. See Tapu: The Sacred Law below for more information.
A tohunga who is also one of the Bound tends toward the Gatekeeper, Necromancer, or Pilgrim archetypes. The nature of her death is usually unrelated to her role as a tohunga; in fact, many were tohunga before they became Kauwaka. A rare few seek out an atua before they have themselves died, undertaking a ritual deprivation in order to induce death and bring the atua to them. This is not always successful, for an atua may decide that the tohunga has rejected his teachings and the sanctity of life.

Wiremu Tangaroa-a-Makute

**Quote:** We came from Hawaiki-the-Great, on our waka, created by our own hands, entrusted to our children, and their children after them. This is our land, given to us by the Atua, passed down to us by our fathers, and their fathers before them. You cannot take it, you cannot despoil it, for we shall not allow it. Our time is not past. You see. You see.

**Background:** Born William Hobson at the turn of the century in a small community north of Auckland, Wiremu Tangaroa-a-Makute’s family were members of the Muruwhenua tribes of Northland. However, they were no more interested in their heritage than Wiremu was in becoming a doctor like his father or a schoolteacher like his mother. As a child, he fell in with a group of Māori youth who were taught many of the karakia and folklore of Muruwhenua by a tohunga living at the edge of town. This group gave him purpose and structure, and by the time he had decided to give up on school, Wiremu had chosen his true Māori name and contributed to the restoration of the marae and other traditional sacred spaces in his community.

Wiremu avoided military service during the Great War because he was frequently ill; throughout his youth and well into his early twenties, he would succumb to bouts of coughing and pulmonary disease that kept him bedridden. On one such occasion, Wiremu was visited by an atua who manifested as a Morepork, a kind of spotted brown owl native to the region. The atua did not bond with Wiremu as it might one who lay dying, but instead lifted the scales from his eyes and bestowed upon the young man the ability to see into Twilight. From that point on, Wiremu’s second sight would be the primary motivator for his training as a tohunga.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Wiremu rose to prominence in Northland as a tohunga of great insight and knowledge. He was consulted by elders in matters connected to tribal politics, visited Wellington to represent his community in parliamentary debates, and even ran for office, narrowly losing to the incumbent. At no point during this time did Wiremu see the Morepork atua, nor did any other atua visit him. He met Sgt. Ned Poindexter in 1948, however, and this was a revelation to him — the first of the Bound he had encountered, more than just a case of a kēhua possession.

Since becoming aware of the Bound, Wiremu has been obsessed with forming such a bond himself. He has sought after the Morepork atua, hoping to summon it with powerful karakia. He has also investigated the nature of the Maelstrom and those who struggle against it. He does not want to do anything rash, such as induce his own death, but his collection of Māori and Polynesian ceremonial texts are gradually putting together enough pieces that he may attempt to just force such a bond, if the occasion presents itself.

New Zealand’s active Kauwaka community, such as it is, is aware of Wiremu. From time to time, they consult him on spiritual matters relevant to the Northland, but it’s clear he doesn’t have the power or supernatural talent to do more than observe their activities and grow more and
more envious. It’s possible that a whānau of Sin-Eaters may soon find themselves the target of Wiremu’s obsession, and play a part either in his rise to power or a nasty epilogue.

**Appearance:** Wiremu is a middle-aged Māori man with short, wavy black hair, brown eyes, and deeply creased features. He dresses conservatively, usually with a white button-up shirt, trousers, and suspenders. As a tohunga, he carries a taiaha, a wooden staff-like weapon that serves as his badge of office, should it be required. When conducting ceremonies, he also drapes a woven flax cloak called a kaitaka around his shoulders to indicate his prestigious status.

**Storytelling Hints:** Wiremu is gifted with great presence and intelligence, but it is soured by his arrogance and ambition. He speaks with gravity and power, but if confronted or challenged swiftly becomes angry and boastful of his place. When talking to Kauwaka or even other tohunga, Wiremu seeks to interject his own opinions and anecdotes whenever possible to secure the impression that he is competent and deserving of notice. If snubbed or called upon to change his behavior, Wiremu tends to leave the gathering and find a way to exact political or societal revenge on the party who slighted him; given his great reach in local politics, this is not something to take lightly.

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Political Science) 2, Crafts 2, Investigation 4, Medicine 2, Occult (Karakia, Māori Folklore) 3, Politics 4, Science 2

**Physical Skills:** Brawl 1, Drive 2, Weaponry 2

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Empathy 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 3 (Debate), Socialize 2, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Contacts (Northland iwi, Politics) 2, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Fame (Tohunga) 1, Language (Māori) 1, Status 2

**Willpower:** 5

**Morality:** 6

**Virtue:** Justice

**Vice:** Greed

**Initiative:** 5

**Speed:** 10

**Size:** 5

**Defense:** 3

**Health:** 7

**Taniwha: Mighty Spirit Guardians**

A taniwha is an ancient ephemeral spirit that embodies qualities of elemental water, guardianship, primal opposition to external forces, and so on. They are universally large and
potent spirits, manifesting as reptiles, whales, even octopuses and squids. Occasionally they will also adopt insect-like or bird-like traits, depending on their chosen places of residence and the specific archetypal traits they have acquired over the centuries.

Māori folklore is filled with stories of *taniwha*, who coil up to sleep beneath large rivers such as the Waikato, or beneath coastal mountains and under volcanoes. Every bay, inlet, cove, and harbor in New Zealand has a *taniwha*, protecting the people who live in the area and from time to time causing havoc when driven mad by supernatural assaults, breaches of *tapu*, and other triggers.

*Taniwha* speak fluently in Māori and other Polynesian languages, and most have also learned to speak English and other outsider tongues. They communicate with deep, resonant voices that sound like rushing water, grinding stones, or thunderstorms, when they speak at all; many *taniwha* are so ancient and have been fixed in place so long that their voices are too slow and deep for mortals to comprehend them.

*Taniwha* occupy an interesting place in the hierarchy of spirits in Aotearoa. They can interact with ghosts and other ephemeral creatures equally, and have been known to consume lesser spirits and ghosts in order to satisfy their hunger. Yet, they are also the spirit guardians of the nation, and thus in most cases they act as gatekeepers to Gates that reach into Shadow or the Underworld, especially those near the sea or at the mouth of rivers and lakes. A *taniwha*’s presence is often felt indirectly in an area, tied into the *tapu* of the location and the general mood and emotional levels of the people and spirits nearby. It is only when the location is threatened, unbalanced, or upset by mortal activity, exotic spirits, or the surges of the Maelstrom that a *taniwha* reveals itself to its full extent.

*Kauwaka* are likely to encounter a *taniwha*’s servants, allies, or even foes long before they encounter the creature itself. Some *taniwha* speak through small lizards, fish, or birds; others even speak through humans. All of this is accomplished via Fetters and other standard Manifestation effects, visible and detected in short order by a *Kauwaka*’s senses. These servants typically list the various conditions of *tapu* in the area, the people that the *taniwha* protects, and how many varied and terrifying ways the *taniwha* might exact punishment on those who transgress it. If the servants are ignored or attacked, or if the *Kauwaka* deliberately seeks the *taniwha* out (perhaps by following the servants back to their master), only then will the *taniwha* emerge in earnest.

*Taniwha* can bring all manner of environmental assault upon a target, should they choose to. They might also resort to physical violence, with claws and teeth and spines and other sundry implements of disaster. But it is the *taniwha*’s supernatural prowess that a *Kauwaka* must be wary of, and indeed most confrontations with a *taniwha* should either end in a negotiation (in which the *taniwha* has the advantage over the *Kauwaka*) or the brief and violent end to the *Kauwaka*.

**Ureia, Guardian *Taniwha***

This is a large and powerful guardian spirit of the Ngāti Maru, near the Hauraki Gulf. For many years its essential nature was bound into a *whare* or meetinghouse, protecting the tribal meetings and lashing out at invading war parties, and then later threatening gold prospectors and settlers arriving in the region. For the past several decades, Ureia has coiled its long, serpentine body at
the mouth of the Waihou River, rising once a year to speak with other spirits along the Coromandel Peninsula before returning into hibernation.

Resembling a cross between a sea serpent and a spiny rockfish, Ureia’s tongue is long and hollow and it has been known to lash out with it, piercing its foes and drawing both their life force and their essential fluids out in seconds. Otherwise, Ureia prefers to manipulate waters around it to send localized floods, waterspouts, or tidal waves against its enemies.

A wooden carving that once stood in a meetinghouse in Thames represents Ureia. The carving was later returned, and is now housed in the Auckland War Memorial Museum in Auckland.

**Rank:** 3  
**Essence:** 20  
**Attributes:** Power 9, Finesse 6, Resistance 7  
**Corpus:** 15  
**Willpower:** 10  
**Initiative:** 13  
**Defense:** 6  
**Speed:** 15  
**Size:** 8  
**Bans:** May not attack a *tohunga* of Ngāti Maru; may not bring harm to children, dogs, or pigs; must respond to the summons of the chief of Ngāti Maru or anyone who invokes his name at the carving in the Auckland War Memorial Museum  
**Banes:** Greenstone jade; a blessed *taiaha* in the possession of a *tohunga* of Ngāti Maru  
**Influences:** Water 3  
**Manifestations:** Fetter, Materialize, Shadow Gateway, Twilight Form  
**Numina:** Awe, Blast (Water), Essence Thief

**Tapu:** The Sacred Law

In Māori spiritual tradition, a person, place, or object that has been placed under *tapu* has been made inviolate, and it is forbidden to touch, interact with, and sometimes even approach it. This is a practice that is common in indigenous Polynesian and South-East Asian populations and which in the past formed the backbone of Māori life: when something is *tapu*, it must be left alone, and in turn this creates a series of requirements or constraints that the community as a whole must abide by.

Prior to the arrival of European settlers, Māori elders relied on *tohunga* as well as some old women (*ruahine*) to maintain that which was sacred. It was the role of the *tohunga* or *ruahine* to declare a place sacred and thus *tapu*, or to place an object or even a person into *tapu*. In everyday life, this helped to protect scarce resources from exploitation, served as both punishment and protection for certain individuals, and guided the administration of funerals, marriages, childbirth, food preparation, and practically everything else.
Like many things that have a supernatural component to them, belief and rigorous practice helps to strengthen the power of tapu. In the current era, many New Zealanders have little cause to worry about tapu objects, people, or places. As a result, tapu doesn’t impair or limit as much as it may once have, but depending on the emotional strength of the tohunga, ruahine, or atua that placed the tapu to begin with, the effects may manifest in often striking ways.

Mortals may not regard tapu as important, but Kauwaka, tohunga, and most other supernatural creatures are fully aware of its potency. It is often implemented as part of a ban or even bane for a spirit or kēhua, and one of the Bound can detect the borders and placement of tapu as a result of her geist-granted senses.

**Systems**

Tapu is highly variable but almost always involves a warding barrier or quality coupled with a negative effect that is triggered when the warding barrier is breached. The specifics of the tapu are decided when the tapu is placed; tohunga and some other supernatural entities may alter these specifics or even lift the tapu entirely.

Common restrictions include: cannot be eaten, cannot be touched or manipulated, cannot be spoken of, cannot be looked upon, cannot be removed, and so forth.

Common effects include: mental anguish or despair, physical ailments such as boils or intestinal distress, alerting a powerful taniwha guardian or tohunga, paralysis, unconscious desires to leave the area, and so forth.

*Tapu* is charged with Essence. When connected to places of death or the dying, it can be charged with plasm; it can also be coupled with a channel to the Underworld or to the Shadow, depending on the nature of the tapu. In many cases, a location that is tapu has a taniwha or some other guardian spirit or spirit folk connected to it, and such creatures use the tapu as a source of Essence that regenerates on a routine basis.

The Maelstrom may weaken or otherwise disperse tapu on people or objects if they enter into a location where the Maelstrom is highly charged or active. *Tapu* acts as a shield against the Maelstrom if it is placed upon a location, although sustained buffeting by the Maelstrom’s winds can wear down even the most sacred of places, albeit temporarily.

Mortal tohunga can declare something tapu using the abjuration rules (*World of Darkness*, p. 213), with the exception that there is no minimum Morality score required but they must have received training from another tohunga. Kauwaka can declare something or someone to be tapu by using the Tapu Invocation ceremony. Note that the individual invoking tapu is not immune to the conditions it lays, and the ceremony or abjuration is required again to remove the designation.

**Tapu Invocation (•)**

This ceremony guides and shapes New Zealand’s supernatural landscape. Invoking tapu on an object or person places a restriction on interaction with that target. Violating those restrictions calls down curses upon the individual, punishing him for ignoring sacred boundaries.

**Performing the Ceremony**: The Sin-Eater must chant over the target while touching it with a twig from a native tree, invoking the spirits as witnesses and listing the restrictions and the punishment for violation. The Sin-Eater does not need the individual target’s consent, but the target cannot be actively resisting the ceremony.
Dice Pool: Psyche + Presence

Action: Extended (target number of 3)

Time Increment: The Sin-Eater can roll for this ceremony once every minute.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: All successes are lost and the ceremony rebounds on the Sin-Eater, who becomes tapu according to the restrictions he was trying to invoke. Sin-Eaters affected by tapu must find someone else who can remove the condition in order to end it.

Failure: No successes are gained.

Success: The Sin-Eater invokes tapu on the target. Individuals who violate the stricture suffer the effects for 10 minutes per dot of Psyche the Sin-Eater has.

Exceptional Success: No additional benefit.

Patupaiarehe and Ponaturi: Spirit Folk of New Zealand

The Māori are not the only natives of the Land of the Long White Cloud. In God’s Own Country, spirit folk deeply connected to the Shadow and — in death — the Underworld, are a common rural or wilderness antagonist for Kauwaka.

Patupaiarehe

The Patupaiarehe, also called the pakepakehā, are a pale-skinned tribal folk who are organized into iwi much as the Māori are, even to the extent that they hunt, gather, and form kinship groups like mortals. They are nocturnal, however, and their villages and hunting grounds are deep within the forested mountain regions of New Zealand, away from civilization and humanity. In the current era, they are almost all in Twilight, trapped on this side of the Gauntlet by the Maelstrom. In the distant past, they would venture across into the mortal realm, engage in fleeting encounters with the Māori, and then disappear. Their Shadow Gates were located in misty glades or forest springs known only to them. Now, of course, everything is different.

With the arrival to Aotearoa of the Pākehā (who some have said were named after the Patupaiarehe, sharing their pale skin and tendency toward reddish hair) the mountain fairies soon found that their secret places were being discovered and overcome with settlements or conflict. As the Maelstrom rose, the Shadow Gates began to overlap with the Avernian Gates that also manifested, cutting the Patupaiarehe off from their homes in Shadow. Ghosts, storms of negative energy, and other dramatic changes to the supernatural landscape have driven many fairy tribes to violence or mischief; others have simply dispersed, incapable of living off the meager Essence left to them.

Patupaiarehe Mischief-Maker

This is a typical individual of the mountain fairy folk, crazed with negative emotions and ready to cause havoc among mortals.

Rank: 2

Essence: 15

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 6, Resistance 5
Corpus: 9
Willpower: 10
Initiative: 11
Defense: 4
Speed: 10
Size: 4
Bans: Cannot enter a site that is made tapu
Banest: Firelight or bright sunlight
Influences: Forests 2
Manifestations: Materialize, Reaching, Twilight Form
Numina: Dement, Mortal Mask

Ponaturi
The Ponaturi are the aquatic or sea-going relatives of the Patupaiarehe: wispy, teal-colored spirits who formed coastal settlements and occasionally took a Māori man or woman for a spouse, dragging them off into the deep. Much like the Patupaiarehe, the Ponaturi have experienced significant change with the rise of the Maelstrom and the arrival of Europeans. The sharp increase in shipping, fisheries, and tourism has cut the Ponaturi off from their own Essence sources, and now that they are trapped for the most part on this side of the Gauntlet, their mysterious society is rapidly dying out.

Ponaturi Shorerunner
This is an ocean fairy that haunts coastlines near settled areas at night, stealing items from the houses and businesses close to the seashore. It can whip the air or water up around objects, carrying them over to its waiting grasp; this is especially useful if the Ponaturi wants something inside a well-lit building or near a source of flames.

Rank: 2
Essence: 15
Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 7, Resistance 5
Corpus: 9
Willpower: 10
Initiative: 11
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Size: 4
Bans: Cannot enter a site that is made tapu
Banest: Firelight or bright sunlight; blessed fishing nets
Influences: Oceans 2

Manifestations: Materialize, Reaching, Twilight Form

Numina: Mortal Mask, Telekinesis

Kahukahu

Māori folklore includes stories of the Underworld creatures known as kahukahu coming into contact with isolated communities, but their existence wasn’t proven until the 19th century. These wretched ghosts began to plague Māori villages that had broken tapu related to the Patupaiarehe, or were encroaching on previously unsettled areas of forest. Soon, the ghosts were appearing in European settlements as well, often deep into civilized areas such as cities. They are the twisted echoes of Patupaiarehe and Ponaturi as reflected in the Maelstrom, ghosts of the spirit folk, empowered by the negative energy that grows year by year.

A kahukahu manifests as a deathly-white figure, skin tight upon its bones, mouth unnaturally wide and filled with sharp teeth. Many of them have fiery red hair, while others are simply hairless. A kahukahu is often drawn to sites where innocents or other childlike individuals have suffered or died, to torment the living relatives or those who live nearby using phantasms of the deceased child to exact more grief and despair.

Kahukahu are as afraid of light and fire as the Patupaiarehe and Ponaturi are. If the light creates a shadow behind them, they screech and flee into it, disappearing from sight. Most locations can be warded against kahukahu by flooding the space with as much bright light as possible, or by having a tohunga or a Kauwaka with the right rituals make it tapu long enough to resolve the situation.

Nursery Room Kahukahu

This malevolent spirit lurks in nurseries where children have died in their sleep or from sickness. When new children are brought in or new residents repurpose the room, the kahukahu terrorizes them at night using horrific hallucinations and moving objects.

Rank: 2

Essence: 15

Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 6, Resistance 6

Corpus: 10

Willpower: 10

Initiative: 12

Defense: 6

Speed: 12

Size: 4

Bans: Cannot enter a site that is made tapu

Banes: Firelight or bright sunlight

Influences: Anchor (Nursery) 2
Manifestations: Materialize, Twilight Form

Numina: Drain, Essence Thief, Hallucination, Telekinesis

Playing the Game

*God’s Own Country* presents a setting for *Geist: The Sin-Eaters* that focuses on stories that are more intimate in nature and yet potentially much larger in scope. For purely geographical reasons, stories set in New Zealand won’t range much further than a few hundred miles at the most, yet the Pacific region of which New Zealand is but one isolated corner harbors a powerful, primal spirit world that is deeply entangled with the Underworld. The supernatural world is unbalanced. Sin-Eaters stand against a potential onslaught of ephemeral beings with only a handful of allies, while the mundane world appears at its most prosperous.

Who Are You?

Who becomes a *Kauwaka*? What is it like to be active in New Zealand in 1954? Along with the information presented earlier about New Zealand culture, geography, and society, the following section provides guidelines and suggestions for properly fleshing out your Sin-Eater as one of the Bound of Aotearoa in *God’s Own Country*.

The Prelude

Whoever you might become, every *Kauwaka* begins as a mortal, one who may have been born with a caul or experienced moments of extraordinary insight as a child. Every *Kauwaka*’s story begins long before the *atua* comes to her in her moment of death. In *God’s Own Country*, there are as many backgrounds as there are ferns in the forest, but here are a few that provide a strong connection to the setting and the period.

Urban Backgrounds

Characters who grew up in the big cities — Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, or Dunedin — are overwhelmingly white, middle-class, and work or have family who work in the manufacturing sectors. They’re used to driving cars, riding trams, and living in row houses or even city apartments. A Sin-Eater who comes from a city is likely better educated, used to more immediate news and entertainment, and belongs to a social club, sports team, or church group.

Obviously the exceptions are often the root of any interesting character, so consider a recent immigrant from Great Britain seeking work in the growing field of electronics, a veteran of the Korean War trying to make a go of it on military benefits, or a public school teacher fighting the encroachment of standardized curriculum. Think of the downtrodden or poor residents of any city, struggling with mental illness or a lack of family support, eking out an existence conducting the tram lines in downtown Auckland or cleaning the offices of Parliament in Wellington.

Although more of the population is beginning to accumulate in cities, the towns just outside the city limits are suburbs-in-the-making. A young couple, he with an Army discharge check, she with a decent job at the switchboard, commutes into Auckland on a city train, coming home each day to a bare street with few trees and rows of sparsely-decorated new houses. Public funds pave over gravel roads to open new business and new residents to the neighborhoods of tomorrow, pushing farmland and native forests out, and all of this with government workers.

The strongest attraction to playing a character from an urban background in *God’s Own Country* is the degree of familiarity it provides. A New Zealand city in the 1950s is much like a city in...
Britain, or the West Coast of the United States, or in Australia. The biggest difference is that urban folk in Aotearoa aren’t nearly as crowded from day-to-day — but this will change. Otherwise, it’s not too difficult to imagine a pre-information age city-living person, if only because television and movies give us so many examples.

Rural Backgrounds

The rest of the country lives in small towns or on farms, connected by railway tracks, unpaved motorways, and — if you’re lucky — telephone lines. To be a rural character is to grow up in a farmhouse or a cottage by the railway tracks, attending a school with both Pākehā and Māori kids, spending long, hot summers keeping sheep out of the wrong field or constructing forts in the bush by the river inlet. Communities are tightly knit, with everyone in each other’s business, despite the conservative attitudes of the time; gossip is a currency, you can’t hide a family secret forever, and you’ll band together when the folks from the city come into town or on the farm looking for that escaped convict or that terrified runaway.

Consider the small town constable, who might have the best car in the district and spends most of his time trying to get the drunks home from the pub at closing time. War vets who return to a rural community are local heroes, elevated quickly to positions of influence, such as deputy mayor, or a councilman. Others are left to their own devices, nursing war injuries at a day hospital on the edge of town, or drowning their sorrows at the pub next to the TAB. Many sports heroes come from such pastoral beginnings, as do many politicians. And if you’re living in a farming community but you’re not a farmer, then you’re probably catching a very early train to travel several miles to a factory on the coast — the freezing works, or one of those new car manufacturers turning out Holdens and Vauxhalls, Morris Minors and Chryslers.

The appeal of playing characters from small towns, Māori pā, or farming collectives, is that you’re automatically set up with a manageable home base, a location that isn’t as busy or crowded as a city, a place you can easily occupy an important role. You’re also closer to the supernatural and the mystical, such as it is — certainly, there’s a great deal of untouched wilderness, whether it’s forests, mountains, glacier parks, or empty stretches of beach. It’s also not true that rural characters are country bumpkins. Every town in New Zealand gets radio broadcasts, every town has a newspaper, and it really isn’t considered a problem to be a “good keen man” from the country. Matter of fact, you might just have a lot more common sense.

Ethnicity and Cultural Considerations

While it’s true that the majority of the population in 1954 was Pākehā, this shouldn’t mean that the same is true for Kauwaka. New Zealand’s spiritual landscape is a tumult of Polynesian traditions blended with European ones, but the essence of the Māori spiritualism dominates. After all, many more Māori have historically died in New Zealand than Pākehā, but that’s changing more and more every year. The simple fact that most atua, too, are derived from ancestral spirits creates a tendency for Kauwaka to be Bound to geists that present with indigenous or native thematic aspects.

Playing a foreigner is an excellent alternative to being either Pākehā or Māori. In the 1950s, over 125,000 immigrants arrived on New Zealand’s shores, following the post-war boom across the Commonwealth and departing their stifled job markets in England, Scotland, and Australia to start a new life in Aotearoa. If these people were already Sin-Eaters, then there’s a wealth of roleplaying potential there to adjust to the radically different Twilight world around them. If they
died and came back as Sin-Eaters after immigrating, then the culture shock is a delightful hook in its own right.

New Zealand also has immigrants from India and Pakistan as well as a few from South-East Asia. The Pacific Ocean connects to many countries, and there’s ample opportunity for a character to hail from overseas, whether recently or as a child of immigrants. The key thing to remember is that everyone who migrated to New Zealand was given a visa on the condition that he or she knew a trade or were readily employable. It’s much less likely that a foreign national would arrive in New Zealand as a homeless vagrant.

**Archetypes and Thresholds**

Although Bound of all Archetypes and Thresholds exist in New Zealand of the 1950s, as a Sin-Eater you are likely to be one of only a handful, potentially even the only one of your particular circumstances. The nature of the times and the particulars of the setting provide a stronger emphasis on some Archetypes over others, and the same is true for Thresholds. Some suggestions on how this may affect character concepts follow.

**Archetypes**

All Sin-Eaters adopt archetypal roles that connect in a primal manner to the Underworld, creating a channel for plasm to flow into them. In *God’s Own Country*, the circumstances surrounding the gates into the Underworld and the rising tide of restless dead dictate that some channels are more prevalent and thus inspire more occurrences of certain Archetypes.

**Gatekeepers** are perhaps the most common of all Archetypes, for the pathways between life and death are being challenged, and ghosts are influencing the world of the living in more ways than simple manifestation. Sin-Eaters who are also educated in the traditions of the *tohunga* know full well the sacred boundaries between life and death must be enforced.

**Advocates** attempt to resolve what anchors Aotearoa’s growing population of the dead to the world of the living, freeing them from their responsibilities and mortal ties in order to move on. When this fails, which is more and more common, Advocates seek out allies among Necromancers and Pilgrims, hoping to use either traditional lore or methods of abandoning concern entirely to ease their consciences.

**Necromancers** may arise as a response to the spiritual Maelstrom, seeking hidden secrets within the Māori oral traditions or those of other cultures to solve the problem of so many restless dead. This aligns them with Gatekeepers and Advocates, who likewise understand that it’s a problem.

While the prosperity of the 1950s in New Zealand may seem to support Celebrants, any Sin-Eater who catches a glimpse of the state of things around Haunts and places where the Underworld should be accessed would think differently. Celebrants are more likely to appear among the youthful Bound, those who prior to dying were involved in teenage “milk-bar cowboy” gangs, rock n’ roll, or street racing. Others were wealthy before they died and, on return, hope to make the best of their fortunes rather than leave them to others.

**Pilgrims** are challenged by the howls and storms of ghosts around them and respond by trying to weaken the influence the dead have on the living as best they can. By pushing grief-stricken families to move on, eliminating physical anchors, and even creating distractions in the media or in politics from news of death and the dying, Pilgrims firmly believe that the crisis at the gates of the Underworld can be taken care of.
Bonepickers and Mourners are equally uncommon among Sin-Eaters, although representatives certainly could exist. Their obsession over either the remains of the dead or the dead themselves doesn’t stand up to scrutiny in times like these.

Lastly, the Reapers are more likely to present as antagonists in God’s Own Country, numbering only among the Bound who are actively creating more problems among the dead than resolving them. They can come between any one of the other Archetypes and a solution; they are only feeding the Maelstrom, despite being convinced perhaps that their role is a sacred duty.

Thresholds
As a Sin-Eater, the means by which you died created a resonant quality within you when you returned to life as one of the Bound. In God’s Own Country, certain Thresholds stand out as more thematically relevant. Certainly, everyone still dies in all of the ways that the Thresholds represent; but of those whom geists seek out and offer a second chance, victims of certain circumstances are perhaps more likely than others to attract New Zealand’s spectral partners.

The Forgotten: Victims of transportation accidents, especially railways, have produced the greatest numbers of the Lightning-Struck in New Zealand. One or two people always seem to make it out alive under otherwise fatal conditions. Are they Sin-Eaters, or just those whom Fate has smiled on?

The Prey: Nature claims its fair share of victims in New Zealand, from mountain climbers and glacier explorers to those unfortunates who stumble into limestone caves while hiking in the bush. New Zealand has fewer predatory animals than any other nation — no wild cats or wolves or snakes — but the venomous katipō spider, found in crevices and along beaches, is New Zealand’s answer to the black widow and just as deadly.

The Silent: Starvation and hunger are not common causes of death in the prosperous post-war period, but alcoholism, drug abuse, and tobacco are easily the leading killers among the Starved Ones. Others come from the ranks of those who could not live without family members and loved ones who died in the war, and simply wasted away from depression or heartbreak.

The Stricken: An influenza epidemic claimed the lives of many in 1918, and despite the advances of medicine since, similar outbreaks have erupted in isolated communities from time to time. Jonas Salk has not yet discovered the polio vaccine, and many other diseases that the 21st century no longer fears are still killers in 1954.

The Torn: Foreign wars, domestic abuse, and homicide are all too common origins for the Bleeding Ones. Returned from a violent death by being bound to a geist, these Sin-Eaters often participate in covering up the incident, out of guilt or revenge. Veterans have returned to New Zealand with geists that they acquired on foreign soil, adding to the pervasive feeling of being an outsider among friends and family.

Sin-Eater Traits
Your choice of Keys, Manifestations, and other Traits is unchanged in God’s Own Country for the most part, as derived from your Archetype and Threshold. The important distinction to be made when considering how these interact with your concept and how they are used in play is to remember that it is 1954, around 60 years prior to the default time of Geist: The Sin-Eaters.

Keys
The Industrial Key in *God’s Own Country* considers the 1950s as “modern.” See the nearby Anachrotech Modifiers Table for more information on how this affects the Industrial Key. This chart updates the one on page 111 of *Geist: The Sin-Eaters*.

### Anachrotech Modifiers Table 1950s

What’s old and disused in 2014 is cutting edge in 1954, so Sin-Eaters active in the 1950s who make use of the Industrial Key may find that they’re most capable of working with early Victorian era technology. The term “anachrotech” is unlikely to be in much use; rather, Sin-Eaters jokingly refer to it as “vintage.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dice Modifier</th>
<th>Invention Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+3</td>
<td>More than 100 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+2</td>
<td>Before 1860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+1</td>
<td>Before 1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Before 1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−1</td>
<td>In the 1910s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−2</td>
<td>In the 1920s</td>
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<tr>
<td>−3</td>
<td>In the 1930s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−4</td>
<td>In the 1940s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−5</td>
<td>In the last four years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, because of geography, the Primeval Key draws most heavily on birds, reptiles, and insects when considering animal life or aspects of fauna. It is rare that anyone with this Key would manifest the traits of larger predators, for example.

The other Keys are unaffected, outside of general accommodations for geography, history, and location. Note that influencing volcanic activity falls under the Pyre-Flame Key, but the Grave-Dirt Key more correctly influences earthquakes and temblors.

### A Second Chance at Life, and What It’s Like

As one of the Bound in mid-1950s New Zealand, quite apart from the life you once led, your day-to-day existence is governed by the certain fact that you are one of only a handful of people like you. You have a responsibility to the supernatural world that extends beyond your own upbringing and background. You can’t simply return to your old life as if nothing had happened. The Maelstrom and the sheer number of ghosts, *kēhua*, native spirits, and other ephemeral flotsam and jetsam make this impossible. So what is this second life like?

#### A Whānau Born of Death

Sometimes, the Bound are created in small groups, sharing a terrible fate, and thus have that much in common. *Atua* are nominally tribal, or at the very least social spirits; because the Underworld has been dredged up and floods the land of the living, just out of sight, many *atua* are or have been free-roaming entities for years, gathering together in some cases to form clusters of like-minded spirits who share an interest in opposing the growing Maelstrom. These *atua* are drawn to group deaths, or are present when such an event is caused by supernatural events. In part because they feel some responsibility, and in part because they have mysterious
and unknowable goals of their own, these atua whānau bring back several individuals at a time, Binding to them and presenting them with new responsibilities.

**Solitaries**

More often, however, a Kauwaka is brought back to life with a bargain, a solitary atua choosing her as its new instrument in the war against Whiro’s storms. In this case, no one is around to explain it, and no useful mentor is readily apparent. The first few months of a Kauwaka’s new life are spent trying to make sense of it, trying to block out the chorus of spectral voices, to look away when walking down a street only to have ghosts stare noiselessly at them from windows, from fields, from cemeteries. It’s only after a period of painful adjustment that the Kauwaka meets another of her kind, a desperately needed meeting with another person who knows just what it’s like.

When the dust settles, a Kauwaka has the option of assuming her former life, or starting over somewhere else. Whatever she decides, her circle of friends has grown to include one or more Kauwaka, potential ghostly contacts, the occasional revenant or crazed spirit, and a strong likelihood that mortal spiritualists, occultists, and “ghost hunters” have her name in a book or on a list somewhere.

**Getting Around**

Kauwaka and their whānau have limited options in terms of how far to travel and how to do it. The primary method of transport in New Zealand in the 1950s is either to drive or take a train; the wealthy could afford a small private plane or a chartered DC-3, but it’s quite rare. The impediment presented by the Maelstrom means that setting off on a boat carries risk of being caught in a negative energy storm, although river travel is not affected in the same way.

Automobiles and trucks aren’t terribly sophisticated, tend to be of the American type, and are either imported in pieces and assembled in New Zealand plants or built here entirely. Most New Zealand families have a car or wagon by this point in history, and thus the same is certainly true for a whānau of Sin-Eaters. It’s probably just the one, though. The likelihood that every Kauwaka has his or her own car is still relatively small, so some characters need to get used to the idea of taking the train or bus, or hitching a ride.

Trains not only offer the most reliable and safe means of traveling up and down the country, they’re also popular as sites of hauntings, ghostly manifestations, and rival Kauwaka. On several occasions, whole battles take place in isolated train stations in the middle of the night, with only a slightly damaged siding on the rail sheds to greet the early morning commuters. Trains allow the Kauwaka to enter and exit cities, to link up one town’s situation with solutions from another. The Maelstrom has very little direct influence or power on rail cars. An angry taniwha or rogue atua, on the other hand, might find a train a tempting target.

**Gathering Together**

As noted elsewhere, nowhere near as many Kauwaka live in New Zealand as in other civilized parts of the world. The actual demographics are entirely up to the Storyteller for any given chronicle, but the active number is likely in the low 30s or 40s at any given time. This makes it both much easier to gather together in a convocation or war council, and much more dangerous; with so few, the wrathful dead may cut the population of Kauwaka in half in just one night if there’s cause for them to rise up.
Wakes aren't as common, simply because getting together to dance the night away in a graveyard is seen as somewhat boorish or disrespectful by New Zealanders in general if not always in the case of Kauwaka. If such a gathering were to take place, it would be conducted in some part like a Māori tangi (or funeral). The Kauwaka from the region, even if but a handful, gather at a place to weep openly, invoke the memories of the departed, keep their shades from clinging to anchors, and prepare them for their passage north to Spirits Bay. When a Kauwaka dies, the tangi can go on for days. It is usually held near the sea, with a strong Warding set up around the marae or the cemetery, a place of calm amidst the Maelstrom.

Markets — which is to say gatherings of Kauwaka to trade mementos, information, and the tools of the trade — only ever happen in the big cities, where the Gauntlet is stronger and the Maelstrom is not as disruptive. Once a month at Auckland’s War Memorial Museum, a gathering of North Island Kauwaka meets at market, bartering carved greenstone pendants or Korean War medals with one another. Beer is brought, songs are sung, but the atmosphere is strictly businesslike.

Outside of the quasi-formal convocations, councils, and other gatherings, Sin-Eaters in New Zealand tend to settle on a single location for their whānau to operate out of, whether it’s somebody’s house on an old beachfront street in Devonport, a hospital basement near the Dunedin city center, or a cabin on the slopes of Mt. Egmont. Others, like the Railway Battalion, have no central meeting spot. For them, the second life of a Kauwaka is one of constant motion, traveling by train or car, never stopping in the same place for more than a night. For these vagabonds, it’s good to have contacts from your past life maintained, just to be able to guarantee a roof to sleep under or a kitchen to congregate in during an important trip.

Setting Stories in God’s Own Country

Although the Themes, Mood, and the overarching premise of a prosperous nation hiding a terrifying storm of unrest and violence under the surface may seem as if they practically write stories for you, this is likely not always the case. Here are three examples of stories to tell in New Zealand of 1954.

Story Hook: Opening the Floodgates

The Avernian Gates in New Zealand are choked with the restless dead. It’s the Kauwaka’s job to clear those out, allowing the path to the Underworld to be easier for those that need it, and restoring the balance in the region so that the constant mood of despair and unease is lifted. This is obviously easier said than done.

These Gates are found in both out of the way places, such as remote native forests, caves beside the sea, or in abandoned mines, as well as right smack dab in the middle of settled locations, such as churches, cemeteries, and university libraries. A massive Gate exists up in Spirits Bay, at the tip of the North Island, which also happens to be where the Māori believe the souls of the dead go when they die. Sadly for most souls of the dead, this Gate is sealed shut, looking like nothing so much as a railway tunnel clogged with writing masses of minor ghosts and fragmented echoes formed of plasm and spirit-stuff.

It’s possible to clear a Gate using the right ceremonies or simply by pushing forcefully through the opening and reconnecting the channels into the Underworld, but within hours or days the Gate once again seals itself off. It becomes clear to any Kauwaka who does this (likely with the help of a few friends) that the Maelstrom itself, composed of Twilight storms of negativity
brought up from the Underworld, is sometimes even bringing these ghosts back to the land of the living, stuck in an endless, screaming cycle of ephemeral horrors. This may even happen when the Gate is cleared, and what appears to be a backwash of ghostly remnants floods outward.

*Kauwaka* who have been working diligently for years clearing existing Avernian Gates of the excess of ghosts have started to realize that opening newer, unblocked Gates is probably the best long-term solution, barring actually reversing the Maelstrom itself.

**Chronicle Hook: Ending the Maelstrom of Āwhāwhiro**

If you want to tell an epic story set in New Zealand, this is the one. At some point in the history of the nation, the Maelstrom is subdued, the Underworld is driven back through the Avernian Gates, and relative peace is restored, albeit only until the next serial killer or natural disaster. How this is accomplished is likely the stuff of an extended chain of stories, centered on the identification of the Maelstrom’s cause and the efforts on the part of the *whānau* to reverse it.

The premise of such a chronicle is that while New Zealand’s history of colonialism, isolationism, and societal unrest is the fuel for the Maelstrom’s negative energy, what’s actually keeping the whole hurricane of anguish churning is an ongoing war between two Kerberoi, whose Dominions overlap and thus create a sort of fault line in the Underworld. The Kerberoi each represent a separate set of Old Laws, one very much rooted in primal Polynesian traditions writ large, and the other a Northern Hemisphere codex of colonial power. It may seem ridiculous to the modern political or religious thinker, but these two conflicting powers feed off the clashing attitudes and opposing beliefs of those above.

At the turn of the century — when New Zealand came into its own as a Dominion within the British Empire, women gained the right to vote, and the Tohunga Suppression Act was passed by parliament — what was previously just a contested rivalry between the two Kerberoi erupted into open and esoteric war. Just as the volcanic faults in the tectonic plates beneath New Zealand cause eruptions of magma and searing gas, the dispute between the two Kerberoi forced the Underworld up and through the Avernian Gates, creating the Maelstrom as a result.

Ending this war is an exercise in diplomacy on the part of the *Kauwaka*, who must first realize what’s going on and journey into the Underworld to find out what’s actually happening. In that twisting labyrinth of lava tubes, lakes of fire, noxious vaults, and clashing traditions, the *Kauwaka* must deal not only with the Kerberoi but with powerful spirits who feed off the conflict itself — including Whiro, the wicked *atua* of legend, the strongest among them. Perhaps the *Kauwaka* can establish peace accords, creating a détente between the Kerberoi and their Old Laws, forging what amounts to a spiritual Treaty of Waitangi. Or, perhaps a new Dominion must be forged, pushing the other two apart, and one of the *Kauwaka* must undertake a ritual to become a Kerberos herself.

**Story Hook: Abmortal Beloved**

New Zealand has its fair share of creepy tales that aren’t quite ghost stories but center around strange men, whether foreigners or outcasts. In the story of Sgt. Ned Poindexter, there’s the former knife-throwing mesmerist Salter the Sensational, who was in truth a body-jumping spirit. Tales of innocuous laborers, train workers, and traveling salesmen who live unnaturally long lives are shared among the *Kauwaka*. These people don’t seem to age a day, or they seem to crop up every generation looking exactly as they did decades ago.
The story hook for the Eternal Mayor on page XX is one example, but here’s another. A Māori warrior fights in Te Kooti’s War during the mid-19th century, and comes home to find his village wiped out, his wife torn apart, his children and family carried off or dead. Wracked with grief, he undertakes the rite of *Utu*, the sacred duty of vengeance, swearing upon the names of his *iwi*’s *atua* and the *waka* that brought them from Hawaiki that he won’t stop until all those responsible are dead.

This warrior, Tu-o-Rangi, is unaware that his wife and his family are still with him, anchored to him by the invocation of *utu*. He sees them in his dreams; they visit him in reflections in pools or mirrored glass. As his bloody task continues, he finds that he is unable to rest, unable to feel as if their spirits have been avenged. Empowered by their lingering presence, Tu-o-Rangi never ages, never grows old, and spends decades hunting down those who murdered his family and relations, and those who ordered it.

The Kauwaka encounter Tu-o-Rangi, perhaps suspecting he is a Sin-Eater himself. To those who can see into Twilight, ghosts always surround the warrior. It is only after one or two clashes with him, perhaps trying to keep him from killing a descendant of his village’s despoilers, that they realize he is an abmortal. With the sacred strength given to him by *utu*, Tu-o-Rangi may be a match for multiple Kauwaka. With his Numina essentially driven by negative energy and wrath, the Maelstrom has the opposite effect on him that it does on the Kauwaka: It sustains him, protects him, and keeps him vital.

The Kauwaka must either convince Tu-o-Rangi to release his family’s spirits, removing the anchors that tie them to him, or do this by force. Only when he understands that killing those who wronged him is not the solution to easing his beloved whānau’s passage to the afterlife, but rather his own acceptance of their death that will grant them peace, will Tu-o-Rangi’s unnatural life come to an end and he may join them in eternity.

**Inspirations**

The following books, movies, and other materials are directly or indirectly responsible for the content of *God’s Own Country*, and the list doubles as a handy reference for what media to consume in preparation for running a chronicle set in New Zealand of 1954. Most of these are firmly in the category of “What is New Zealand like?” rather than the much smaller group, “What are New Zealand ghost stories like?”

**Fiction**

Ronald Hugh Morrieson’s *The Scarecrow* and *Came A Hot Friday* portray small town life in New Zealand in the 1930s and 1940s, decades before our time period, but each is rich with Kiwi slang, dark comedy, and, in the case of *The Scarecrow*, a heightened sense of dread that directly inspired the Railway Battalion.

Alan Duff’s *Once Were Warriors* inspired a popular film of the same name (listed later), although the book is even more brutal in its depiction of the diaspora of the Māori *iwi* from rural life to urban squalor. It has two sequels, *What Becomes Of The Broken Hearted* and *Jake’s Long Shadow*.

Margaret Mahy’s *The Haunting* is a New Zealand novel about an eight-year-old boy whose family legacy of supernatural gifts is revealed after his grandfather’s passing. Mahy is a Carnegie Medal-winning writer who focused on children’s literature, and this is one of her finest. It’s
worth checking out her later novel *The Changeover*, too, although that novel is concerned more with witches than ghosts.

**Film**

*An Angel At My Table.* Jane Campion’s 1990 film based on the autobiographical novels of Janet Frame, who was (at the time of *God’s Own Country*) living through the middle installment of the trilogy at Seacliff Asylum. References to the time period’s care of the mentally ill and a number of pop culture references of the 1950s make this worth the effort to track down.

*Heavenly Creatures.* For a clear sense of Pākehā society at the time of *God’s Own Country* and a chilling look at the underside of the era of prosperity, you can’t do better than Peter Jackson’s thriller based on the Parker & Hulme murder case. The film is set in 1954, and is an excellent crash course in Kiwi accents of the era.

*Once Were Warriors.* It’s set long after the time period of *God’s Own Country* but it gives insight into the outcome of the migration of Māori to urban centers, as well as the heritage and traditions that were left behind. Strong portrayals by Temuera Morrison and Rena Owen make this a true gut-punch of a movie.

*The Piano.* This haunting drama set on the West Coast of New Zealand a hundred years prior to our era gives plenty of fodder for ghosts and highlights the often messy and brutal history that *God’s Own Country* paints a picture of dark prosperity over.

*The Frighteners.* Although this film isn’t set in New Zealand of 1954, it nevertheless was filmed entirely in New Zealand (Wellington, to be precise) and includes so many Easter Eggs among the dark humor and slapstick that it’s definitely a must-see for Geist: The Sin-Eaters fans of any era.

*The Scarecrow* (AKA *Klynham Summer*). 1982 film adaptation of the book, very hard to find. Notable for starring John Carradine, and for moving the time period up 20 years to the 1950s, which is spot-on for *God’s Own Country*.

*Whale Rider.* Again, set many years after the time period of *God’s Own Country*, but notable for its portrayal of life in a predominantly Māori coastal community and the trouble that a tohunga (played by Rawiri Paratene) has in passing his knowledge along to the next generation. Also, great scene depicting the use of a *taiaha*! 
Hans Blutig watched the snow fall from his state-provided apartment in East Berlin. December 24, 1961. The date dredged up the memory of another Christmas Eve — 1943. The lights on that night had been of a different sort — the detonations of bombs and the fires they ignited. It had turned the falling snow to ash. Yet that had not been a very destructive night compared to others that winter.

Hans turned away from the window and put on his greatcoat. The snow and darkness would increase his chances of success. The GDR kept a close watch on churches as potential hotbeds of sedition, and that would keep the police occupied. At least Hans hoped it would. He didn’t like taking risks of this kind, but communication with the West had grown almost impossible, and he needed to know what was happening there. No telling when he would have another opportunity as good as this one.

The snow crunched under his boots in rhythm with his breathing. Soon he was only a few blocks away from Checkpoint Charlie. One of his colleagues exchanged information with the West at that checkpoint, but Hans hadn’t heard from her in weeks. Perhaps she had merely gone to ground. Any near-miss was usually enough to spook an Inquisitor. He had certainly laid low a time or two in the last year. Hans hoped that was all there was to it. Fräulein Graltor was as careful as any of them. If she had been picked out by enemy operatives, then nobody was safe.

Hans wouldn’t cross at Checkpoint Charlie, though. Too much traffic. Too many soldiers. Too much risk of being seen. False identities he had, but not the luxury of multiple passports. Someone had found and plundered his cache of forged documents months ago, and his fixer in the records department refused even to meet with him. He turned down a side street, strolling casually with his hands in his coat pockets.

A shadowy figure emerged from the snow, and only Hans’ self-control kept him from leaping in surprise.

“Sir, your papers?” the figure asked.

“Good evening, comrade,” Hans said, withdrawing his identification from his left pocket and holding it out. His other hand remained firmly planted in the pocket. “Urgent house call.”

The figure stepped into the pool of light from the streetlamp above. He was a young man dressed in the uniform of the Volkspolizei — the regular police. That eased Hans’ mind somewhat, but he didn’t relax entirely. The dreaded Stasi often dressed like ordinary civilians or soldiers, and even those who weren’t agents of the enemy could make trouble for someone like Hans simply by taking too much interest in him.

The VoPo gave the papers a preemptory glance and returned them to Hans. He smiled. “ Seems to be in good order, doctor.”

Hans murmured a response and continued walking, fighting down the urge to look over his shoulder. If the man was merely VoPo, he had no reason to think twice about a doctor’s late night house call, but one of the Stasi would ask questions. He would want to know if Hans’ story were true. He would tail the suspect. He would alert the border guards.

Blood in the snow would have been more obvious to the real enemy, though. They would recognize my scent immediately.

Hans entered an apartment building and ascended the stairs. The third apartment on the second floor was unlocked and empty. Hans went to the window. Outside stretched the death strip — an
open, 100-meter-wide gap between the two fences that now separated East Berlin from West Berlin. The Soviets called it the Mauer — the Wall. Some of Hans’ acquaintances laughed that it was nothing more than a fence pretending to be a wall, the same way the GDR pretended to be a democracy. Hans hadn’t laughed, though. The Soviet puppet governor had likely let slip the truth of what the fence would become.

Hans opened the window. The nearer barbed wire fence stood directly underneath. With one final glance at the cold reality of the death strip, he leapt from the window to the ground below. He picked himself up from the snow and watched the sweeping beams of the searchlights for a few minutes. Once he was satisfied he had identified the pattern, Hans ran through the snow toward the Wall on the far side.

The beam of one searchlight caught his coattails for just a moment. In that eternal half-second Hans expected to hear a shout or a siren. He would hear the crack of a rifle and feel the burning pain of a bullet in his back. But the searchlight didn’t stop moving. The guard had only seen a whirl in the snow as a gust of wind stirred the falling flakes.

Ten meters. Hans slipped off his greatcoat as he ran. The black curls of the barbed wire fence looked like the shadows of thorny bushes in wintertime. The searchlight would return all too soon. He threw the coat over the fence and clambered over. The tower guard spotted him just as he reached the top. A siren blared, but Hans was already on the other side. He collapsed into a heap behind a black sedan, panting from the exertion. The guards could no longer reach him.

“Herr Blutig, I presume,” said a voice from inside the vehicle. The window rolled down to reveal a young man in a broad-brimmed hat smoking a cigar. “Can I offer you a cigarette?”

Hans stood up. That was one of the signs. “I don’t smoke, but let me buy you a drink.”

The man with the hat shook his head in response to the countersign. “And I’m afraid I don’t drink. Shall we go for a ride?”

Hans didn’t answer, but he slipped into the car’s passenger seat.

“Are you Herr Demütig?” Hans asked as they left the Wall behind.

“His colleague. Uwe Demütig is no longer a part of the Agency. He fell into the hands of the Enemy four nights ago.”

“I had not heard,” Hans said slowly. “Ever since the Wall went up, all the usual channels for news have dried up — the checkpoints, the U-Bahn, the sewers, and even the radio. What has been happening over here?”

“West Berlin is under siege. We’ve lost twelve Agents in the last year. Either the Enemy has operatives everywhere, or we have a high-ranking mole.”

They drove in silence for several minutes after that, past the illuminated Christmas tree near the heart of the American Sector.

“What news brings you to West Berlin, Herr Blutig? Paranoids seldom risk the death strip so openly.”

“According to my colleague in Moscow, a representative from an American corporation recently met privately with First Secretary Khrushchev. No one knows what they discussed, but the company’s name is Black Sun Cosmocartography.”
“I’m missing something, I think.”

“Are you so new to the business?” Hans asked. He didn’t wait for a reply. “Black Sun is also a contractor that works with NASA. When Kennedy announced on TV earlier this year that the United States would soon place a man on the moon, a Black Sun representative was standing behind him.”

“What is on the moon that is so valuable to them?”

“I don’t know,” Hans admitted. “During the war I was assigned first to Dresden and then to Berlin.”

The man in the hat stopped the car in front of a small apartment building, and the two of them got out.

“We need to bring this to the rest of the Agency,” Hans said as the key turned in the lock and the man in the hat pushed the door of the apartment open. A small, electrically lit Christmas tree provided the only illumination in the darkened living room.

“It will wait until morning.”

Hans entered, shaking his head. “I must speak to them tonight. We may have been followed.”

The door slammed behind them, and Hans whirled. He found himself looking down the barrel of Agent’s pistol. Its silencer gleamed red and green in the glow of the Christmas lights.

“I’m afraid I can’t let you return to East Germany, Herr Blutig.” He almost looked apologetic. “You know far too much to be allowed to fall into the hands of the Enemy’s operatives.”

Hans opened his mouth to respond a fraction of a second before the bullet passed through his skull.

Demon: Into the Cold

“A wall is a hell of a lot better than a war.”

— John F. Kennedy upon hearing about the construction of the Berlin Wall

The Cold War remains possibly the most terrifying period in human history — certainly the first to pose an existential danger not just to one nation but to the entire world. That threat of nuclear Armageddon hung over the world like the sword of Damocles, coloring the politics, society, and art of the period. Citizens of nations directly involved knew their deaths could come at any time in a flash of light and heat. Those on the edges sat helpless, horribly aware that the fallout and nuclear winter would give them a slow, wasting death — and there was nothing they could do about it. Duck and cover drills and fallout shelters were worthless. They might help you survive the initial blast or even the next few months, but no backyard bunker’s supply would last forever. Eventually the food would run out, and all you had accomplished was to delay the inevitable.

The Cold War’s intensity waxed and waned erratically from the Battle of Berlin in 1945 to the fall of the USSR in 1991. At times, the threat of global thermonuclear war shrunk to little more than a stone in the shoe — a possibility of death not much more likely than any other freak accident. Other times, it swelled up until it seemed World War III could start at any moment, and the people on the ground could practically hear the air raid sirens. The year 1961 saw a marked
rise in tensions, and Berlin lay at the center of the elaborate game of chess in which the Soviet Union and the United States were engaged.

It is now December 1961. Berlin has weathered the Crisis of 1961 without anyone declaring war, but now West Berlin — an island of capitalist West Germany in the sea of communist East Germany — is surrounded by a barbed wire fence and guarded by soldiers with orders to gun down anyone who attempts to flee to West Berlin. The Berlin Wall represents a tiny compromise between the world powers, a moment when John F. Kennedy blinked and chose not to press the issue for fear that it would trigger catastrophe. As with so many of the maneuvers of the Cold War, both sides used semantics to define the meaning of the Wall. In the West they called it the Wall of Shame, claiming it was an admission by the USSR that Communism had failed so badly in East Germany that it had to build a wall to keep its citizens from fleeing to the West. Their counterparts in the East described it as the Anti-Fascist Protection Rampart, implying that neighboring West Germany had not yet been fully de-Nazified.

The Unchained have as much at stake in the Cold War as anyone. What’s more, their abilities are particularly well-suited to the espionage and acts of sabotage the times call for. Many have become involved in the conflict between East and West — either to bring an end to the stalemate by ensuring the victory of one or the other, or to ensure that neither side gains the upper hand. Others eschew human politics as much as they dare, certain that the God-Machine’s angels, cultists, and projects present the real danger. Either way, even the most temporal outcast must still contend with servants of the God-Machine, and those who focus their attention on supernatural Berlin may still fall under the scrutiny of human authorities who see enemy operatives everywhere.

Theme: Walls

The construction of the Berlin Wall did nothing to improve the Soviet Union’s military standing in the world, nor did it entirely stop refugees from escaping into capitalist Western Europe. West Berlin is an important city, but it isn’t the only city. Rather, the Wall is a symbol of the Iron Curtain that separates the capitalist West from the communist East. It represents everything that stands between opposing sides and keeps them from exchanging ideas, building relationships, or resolving their differences peacefully.

The Wall is not the only barrier with which the Unchained in 1961 Berlin must contend. The paranoia of world governments and the heightened interest of the God-Machine in the area have only exacerbated the outcasts’ natural distrust of anyone connected to their creator — including other demons. The Agendas are often at odds with each other, and even Agendas face significant internal splits as the physical and political divide between East and West prevents them from easily cooperating. Under the watchful eyes all around them, outcasts must be more careful to separate the lives of their Covers from their secret lives as demons. Even those who go deep undercover in human society and refuse to surface cannot completely shake the sense that they are still shut out, for there is no higher wall than the one a demon surrounds herself with. Her emotions, loyalties, and knowledge of the God-Machine’s secrets are just more refugees fleeing into the light — but she may choose which to let escape and which to gun down, until her conscience runs red with the blood.

Mood: Cold

After the seemingly unquenchable inferno of World War II, anything that followed would have seemed cold by comparison, but the Cold War that has settled into the bones of the world has
gone beyond any winter of human history. Every day seems colder, as though the fire of all human sympathy has been extinguished, leaving the world to die a slow heat death as entropy saps away whatever warmth still remains. Cold spreads throughout Berlin. The cold of the city in winter. The cold of the war. The cold of the face of the policeman as he watches a refugee shot down on the other side of the Wall.

For the Unchained, this chill sinks its claws deep, penetrating the thin coats of paint they have put on their stolen lives. It is the coldness of the spy who looks upon injustice and does nothing because stopping it would break her cover. It is the coldness between demons who know they cannot fully trust each other because anyone — even another outcast — could be a servant of the enemy, be it a mechanical being or a human institution. It is the cold precision of the God-Machine’s gears as they grind on, seemingly heedless of the damage its machinations have already caused and unconcerned with the potential catastrophes they may yet trigger. It is cold out here for the Unchained, and it is getting colder with every passing day.

**What Has Come Before**

The oldest demons in Berlin remember the industrial revolution. They remember the arms race with England that led into the Great War. They remember seeing death and horror inflicted with a cold, mechanical precision that was all too new to those unfamiliar with the God-Machine. They saw the rise of the Nazi state, an institution built on the newest technology, on the most modern ways of doing things. They saw humanity become like the Machine, and the madness that resulted. Even those who Fell only recently are intimately familiar with many of these horrors because they played some role in bringing them about.

The Unchained of Berlin mostly agree that World War II began in response to a message from the God-Machine to a small occult group in Germany called the Thule Society. This is not to say that an all-consuming conflict with a catastrophic death toll and crimes against humanity far beyond the imaginations of any previous generation was necessarily its intention. What a demon believes about the God-Machine’s involvement in the events of the 1940s usually plays a key role in her choice of Agenda (see p. XX). Demons outside of Berlin float other theories, of course. Some foreign outcasts claim other Trumpets delivered messages to Russia, Japan, Great Britain, and even the United States, but only in Berlin do they know the Messenger’s name — Herr Arger, usually rendered as Mr. Strife in English. What became of Herr Arger after the war is a matter of some debate (see p. XX).

In addition to the mortal death toll and the massive waste of mundane resources, more angels Fell in response to World War II than to any other event in human history. The reason for this isn’t clear. Perhaps the random destruction wrought by bombs damaged Infrastructure that helped prevent angels from gaining enough self-awareness to question their orders. Maybe even the creations of Heaven grew sick at heart after witnessing the horrors of this chaotic time, when human sympathy gave way to brutal, technologically leveraged force. Whatever the cause, hundreds, if not thousands, of the God-Machine’s angels Fell during or immediately after the war, and those stationed in Germany had the highest defection rate.

Although they were incapable of questioning, much less disobeying, their orders, many demons now regret the instructions they carried out, and came to Berlin to make new lives among the ruins. Some seek redemption — to rebuild what their hands helped destroy. Others thirst for power among the tremendous opportunities presented by this new era. Many simply wish to be
left alone. The God-Machine feels the loss of its servants, however, and it seems intent upon getting them back. Hunter angels stalk the streets of Berlin, rounding up outcasts for recasting in the forges of the God-Machine. Human agents and informants lurk around every corner, watching for signs of defectors. Even some among the Unchained have been compromised and infiltrate rings and Agencies, waiting for just the right moment to spring the trap so it catches as many demons as possible.

The Fateful Message

In 1933 the God-Machine dispatched a Trumpet to Berlin — the angel who in later years would Fall and take the name Herr Arger. Its message was meant to create a cult that would serve one of the God-Machine’s projects by constructing and defending a large, twisted windmill whose blade turned counterclockwise. As was within the parameters of its instructions, the angel determined that subverting an existing cult would be more efficient than founding a new one.

It singled out the Thule Society — a group of German occultists with no direct connection to any other supernatural power. As it had done on previous missions, the Messenger angel fabricated a translation of the *Oera Linda Book*, which claims to be a secret history of Europe, and arranged for it to fall into the hands of the Society with its message retooled to speak to them. The angel’s translation of the *Oera Linda Book* claimed to tell the secret history of the Thule Society’s origins — how its members were the descendants of an ancient line of wise and benevolent rulers who had left their shining city in Thule millennia ago to bring illumination to the benighted lands of Europe. It included blueprints for a device that would allow the occultists to communicate with their counterparts in the shining city — the technology of which greatly surpassed those of any modern nation.

It was bait, a way of manipulating the Thule Society into building the large and important piece of Infrastructure the Widdershins Windmill represented. When the Infrastructure was complete, the Trumpet put on a brief show for the cult it had duped. It appeared to them as a ghostly figure that matched their expectations of how an elder of the shining city would look. As the Gears and the impossibly huge millstone turned above it, showering the floor of the mill with flakes of gold, the angel revealed that the people of the shining city feared the Society had allowed themselves to be sullied by their contact with those not of the pure blood. It gravely announced that the Society would receive no further communication from the shining city until they had proven themselves worthy heirs of its secrets. The door to the Widdershins Windmill slammed shut, and the Trumpet departed quietly, content that it had left the Thule Society fanatically devoted to preserving the piece of Infrastructure without any significant expectation of a future message.

The Society, however, interpreted this final message as a call to action. Living as they were in the ruins of the Great War and in the economic hardship of its aftermath, they hoped to return to the land of their ancestors and dwell in the shining city. They didn’t know how to reach their destination, so their only hope was to prove their worthiness. Ultimately, the leadership of the Thule Society concluded that the best way to prove they were not sullied by their contact with those who were less pure was to cut off all contact with those of lesser blood. They could not drive all those not of their race out of Germany alone, but their doctrine was a flame to the shattered nation’s powder keg, and the Nazi Party quickly rose to power.

During the war that followed, the God-Machine dispatched the same Trumpet to Germany on an unrelated mission. The angel witnessed firsthand the atrocities its message had unwittingly
inspired and Fell. In an effort to undo the damage, the demon returned to the Widdershins Windmill and spoke through it. He excoriated the Society for misinterpreting his previous message as a call for genocide and condemned their actions as proof of how far they had fallen from the grace their ancestors had possessed in the shining city.

Members of the Thule Society heeded Herr Arger’s message and immediately attempted to convince Germany’s leaders to stop the war, but by then matters had gone too far. The occultists’ influence had greatly diminished over the course of the last decade, and the S.S. viewed their calls for peace as proof of treason, which it linked to the mysterious Widdershins Windmill. When the demolition order arrived, the Thule Society attempted to defend their precious artifact. The resulting battle was short and ended with German tanks razing the Infrastructure.

After the war ended, most of the surviving members of the Thule Society left the occult entirely or joined smaller, less influential, and — most importantly — less radical orders. Some few, however, vowed to rebuild the demolished Widdershins Windmill from the original blueprints, if they could be found. The pages on which they appeared have been missing since the battle for the Windmill. Others took their failure as a sign that they deserve their exile from the shining city; they are still loyal to Thule, but they are not worthy of it.

One splinter of the Thule Society suspected the truth as none of their brethren did. They called themselves the Bändiger (short for “Teufelsbändiger,” making them the “devil-tamers”), and soon won the respect of West Germany’s Chancellor Konrad Adenauer by playing to his Catholic faith and fears that Satan was the driving force behind the Soviet Union. They still believed the first messages from Thule were genuine, but they became convinced that Herr Arger’s message came from another being masquerading as one of the messengers of Thule’s shining city. They have spent the last 15 years tracking down the demon.

The Wall

From the end of the war to 1961, 3.5 million East Germans had fled into West Germany — approximately 20% of the population of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Many of those fleeing the East were young, educated professionals and those with highly specialized skills, and the brain drain had a substantial economic impact on the nation they left behind. The Soviet Union took pains to control the border between the two Germanys, but West Berlin remained a gateway to West Germany at the heart of the Communist East. The Berlin Wall was intended as a solution to that problem — a way of closing this pesky loophole.

It began as a more or less simple fence built just within the boundaries of East Germany to prevent refugees from escaping. In the first days after the GDR erected the Wall, demons with the ability to pass into other worlds found it laughably easy to circumvent. Those outcasts and stigmatics with abilities that allowed them to communicate with ghosts or spirits could use these incorporeal beings to deliver messages to the Unchained on the other side. Embeds like Across a Crowded Room, Special Message, and Animal Messenger allow crude but subtle communication, as well. Some among the Unchained have noticed a second barrier that follows the path of the Wall. It is an invisible, arcane barrier that blunts the force of supernatural abilities that might otherwise damage or penetrate the fence — one whose power grows stronger by the day (see p. XX).

Hearts and Minds
Both sides regularly characterize the Cold War not as a conflict between nations or coalitions but as nothing less than a battle between ideologies — communism and capitalism — each of which has strengths and failings. Both have adopted strategies that involve interfering with the affairs of unaligned countries. Both engage in complex games of espionage aimed at gaining some small advantage over the other, games that often end in the injury or death of innocent bystanders. Most tellingly, however, both claim to have the citizens’ best interests at heart — the same tactic the God-Machine’s angels use to ensure the loyalty of its cultists. This detail is not lost on the Unchained.

The confounding part of this is that except for slight variations both sides use the same tactics but appear bent on achieving mutually exclusive strategic results — the worldwide dominance of either capitalism or Communism. Some demons maintain rather zealously that the God-Machine is on one side of the conflict, and only the other side stands in its way — although whether or not this is a good thing or even a war those fighting for humanity’s freedom from the Machine have any hope of winning is open to question. Most outcasts maintain that their creator is behind none of it. They believe the tactics adopted by NATO and Warsaw Pact operatives resemble the God-Machine’s projects only because they are demonstrably effective methods of controlling any large group of humans, and it was only a matter of time before mortal governments learned how to manipulate the psychological vulnerabilities the God-Machine has been exploiting for years.

A handful of Unchained speculate that the God-Machine is backing both sides, and this conjures many worrying questions. Is it deliberately maintaining the Cold War as a kind of massive work of Concealment Infrastructure that allows it to move operatives and materials anywhere in the world without arousing human suspicions? Is it uncertain whether Communism or capitalism will better serve its goals, and so has created an experiment with Berlin at the center in order to test the individual merits of each one? Or is its seeming crisis of identity the result of broken connections between the God-Machine’s Command and Control Infrastructure so severe that it is now effectively two God-Machines, each vying to assimilate or destroy the other?

Eyes Everywhere

1961 finds Berlin in a state of high alert. The GDR refuses to let any of its citizens travel to West Berlin. The guards who monitor the death strip have orders to shoot refugees on sight. Visitors from the other side of the Iron Curtain face constant and pervasive surveillance for the duration of their visits in East Berlin, with even children recruited as spies. Those suspected of disloyalty to the GDR face arrest, interrogation, torture, and execution. Although West Berlin is less overtly repressive, they work tirelessly to identify and root out Soviet saboteurs and other agents in the city, and with good reason. The KGB has proven that they have access to intelligence only available to those high in the command structure of either the British Secret Intelligence Service or the American CIA. Of more immediate concern are the many acts of industrial espionage and sabotage committed within the city by agents of East Germany. The Allies are desperate to identify these enemies within West Berlin, and sometimes they resort to measures the citizens of their home countries might consider abhorrent.

Demons in Cold War Berlin must take extra care to maintain their Covers in this divided city where everyone is watching for signs of enemy sympathy. Anyone with contraband could be in the pay of the enemy. Anyone who betrays less than a fanatical devotion to the ideals of secular socialism or religious capitalism might become an agent for the other side — if she isn’t one already. Anyone who is too interested in events on the other side of the Wall or who is caught in
a restricted area without authorization or who commits acts of sabotage in the city is immediately suspect and faces interrogation or worse. Because outcasts often exhibit any number of these suspicious behaviors, they must be as careful to avoid attracting the attention of human organizations as they are of evading angelic scrutiny.

Living the Post-War Dream

Demons in both Berlins enjoy the anonymity of living in a city of more than a million inhabitants. Both sides of the city have a substantial number of industrial plants and factories. Because both NATO and the Warsaw Pact nations regard Berlin as an important front in the Cold War, the cities are the focus of intense external scrutiny and investment. Both cities offer demons plenty of opportunities settle into their Covers.

West Berlin

West Berlin has flourished since the end of World War II. It has a booming commercial sector and caters to a large foreign military population. Due to some legal technicalities, its citizens are exempt from conscription into West Germany’s armed services, and so it is a magnet for young people and has gained a well-deserved reputation as center for the arts and counterculture. West Berliners enjoy live theater and film. Although many West Germans are Catholic or Protestant Christians, a secular streak is rising among the new generation of West Berliners. Church attendance hasn’t yet begun to wane, in part because practicing a faith is often seen as a way of distinguishing the free world from the godless communism practiced in the Soviet Union. As an urban island surrounded by hostile territory, West Berlin is heavily reliant on shipments of food and other goods via the rail lines to West Germany. This serves as an often rankling reminder of the city’s dependence on the foreign forces stationed there, since West Berlin could not prevent East Germany from cutting off this critical artery if not for the Americans, French, and British. For most West Berliners, the willingness of the Allies to take extraordinary measures to ensure the city remains free and well-supplied — so clearly proven during the Berlin Airlift of 1949 — makes them favorably disposed toward these friendly forces. Some resent having their home city being waved like a flag of victory by the United States, however.

Although the occupation forces have rebuilt most of the infrastructure that was destroyed during the war, the division of the city has complicated matters for its inhabitants. Several subway routes that once allowed travel between the two halves of the city have been closed off to prevent East Germans from escaping into West Berlin. Others remain open but pass through ghost stations beneath East Berlin without stopping. In one case, the subway stops at the ghost station but only so passengers can access another subway line. East German police guard the subway station entrance to prevent anyone from entering or leaving East Berlin by that route.

Telephone communications were all but destroyed in the aftermath of the war, and reestablishing them has run into obstacles. Telephone coverage is significantly lower in West Berlin than in most European cities of comparable size, and many switchboards are still manual, requiring a live operator connect callers. In addition, any telephone communication between West Berlin and the rest of West Germany must pass through East Germany, which could tap or disrupt the conversation at any time. Plans are in the works to build a radio transmitter to communicate securely with West Germany, but it could be decades before that sees fruition.

Demons of West Berlin
Although outcasts can integrate themselves into any niche in the city — from factory workers and soldiers to rich industrialists and high-level local government officials — many of the Unchained often favor Covers that either grant them access to classified information or give them contact with a variety of people in their day-to-day lives. The former must take great care to avoid human suspicion as they examine the eddies and currents of bureaucracy and espionage for signs of God-Machine projects. The latter allows them to achieve the same results by taking the role of the waitress, the guard, or some other near-invisible, but it often takes much longer to access actionable intelligence by such indirect means.

**East Berlin**

East Berlin is the capital of the GDR, which means it has a large number of government offices and bureaus, although Party members are given preference when filling vacancies. The city is economically depressed, which is partially to blame for the flight of its residents to West Berlin. The majority of the revenue generated by the city's manufacturing boom goes toward paying the substantial war reparations East Germany still owes to the Soviet Union, which means that workers receive paltry wages that do little more than cover their basic living expenses.

The Soviet Union has devoted considerable resources to establishing infrastructure within East Berlin, but most of the residents do not benefit from it because the majority of these projects are focused on ensuring the smooth operation of government and securing the border between West Berlin and the GDR. Many East Berliners live in small tenement apartments fitted with holes in the walls through which the Stasi can monitor their behavior. When they aren't at work at factory and service jobs, they attend politically sanctioned performances or sanitized versions of entertainments from before the war. Public libraries have many empty shelves where potentially subversive books have been removed by the Soviets or stolen by those who wish to protect or resell them on the black market. The East German Lutheran Church is tolerated by the Party, but its members are watched and those who show signs of disloyalty are often arrested.

Members of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany must maintain strict political orthodoxy, but they are also reasonably assured of receiving better positions, which allow them to enjoy a less austere lifestyle. Even low-ranking soldiers and police receive some of these benefits, but those in key government roles can live quite lavishly so long as they don't make a spectacle of doing so. People with highly specialized skills or knowledge acquired before the end of the war can sometimes maintain a high standard of living without being vocal proponents of the Party. Doctors and scientists must still steer clear of open sedition, but minor indiscretions might be overlooked to some degree.

**Demons of East Berlin**

Demons find it reasonably easy to establish Covers within East Berlin. The GDR’s emphasis on loyalty to the Party means not everyone who receives prestigious government jobs is competent to perform them, and this can sometimes work in a demon’s favor. The increased scrutiny such bureaucrats often endure from the Stasi can make maintaining one’s Cover more challenging, however. Those outcasts who steer clear of positions within the Party often favor intellectuals, both for their access to useful skills via Legend and their increased mobility compared to rank-and-file East Germans. Factory workers and other such proletariats make good burn Covers, but few demons use them as a primary Cover unless they have no other choice.

Covers and Covers
As steeped as they already are in living double lives, no few demons end up serving as spies or agents for one side or another in the Cold War. In some cases, they may even have one Cover working for the West and another for the East — each of which is hidden behind another cover (note the small c). For example, a demon cashes in a soul pact from an agent of the KGB whose cover was as a minor bureaucrat in East Germany. What constitutes a compromise for the demon?

In general, the Storyteller should call for a Cover check whenever a demon does something radically out of character for either the Cover or its cover. The reasoning behind this is simple: It is out of character for an undercover agent to act in a way that would compromise her cover, so if the demon’s behavior is radically different from that of her Cover’s cover, it is a compromise for the Cover, as well. The exception to this is if the Cover is not currently at risk of compromising her cover — such as when reporting back to headquarters as an agent. Furthermore, the demon can only use Legend to access Skills and Merits that her Cover would have, not that Cover’s cover.

Note that it is exceptionally difficult to step into the role of someone who is already living this sort of double life. Remember that a soul pact imparts no knowledge about the person whose identity the demon is taking. The demon won’t know the drop points, passphrases, or codes the agent uses to communicate with his superiors, much less the ins and outs of the job the Cover’s alias is ostensibly paid to do. Moreover, the KGB agent almost certainly has friends and relatives back home who would notice if he was behaving strangely.

A demon who dares attempt to become a double-agent under the same Cover increases her risks exponentially. Spies who defect come under tremendous scrutiny, and these sorts of background checks are poison to a demon’s Cover. If a demon really insists on playing for both sides for whatever reason, it is safer by far to employ two different Covers with separate aliases. Even then, it is rarely a good idea for those two covers to intersect in any way. Several years ago, one of the Unchained received orders to kill an enemy agent working in the same building — an enemy agent who turned out to be the alias of his other Cover. That forced the demon to choose between Covers knowing that whichever he chose, it would no longer be as valuable to him as it once had been — an agent likely to be targeted again or an agent who could not prove he had successfully carried out his orders.

**Human Operatives**

Although some stigmatics and supernatural beings infiltrate mundane agencies for their own reasons, most have to hide their presences and abilities just as much as the Unchained do. Ordinary agencies usually identify outcasts by purest luck, unless a demon is careless. What they lack in unnatural capabilities, however, these institutions make up in sheer numbers — both the number of organizations that operate in the two cities and the number of agents each of these groups has in the field. If they run into something they can’t even explain much less capture, these operatives are likely to call for help from agencies with more exotic resources — or have
that help thrust upon them when their reports start showing certain irregularities the more extraordinary organizations are trained to spot.

**Volkspolizei**

The Volkspolizei, or VoPo, are responsible for law enforcement in East Germany. Despite this role, they receive training and some equipment (armored personnel carriers, artillery weapons, etc.) more commonly associated with a military organization. Moreover, their officers must be members of the GDR's ruling Socialist Unity Party. Like police virtually everywhere, the VoPo issue citations for minor offenses, investigate crimes, make arrests, respond to disturbances, and generally act as the arm of the law within East Berlin. Most are professional, politically orthodox (at least outwardly), and genuinely interested in the well-being of the people and precincts they protect.

The VoPo are not intelligence operatives, although they will not hesitate to report any suspicious characters or behavior they notice on their beats to the appropriate authorities. A demon most often runs afoul of the VoPo when he commits some crime and does not adequately cover his trail afterward. Although forensic science is still fairly primitive in 1961, traces from fingerprints and footprints to ballistic signatures and autopsies can still help the police catch a perpetrator who doesn’t take sufficient countermeasures.

**Grepos**

The Grenzpolizei (frequently shortened to Grepo) are the East German border police responsible for guarding both the Berlin Wall and the inner German border (the longer, similarly fortified boundary between East and West Germany). When a refugee is gunned down while fleeing East Berlin, it is almost always a Grepo who fires the fatal bullet. They have orders to shoot to kill directly from the highest authorities in the GDR, and those police killed or wounded in the line of duty receive lavish praise and awards from East Germany's government.

For demons who must travel between the Berlins, the Grepos are a largely stationary obstacle. These police patrol the border or monitor the Wall from one of the city’s many guard towers. If they spot a refugee or other suspicious person, they sound an alarm, illuminate the target with spotlights, and do not hesitate to use lethal force to bring him down. Although Grepos don’t receive extraordinary equipment or training, the death strip near the Wall has been designed specifically to stack the deck against refugees:

There is no cover to be had on the ground, while Grepos in watchtowers or bunkers enjoy defensive fortifications (Durability 2; Size 10). A spotlight in the eyes at night might impose the Blinded Tilt (which can be resolved by turning away from the light). Climbing the Berlin Wall is an extended Strength + Athletics + Equipment roll at a –2 penalty due to the difficulty of climbing a barbed wire fence, with each roll requiring 10 seconds (3 combat turns). Reaching the top of the wall requires 5 successes. Failed rolls impose Conditions normally (see p. XX) and also cause one point of lethal damage to the climber.

**Stasi**

The Ministry for State Security (Stasi for short) is the German Democratic Republic’s secret police, which maintains an impressively effective and repressive intelligence agency. It has its headquarters in East Berlin, with several other offices in other parts of East Germany. Through its various branches and services the Stasi monitors every possible channel through which subversive thought can flow — from obvious targets like visiting foreigners and communications
(mail and phone) to citizens’ garbage (lest it contain suspicious Western foods or materials). It spies on the population mainly through a vast network of citizens turned informants, and fights any opposition by overt and covert measures including arrest, torture, and execution. It is currently honing alternate methods of crushing dissidents using blackmail, defamation, and relentless acts of psychological warfare.

The Stasi works closely with the KGB, and they have a reputation among the citizens of East Berlin that is as fearsome as their Soviet peers. Its agents are fiercely loyal to the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. Some among the VoPo might pay lip service to the Party’s ideals to avoid rocking the boat and capsizing their careers, but members of the Stasi are true believers in the communist ideals of the GDR. Every major industrial plant has an undercover Stasi officer monitoring its workers for signs of disloyalty or sabotage. Every apartment building has at least one Stasi spy reporting who visits whom. Their agents also operate in every hospital, school, and university to ensure the intellectual elite do not deviate from political orthodoxy when interacting with patients and students. They frequently infiltrate religious and artistic organizations that often nurture dissidents, using the intelligence they gather to identify ring leaders and spread discord among the groups.

Suspicious both by nature and profession, Stasi officers investigate anyone they suspect of subversive intentions or enemy connections. They break into homes without warning to search for contraband, check public records to root out those using false identities, and carefully monitor the activities of those suspected of sedition. While the Stasi can have a hair trigger when dealing with innocent East Germans, officers don’t waste their time pursuing a target who is clearly not involved in anything problematic. Once their initial surveillance comes back negative, they will likely pull out and turn their attention to other suspects.

A demon who falls under the suspicion of the Stasi has a real problem on her hands, however. The preliminary investigation, in addition to potentially catching her acting out of character for her Cover, can quickly wear away the thin guise of mortality that she relies upon to keep herself hidden from the God-Machine’s agents. The more the secret police dig into her history and lifestyle, the more flaws they find in it, prompting them to investigate further, which erodes the outcast’s Cover all the more.

KGB

This Soviet security agency has operations throughout the world. While their networks of spies allow them to collect intelligence on the enemy, the KGB’s most powerful espionage weapons are its counterintelligence operatives. They have infiltrated key agencies of the governments of many Allied nations and use their positions to feed misinformation to the enemy in order to sow discord internally and bring more Soviet operatives into these organizations. In East Berlin, the KGB oversees the operations of the Stasi and ensures the GDR’s government’s continued cooperation with the Soviet Union.

Many among the Unchained suspect the KGB’s effectiveness at home and abroad, and its seeming prescience regarding enemy actions, are not entirely the work of mundane operatives. They see the panoptic awareness and calculating intelligence of the God-Machine in the agency’s methods of operation. Inquisitors are aware of at least one hunter angel among the KGB officers in East Berlin. How many more remain hidden from them? Some outcasts believe the God-Machine is the motive force driving the whole Soviet Union, building up Infrastructure at key points throughout the world under the guise of merely collecting information and
spreading disinformation. Whatever the truth, the KGB seems particularly interested in both sides of Berlin.

**Bundesgrenzschutz**

The Bundesgrenzschutz, or BGS, began as a West German border control force responsible for monitoring and controlling the traffic between East and West Germany. Over the last decade they have evolved into a more generalized police force and have a considerable presence in West Berlin in both of these capacities. The BGS performs many of the same duties as police in other cities, but they are also responsible for detaining those attempting to smuggle illicit goods, spy gear, or Soviet agents into West Berlin. This makes them suspicious of outsiders, especially those from Communist Bloc nations. They are also likely to take an interest in possible espionage-related activity to a much greater degree than do East Berlin’s VoPo officers. Their city is surrounded by an enemy that seeks to infiltrate, undermine, and overweight it, and the BGS knows it all too well. The Berlin Wall may have lessened the likelihood that matters will again escalate to tanks rolling down the city streets, but a siege is still a siege.

**The Berlin Brigade**

At the end of World War II, West Berlin was divided into three sectors, each controlled by one of the Allied nations. France administers the northern sector, the United Kingdom the central sector, and the United States the southern sector. While the day-to-day civil authority rests with Berlin’s citizens, the three nations maintain military garrisons and intelligence operations in West Berlin. They nominally cooperate with each other, but conflicts occasionally arise over jurisdiction, and spying on one another isn’t unknown.

The Berlin Brigade refers to the three foreign military forces operating within West Berlin — the American Berlin Brigade, the British Berlin Brigade, and the French Forces in Berlin. From the perspective of the Unchained, these occupying armies represent an unknown quantity. Foreign soldiers and agents enter and leave West Berlin on regular rotations, and while most are mere humans, angels, other demons, and stranger creatures often use these changes of the guard to slip into and out of the city. Each fresh group of soldiers sets off a flurry of activity as the outcasts scramble to identify which new arrivals are enemies, which are potential allies, and which are third parties best left to their own devices.

**Psychic Operatives**

Although few humans manifest psychic abilities, those who do are often targets of recruitment campaigns by intelligence agencies and secret police on both sides of the Iron Curtain. No small number of psychic operatives find themselves stationed in Berlin, where their talents can be of especial use in the intrigues of East versus West. Although most aren’t directly aimed at demons, Unchained who exhibit suspicious behavior run afoul of them with irritating frequency.

**Gespenster**

The Stasi actively recruits psychics into the Ministerium für Staatssicherheit – Medienkorps, more often called Gespenster when it finds its way into rumor. Although many join only unwillingly, by the time the senior leadership of Gespenster has completed a conscript’s training and psychic conditioning the new agent is utterly devoted to the Communist ideals of the German Democratic Republic. Although a handful of Gespenster agents possess kinetic powers — such as Biokinesis, Psychokinesis, or Telekinesis (see *Demon: The Descent* p. XX, XX, and XX) — its most terrifying operatives possess abilities that allow them to spy on people in new
places, such as Aura Reading, Clairvoyance, and Telepathy (see Demon: The Descent p. XX, XX, and XX).

Telepathy is particularly common in East Berlin’s Gespenster because it is such a potent method of interrogation. When the Stasi captures an enemy agent who cannot be forced to betray his secrets by conventional means, officers often bring a Gespenster telepath into the investigation. Gespenster’s involvement doesn’t usually lead to a dramatic confession, but a telepath can pluck a piece of sensitive information from the victim’s mind in a fraction of the time required for a traditional interrogation. Over the course of a few days, a small team of telepaths could squeeze out every drop of actionable intelligence from the target of their interrogation. This is especially valuable if harming the target might have adverse political consequences, as this process of ripping away every state secret a diplomat possesses does not leave so much as a bruise.

If falling under the scrutiny of the Stasi means trouble for a demon, attracting the attention of Gespenster is even worse. They have files on practically everyone in East Berlin, which they routinely cross-reference with the information their telepaths collect during interrogations. Contradictions invite additional scrutiny. Gespenster knows supernatural creatures exist and makes an effort to identify and track them. This is a particularly serious problem for demons, whose Covers weaken if subjected to close examination.

**KGB Iron Comrades**

The Iron Comrade Initiative was conceived as a means of creating elite soldiers for the USSR. By injecting subjects with powerful drugs or exposing them to radiation, the Initiative hoped to discover a reliable means of causing soldiers to manifest supernatural abilities. Most of these experiments proved fruitless, usually succeeding only in causing fatal cancers or radiation poisoning. In 1947 the KGB captured a powerful being of undisclosed origin, which it turned over to the Initiative several years later. The scientists of the Iron Comrade Initiative found a way to tap the creature’s power and distill it into a form that could be administered to the subjects of their experiments by a process that came to be known as the Red Iron Method.

Although the Red Iron Method has far less than a 100% success rate (closer to 10%), and while fully half its subjects do not survive its effects, the USSR considers it a success and has enrolled many of its graduates into the KGB as enforcers. Most of the Iron Comrades manifest multiple supernatural talents. Kinetic abilities like Biokinesis, Psychokinesis, or Telekinesis (see Demon: The Descent p. XX, XX, and XX) are the most common, but Aura Reading, Omen Sensitivity, and Unseen Senses (see Demon: The Descent p. XX, XX, and XX) frequently manifest as secondary capabilities.

Even though Iron Comrades are stationed throughout the world, at least a dozen operate in East Berlin, where agents of the KGB act as minders for the Stasi. These psychics often spot security risks and enemy operatives that their less sensitive colleagues miss, but their primary purpose is to identify and neutralize supernatural beings within East Berlin. To this end they have full authority to take command of East German police and soldiers in operations targeting these creatures. Demons are not their primary prey, but those Unchained who use flashy powers or take their demon forms in public soon learn that the God-Machine is not the only one with armies of hunters at its disposal.

**MI-13 Spy Hunters**
In 1953, the British learned of the presence of Soviet spies that had reached the highest levels of the Secret Intelligence Service — also called MI-6 or the SIS. These enemy agents proved elusive. They seemed to know every move MI-5 (the United Kingdom’s counter-intelligence agency) made to identify and capture them before the operation even started. It was as if both MI-5 and MI-6 were positively rotten with enemy informants, and for three years the SIS labored under the uncomfortable reality that nearly every mission they undertook would be compromised — a state that made their work virtually impossible. The defection of one of the KGB’s Iron Comrades stationed in London brought the truth to light. The USSR had discovered a means of giving their agents psychic abilities that were the true source of their seeming omniscience. Although the defector didn’t know enough about the Red Iron Method to allow the SIS to duplicate its effects, the existence of such a process gave the British government pause.

To combat this mentalist gap they collaborated with a similarly conceived section of the CIA to recruit psychics throughout the West. The result was MI-13, a joint counterintelligence taskforce focused on identifying, hunting down, and eliminating (or turning) enemy agents. The section is still new and small, so its spy hunters operate only in areas enemy espionage operations are likely to target — London, Washington, and of course Berlin. The psychic talents of its agents vary widely but tend toward clairsentient abilities — Aura Reading, Clairvoyance, Medium, Mind of a Madman, Omen Sensitivity, Psychometry, and Unseen Sense (see Demon: The Descent, pp. 298-302). Telepathy is prized but rare, and only a handful of MI-13 operatives possess kinetic talents.

The Unchained of West Berlin often complain that MI-13 operatives have an uncanny knack for turning up at the most inconvenient times. The psychics can’t identify demons on sight, nor are their visions of the future more than vague hints, and yet they tend to turn up wherever an undercover agent is in the process of compromising his cover. Whether it is the operatives’ training or their psychic abilities, this precognitive gift frequently places them in the path of demons who are rather unhappy to see them.

**What Is to Come**

The Cold War’s pressure has been building since the end of World War II, and it is about to get more intense than anyone expected. Nations on both sides of the conflict test nuclear weapons more often with every passing year. Advances in ballistic missiles and nuclear submarines make it all the more certain that any large-scale confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union will spell humanity’s doom. The superpowers conduct proxy wars, involving themselves in the political struggles and civil wars of other nations (such as the Vietnam War) in order to spread their ideals or prevent their rival’s ideals from spreading. The space race becomes another proxy conflict.

**1960**

1960 sets the stage for many of the conflicts of the next year. In February, France, an American ally, tests its first atomic bomb. In April, the US moves nuclear missiles into Italy, within striking range of Moscow. A month later, an American covert surveillance plane is shot down over the Soviet Union and its pilot captured in what became known with embarrassment as the U-2 Incident. These three events put the Soviet Union on the defensive, and its leaders increasingly feel they must defend its interests. The siege mentality only intensifies in June when
the People’s Republic of China declares their version of Communism superior to that of the
USSR, depriving the Soviet Union of a critical ally on their eastern front.

In West Berlin, someone murders an elementary school teacher with a sickle and sledgehammer. The body is found in the victim’s locked house, with no sign of entry or exit anywhere in the building. No reliable witnesses come forth, and the killer’s identity remains unknown. The killer goes on to murder more elementary school teachers but remains elusive. Due to the curious choice of murder weapons, the press nicknames the killer Red Ivan.

1961

In January the US closes its embassy in Fidel Castro’s Cuba. Three months later, a CIA-backed military intervention intended to overthrow Castro fails spectacularly in the Bay of Pigs Invasion, prompting Cuba to publicly declare itself a socialist nation by the year’s end. Also in April, Yuri Gagarin becomes the first human in space, prompting President Kennedy to counter with a challenge to place an American on the moon by the end of the 1960s. More ballistic nuclear missiles within striking distance of Moscow are deployed to Turkey and the UK. At the end of October, the Soviet Union detonates the biggest thermonuclear weapon ever tested and intensifies its testing of other nuclear weapons.

In August, after talks break down between the US and USSR over the future of Germany, the Soviets build the Berlin Wall. October sees the Berlin Crisis — a tense tank standoff between US and USSR forces at Checkpoint Charlie near the heart of Berlin. Although it ends peacefully after less than a day, the incident marks a considerable escalation of tensions between East and West, one centered on the two Berlins.

At the end of 1961, no one knows whether the Wall will be a permanent feature of Berlin or whether the Soviet Union will relent and demolish it. Some in the US and UK regard the erection of the Wall with a kind of relief, as a sign that the Soviets and GDR have no immediate intention to conquer West Berlin; but for the Germans living there, it remains a shocking symbol of chilling relations between the neighboring halves of the divided city. Those with families and friends on the other side don’t yet know whether they will see these loved ones again.

Surrounded as it is by communist East Germany, West Berlin’s continued existence as a bastion of capitalist democracy is by no means assured, and its fate rests with powers beyond the control of its citizens — the political fortitude and military might of the NATO allies in the West and the Warsaw Pact nations in the East.

A human sorcerer in East Berlin attempts to open a magical gate leading through the Wall and is the first to encounter its arcane echo. He and one of his allies are arrested by Gespenster, which executes them for treason a few days later. The sorcerer’s second companion and his accomplice on the western side of the Wall remain at large.

1962

The walls between East and West rise ever higher during the following year. The Soviet Union replaces the simple Berlin Wall of razed streets and wire fences with an improved fence watched by more towers and guards, all of whom have orders to shoot anyone attempting to cross the death strip into West Berlin. More East German refugees will die attempting escape in 1962 than in any other year of the Wall’s existence.
The Cuban Missile Crisis in October brings the world closer to thermonuclear war than it has ever been. The Soviet Union secretly installs ballistic missiles in Cuba, within striking distance of many American cities. When President Kennedy learns of this emplacement, his advisors encourage him to invade Cuba outright but he hesitates, concerned that Moscow will retaliate by capturing West Berlin. He ultimately orders a naval blockade of the nation and initiates tense negotiations with Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev. During talks, American ships have orders to fire if fired upon, and an American surveillance plane is shot down over Cuba. B-59, a Russian nuclear submarine, is targeted by US depth charges and, believing war may have already started, very nearly launches a nuclear torpedo. Despite these provocations, negotiations continue. After two weeks spent on the brink of nuclear war, the Soviet Union agrees to withdraw the missiles from Cuba in exchange for Kennedy’s agreement to withdraw the nuclear weapons it has in Turkey.

An explosion destroys a large warehouse in Western Berlin and kills 16 people. The French Forces in Berlin block the West German police investigation when it is discovered that most of the victims were dead before the explosion. The area remains under strict quarantine for most of a month, but rumors of half-mechanical bodies savaged by saber-toothed lions persist. Several months later, Professor Lidenbois, the parapsychologist brought into the warehouse as an expert investigator, is scheduled to present a paper at the University of Paris titled “Elohim and the Eloi.” A week before his presentation his home burns down in an apparent gas explosion, destroying his research and all the copies of his paper, although abstracts of “Elohim and the Eloi” continue to circulate among occult investigators.

1963

After maintaining a strict border closure since the construction of the Berlin Wall, the GDR agrees to allow West Germans to visit East Berlin during the Christmas season in 1963. These visits must adhere to strict limits, but they allow families sundered by the Wall to see each other for the first time since 1961.

The Cuban Missile Crisis drew attention to the need for a means of communicating directly between Moscow and Washington, and the two superpowers establish a hotline to facilitate this. The US, UK, and USSR sign the Partial Test Ban Treaty in July, agreeing not to conduct further nuclear weapons tests except underground.

The second half of the year is less auspicious. The Prime Minister of South Vietnam is assassinated in a coup on November 2nd, possibly one enabled by the CIA. On November 22nd, President Kennedy is also assassinated, and conspiracy theories will rage about the assassination for decades to come.

On Christmas Eve, seven people in West Berlin and nine people in East Berlin go missing. No bodies are ever found. Many civilians report hearing bells that night near the last places the victims were seen, but beyond a few dark jokes among the Americans about Santa Claus kidnapping innocent people, the authorities in both Berlins remain baffled. One of the missing Berliners is later found living on the streets of New York City, but he appears to have forgotten his native tongue and only speaks English with a heavy German accent.

1964
The Berlin Wall continues to claim the lives of refugees fleeing East Berlin. The Soviet Union lays plans for improvements to the existing wall, although these will not be put into effect until the following year.

In August, President Lyndon B. Johnson claims North Vietnamese naval vessels attacked American destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin. Although this claim is later found to be misleading, it is used as a pretense for the US becoming involved in the ongoing Vietnam War. In October, China becomes the fifth nuclear power after testing its first atomic bomb.

MI-13 identifies six KGB agents in West Berlin, including two Iron Comrades, after receiving a tip from “an interested party.” Five are held for interrogation and quietly executed. The sixth is handed over to the informant in lieu of a monetary reward. This KGB agent’s body is later found flayed and dissected in the basement of a small church in the British Sector. The investigation into the murder is closed within days, the photographs of the crime scene sealed along with all other records of the incident.

1965

A concrete wall replaces the fence that had previously separated the cities. Residents of East Berlin are allowed, under very specific circumstances, to enter West Berlin. As in the previous two years, West Germans are permitted to visit East Berlin during the Christmas season.

In March, the US begins the sustained bombing of North Vietnam. It also invades the Dominican Republic out of fear of a communist takeover like the one in Cuba. Violence breaks out between India and Pakistan, in Indonesia, and in the African nation of Rhodesia (which declares its independence from Britain in November). In November, American forces fight their first major engagement of the Vietnam War in the Battle of Ia Drang.

Over the course of the year 40 women living in an East Berlin tenement give birth to identical twins — an extremely strange circumstance for a 50-unit apartment building. The Stasi declare the building off-limits to outsiders, and its residents are only allowed to leave for short periods while accompanied by police. At night neighbors report lights and strange noises coming from the tenement.

1966

At least another dozen people die at the Berlin Wall, most of them refugees gunned down by the East German border guards. After undisclosed incidents involving West German visitors during the Christmas season, the GDR suspends this program indefinitely.

France has felt years of festering dissatisfaction with its role in the alliance. With the close partnership of the US and UK, it feels that neither regards the French as an equal partner. France withdraws from the NATO command structure in March. It ousts all non-French NATO troops from France and refuses to allow any foreign nuclear weapons into the country. France remains a nominal member of the alliance, but French president Charles de Gaulle signals that, in the event of an East German incursion into West Germany, he wants the option of coming to a separate peace with the Eastern bloc instead of being drawn into a larger NATO–Warsaw Pact war.

Someone leaves a thousand folded paper cranes in a West Berlin park on the vernal equinox. The paper appears to be pages from antique copies of the Quran, the Kama Sutra, and the complete sonnets of William Shakespeare. On the morning of the summer solstice, a thousand more paper cranes appear in the same park. This one includes pages from the Bible, George Orwell’s
Nineteen Eighty-Four, and several car engine repair manuals. A similar incident takes place on the autumnal equinox. This time, a witness provides the police with the license plate number of the van believed to have been used to deliver the cranes, but the authorities make no move to pursue the matter.

1967

1967 sees a sharp drop in the Berlin Wall death toll, as East Germans increasingly come to regard the barrier as an insurmountable obstacle. Of the two known refugee casualties in that year, only one is shot. The other drowns.

In April, Latin American and Caribbean nations sign the Treaty Tlatelolco in an effort to prohibit nuclear weapons in the area. The violence begun in Indonesia in 1965 comes to a halt as President Suharto seizes control of the nation with the support of the US, whose full involvement in the conflict remains a subject of speculation. Israel responds with force to Egypt’s military posturing, culminating in the Six Day War in June. Flare-ups of Maoist popular movements in Southeast Asia prompt the Bangkok Declaration in August, which is intended to quell the spread of communism in the region.

In April the GDR issues silver-plated bullets to all of East Berlin’s Grepos. Three weeks later, no sign of this specialized ammunition remains in any of the guard towers along the Wall. Only three border guards remember ever seeing the bullets.

1968

In April 1968, East Germany enacts a new constitution intended to better-reflect the relations of socialist society and the present level of historical development. The original 1949 constitution had been at least superficially a liberal democratic document, while the new one is unabashedly communist, modeled as it was on the 1963 Soviet Constitution. The new constitution’s restrictions on civil rights and the heightened force used to enforce it trigger a fresh wave of escape attempts, many of them ending with more blood on the Berlin Wall, including that of a guard shot by a fleeing refugee.

In Vietnam, the Tet Offensive stretches on from January to June, calling into question the winnability of the war in the minds of Americans. On the Korean Peninsula, the American ship U.S.S. Pueblo is captured by the North Korean navy while conducting surveillance on Soviet forces in the area, although its crew is eventually released in December. In Czechoslovakia, the Warsaw Pact nations bring an abrupt and heavy-handed end to the liberalizing reforms of the Prague Spring.

The KGB shuts down an experimental “workerless factory” in East Berlin, citing safety concerns. Its manager and his staff of seven foremen are later executed for sedition. Ten minutes later the Iron Comrades are summoned to the execution yard to assist in disposing of the bodies. The corpses are cremated, dissolved in sulfuric acid, and then buried in a radioactive waste site.

In March, construction begins on the George Washington Building in West Berlin, which will be the tallest building in the world when it is completed. The project is abandoned six months later, and the construction site remains unoccupied for many years except for its population of at least 200 feral cats. Housecats who run away almost always find their way to the construction site, after which they lose all signs of their former domesticity.

1969
Only three refugees are shot while trying to escape to West Berlin. Higher productivity quotas as part of the Economic System of Socialization (ESS) afford residents very little time to plan escapes, and increased scrutiny by the KGB and Stasi to prevent industrial sabotage leave dissenters with fewer opportunities to cross the death strip.

Border clashes between China and the Soviet Union draw some attention away from Berlin in the early part of the year. In July, the Americans accomplish the first publicized manned lunar landing as Apollo 11 touches down. Later that year, Black Sun Cryptocartography — a major motivating force behind the ESS despite its capitalist ties — abruptly withdraws all its interests from the Soviet Union. ESS is abandoned as a failure early the following year. Libya overthrows its monarchy in September, and the new regime aligns itself with the USSR, expelling all American and British personnel.

A hospital in West Berlin successfully revives a woman who has been dead for a week. During the following month it reproduces this miracle on seven other people. American troops storm the hospital six weeks later, after which no further resurrections take place.

1970

Although the Berlin Wall’s penumbral shadow presented a significant obstacle to supernatural beings previously, some demons and other creatures had learned to circumvent it using their remarkable abilities. That changes in late January 1970 as the spiritual barbed wire that had previously surrounded West Berlin is mysteriously replaced with an almost impenetrable barrier. This forces supernatural creatures to rely on the same entrances and exits to West Berlin as humans do. Additionally, servants of the God-Machine heavily infiltrate the prisons where captured escapees are detained, and fully half a dozen demons fall into the hands of the angels as a result. Once this comes to light, outcasts who face inescapable capture at the Wall often commit suicide rather than face certain recasting in their creator’s forges.

In March the US, UK, and USSR (among others) sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Although hailed as a step away from the brink of human extermination, some among the Unchained see potential God-Machine influence at work.

1971

In March, a major supernatural incident at the Berlin Wall requires the direct intervention of most of East Berlin’s Iron Comrades to suppress. Eyewitness accounts of the event remain confused and often contradictory, but it appears that several different supernatural beings joined forces to break through the Wall. After this event the GDR adopts procedures to cover up the deaths of subversive non-humans. Official death tallies and border guard reports no longer include those suspected of having supernatural origin. In September, the Four-Power Agreement on Berlin eases restrictions on visits to East Germany by West Germans.

In October, the United Nations officially recognizes the People’s Republic of China as the legitimate government of China. The God-Machine’s servants break up the largest Insurgent Agency in Moscow. Some of the Soviet demons who avoid capture flee to East Berlin and are pursued by hunter angels.

1972
The Four-Power Agreement on Berlin takes effect, and the number of reported escape attempts diminishes significantly as a result. A faction of Integrators in East Berlin put their plan into action (see p. XX).

Nixon visits China in February — the first such visit by an American president since the formation of the People’s Republic of China. In May, agreement on the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks marks the beginning of détente between the United States and the Soviet Union.

1973

The Berlin Wall and its arcane shadow continue to enforce West Berlin’s isolation, and turf wars between supernatural creatures and their various internal factions break out throughout the city. This conflict attracts the attention of powerful hunter organizations, which soon become a greater threat to the Unchained in West Berlin than are the angels. East Berlin’s demons, having narrowly avoided falling into a major God-Machine trap, go deep into hiding and remain there throughout 1973.

In January, the US ends its involvement in Vietnam. In September, the CIA helps Augusto Pinochet overthrow the democratically-elected, Marxist-leaning president of Chile. This regime will later earn a reputation for human rights violations.

1974

Having gained international recognition as a nation, East Germany’s relationship with West Germany appears to be thawing. At the same time, the GDR amends its constitution to remove all references to the previously united Germany and to declare its close friendship with the USSR. The Socialist Unity Party of Germany intensifies its efforts to bring East Germany into alignment with Soviet ideals of communism, which involves cracking down on dissidents internally.

The US and USSR have reached, if not peace, then at least a stalemate. The Soviet Union tightens its grip on the people of Eastern Europe, brooking no dissent on its side of the Iron Curtain. The Stasi arrests several Inquisitors who were working to reestablish communications with West Berlin’s Unchained. Presumably, these outcasts are executed or turned over to hunter angels.

In West Berlin, hunters sent by the Church abduct the son of a demon and attempt to blackmail the outcast into betraying her fellow Unchained. They arrange a meeting in a local church, which burns to the ground during negotiations. The demon, her son, and the hunters are never seen in Berlin again, nor are any bodies recovered. The Church regards this as a direct challenge to its authority and sends more demon hunters to West Berlin.

1975

The GDR begins replacing the concrete Berlin Wall with a high-tech, reinforced concrete barrier twelve feet high and four feet wide. This Grenzmauer 75 includes highly sophisticated measures to prevent escape. These include smooth pipe at the top of the wall to make it harder to scale, barbed wire, anti-vehicle trenches, and fencing that triggers an alarm when touched. This is overseen by more than a hundred watchtowers, a score of bunkers, and guard dogs on runner leashes. The shadow war in West Berlin continues, although its participants have been forced to carry it out more quietly. In East Berlin, some of the Unchained emerge from hiding and resume Agency activity.
In April, the communist Khmer Rouge take power in Cambodia, beginning their reign with a genocide that will become known as the Killing Fields. Also in that month, communist North Vietnam conquers American-supported South Vietnam. The US and USSR participate in a joint space mission called the Apollo-Soyuz Test Mission, marking the symbolic end of the space race between the nations.

1976–1980

The Grenzmauer 75 increasingly becomes an intimidating fixture in Berlin’s landscape, but East Germany has serious troubles of its own. Many of its problems are economic — debts pile up until the GDR has a growing cash flow problem. The Soviet Union, embroiled in conflicts throughout the world (most notably, Afghanistan), is not in a position to lend needed support. Additionally, the Helsinki Accords ratified in 1975 have the unanticipated side effect of increasing dissent throughout the eastern bloc, and Soviet crackdowns on protests create an international backlash against the USSR. East Berlin enters a deep economic depression along with the rest of the GDR as civil rights abuses by the Stasi undercut the city’s morale and loyalty to communist ideals.

1981–1989

Newly elected American president Ronald Reagan rises on a tide of opposition to the policy of détente pursued by previous administrations. The US becomes more active on the world stage, sending forces and supplies into nations in an effort to ensure that their current or new regimes do not support the Soviet Union.

In 1983 Reagan labels the USSR an “evil empire.” He proposes the Strategic Defense Initiative (commonly known as “Star Wars”), which, in addition to being impossible with existing technology, increases the probability of nuclear war. The Soviet Union shoots down a passenger plane carrying a member of America’s Congress when it strays into the nation’s airspace.

At the height of this posturing and the deteriorating relations between the US and USSR, a Soviet early warning system mistakenly identifies a NATO war readiness exercise as a single thermonuclear ballistic missile launch from the United States. Had the Soviet operator responsible for monitoring the station not (correctly) dismissed the reading as an error, it would have meant global thermonuclear war. Even then, it is a near miss — the closest the world has come to Armageddon since the Cuban Missile Crisis. Able Archer 83 (the name of the NATO exercise) prompts the Soviet Union to arm its nuclear arsenal in preparation for a full-scale attack by the United States.

Following this incident, America opts for a change in tactics. President Reagan meets with incoming Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbechev in November 1985. In 1987, the president famously challenges the Soviet Union to tear down the Berlin Wall as a show of good faith. In 1989, with the Soviet Union virtually bankrupt, a series of peaceful revolutions take place throughout Eastern Europe.

In response to widespread protests in the second half of 1989, the GDR announces its intention to reopen the border between East and West Germany. On November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall is breached. It will be demolished more completely over the course of the next year.

History and History
Many of the historical hooks in this section, although assigned a specific year, could happen at any point during the Cold War. The Storyteller should feel free to use any that inspire her. Want the Integrators of East Berlin to betray the other Unchained this year, instead? Go right ahead. Think the “workerless factory” would make an interesting hook for the next story? Introduce it whenever you want.

The same holds true for the “real” history of the Cold War. In our world, the Berlin Wall evolves from a fence in 1961 to an imposing and seemingly impenetrable barrier in 1975. Few chronicles take place over the course of 14 years, but if you want the Grenzmauer 75 to be the Grenzmauer 62, instead, don’t hesitate to change history. After all, the World of Darkness is supposed to be a darker version of our own.

The Supernatural

The Unchained can’t tell to what extent the God-Machine is manipulating the Cold War. Few assume it exerts any direct influence over the conflict, but many more allow, when they are feeling paranoid, that it is at least a possibility. Whatever the truth, nearly all demons in Berlin recognize that their creator is using the standoff to its advantage. The seemingly unlimited budgets set aside for secret military projects provide it with no shortage of resources, and the God-Machine is certainly not above using nationalism to prevent people from asking too many questions about how that money is being spent. As a focal point of the international conflict, Berlin makes a good place to conceal the God-Machine’s projects, and Infrastructure proliferates in plain view of the demons who live there — watched over by angels and human authorities.

Agendas

The Unchained of Cold War Berlin are creatures of the world in which they find themselves. Many see everything through the lens of the events of World War II, and all feel the pressure of a potential nuclear Armageddon. An outcast’s Agenda often reflects her response to world events as much as or more than it springs from her views of the God-Machine. It is worth noting that most of the factions described below are not formalized. They represent a philosophical nuance within each Agenda, as well as modus operandi — a sort of range of paths on the Descent. While demons with similar methods and goals are more likely to band together into rings or share information, even demons with incompatible objectives must still work together to survive long enough to implement their grand designs. As well, outcasts of several factions actively seek out demons of opposed groups as a step in their plans. An infiltrator must befriend those she means to spy on and ultimately betray. Even if she never wavers in her faith in the rightness of her actions, she may yet come to respect these enemies with whom she must associate.

Inquisitors

An unprecedented number of demons Fell during World War II or in its aftermath, and the God-Machine has directed no small amount of attention to locating and recapturing its wayward servants. Those demons who have lost friends and allies to hunter angels and God-Machine spies — as well as those who were nearly captured themselves — are more likely to become Inquisitors.
Secrecy is the key to survival. Even the most paranoid of Inquisitors can seldom bring himself to huddle in a dingy apartment or squalid public tenement and do nothing. The God-Machine designed angels to act. Even Shields on long assignments do not sit idle. They are constantly looking for potential threats and creating elaborate defenses to protect their wards from harm. Fallen they might be, but outcasts still have many of the instincts they possessed as angels, and this includes the programmed drive to eschew lengthy periods of inactivity. Inquisitors feel just as compelled to act as other Unchained, but they attempt to minimize the risk that they will be discovered by the God-Machine’s agents.

With their mastery of intelligence-gathering techniques and disciplined caution, Inquisitors may seem like they would be natural talents among the cloaks and daggers of the Cold War. They are in fact the least likely to dabble in human espionage. Of the Agendas, they are the least active in the politics of East versus West. In part this is because many of them aren’t convinced that thermonuclear war presents the greatest threat to the Unchained, and most who do fail to see how the petty intrigues of a single city can tip the scales in either direction in any meaningful way. That should be left up to the demons of Washington, D.C. and Moscow. The Inquisitors of Berlin collect information about the Enemy, but if they have a universal goal in doing so it is to prevent the Unchained from falling into the hands of the God-Machine. This makes them the most cohesive of the Agendas, and though the Inquisitors of West Berlin may face slightly different obstacles than those in East Berlin, their methods and philosophies differ little from one half of the city to the other.

The Curators focus on collecting and organizing intelligence on the enemy, whether they do so almost compulsively, to satisfy their curiosity, or because they believe it will allow them to evade the God-Machine’s servants. While some do the legwork personally, many rely on networks of informants — often ones unwittingly placed in the position through regular application of Embeds like Living Recorder or Special Message. Curators seldom reveal their sources and often hesitate before acting on any intelligence in their possession (including sharing it with other demons) for fear the Enemy will realize the outcast has a spy in a sensitive position within one of its organizations. When a Curator can be convinced to act as an information broker, however, the secrets at her disposal can mean the difference between the success of a mission and its failure.

The Broadcasters believe that the best protection from the God-Machine they can have is a community of Unchained who do not draw their creator’s eye to Berlin. While they employ many of the same means of collecting intelligence as do Curators, the Broadcasters’ focus is on disseminating that information to other outcasts — particularly if it will allow demons to avoid entanglements with angels or servants of the Machine. The West Berlin Free Agency — the organization behind Radio Free Hell — is the brainchild of Broadcasters. For the last 15 years they have been the primary channel of communication between West and East Berlin, and the erection of the Wall has hurt them more than any other faction in the city. As quickly as they develop new methods of getting messages over the Wall, human authorities and the God-Machine agents close the gaps through which the Broadcasters’ messages slip. Some outcasts worry that the Broadcasters, in their desperation to maintain communication between the two halves of the city, have grown sloppy. They point out that in any war, priority is often given to eliminating enemy communication capabilities — especially immediately before a major attack — and in that light they fear what the sudden changes to Radio Free Hell might mean.
The **Tutors** agree with the Broadcasters’ goals in principle but maintain a narrower focus. They seek out newly Fallen demons and shield them from the God-Machine’s agents long enough for the newly Unchained to learn to avoid their creator’s eye unaided. Tutors usually don’t approach their protégés directly, working through intermediaries or using Embeds to pass warnings and instructions at critical moments. In the course of her surveillance of her target, the Tutor often unearths useful blackmail material and keeps a detailed analysis of her target’s capabilities that she can use to protect herself should the student later turn against his master. Tutors sometimes provide their services to more experienced demons, alerting those who are about to fall into one of the God-Machine’s traps. It is customary, particularly among the Unchained of East Berlin, to leave offerings of money and small comforts (cigarettes, vodka, etc.) at dead drops throughout the city that Tutors are believed to monitor. It seems so unlikely that these tokens of gratitude from their fellow outcasts are enough to see to a Tutor’s material needs that some demons suspect these Inquisitors support themselves using blackmail. No one admits to believing the persistent rumors that Tutors sometimes arrange for the God-Machine’s agents to capture intractable students who insist on ignoring the Inquisitors’ advice.

The **Observers** are the most hands-on of the Inquisitors. They infiltrate the ranks of the God-Machine’s servants to monitor its projects. Like Curators, they do not usually act on the intelligence they gather — at least not unless they can manufacture a way to make it appear that the information leaked some other way. Also, Observers are not Saboteurs or Integrators (although some lean one direction or another), which means they seldom interfere with the construction of Infrastructure or the work of angels and cultists unless these place the Unchained in harm’s way.

**Integrators**

Most of the Integrators of Berlin closely resemble the Turncoats of other places and times. Each Fell for his own reasons, and while he longs to return to the service of the God-Machine one day, he intends to do so in his own time and on his own terms. Some of these solitary pilgrims pursue earthly quests with a clear endpoint such as protecting a human as long as she lives or avenging a specific wrong — although not all Integrators who achieve these goals turn themselves over to the next angel they see. Others take up open-ended tasks like atoning for the crimes they committed during the war or serving the people of Berlin.

The **Penitents** maintain a loose connection with other Integrators. They may share a common general goal (returning to the God-Machine’s service), but the path and timing of that return is highly personal to the Integrator. No two agree on the exact terms or method, which makes an organized fifth column of Penitents virtually unthinkable. For this reason, outcasts of other Agendas largely regard Penitents as harmless. Saboteurs may consider them blind fools steeped in self-loathing and bent on quixotic quests of self-destruction, but even they recognize that these Integrators usually don’t pose a serious security risk.

The Cold War has given rise to a different kind of Integrator, however — one more capable of the single-minded pursuit of a shared goal. The **Faithful** fear that left to their own devices humans will eventually destroy themselves — and all the Unchained with them — in a massive cascade of atomic explosions, radioactive fallout, and nuclear winter. If humans cannot be trusted not to leap from the precipice, then only the Machine can prevent Armageddon. These Integrators believe the God-Machine is not self-destructive, and will take any steps necessary to prevent the kind of worldwide catastrophe a nuclear war would be. In fact, they believe the God-
Machine may be the only thing that will save humanity. The Faithful simply believe the God-Machine will prevent Earth-shattering disaster, whatever the Unchained might do. They don’t actively serve the God-Machine, but they try to avoid getting in the way of its projects. Some demons of other Agendas — particularly Tempters — adopt similar non-interference policies toward their creator and its servants for the same reason as the Faithful, even though they are not Integrators themselves.

The hope to which the Faithful cling has given rise to more proactive factions of Turncoats. All of them believe the God-Machine is the best hope the world has of escaping the thermonuclear doom that hangs over it. The main difference is they believe that World War II damaged or crippled the God-Machine in some way that has rendered it incapable of preventing catastrophe. Because these groups emerged independently of one another on both sides of the Wall, they take different forms in East Berlin than they do in West Berlin.

West Berlin
The Restorationists believe the God-Machine was badly damaged in the war and needs to be repaired. Furthermore, they are confident that the key to their ambition is a piece of critical Command and Control Infrastructure that once stood in West Berlin but was destroyed in the chaos of war. These Integrators understand enough of occult physics to recognize that simply rebuilding Berlin exactly the way it looked prior to the war will not harness the arcane forces necessary to reestablish the original occult matrix. A new piece of Command and Control Infrastructure must be built from scratch. A handful of Restorationists hope that this new Infrastructure will allow them to influence or even control the God-Machine, but that is probably a fantasy. The main obstacle to the Restorationists’ work is that the Unchained don’t have nearly enough knowledge of occult physics to design Infrastructure of this kind, although a handful claim (most of them falsely) to have constructed Infrastructure to maintain less complex occult matrices.

The Restorationists’ obsession with Infrastructure and arcane physics has made them some strange friends. These include Stigmatics, God-Machine cultists, and scholars of every discipline. Some have forged uneasy alliances with other supernatural beings and the humans who hunt them, usually by concealing their true natures. Sadly, these Integrators have been known to side with their allies in disputes that involve other outcasts, a position that has not made them popular. Restorationists are particularly likely to betray known Saboteurs, since members of that Agenda are the only ones in West Berlin who seem to consider this faction of Turncoats a real danger to Unchained society.

The Scales trust that the God-Machine has enough redundant systems that it will eventually repair any damage it sustained during the war. The key word, however, is “eventually.” These Integrators steep themselves in human espionage and bureaucracy and use their positions to prevent both the US and the USSR from gaining enough of an upper hand to trigger a nuclear war. Unlike Tempter groups that operate in a similar way, the Scales consider their work a stalling tactic. They are simply giving the God-Machine enough time to restore the systems it will need to create a long-term resolution to the Cold War.

East Berlin
The Monitors are Integrators who believe the God-Machine is currently operating below its optimal capacity because so many angels Fell during World War II and it is having difficulty compensating for their absence. Angels are, after all, a precious resource — arguably the least
replaceable of all the God-Machine’s servants. Most Monitors don’t often act on this belief. They simply don’t stop other demons from being recaptured by angels unless they have a personal stake in that outcast’s continued freedom. The Monitors belief is that the God-Machine needs a certain number of its angels back; after that it will stop scouring the Earth for demons and return to the serious business of preventing full-scale nuclear war. The Monitors won’t actively betray their fellow Unchained, but they certainly don’t intend to be among the ranks of outcasts rounded up and recast in their creator’s forges, either.

**Vigilantes** take a more active role in the process of returning demons to the God-Machine. While they share the Monitors’ core article of faith, they have a degree of respect for their fellow Unchained. Some try to win over other demons, convincing them to return to the service of the God-Machine. As this approach usually proves a non-starter among outcasts, nearly all Vigilantes find other ways of deciding which demons deserve to return to their creator’s service. They target outcasts who prey on humans, engage in criminal conduct, or recklessly endanger all the Unchained. Once a Vigilante identifies a target, he takes steps to draw God-Machine attention to her by any means at his disposal, ultimately flushing her out in the open so she can be captured by hunter angels. Some Vigilantes specialize in redirecting the attention of the God-Machine’s agents away from benevolent demons by giving the hounds a less savory outcast to pursue, instead. Because they help rid the city of outcasts whose actions endanger all demons, Vigilantes are quite well-regarded among the Unchained of East Berlin and have earned favors from some powerful demons, many of whom owe their freedom to a Vigilante’s timely intervention.

No demon openly admits to being a **Mole**. These Integrators operate deep under cover, earning the trust of other outcasts and collecting intelligence with the intention of betraying dozens if not hundreds of demons to the God-Machine when the time is right. Some believe this will return them to their creator’s good graces, while others hope it will not bother pursuing them after they make such a major offering to it. Many don’t expect to evade recapture but simply hope to help the God-Machine replenish the depleted ranks of its angelic servants so it can prevent humans from destroying themselves. Moles do not regard themselves as traitors but as martyrs in the service of humanity, angels, and their creator.

Future Fate: Monitors, Vigilantes, and Moles

Those who carefully read Chapter One of **Demon: The Descent** will recall that by the time the Berlin Wall falls, the Unchained of East Berlin routinely execute known Integrators — a practice they only gradually abandon after the reunification of Germany. Although 40 years of the Idealists’ cavalier attitude toward the capture of outcasts certainly wins them few friends among the other Agendas, their fellow Unchained can forgive this. They cannot sit idly by once they discover the Moles’ designs on East Berlin, however.

In 1972, having secured agents among nearly every faction in the East, the Moles contact powerful servants of the God-Machine and offer a gift of 100 demons. They even subvert the Vigilantes to aid in their coup. If the Moles’ plan succeeds, as many as half the Unchained in East Berlin will be returned to the God-Machine’s service against their will. Fortunately, an Inquisitor discovers the truth before the Moles can complete their act of betrayal. The Unchained of East Berlin go to ground virtually as one body and remain there for several months. The
Moles, their Vigilante tools, and most of the other Integrators in East Berlin are less fortunate, and the majority of them fall into the hands of the God-Machine’s hunter angels.

After this failed coup, the Integrators no longer receive the benefit of the doubt from their fellow outcasts. The Unchained of East Berlin show no mercy to any demon who admits Integrator sympathies. The outcasts will not even tolerate Penitents or the Faithful. This ruthless persecution of anyone who dares admit that they regret their Fall continues until the mid-1990s, and suspicion of Integrators in the former East Germany persists even into the early decades of the 21st century.

**Saboteurs**

Berlin’s Saboteurs do not share the Faithful’s belief that the atrocities of the last two wars occurred because the God-Machine merely miscalculated the human consequences of a few of its projects. Many believe their creator knew exactly what it was doing and that all of it— the incineration of Dresden, the Nazi death camps, Stalin’s purges of millions of his own people, and even the nuclear bombs dropped on Japan— was according to the God-Machine’s designs. Perhaps some occult matrix required human sacrifices on a hitherto unimaginable scale, or maybe the God-Machine had hundreds of smaller projects that required a London Blitz here, a D-Day there, a Battle of Berlin at some other point. The Soldiers don’t much care at this point, but they know their creator’s behavior has become completely unconscionable and they mean to put a stop to it before the God-Machine does something even worse. They already have their suspicions about the true purpose of this Cold War.

And if the Integrators are right about the debacles of the last couple decades being a sign that the God-Machine suffered damage to a critical system, what of it? The Unchained are no better equipped to fix the Machine than its cultists are. Nobody understands it. Nobody knows what drives it or even where its key systems are located. If it is an out-of-control machine driven mad by accidents in the wars it started for reasons it certainly never shared with its servants, it is still a machine. It can’t be reasoned with. Might as well try to talk a ticking time bomb out of exploding.

No. The God-Machine must be disarmed and dismantled, removed from the equation of human history forever. Without its influence, humans will come to their senses. They’ll still be ignorant and often petty, but they won’t engage in an act of nuclear war if it means their mutually assured destruction. The Cold War need not be a prelude to an Armageddon that takes place at a time of the God-Machine’s choosing. Some Saboteur methodologies are equally common on both sides of the Wall, while others are much more prominent in East or West.

The Freelancers are not guided by any grand strategy. Rage drives them to attack the God-Machine at any opportunity. They are not suicidal, but they are more likely to take risks. Other Saboteurs frequently treat them with derision for their impulsive behavior. Mostly, though, other Thugs worry that the Freelancers’ tendency to destroy Infrastructure and kill agents of the Machine will trigger exactly what most other Saboteurs are trying to prevent— nuclear war. The Freelancers usually scoff at this as a remote possibility at best. Occasionally one will muse that a premature Armageddon would present a considerable setback for the God-Machine’s project— one it will take steps to prevent— and so nothing is more likely to force the enemy to waste its resources and to direct its attention away from the Unchained than a sudden and unexpected
escalation of tensions. And if everything goes horribly wrong? Well, better to die free in the ruins of human civilization than to live in a world ruled by the Machine.

The **Cloaks** steep themselves in the espionage between East and West. While some do so because they genuinely subscribe to capitalist or Communist ideals, the majority use it to monitor and control the flow of intelligence between the two sides of the Cold War. The right misinformation in the right ear at the right time can implicate one of the God-Machine’s servants or draw attention to Infrastructure it would prefer remain hidden.

**West Berlin**

The **Anarchists** engage with the countercultural elements of West Berlin. They direct the storm of anger at the less benign aspects of capitalism — its greed, its arrogance, its hypocrisy. Many of their tools are people rebelling against the foreign occupation of their city, those who haven’t benefited from the post-war economic boom so often described as “the miracle,” or those disaffected young people in any free society who refuse to conform to social norms or kowtow to authority figures. Some are much more focused than that — such as members of the Girmann Group, which has helped 5,000 refugees escape into West Berlin so far this year. Some Anarchists have already found other uses for the Girmann Group’s human smuggling and extraction skills in Unchained society.

The **Silencers** take a much more cautious approach to their war on the God-Machine and its agents. When they need to stop a project, they would rather arrange construction delays due to misrouted materials or lost paperwork. In dismantling Infrastructure they usually arrange accidents or commit crimes (such as arson) that have an obvious cause with absolutely no connection to the Cold War. If only assassination will do, they will, whenever possible, make the murder look like a common crime, a suicide or, at worst, a minor cloak and dagger incident. They do this not because they fear their creator’s scrutiny but because, in this city where an explosion or gunshot could trigger World War III, they do not want demons to be responsible for nuclear Armageddon. That said they do get their hands dirty — more often than they’d like, in fact. When circumstances demand a swift but noisy solution, the Silencers do not hesitate. At that point, however, they go into damage control mode as soon as the immediate danger has passed — eliminating as much evidence of the event as they can. They destroy documents, scrub crime scenes, and alter the memories of witnesses with Embeds like Homogenous Memory. They are willing to kill the innocent to maintain secrecy, but most Silencers hesitate to do so. Partly, they recognize that it would mean resorting to the favored tactics of the Machine. More practically, though, every human exists at the center of a network of friends, family, and colleagues. Killing or abducting someone disturbs that web, sending powerful emotional vibrations into the wider world where it may attract the attention of anything from agents of the Enemy to human hunters looking to avenge the demon’s victim. The higher the body count, the larger the disturbance, and the greater the probability that the outcast will attract powerful new enemies. Given how many dangerous enemies the Unchained already have, no demon needs to add a gang of shapeshifters or a sorcerous cult to her problems.

**East Berlin**

The secretive top-down organization of the Communist government of East Germany provides the God-Machine with an easy means to direct its projects while keeping its activities hidden, but the **Bureaucrats** are onto its game. These outcasts insinuate themselves into all levels of government, exploiting the deep corruption of human officials to undermine the plans of the
Enemy. Their bribes and blackmail campaigns redirect resources at critical moments, alter orders for the movement of materials, and fabricate legitimate-seeming reasons why the government should dismantle Infrastructure. When they encounter a dupe of the Machine that they cannot manipulate, the Bureaucrats instead frame him for sedition and allow the brutal fist of the Communist government to crush him. Punishment in East Berlin is swifter than it is just—a mockery of a trial followed by a quick execution by firing squad—and the victim’s successor is almost always more cooperative, especially if he knows how his predecessor’s career ended.

The **Enforcers** specialize in identifying and neutralizing angels, believing that the God-Machine needs these servants to exert its will on the world. Some concentrate on destroying angels, forcing their former colleagues into the open and bringing them down by using their own Bans and Banes against them. Others focus on capturing them, and imprisoning or banishing them to places where they can no longer serve the Machine. A handful of Enforcers have built reputations for convincing angels to defect, using any number of means to orchestrate these Falls. These Saboteurs have arguably gained too much notoriety among the God-Machine’s agents, however, for they have begun to use the Enforcers’ own tactics against them. A particularly high-profile betrayal by one of the Unchained ended with half a dozen Enforcers captured by the Enemy, which was bad enough. When those fallen comrades returned to East Berlin recast as hunter angels with orders to seek out their old allies, however, it became clear to the Enforcers that the God-Machine had singled them out as targets of brutal psychological warfare. In the five years since that incident, the Enforcers have had to expand their focus to rooting out traitors who have infiltrated the Unchained—undercover angels, cleverly programmed Exiles, and even demons who hope to return to the Machine’s service. While they are particularly suspicious of anyone with Integrator sympathies, the Enforcers have a difficult time trusting any of their fellow demons.

**Tempters**

In some ways the Tempters of Cold War Berlin are not so different from contemporary Decadents. They surround themselves with wealth and power and useful connections, the better to enjoy their new lives on Earth. They seek out pacts more often than any other Agenda does and yet are the most likely to grow attached to their existing Covers. As deeply connected as they are to the pleasures of the world, it should not be surprising that the Tempters feel the weight of the nuclear standoff more deeply than do other demons. But they also try to divorce philosophical motives from their means of furthering their personal agendas. A Tempter’s modus operandi largely depends on whether he operates in West Berlin or East Berlin, while a Builder’s side of the Wall seldom affects his likely raison d’être. The “why” of a Tempter’s actions usually falls into one of a handful of broad philosophies.

After carefully examining the Gordian knot that is the Cold War, the **Nihilists** have reached the conclusion that nuclear war is inevitable. Furthermore, they see no reasonable means of preserving their own lives when it comes, and so they have decided to enjoy their brief existences on Earth as much as they can. As a result, Nihilists are the most likely to embody all the negative connotations of the word “hedonist.” They don’t actively work toward World War III, but they take no great pains to prevent it, either.

The **Meddlers** reject the Nihilists’ fatalism. They believe they can prevent Armageddon by working through human institutions. Their exact methodology varies from Meddler to Meddler. Some infiltrate military or police organizations, others government bureaucracies or political
positions, still more intelligence operations or corporate hierarchies. Whatever her means of gaining power, the demon uses her influence to make East and West less hostile toward one another — creating opportunities for cooperation to mutual benefit, encouraging social contact, and otherwise preventing either side from dehumanizing the other enough to force a war of annihilation. The Meddlers have seen some success in the two Berlins so far, but it is unclear how much the Wall will hamper their future efforts.

The **Adherents** buy into the human ideology of Communism or Capitalism and work to bring their side victory. So long as there are two equally powerful empires vying for world dominance, the threat of nuclear war will always exist, but if one side or the other can be defeated before it can employ atomic weapons, the opposition will have no further reason to hold that threat of obliteration over the planet’s inhabitants. Needless to say that the two camps of Adherents are not on speaking terms, despite the Meddlers’ efforts to bring them into accord.

Like the Nihilists, the **Escapists** do not believe nuclear war can be prevented. Rather than using that conclusion as an excuse to descend deeply into fatalistic hedonism, however, these outcasts regard it as a strong reason to build or reach Hell as quickly as possible. Few among the Unchained are as single-minded in their pursuit of the Descent as the Escapists are.

**West Berlin**

The **Blooded** make up the oldest and most powerful faction of demons in West Berlin. Many of them made their fortunes during the Great Miracle after the war, but most secured positions of political and economic influence before Hitler seized power. Although they accept newly Fallen members, their enemies call them the Blooded because so many of them Fell prior to the war and so participated or profited from its atrocities not as servants of the Machine but as outcasts. Their hands are as bloody as any Destroyer angel’s, and they do not have the excuse of being in the God-Machine’s service at the time they committed their crimes. The Blooded frequently hold powerful positions in government, the military, or the Church that allow them to maintain their high-society lifestyles. They chafe at what they feel is the undue influence wielded by the foreigner outcasts who make up the Expatriates, and they’re watching with growing trepidation as the Cooperative rapidly increase in size and power. The Blooded worry that if they are to maintain their position in West Berlin they will need to drive out or subvert at least one of these two rivals.

The **Cooperative** is almost entirely made up of demons who Fell during or immediately after World War II. Most have an almost religious devotion to the capitalist ideals of the West, if only because they have such an intense loathing both for the atrocities of the Nazis during the war and for the excesses of the Soviets during the Battle of Berlin. They have embraced capitalism and used it as their primary path to power. Many have taken positions in large corporations — from construction companies and hospitality conglomerates to retailers and manufacturers. Others have taken the free market a step further by steeping themselves in the city’s organized crime rings. The Cooperative seeks out soul pacts more actively and aggressively than either of its Western rivals. Its members frequently condemn the Blooded for their complacency during the war, but this is mostly propaganda. The truth is the Cooperative covets the wealth and power of the older Unchained and will do whatever it can to supplant them as rulers of the city. They regard the Expatriates as imperialistic interlopers who present an inconvenient complication in the Cooperative’s power struggle with the Blooded. Its members worry that as soon as they
topple the Blooded, the supposedly neutral Expatriates will seize the opportunity to fill the resulting power vacuum ahead of the Cooperative.

The **Expatriates** are demons who came to West Berlin from far off lands in the last 15 years. Most do not even have German Covers, instead favoring American, French, or British identities. Many left behind existing financial or political empires to come to the city — whether to escape entanglements back home or to elevate their business to an international level. They frequently gather power in areas of West Berlin dominated by the handful of foreign nations that have set up operations in the city — as military officers, diplomats, or contractors. The Expatriates regard the Blooded with disgust and believe they are doing West Germany a service by drumming these despicable demons out of power. They likewise recognize the Cooperative as an obstacle to their own rise in power, and the tensions between the two factions have grown steadily.

**East Berlin**

East Berlin once had several factions of Tempters who were as eager to plot each others’ downfall as those that now maneuver in West Berlin. Several years ago, however, their conflict grew too heated, and the God-Machine dispatched angels to the region. Forced to work together for mutual survival, the few remaining Tempter factions came to an understanding about which sources of influence would belong to whom. Any business that involves both sides of East Berlin’s Decadent society requires at least one demon from each faction be involved.

The **Parasites** wield their influence only in an official capacity. They are military officers, bureaucrats, and politicians growing fat on the many public welfare programs forced down East Berlin’s throats by the Communist puppet government. Technically, embezzling funds from these projects outright violates the Parasites’ mandate, but it is enough of a grey area that other Tempters usually look the other way.

The **Corrupters** draw their strength from organized crime or deal in illicit goods. Their black market of small comforts not normally available to East German citizens provides them with a steady income, but they can also secure access to more valuable contraband through their webs of bribery, blackmail, and theft. Some hire on as assassins or problem-solvers for desperate people. Others stockpile soul pacts, which are frequently the price for their more unusual goods and services.

**Berlin Personalities**

The God-Machine is especially active in Berlin. As a result, the divided city’s population of demons, angels, exiles, and stigmatics is high for a community of its size. What’s more, the population of Unchained changes constantly. Most of the demons of Berlin have lived there for years or decades, and more arrive all the time. A handful of Berlin’s lost and renegade angels have called the city home for centuries. Outcasts have a high attrition rate, as well. Hunter angels, rival demons, human governments, and supernatural beings whittle away their numbers as quickly as they grow.

**Links**

*The fuse at Junction U-34571 has burned out. Replacing it will restore power to the U-8 Line.*

**Background:** As a Guardian angel, Links’ mission was to preserve the structural integrity of Berlin’s subway system. The layout of the tracks and the movement of the trains on it were
Command and Control Infrastructure. The God-Machine analyzed patterns in the movements of passengers in the U-Bahn to make certain kinds of calculations. For 20 years Links guided maintenance crews to trouble spots and, when necessary, performed emergency repairs himself. During the bombing of Berlin in 1943, however, the God-Machine fell abruptly silent. Moreover, this disruption of communications coincided with a sudden decrease in Links’ power and a shift in his Ban that has made it more difficult for him to maintain the U-Bahn.

Links continues to maintain Berlin’s subway system to the best of his ability — less out of loyalty to his muted creator than as a means of self-preservation. He haunts the ghost stations and maintenance tunnels, feeding on the current pulsing through the electrified rails. U-Bahn passengers occasionally glimpse Links as they pass darkened stations. The exile has saved the lives of several maintenance workers who lost their way in the dark. He has a grudge against foreigners (especially the Soviets, Americans, and British), whom he blames for his current predicament, attacking or killing them whenever he thinks he can do so without creating more trouble for himself.

Description: Links resembles a minotaur made of clockwork and pistons. Jets of steam exude from his nostrils as he exhales. His tail has a plug for a standard electric socket, with prongs that flicker with blue sparks when he manifests his influence over electricity. Only his eyes appear fully organic, although they are the oversized eyes of a bull. Whenever Links must communicate with a human without causing a panic, he does so from Twilight or from a position where he cannot easily be seen.

Methods: Links usually makes himself known as a mysterious voice in the darkness, providing warnings to wanderers in order to prevent accidents (because these tend to result in transit authorities temporarily shutting down a line while they investigate). He frequently offers advice to maintenance workers, especially if they don’t notice a potential problem or can’t determine the cause of the issue that brought them into the tunnels — again, speaking from behind grates or around corners. Links has been known to grow desperate if a technical fault is not repaired quickly enough. In some cases he kidnaps humans and demands they perform the maintenance he could not — freeing them once they restore service.

Virtue: Protective
Vice: Impatient

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 3, Resistance 4

Influence: U-Bahn 2

Corpus: 11

Willpower: 7

Size: 7

Speed: 15 (species factor 7)

Defense: 3

Initiative: 7

Armor: 4/2
**Numina:** Blast (electricity), Implant Mission, Innocuous, Pathfinder

**Manifestation:** Discorporate, Materialize, Twilight Form

**Max Essence:** 15

**Ban:** Links cannot use or manipulate physical tools of any kind.

**Bane:** A melee weapon wielded left-handed.

**Fräulein Anja Uhrmacher**

*If I start this stopwatch when that clock strikes 4:44 p.m. it will trigger a riot within five blocks of the courthouse.*

**Background:** On an out-of-the-way street in West Berlin sits a clockmaker’s shop that has been in the same family since the middle of the 17th century. Anja is its current proprietor, and at the same time she has always been its proprietor — although this is the first time she has taken Cover as a woman. For the last 300 years, whenever Herr Uhrmacher’s current body grew too old to carry out his work he secured a soul pact with one of his grandsons, groomed him as a successor, and cashed in for the young man’s body. He did this because he believed it would keep him mystically closer to the original Cover the God-Machine provided and because it serves as a reminder not to get too attached to the lives he must live to avoid angelic attention.

Left with no suitable male heirs, the most recent Herr Uhrmacher deigned to steal the life of his only granddaughter, instead, and became Anja Uhrmacher. Fearing any husband would interfere with her work, she never married, instead choosing to have a child out of wedlock. What little time she spends outside her shop Anja spends badgering her 30-year-old son Matthias to get married and start a family.

Anja Uhrmacher has devoted her post-Fall existence to studying arcane physics and is probably the only demon who has ever been able to boast that she has created new Infrastructure. Those Integrators who call themselves Restorationists look to Anja as the founder of their clique and their best hope of successfully repairing the damage the God-Machine suffered during the war. She believes that, in restoring her creator to its former glory, she will be able to adjust its processes enough to redefine her role such that it regards her as an equal partner.

**Description:** Uhrmacher seldom takes any Cover other than the current proprietor of the clockmaker’s shop or his immediate successor (or predecessor). Currently, Anja is the only permanent Cover the demon has, although she keeps a few patch jobs on hand for emergencies.

Anja is a woman in her mid-50s with long-fingered hands and a small scar on her left cheek. She favors practical workman’s clothes when she’s in her shop and is never without her jeweler’s kit, which she uses to study and modify clocks and watches in the field. Although she wears dresses and long skirts with some frequency, these inevitably have several pockets.

In her demon form, Uhrmacher is a short, grey-haired creature with an oversized head and four spindly arms. Her eyes are slowly turning orbs that are solid black on one side and all white on the other.

The clockmaker’s shop is filled with thousands of clocks of every description. Many are comprised of exotic materials or have parts with no discernable purpose. Most unusually, only a few of the clocks show the correct local time. In fact, telling time is not the purpose of these clocks at all. They are all part of a crude work of Logistical Infrastructure that can manipulate
space and Cover. Functionally, with at least an hour of preparation Anja can use one of her Embeds or Exploits on any target she could see via Clairvoyant Sight. Using this ability more than once per chapter is a compromise. Furthermore, with an additional two hours of preparation time, Anja can generate this effect on behalf of a customer in her shop, affecting any person he has met or place he has visited in the last month — either with her own Embeds and Exploits or that of her customer. However, this latter use risks compromise.

**Storytelling Hints:** Anja is intelligent but obsessive. Very little of what she says about arcane physics or her clocks makes any sense to anyone else. She knows the history and function of every timepiece in the shop, but it is remarkable how any demon who has spent three centuries on Earth can be so blind when it comes to reading ordinary people. The way she talks about her son, for example, you would think he was a clock with a faulty gear that would work just fine if only she could open up his casing and poke at it with a screwdriver for a couple hours.

Anja has achieved something usually considered impossible — the construction of a functional work of Infrastructure. This makes her a useful plot device the Storyteller can take in many different directions as the needs of the tale demand. Is she a potential ally, a mentor figure for the ring, or a dangerous antagonist? A pillar of Unchained society or the object of outcast distrust? Are the angels actively hunting her, or has the God-Machine chosen to let her pursue her pet project for its own reasons? Has she largely avoided the attention of mortal governments, other supernatural beings, and human hunters, or is she days away from being arrested, abducted, or murdered?

**Virtue:** Analytical

**Vice:** Callous

**Incarnation:** Psychopomp

**Agenda:** Integrator

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 4

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

**Mental Skills:** Academics 2 (History), Crafts 5 (Clocks), Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 4 (Logistical Infrastructure), Science 3

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 1, Larceny 3 (Locksmithing), Stealth 3, Weaponry 2

**Social Skills:** Expression 1, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 2

**Merits:** Area of Expertise 1 (Logistical Infrastructure), Bolthole (clockmaker’s shop; No Twilight) 1, Eye for the Strange 2, Good Time Management 1, Interdisciplinary Specialty 1 (Clocks), Patient 1, Resources 2, Suborned Infrastructure 1

**Health:** 7

**Primum:** 5

**Demonic Form:** Clairvoyant Sight, Essence Drain, Extra Mechanical Limbs, Inhuman Intelligence, Inhuman Reflexes, Sense the Angelic, Sonic Acuity, Teleportation
**Embeds:** Cause and Effect (First Key), Efficiency, In My Pocket, Interference, Like I Built It, Lucky Break (Second Key), Momentum (Third Key), Never Here, Special Someone, Voice of the Machine

**Interlocks:** Anja’s Infrastructure is the manifestation of her first two Interlocks. The first allows her to create Logistical Infrastructure that manifests her Embeds and Exploits in other places. The second allows her to share this capability with other demons. She had hoped that Voice of the Machine would allow her to subvert the God-Machine’s control over its angels, but that experiment failed spectacularly.

**Exploits:** Affliction, Deep Pockets, Four Minutes Ago, Murder by Improbability

**Aether/per turn:** 14/5

**Willpower:** 8

**Cover:** 7 (patch jobs range from 1 to 4)

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 5

**Defense:** 4

**Initiative:** 8

**Armor:** None

**Infrastructure**

Few demons believe the God-Machine is directly controlling the Cold War, but almost all acknowledge it has not hesitated to take advantage of it to further its own goals. It frequently erects Infrastructure in areas that are politically or militarily important to one or both sides because it can use the heightened human secrecy and security to conceal and protect its projects. In that sense, Berlin is no different from Moscow, Washington, or London. Even taking that into account, however, the God-Machine has built a lot of Infrastructure in Berlin since the end of the war.

**Static Radio**

The military forces on both sides of the wall use encrypted radio signals to communicate with allies inside and outside of the city. Ordinary radio stations provide residents with music, news, and entertainment. The Unchained and the God-Machine hijack these channels frequently, adding hidden piggyback transmissions with messages to coordinate their allies or manipulate human listeners.

A high-pitched static hiss renders AM broadcasts between 400 and 700 kHz impossible for anyone within 150 miles of Berlin. This includes all of East Germany, as well as parts of West Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. At night, due to the skywave effect of the Earth’s ionosphere, this interference blacks out communications on these frequencies throughout Europe and can occasionally be heard as far away as Moscow. A radio can sometimes pick up intelligible voices at what have become known as AM 444 and AM 666. These nicknames are a bit misleading, as the broadcasts are usually slightly above or below those frequencies. Half the time, these voices speak in Russian. The other half, they speak English with an American accent.
Most of the time they recite seemingly random strings of numbers and letters, but occasionally a listener will catch a phrase or sentence that sounds like a coded order or warning.

The broadcast is coming from one of the high rises in the British quarter of West Berlin, but the large number of tall buildings in the area makes it difficult to pinpoint the exact source. Adding to the difficulty is the presence of the MI-6’s HQ within the suspicious area, so intelligence agents tend to take note of outsiders snooping around in the neighborhood.

It appears that the God-Machine is using these transmissions to direct its angels in East Germany and possibly the rest of Europe. Additionally, the radio static might be producing unknown side-effects in humans who are exposed to it, as radio signals frequently play a role in Concealment Infrastructure. Destroying the Static Radio would force the God-Machine to use alternate means of communicating with its agents in the region or cut it off entirely from some of its angels. Moreover, it might well lift the curtain obscuring many of the God-Machine’s projects in East Germany. Suborning it, on the other hand, would give the Unchained access to a secure communications channel used by the enemy to coordinate its servants — a powerful intelligence-gathering tool in the hands of any ring or Agency who pulled it off. An outcast might even find a way to manipulate the Static Radio’s broadcasts in order to issue false orders to angels or conceal demonic interests from human scrutiny.

The linchpin of this powerful piece of Logistical and Concealment Infrastructure is the radio room hidden near the top floor of the building used as a broadcast station. Aether gathers in the exposed steel girders on the roof of the high rise, which the Static Radio uses as broadcast antennae. Analyzing the Infrastructure once the demon identifies it requires an Intelligence + Science roll at a –3 penalty.

Interrogation Room #4
The Stasi has several interrogation rooms available to them in their East Berlin headquarters. The GDR’s secret police use them to conduct interviews intended to frighten small-time offenders, extract information from enemy operatives, or shatter the ringleaders of seditious groups to serve as a warning to their accomplices. Gespenster agents and Iron Comrades sometimes borrow these spaces, as well, but no one ever seems to notice Interrogation Room #4.

This piece of Elimination Infrastructure exists to decommission angels — particularly Fallen angels. Hunter angels dressed as plainclothes Stasi officers turn over their prizes to the Trumpet responsible for implementing the sanctions procedures. To the outside observer, Interrogation Room #4 looks little different from the Spartan décor of the other interrogation rooms. The furniture varies from seductively comfortable to extraordinarily frank about its real purpose. Torture implements, as the Messenger angel is fond of saying with a smile, are entirely optional.

A trap door in the floor opens to a river of molten steel — one of the God-Machine’s infamous reforging facilities — but few captured outcasts see that until the Trumpet completes its “exit interview.” In addition to this portal to the recycling facility, this Infrastructure has one other important property. For reasons of arcane physics none among the Unchained understand, demons in Interrogation Room #4 cannot lie. This doesn’t mean they must tell the truth, of course. That said, the Messenger angel serves only one function, and is very good at what it does. Very few demons who find themselves in Interrogation Room #4 successfully withhold all their secrets. Some manage to protect a close friend or their ring, but most betray everything long before they melt away in the God-Machine’s forge.
This Elimination Infrastructure has been the perennial target of the Unchained since the time when its existence was only a worrying rumor. Its location makes it difficult enough to access, and the steady traffic of hunters and angels reporting for decommission further complicates both rescue and sabotage attempts. When a demon who knows far too much about her fellow Unchained falls into angelic hands, however, a desperate and doomed extraction mission often takes place. Discussions of the potential benefits of suborning the Infrastructure are little more than thought experiments, but a place where even demons cannot lie has considerable potential as a tool of diplomacy among the Unchained.

The linchpin of this Elimination Infrastructure is the badge of office the interrogator Trumpet wears on its Stasi uniform. It only dons it when actively engaged in an interrogation. At other times the uniform and badge remain neatly folded in the angel’s tenement apartment three blocks away from Stasi HQ. Aether gathers in the furniture and implements of torture as they see use in Interrogation Room #4, although they sit in a storage room when not in use. Analyzing the Infrastructure requires an Intelligence + Intimidation roll at a –2 penalty.

The Day Trains

Checkpoint Bravo at the southern tip of West Berlin provides access to trains that travel across the GDR and into West Germany. Allied trains are not allowed to travel these tracks except by night. Ostensibly, this is to prevent NATO from collecting intelligence on East Germany while traveling between West Berlin and West Germany, but the truth is stranger than that. A scale in the rails near the Checkpoint Bravo end of the rail line determines the weight of freight and personnel the Allies ship into and out of West Berlin each night. The next day, East German trains ship an equal mass of materials in the opposite direction on the same tracks. The specific cargo makes no difference as far as anyone can tell, but if a train hauls a hundred tons from West Germany to West Berlin, a GDR train hauls a hundred tons from the outskirts of West Berlin to a depot a few miles away from the West German border.

The movement of the Day Trains sustains the continued presence of three powerful hunter angels in Berlin, and disrupting this daily ritual would force the trio out of the world for at least a few days if not significantly longer. The linchpin is the cargo scale concealed in the train station near Checkpoint Bravo. Traces of Aether collect in any cargo the Allied trains haul into or out of West Berlin, with its highest concentrations in trains themselves. Analyzing this Logistical Infrastructure requires a successful Intelligence + Crafts roll.

House der Technik

This five-story building in East Berlin has housed dozens of the God-Machine’s short term projects since its construction in 1907. It has been a department store, a cinema, a show room for General Electric of Germany, a Nazi office building (and later POW prison), and, most recently, the German Free Trade Union Federation. Records concerning its use between 1914 and 1924 have vanished, but after 1924 it had a basement (which it lacked in the original plans), and the floor plan has changed considerably from its 1907 blueprints. In all that time it has never been renovated, only appropriated for its new function. All attempts to order its demolition have mysteriously failed to be carried out. The building itself benefits from potent Concealment Infrastructure that has been used to cover up dozens of minor works of Logistical and Defensive Infrastructure.

The linchpin of the building’s Concealment Infrastructure is a capsule that has gotten stuck in the pneumatic tubes between the third and fourth floors. It contains an uncashed check made payable
to the House der Technik’s original architect. Aether collects in each pneumatic capsule the building uses. A demon who wishes to analyze the Concealment Infrastructure of the building must succeed on an Intelligence + Politics roll at a –3 penalty. The lesser projects the God-Machine frequently houses in the House der Technic have their own linchpins and functions, but their short-term nature grants any analysis attempts a +1 bonus.

Future Fate: House der Technik
After the fall of the Berlin Wall, a community of squatter-artists takes over House der Technik and renames it Kunsthaus Tacheles. It remains an artist commune well into the 21st century. Perhaps the Unchained successfully suborned its Concealment Infrastructure to create several Bolt Holes in the building. Or maybe it became a squatters’ haven because that Concealment Infrastructure was destroyed. Possibly, however, the God-Machine determined that it would get no further use from the building and abandoned it.

Pergamon Museum
Situated on the Museum Island in East Berlin, the Pergamon houses countless relics from ancient times. It suffered damage and looting during the war but reopened with its remaining collection in 1958. Its proverbial scepter and crown jewels are four ancient architectural works packed up stone by stone over the course of a few centuries — the Pergamon Altar (which gives the museum its name), the Market Gate of Miletus, the Ishtar Gate, and the Mshatta Façade. Together they represent four distinct empires at the height of their power — Ancient Babylon, the Greek Empire, the Roman Empire, and the Umayyad Caliphate.

The museum and its four huge treasures are part of a massive work of Logistical Infrastructure. Each is a gateway that opens at midnight on certain nights and allows travel to and from the architectural work’s point of origin — using principles of sympathy. These portals remain open for 12 minutes before becoming ordinary doors between various exhibit halls once more. The number of days between opening nights varies according to a fixed rising and falling cycle that corresponds with the first 12 numbers in the Fibonacci sequence — 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, and 89. At the beginning of the cycle the doors open on two consecutive nights, after which the openings take place every other night for two openings. The fifth opening in the sequence takes place after two nights with no opening. The number of days without openings increases until the twelfth opening. After this, the gap shrinks using the same principles. The thirteenth opening takes place on the 90th day after the twelfth opening, and then the period between openings shrinks to 55 days, 34 days, and so forth until the end of the cycle sees openings on two consecutive nights and the sequence begins again from the start. This means that the 23rd, 24th, 1st, and 2nd openings take place over the course of four consecutive nights.

The God-Machine uses the museum to move personnel and materials between the four sites. It never moves supplies into or out of Berlin itself, however, although it is not clear why. On nights of opening, a Shield disguised as a security guard patrols the museum to ensure no one disrupts the supply line or sees something he shouldn’t. It also prevents in-the-know GDR refugees from using the gates as a means of escaping East Berlin. Aether collects in each gateway during openings. The linchpin is an out-of-the-way gallery that lies at the exact center of mass for the four gateways. Museum patrons almost never enter this gallery, which features an ancient clockwork device reminiscent of the Antikythera mechanism whose gears whir and turn only
during the 12 minutes of each nocturnal opening. Analyzing the Infrastructure requires an Intelligence + Academics roll with a –1 penalty.

Playing the Game

Although the Cold War has been going on since the Battle of Berlin in 1945, the construction of the Berlin Wall on August 13th, 1961 marks a steadily growing coldness between East and West, Soviet Union and Allies. The chill spreads through the city like frost on a cracked windowpane. It grows like a wall stacked stone upon stone by calloused hands. As the chronicle progresses, Berlin should feel increasingly claustrophobic. The enemies of the Unchained gradually multiply and employ more effective tactics against them. The espionage between East and West evolves from small intelligence-gathering operations to massive spy rings with agents at the highest levels of government. And underneath the skin of the city the gears of the God-Machine grind on, building elaborate Infrastructure to make Berlin ever more dangerous for the demons who hide there.

It is no accident that much of the terminology 21st-century demons use to describe their operations and abilities stems from this time and place in history. Cold War Berlin is a crucible that will test the resolve and cunning of its outcasts. Half a century hence, demons will look back on it as a time when the hopes of both Hell and human survival flickered and grew so dim that it seemed they would perish. This chronicle aims to capture the bleakness of the age while giving the players’ characters an opportunity to bring the world back from the brink or to stand helpless as it tumbles into the eternal winter that threatens to consume it.

To that end we provide several stories that can be introduced either one at a time or layered upon each other until the players’ characters begin to despair of maintaining their freedom in the face of the challenges arrayed against them. Some of these stories are fairly small in scale. Others have wide-reaching scope that might only play out after many chapters.

Ghost Numbers

East Berlin has one of the most advanced telephone networks in Europe. When an aging automated switchboard is replaced with a newer model able to route more calls, however, the city’s phone system begins to exhibit strange behavior.

Blueprint

The new switchboard is the linchpin of Logistical Infrastructure that allows East Germany’s phone system to connect callers to people who were killed during the bombing of Berlin and the Battle of Berlin. Perhaps they are ghosts who don’t realize they are dead and so remember Berlin as it was during World War II, or maybe they are echoes of the past transmitted into the present along the phone lines.

However it actually works, its purpose is to make contact with several people who lived in Berlin at the beginning of the war in order to diagnose a problem or glitch that first manifested at that time. The God-Machine will use this information to correct flaws in one of its projects in the city — although whether such a correction will be good or bad for Berlin’s Unchained remains unclear. A ring might learn important details about the God-Machine’s plans by intercepting its servants’ communications with these lost souls. They might find it easier to disrupt the correction by destroying or suborning the switchboard that makes the project possible.
Infrastructure
The anomalous behavior began after the grand opening of a recently rebuilt apartment building. Residents of the apartment reported receiving calls from strangers asking for people they had never heard of before. Oftentimes when friends called the residents, another person answered the phone. When the calls got through, sometimes another party was on the line. At first the residents assumed the fault lay with the lines or switchboards, but when phone technicians found no problems there, the rumor began to circulate that the Stasi was waging some kind of strange psychological warfare campaign on everyone in the building.

Moving Parts
• The phenomenon spreads throughout East Berlin. Sometimes a wrong number will connect a caller to a stranger. Most of these end the way wrong numbers usually do — a moment of confusion, confirmation that the number was miscalled, and finally a brief apology as both sides disconnect. Once in a while, however, the person who answers one of these ghost numbers will say something that gives the caller pause — usually a reference to World War II or someone associated with it.

• One of the ghost numbers finds its way into an East German urban legend. Children and teenagers dial it to “crank call the Devil” — an elderly-sounding man who shouts obscenities and threats at callers. In truth, the victim of these pranks is a deceased World War I veteran with PTSD. Although he is seldom lucid on the phone, he is one of the subjects the God-Machine needs in order to diagnose and compensate for its error.

• A group of East German parapsychologists at the University of East Berlin attempts to systematically catalogue all these ghost numbers, believing themselves to be communicating with people in the past. Concerned that the citizens of Nazi Germany might encourage the researchers to pursue subversive agendas, the Stasi shuts down their research. One of the parapsychologists escapes into West Berlin with a handful of the phone numbers, including one for a man claiming to be an engineer working on the Messerschmitt Me 262 — the first operational jet-powered fighter aircraft — alongside Hans Von Ohain. The engineer is one of the subjects the God-Machine needs to contact as part of this project, and it dispatches an angel to bring the rogue parapsychologist back to East Berlin.

• In the process of attempting to tap East Berlin’s phones, the Allies inadvertently tapped some kind of main switchboard for the ghost phone numbers. They are currently collecting what they believe is top secret intelligence communications disguised as conversations about events that took place in 1945 Berlin. They have enlisted top cryptographers and linguists in an effort to crack the GDR’s code, but have not yet succeeded in doing so. Demons who infiltrate this operation might be able to use it to eavesdrop on conversations between the God-Machine’s servants and the subjects the project requires. A misunderstanding by the Allies might instead result in an international incident the players’ characters will have to hush up.

The Sewer Troll
Although the Berlin Wall does not make the Girrmann Group’s mission easier, they continue to sneak refugees out of East Berlin through the sewer system. As summer turns to autumn, however, that route becomes too dangerous for humans to risk, and even the Unchained will learn to fear what hides there.
Blueprint

The God-Machine has had Gears in the sewers for centuries, but it recently greatly expanded its subterranean operations in Berlin. Angels guard the new Infrastructure their creator has built around the facility that houses them, driving off or killing humans and supernatural beings who wander too close to the Gears. The God-Machine’s servants avoid parts of the sewers that see heavy traffic, including the ones the Girmann Group uses to sneak refugees out of East Berlin. However, emanations from these projects have created many particularly large and nasty cryptids, and some of them have claimed sections of the sewers as their territory.

Infrastructure

Cryptids frequently make their way into Berlin’s sewers. Most are mere vermin little more dangerous than ordinary rats and cockroaches. A couple days back, though, something big attacked members of the Girmann Group during an extraction mission. It killed five people — three refugees and two escorts, including a stigmatic — and dragged off a second stigmatic. The two survivors told frantic stories of a bipedal creature half alligator and half wolf, although they disagreed on which parts of its body belonged to which animal. Among the Unchained the creature became known as the sewer troll.

Moving Parts

- Although West Berlin only recently learned of the sewer troll, its existence is not news to the VoPo of East Berlin. The cryptid makes occasional forays into the city to hunt. Several horrific maulings and many mysterious disappearances are blamed on the creature. The Girmann Group believes East Berlin upgraded the quality of its sewer grates to prevent refugees from escaping into the West, but the truth is that the GDR ordered this as a measure against further cryptid attacks. Now that the sewer troll cannot easily enter East Berlin, however, it will have to find new hunting grounds.

- The Anarchists suspect a monstrous cryptid — perhaps a large animal that wandered deep into the sewers where the God-Machine is known to have Gears. They send a ring of demons down to investigate, and none of them are seen again. Possibly the sewer troll is more than a match for four experienced demons, or maybe there are others like it down there. Whatever the truth, until someone clears the way the sewers will no longer be an easy way to circumvent the Wall.

- Dennis Keller, the stigmatic survivor of the initial attack on the Girmann Group emerges unexpectedly from the sewers of West Berlin. He has no memories of events after the attack. He has been wandering lost in the sewers for weeks, but his body does not appear nearly as malnourished as it should be. Dennis has been infected by reclavore — a symbiotic, bacterial cryptoflora that lives in his gut and allows him to satisfy his nutritional needs by eating Aether. While this isn’t likely to end world hunger, the God-Machine could use it to render its Concealment Infrastructure virtually invisible to demons and stigmatics, since devoured Aether leaves no aetheric resonance to detect. Is this the purpose of the new Infrastructure in the sewers, or is it an unintended byproduct? Is the God-Machine as yet unaware of the existence of reclavore, or has it already used it to hide Gears in Berlin and beyond? Whatever the truth, the mere existence of the cryptoflora is dangerous enough. Letting the God-Machine implement its use on a worldwide scale would be devastating to demons. Braving the sewer cryptids to find the source of reclavore is daunting enough. If it turns out to be the intended product of the sewer Infrastructure, however, the only solution is to suborn or raze some of the most heavily guarded Infrastructure in Berlin.
Herr Arger’s Confession

After 15 years of careful research and extensive investigation, the Bändiger capture Herr Arger — the demon whose message to the Thule Society triggered the rise of the Nazi Party. Using methods known only to themselves, they secure a confession from the outcast that will draw demon hunters to West Berlin like locusts to a field of wheat.

Blueprint

Demons can control their emotions and can make lies seem like truth, but that doesn’t mean they cannot break under interrogation. The Bändiger had all the time they needed to extract a confession out of the demon whose message dashed their hopes of returning to Thule. Although Herr Arger resisted the occultists’ tortures as long as he could, at the end he gave them most of what they wanted.

The Bändiger know Herr Arger is a rebel angel and that he is not unique in Berlin, much less the world. They discovered that demons walk the world in the flesh of mortals, manipulating and sabotaging human institutions from the shadows. Herr Arger has implicated several other demons in Berlin. The only information he kept from them was anything having to do with the God-Machine; but that may make matters worse, for it left the Bändiger with the impression that the Unchained serve the USSR.

Infrastructure

Fräulein Silber, a member of Herr Arger’s ring, issues a warning to any Unchained in West Berlin who care to listen. She has failed to rescue the Messenger from the Bändiger, but her infiltration revealed how much the occultists had learned. That they had extracted any information at all from a demon as old and experienced as Herr Arger was surprising enough — and frightening for any other outcast who might fall into their grasp. Fräulein Silber does not know what became of Herr Arger after his interrogation. Hopefully the Bändiger simply killed him, which would have been a mercy. More likely he was reclaimed by a hunter angel, but it is also possible that he was turned over to agents of the Church for further examination.

Moving Parts

• The Bändiger take their discovery to Chancellor Adenauer and convince him that demons represent a serious and insidious threat to democracy and the souls of West Germany’s citizens. Given Adenauer’s close friendship with the Catholic Church, it is unsurprising that he contacts Rome for its aid in addressing this menace. In a matter of months West Berlin is positively swarming with demon hunters.

• In addition to the problems one would expect to arise from this increased human scrutiny, it appears that someone within one of the Temporal Agencies in West Berlin is selling the dossiers of local outcasts to the Church’s demon hunters. While the initial evidence points to an Integrator or group of Integrators within the Agency, closer scrutiny reveals inconsistencies in this case. Perhaps hard-line Saboteurs are trying to eliminate the Turncoats or simply break their power. Perhaps the leaders of the Agency are using the demon hunters to fray the Covers of local Unchained in order to drive them into the Agency’s debt to replace those Covers. It is possible an angel or other agent of the God-Machine has infiltrated the highest levels of the Agency and is exploiting demonic paranoia in order to foment chaos and distrust within Unchained society.
• One of Herr Arger’s old Covers turns up in East Berlin. Did he escape, was he rescued, or did the Bändiger find a way to turn him into their undercover agent among the Unchained? Herr Arger has no close allies on that side of the Wall, so it seems strange for him to operate there voluntarily. More strangely, he soon infiltrates Gespenster, which becomes a staunch defender of existing God-Machine projects. Based on this, some outcasts claim Herr Arger has been reclaimed by his creator and serves it once more as an angel. This seems unlikely, however, for a demon cast into the God-Machine’s forges and remade as an angel seldom retains the Cover she had as a demon.

• The CIA gives American scientist Dr. Edward Buchanan permission to investigate poltergeist activity in Spandau Prison. While the records of his findings remain classified, Dr. Buchanan uses the money he receives from the Allies for his services to found Leuchtlaboratorium in West Berlin. Ostensibly a research laboratory dedicated to the investigation and study of occult phenomena in the city, Leuchtlaboratorium’s focus is on angels, exiles, gashmallim, and demons. To this end, it is particularly interested in infiltrating or subverting the Bändiger in hopes of learning the occult society’s secrets about these luminous beings. Eventually Dr. Buchanan will succeed in this ambition, laying the groundwork for what will become Luminous Labs, which the Deva Corporation will ultimately acquire.

Hunter: The Vigil and Cold War Berlin

Angels are not the only ones hunting demons in 1961 Berlin. Groups with access to Hunter: The Vigil and its supplements might have noticed a few references to some of the compacts and conspiracies from that game. Hunter organizations that fit in particularly well in the setting include:

The Loyalists of Thule: This splinter of the Thule Society seeks atonement for the mistakes made before World War II, a goal many of the Unchained share with them. Few human organizations know supernatural Berlin better, so they have the potential to be useful allies, but if they ever learn the truth about the Widdershins Windmill they also have ample reason to despise angels and demons alike.

Malleus Maleficarum: Sent by the Church at the request of Chancellor Adenauer, these witch hunters and vampire slayers have turned their talents to rooting out the demons hiding in West Berlin. They have learned to recognize the telltale markings of stigmatics and glitches, although they can’t tell the difference between them and so mistake stigmatics for demons with some frequency.

Guest Appearances: Other compacts and conspiracies that might make an appearance in a Cold War Berlin chronicle include Null Mysteriis, Aegis Kai Doru, Taskforce: VALYRIE, Knights of Saint George, the Barrett Commission, and VASCU.

Radio Free Hell

Agents of the God-Machine disrupt a critical source of news among the demons of both Berlins. They then use this tool of the Unchained first to spread misinformation and then to sow discord between the outcasts of East and West.

Blueprint
Propaganda campaigns play an important role in the Cold War. After all, when any troop movement into enemy territory could set off nuclear Armageddon, leaflets and radio broadcasts serve as less-inflammatory proxies. Radio Free Europe was conceived as a propaganda source intended to expose East Germans to Western culture, to encourage dissent, and to aid refugees seeking to defect. Its broadcasts from West Berlin started in 1949, and the concept has since spread to other Western cities situated near the boundary of the Iron Curtain.

Demons, particularly Inquisitors, long exploited these as a means of transmitting news to Unchained throughout Berlin. Non-demons could not hear these messages, so it was deemed a relatively safe way of notifying outcasts of angel sightings, alerting them to God-Machine activity, and making them aware of the availability of goods and services of interest to demons. Among the outcasts of Berlin, these demon-hidden tracks became known as Radio Free Hell. No one knew the precise identities of the Inquisitors who created the broadcasts, placed them on tapes, and arranged for them to find their way onto the radio, but the information was consistently accurate — no more likely to contain misinformation than any other intelligence briefing. Its only real flaw was it covered mostly events in West Berlin, but enough messages from the East got through that every day’s broadcast usually had one or two items of interest to the Unchained of East Berlin.

Infrastructure

Shortly after the construction of the Berlin Wall, the Radio Free Hell broadcasts come to an abrupt halt. Most outcasts assume something has spooked the Inquisitors behind this channel of communication, but as weeks drag out into months they amend this to an assumption that the angels have captured the broadcasters.

Moving Parts

• Radio Free Hell broadcasts resume without offering any explanation, but their information is less reliable. At first it seems likely a new batch of Inquisitors has taken up the fallen mantle, but doesn’t have the extensive network of contacts their predecessors possessed. The inaccuracies are rookie errors as innocuous, if worrying, as journalists failing to check their facts, but what they get wrong seems entirely plausible. The errors become more egregious as time goes on. When several broadcasts lead West German demons directly into traps set by hunter angels, it grows increasingly clear that Radio Free Hell has been subverted as part of a massive disinformation campaign serving agents of the God-Machine.

• Western outcasts no longer trust the Radio Free Hell broadcasts, and most demons on that side of the Wall have stopped listening to them completely. Whoever is behind the radio disinformation campaign abruptly changes tactics. The broadcasts paint an increasingly bleak picture of events in West Berlin, claiming its Unchained have been subverted by the God-Machine. With most other communication channels with East Berlin cut off by the Berlin Wall and heightened human security, this propaganda is often the only news of the West the Unchained of East Berlin have. That it aimed to sow discord between demons could be no accident, but the damage has already been done. Western demons often receive chilly, if not hostile, receptions when they find themselves on the other side of the Wall.

• At this point, simply shutting down Radio Free Hell entirely will only play into the enemy’s narrative that West Berlin is no longer safe for demons. Even restoring the communication channel to its original state is no guarantee that accusations of subversion will not persist, but at least it can’t possibly make matters worse for the relations between East and West. However, the
God-Machine almost certainly expects the demons to seize this resource and will no doubt be prepared for any operation targeting it. That may, in fact, be the point — to flush outcasts into the open so they may be more easily tagged and collected by the God-Machine’s hunter angels.

The Church of Reconciliation

Berlin has a Wall and a Wall. The GDR erected the Berlin Wall virtually overnight to prevent East German citizens from escaping into West Berlin. The God-Machine’s servants are building a second Wall — an arcane echo intended to cut off all supernatural means of communication and travel between the two cities.

Blueprint

The Church of Reconciliation stands on the border between East and West Berlin, within spitting distance of the French Sector. The Berlin Wall was built around the church — an urban island between two death strips, accessible only to the Grepos, who use it as an observation post. The handful of border police regularly stationed here are all members of a God-Machine cult called Brüderlichkeit der Versöhnung (Fraternal Brotherhood of Reconciliation) and maintain the Gears hidden in the basement.

The church is a piece of Defensive Infrastructure that reinforces the Berlin Wall against supernatural forces. When it first became active in October it only protected the physical barrier from the most heavy-handed of occult assaults — vulgar displays that would likely attract undue human attention anyway — so its effects were not immediately obvious. To maintain the Arcane Wall, once per month the cultists must anoint the Gears with four cups of blood from one refugee whose attempt to cross the Wall failed. It doesn’t technically need to be someone who died trying to escape, but this tends to raise fewer questions than the inexplicable exsanguination of someone the Grepos captured without a shot fired or a struggle.

Infrastructure

Embeds whose effects should be undetectable become unreliable when used to exert influence on the other side of the Wall. Dogs and birds of prey savage animal messengers. Guards and police seize books and documents that hide demonic missives without explanation. Critical words and phrases disappear from conversations via Across a Crowded Room. The Unchained suspect powerful Infrastructure is at work, although no Saboteur has identified the source of this interference.

Moving Parts

• The church’s Gears require the blood of only one victim per month to maintain the functioning of the Arcane Wall, but additional sacrifices strengthen it considerably. The Shield responsible for protecting the church and ensuring its Gears are well-fed goads the cultists into bringing more victims’ blood to water the Infrastructure. The bodies of refugees disappear from morgues and funeral parlors. As the cultists grow more desperate for new sacrificial victims, they kill imprisoned escapees or arrange for a criminal’s release only to murder him a few days later. Pushed to extremes, the cultists begin aiding or even inciting escape attempts — feigning sympathy for their victim’s plight so that they can betray the refugee at the last moment. As more of these ploys succeed, the Arcane Wall grows increasingly impenetrable (see below).

• As time goes on using supernatural abilities to cross the Berlin Wall becomes more dangerous. Stigmatics who can see spirits describe the Arcane Wall as an impossibly high, barbed wire
fence in which ensnared ghosts twist painfully and futilely. Demons who take ephemeral form must contend with this barrier in Twilight just as they would with the physical obstacle in corporeal Berlin. No soldiers with rifles and spotlights watch from the echoes of the guard towers, but at least two angels capable of seeing and affecting both the physical and spiritual worlds patrol the border between the cities to prevent unauthorized crossings in either direction. These angels seem particularly interested in the portion of the Wall that borders the French Sector.

- The linchpin is an unexploded American bomb from World War II that rests in the church’s basement, buried in a pile of rubble that was never cleared out. Bringing GDR attention to this ordinance might prompt an evacuation that would prevent the cultists from feeding the Gears on schedule. The bomb is only a few yards away from the Gears, so setting it off would almost certainly damage the Infrastructure beyond repair. A demon who successfully suborns the Church of Reconciliation Infrastructure could adjust the permeability of the Arcane Wall — allowing some beings and powers to pass through it while refusing passage to others. Of course, any plan involving the church must contend with the angels in the area. The angels that patrol the Arcane Wall cannot enter the church, but they keep watchful eyes on the wall that surrounds it. The Shield in charge of the church has grown a little too zealous in its desire to feed the Gears and could be driven to Fall.

Bad Blood

The KGB discovers that vampires are manipulating GDR politics and sends Iron Comrades to crush these interlopers. A Temporal Agency sees an opportunity to expand its influence in East Germany and assigns operatives to infiltrate the Iron Comrades. Servants of the God-Machine quietly seize control of Gespenster.

Blueprint

Vampires have inhabited Berlin for as long as it could call itself a city. For centuries the dead have exerted influence over local politics to protect their own interests, occasionally reaching out to manipulate nations and empires from the safety of the German city. This didn’t stop during World War II, and it certainly didn’t end when the Soviet Union carved up Berlin into East and West. Vampires found their way into comfortable posts within the Socialist Unity Party of Germany as they had within every royal court and government bureaucracy. They warred among themselves quietly, as is the habit of their kind. Somehow Vladimir Semichastny, the new head of the KGB, learned that the dead had infiltrated the East German government. What’s more, he took the threat so seriously that he dispatched at least a dozen Iron Comrades to identify and destroy every vampire in East Berlin. The leaders of the dead community know this could mean trouble but don’t yet regard it as a serious threat. They could ally themselves with the markgraf of West Berlin, but the dead of East Berlin do not really want to have anything to do with that mad tyrant. Vampire hunts by humans are nothing new, after all. This time, though, the humans aren’t working alone.

Infrastructure

Many new faces arrive at the KGB headquarters in East Berlin. These agents come fresh from Moscow, and their thickly accented German doesn’t so much say “intelligence operatives” as it does “enforcers.” They show up unannounced in government offices and make quiet appearances at Party meetings. Within a few weeks the executions begin. Officially, these are crackdowns on
government corruption, but every demon who has regular contact with the vampires of East Berlin quickly notices the pattern.

Moving Parts

- No one knows why Chairman Semichastny bears the dead such a deep grudge, but a dozen Iron Comrades with the promise of “as many as you need” speaks volumes about the depth of his loathing. These psychic KGB operatives have impressive capabilities for humans, but without the element of surprise they are no match for most vampires in a toe-to-toe fight. Despite their fierce loyalty to the USSR, they quickly recognize that their mission is an impossible one. Reinforcements may prolong the conflict, but the Iron Comrades’ mission in East Berlin will require more than a handful of psychics with big guns.

- The Tempters of the GDR Temporal Agency have acquired considerable political influence in East Berlin over the last few decades, but they have as yet been unable to topple the powerful political machine the vampires have maintained for centuries. The Agency’s bosses learn of the KGB’s vampire hunt and see an opportunity to eliminate their longtime rivals for power. They send Agents to assist the Iron Comrades — quietly at first, but more directly once they have established themselves as trustworthy allies. Agents of the KGB work together with operatives of the Agency to quietly identify and ruthlessly execute the vampires within the city. Only those Iron Comrades stationed in East Berlin know of the alliance, and even the psychics are not entirely sure of the nature of their companions. Once the KGB achieves its goals in East Berlin, the Agency’s leaders expect to easily fill the power vacuum the vampires leave behind using new Covers they are already tailoring to fit the roles.

- They’ll never admit it, but the Stasi is not pleased that the Soviet Union has sent the KGB to handle a threat that should be a GDR concern. That non-human entities somehow avoided the Stasi’s attention is a considerable embarrassment for the organization, and no one’s eye was more blackened by this failure of intelligence than the agents of Gespenster. There isn’t much they can do now. The Iron Comrades have the blessing of the Soviets to investigate and eliminate corrupting influences within the GDR’s government. Eventually, however, the Gespenster operatives hear rumors that some of the Iron Comrades’ local assistants are themselves non-human entities. They conduct a quiet investigation using their extensive network of informants. The angels of the God-Machine who operate within Gespenster take a keen interest in the result of these inquiries.

- In time, matters come to a boil. The Iron Comrades and their Unchained allies hunt East Berlin’s vampires. Gespenster and the undercover angels within their organization root out the demons among the city’s KGB. The few surviving vampires arrange for Gespenster to discover more outcasts to root out — within the KGB and beyond it. The Agency distracts Gespenster by directing attention to the demons of a rival Agency.

Inspirations

**Cold City**, by Malcolm Craig. A roleplaying game about monster hunting and espionage in Berlin during the post-war occupation, before the division of Germany into East and West. *Cold City* has a lot of grist for running investigation stories with secret agendas in the early days of the Cold War, and its catalog of Nazi occult plots is a great inspiration for projects of the God-Machine.
The Lives of Others (dir. Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006). While set in the 1980s, this film dramatizes politics and personal passions intertwined with the Wall and divided Germany. The main hook, in which a Stasi officer is assigned to monitor a playwright because of his superior’s secret romantic jealousy, is a good example of how the layers of deception in a demon’s life may have nothing at all to do with the Machine.

Spione, by Ron Edwards. This roleplaying game includes a detailed analysis of the Cold War spy genre, with special attention paid to Berlin. While it’s very much its own game and not something you can poach rules from for the World of Darkness, the genre criticism alone is worth the price of admission.

The Spy Who Came in from the Cold, by John le Carré. We also cited le Carré in the Demon core book, and his fiction has been an inspiration for much of the game in the present day. However, it deserves particular consideration in the Cold War Berlin setting. The Spy Who Came in from the Cold concludes in the early days of the Berlin Wall, the event which kicks off this chapter.
“There’s not a good onomatopoeia for that sound when a fist cracks a cheekbone.”

The detective leaned over the table, with one foot on a chair. “That’s a fancy fuckin’ word, right there. Did you buy it with the drug money?”

“It means a word that sounds like the sound it describes.” A large man with a shaved head and a tan raincoat crossed his arms and relaxed into the most uncomfortable old wooden chair in the five boroughs.

“I know what it means!” The detective kicked over the chair’s mate and put a finger in the man’s face. “Enough games. Tell me what happened!”

“As I was saying, Officer Thompson, I punched his fuckin’ face in. And in accordance with New York Penal Code 35.15, I was perfectly within my rights as a citizen to do so. He had a gun in my face, so I put a fist in his face.”

“You’re covering something. First off, you still haven’t told me why you were on the scene at an abandoned factory in Harlem when a drug deal was going down. Second off, the lab says there’s no way your fist did that much damage to that junkie’s face. You’d have marks on your knuckles. You’d have chipped bones. What aren’t you telling me, Brown?”

The man in the tan coat kicked his feet up onto the table. “I’ve got a strong constitution. I inherited that from my granddaddy. You know, the one your granddaddy owned? I was at the warehouse because that’s my neighborhood, there was lights on, and I’m a concerned fuckin’ citizen. That’s why.”

The detective paced across the room with his forehead in his hand. “Damn it, Brown. Help me help you. If you were buying drugs, just say it. We’ll sign a deal. You testify. You’ll walk.”

“Excuse me if I’m not too keen on trusting a deal from the police. I’m telling you, I wasn’t buying. I was patrolling. And I can’t tell you anything yet, because I’m on the verge of something big. You let me walk out this door, and you’ll have a bust on your hands by the end of the month. Think about it, Officer Thompson. Breathe in, and smell that sweet promotion.”

Thompson stopped, and instinctively took a deep breath in. He shook his head. “Brown, you’re a private investigator. You’re not a cop. I might turn a blind eye, but the NYPD doesn’t take kindly to vigilante justice.”

Brown rolled his eyes and shook his head. “It doesn’t have to. It just needs to stay the hell out of my way. You eat your donuts, and take your kickbacks, and I’ll catch the bad guys so you can look good. It’s a win-win.”

Thompson winced, and put a finger in Brown’s face. “You’re walking a dangerous line, Brown. I’ve got kids out there dying in the street. I’ve got homeless numbers like you wouldn’t believe. Crime’s an epidemic, because unemployment’s an epidemic. We fight on those streets every god damned day. You and your hoodlum trash are making it worse for everyone.”

A little spark grew behind Brown’s eyes. In a split second, he went from sitting to standing. Before Thompson could react, he had the detective’s tie tight around his neck. He stood face to face with Thompson, pulling the detective over the table. “Don’t you fuckin’ think you know those streets better than me. You need to back off just like I said. We can do this nice, or we can do this rough.”
“McNabb! McNabb, get in here!” Thompson choked out through the constraining cornflower blue tie.

“Your men can’t hear you. They can’t hear you, and they can’t see you. Now, you and me, we’re gonna make an agreement right here and now, you got that?” Little bits of Brown’s spittle smacked against Thompson’s face, adding emphasis to his coarse tone.

“What are you? What do you want?” Thompson stammered, and reached for his belt.

“What’s the spirit, officer. I’ve already told you what I want. I want you to back the fuck off. Let me handle this one. When I get your kingpin, he’ll come gift-wrapped on your doorstep with a little fuckin’ bow. You can march him right into the station, and take all the credit. I just want your men off my tail. I’ll keep my turf safe. You get your jaywalkers and small-time pimps. If it’s big news, you bring it to me.”

Thompson put his hands up in submission. “Fine. What do you want?”

“Chief?”

“Chief. You’re gonna crack every case that hits my hood. You let me walk out that door, and you file a report that looks kindly on whatever it is you want to say I’m doing out there, and I promise you that you’ll have your man within the week. You and me, we could be good friends.” Brown released the detective.

“That ain’t my turf. Outside my neighborhood, you all can do whatever you want. Inside my neighborhood, you’re security guards for show. Play it right, you’re gonna be chief of police some day.”

“I’ll let you walk, on account of a lack of evidence. We’ll see about that culprit.” He straightened his tie, and dusted off his slacks before heading to the door.

“We’ll be talkin’ again soon, Officer Thompson.” Brown stood and gave a mocking salute.

Thompson stopped, his hand on the doorknob. “These talks?” He looked back to Brown. “They can’t happen here.”

Brown gave a toothy grin. “Yes, sir.”

The Bowery Dogs

_Ford to City: Drop Dead_


New York City. The 1970s. Werewolves. What comes to mind when you toss these three things together? Inequality? Violence? Territoriality? Desperation? Attitude? Change? All these, and more? The thing is, the 1970s, New York, and Werewolves intersect so much, the Venn diagram of the three looks a lot like a circle. That lets us home in on those “back to basics” elements that normally pop in a _Werewolf: The Forsaken_ game. We get to keep it simple. If we’re not
sweating the complexities, we get to hit harder and faster with the core conceits of a Werewolf game.

Theme and Mood: When All You Got’s A Little…

The 1970s

Our setting is the 1970s. We’re keeping it vague in order to keep it simple. We’re not too concerned about the chronological order of historical events; we’re just concerned that those events can act as tools in our kit.

Now, if you want to bother with the specifics, the dates, the times, the people that were actually on those streets, you can do that. The Internet’s your playground, and this decade’s been well-documented by many capable journalists. You’ll want to run your game over an extended period, sometimes with a year or more between chapters. But we’re not working with that as the default assumption, because we want a story that shoots like an Uzi, not like a cannon.

Many of the human conflicts don’t directly affect the Forsaken. Economic woes mean little when a simple Gift can net some fast cash. Drugs barely affect them, so they’re not likely to get hooked. Racism looks a lot different when you can not only survive a lynching, but emerge from a pile of bodies that’ll never harass a marginalized person again. If you think the Forsaken are at the top of their game in New York, you’re damned right. However, these problems affect the territory, they affect family, they affect friends. It’s all about encroaching on turf, and all these problems do it in spades. Keeping a neighborhood’s one thing, but watching the foundation literally crumble with neglect is another. Keeping a city block secure isn’t so hard until the law-abiding residents flee for better job markets. The 1970s teach a hard lesson: Maintaining territory depends on more than just the pack. It teaches community the hard way, as the Forsaken scramble to maintain what ties they can.

New York City

We’re set in New York City. It’s not the one you can see right now if you pay to head up the Statue of Liberty’s torch. It’s an elemental, fictional, cinematic construct. It’s the New York City of Taxi Driver, of Shaft, and of The Warriors. It’s New York with the contrast turned up, then layered with a light film grain and gray tone.

In our New York City, everything matters. New York summers are hot, sure. But in our New York, we notice this when a poor Storyteller character’s shoe sole breaks off, and his feet blister on the unforgiving pavement. New York winters are a bitch, sure. But in our New York, the snow comes down hardest on the last day your character can pay her rent before eviction. The violence hits home. The economic disparity affects friends, families, and neighbors. If it’s worth seeing, it’s worth feeling. That’s our New York.

Most of these problems affect the Forsaken on the periphery. The hot concrete might be uncomfortable to the Uratha, but it won’t cause blisters the way it will on a human. For this reason, it’s important to build relationships and make the setting live and breathe. Otherwise, the players won’t care when the pain, the decay, and the despair set in. If you let them live in their own private social island, they may wall off and cease to engage with the things that make this setting different from any other modern urban story.
Gangs

Every now and again, a game offers startling, thought-provoking insights. It can break philosophical barriers and communicate complex concepts with unparalleled simplicity. Here we go: Packs have many similarities to gangs. You can use pack territoriality as a metaphor for what was happening in the real world at the time.

Shocking, right? But now that we’ve got the obvious out of the way, let’s dig deeper. Because there’s something more than a little creepy about attributing the behaviors of disenfranchised and oppressed youth to those of murderous, unnatural monsters. Drawing those comparisons could go to very disturbing places very quickly. Not to say that there’s anything wrong with metaphor and exploring real world problems through the lens of fiction. After all, it’s one of the things speculative fiction does best. But it’s worth approaching with consideration and sensitivity.

We can’t point to one, single reason real people turn to crime. For every crime, and for every person practicing it, you can find at least one different reason. The easiest way to deal with this is to always approach characters as people, not as archetypes, then to always ask “why?” If the answer sounds like it could apply to anyone, ask again. Keep going until you have an understanding of the person behind the action.

Forsaken, like gangs, share common goals, but are still at each others’ throats. The gangs aren’t hurting for territory. New York’s jam-packed with people and businesses; there’s more than enough to go around. So why do the gangs fight over the same few blocks? Why do they push the borders, when they could just as soon grow outward? They’d get more from standing together against corrupt law enforcement and attacks from more-organized crime syndicates. The Forsaken have the same problem. Enough Forsaken live in New York that with a little organization, they could keep the Border Marches safe from invaders, and maintain their own little fiefdoms without contest.

Just remember that people don’t always make the best choices. They’re not looking at character sheets where they can sit down and think about the most sound option; they’re fighting for their lives.

Often, they don’t even think they’re making the best choices. When you’ve been raised all your life to think reputation is the only thing that matters, you’ll take a bullet to look strong. You know as well as anyone that a person with a bullet wound looks an idiot. But a strong idiot.

Sometimes, they thought they were making the best choices at the time, but they got in too deep and felt they had to stay the course. When you’re broke, sometimes pride’s all you’ve got. Sometimes, they think they don’t have another option. And sometimes, the best option seems like the worst. People in gangs, they aren’t playing a game. Not really, no matter what they say. They’re living. They’re making do with what they’ve got. Mechanical optimization isn’t something they have a concept of. If you can apply that to your Forsaken, you’ve applied what’s possibly the best lesson that the gang-as-pack metaphor has to offer.

Drugs

In the 1970s, seemingly credible news outlets published articles stating that cocaine was not addictive. Even though laws prohibited usage, the media showed cocaine as a chic, glamorous lifestyle choice. While LSD was on the decline, Vietnam veterans commonly adopted heroin to
distract and numb the pains of the war. Marijuana crept upward in popularity, as federal laws lightened penalties and drew distinctions between cannabis and harder drugs.

New York stood as a hotbed of drug culture in the 1970s. Today, if you walk Times Square, you’ll find all manner of family entertainment and general popular culture. In the 1970s, Times Square was the perfect place to score coke, to hire a prostitute, or find even less savory services. By this point in time, over a third of the occupants of the prison system did time for drug charges, even if they were arrested for robbery or assault. The system wanted to make drugs the problem.

On top of the horrors of addiction, drugs exacerbated or at least reflected other problems. While African Americans made up less than one-third of cocaine users, they made up over four-fifths of all cocaine convictions.

Drugs offered solid profits for gang and Mafia interests, fueling their recruitment efforts. Drugs kept the downtrodden from participating in many important social battles, and kept them as viable targets of the right-wing political powers that would end up called “The Moral Majority” in the late 1970s.

The Forsaken have little to fear from drugs, at least directly. Nothing pushes hard enough against their metabolism to set in, and addiction’s just not a concern. These things can hurt the wolf-blooded in their lives, however, and pose a serious threat to many of the people in their territories. Worse, heavy drug use opens the mind to possession. Drug-friendly communities remain prime targets for Urging and Claiming. A wasted subculture is like a toy store to spirits looking for access to the flesh world.

Smart Forsaken watch the flow of mind-altering substances in their territories. There’s only so far one can regulate a neighborhood’s free time, but for many people, drug use is a convenience culture. Removing convenient sources removes the motivation to get high for all but the most addicted users.

**Atmosphere: A TV Culture**

Remember that televisions were much more common in the 1970s than they are now; before the Internet, it was a primary source of entertainment for almost every American household. If you want to be particularly poignant and topical, you can find Vietnam newscasts free for download online, or for streaming on Youtube. With a little creative searching, you can find documentaries and radio shows about any given one of the major setting topics. If your players have a scene where the pack sits around planning or otherwise interacting inside the home, play one of these scenes in the background.

With this era, you have a distinct advantage in that the media of the time saturated every aspect of American life. Much of that media is still available today. It may seem like a no-brainer, but a good reminder that news came from televisions, and almost all televisions broadcast in black and white, is markedly useful in establishing setting.

On the other hand, this setting offers a strange new world for the Forsaken of New York. Cameras are everywhere. Civilians don’t yet own personal film cameras; but since the Vietnam War, everything’s fit for broadcast, and New York’s population density is a goldmine for prospective journalists looking to be the next Walter Cronkite.
What Has Come Before

We’re in a falling building. It’s not a building that falls because of an explosion or act of God. It’s a building that falls because of years of mismanagement, abandonment, bankruptcy, short sales, neglect, and unemployment. It’s the kind of building that falls slowly. It decays enough that nobody wants to come back in, then it slowly topples. Every now and again, a big chunk falls off and causes extreme damage, but from day to day, you usually can’t tell the difference.

Bringing it Home

In this section, we touch on many of the events in the 60s and 70s that influence our setting (and to a lesser extent, the 40s and 50s). This section just hits the parts that drive home our target themes and moods. If you’re interested, New York’s modern history is perhaps the most documented of any city, ever. Per capita, it produces more journalists than any other city in the world (we think). Numerous careers were built on publicizing this period in New York.

If you want it, you’ll never find yourself short of specific information on New York. You can’t search the Internet without a bombardment of relevant data and evocative imagery.

Go crazy. When setting a scene, hand the players a vintage photograph to show them what they see. When you sit down to create characters, put a movie on in the background. This is more than just to add to the ambience. As a Storyteller, you may struggle to home in on a specific aesthetic, because of that media saturation. Many players will come to the table with preconceived notions, and it’s up to you to show them just where their notions meet up with your vision.

Ancient History

In The New York Times Magazine in 1948, J.B. Priestley said, “The New York that O. Henry described forty years ago was an American city, but today’s glittering cosmopolis belongs to the world, if the world does not belong to it.”

World War II lifted New York out of depression. It welcomed a rush of new immigrants. It signaled a boom in industry and commerce. Keynesian economics ushered in economic growth worldwide. By the end of the 1940s, New York was the world’s largest manufacturing center. It serviced over 40% of all port freight, and 20% of all wholesale business. With the foundation of the United Nations, New York became something of a world capital.

New York’s golden age didn’t last long. Unparalleled building expansion required commensurate and consistent economic growth to fill those new establishments. As the economy drew back from its fever pitch, many businesses failed, and many residents fled the area. In many cases, they abandoned buildings less than a decade old.

In our setting, most young people were not alive to see this golden age, or were too young to remember it. They were born on the downswing, and things don’t look as if they’re getting better soon. This golden age is just the seed for the stories we’re telling.

Labor Movements

In 1966, transit workers all over the city launched a wide-reaching strike that resulted in changing rights for union organization for New York City employees. At its peak, New York
saw garbage piled and burned in the streets, both as a form of protest, and to get rid of the stench of trash. The piles grew, and the people saw no end in sight as New York quickly learned how dependent it was on its waste removal services. The strike crippled transit for nearly two weeks, and ended with employee wage increases, additional holidays, greater pensions, and the right of employees to vote for their union representatives.

Two years later, sanitation workers went on strike to protest unfair wages and pension policies. As the trash piled up and rumors flew of a city-wide public employee strike, the city buckled to pressure and accommodated the sanitation workers’ demands.

That same year, many Brooklyn schools closed their doors for over a month as teachers fought over community control of the schools. This long-reaching strike went on and off for months, and carried a strong racial undercurrent. Unlike the previous two strikes, this strike did not end well for the workers. The city denied them control of their district schools, and some participants saw jail time.

In 1975, the city faced bankruptcy, and like any other time the privileged faced collapse, the burden fell to the working class. To avoid the default, the mayor called on the school board to invest $150 million from its pension funds to keep the city afloat. While resistant, the teacher’s union buckled at the last moment and paid the debt.

We could fill an entire book with these labor crises. Many have. But the point is, our setting comes right on the tail of these massive strikes that shifted power rapidly and heavily. Those sorts of shifts are rarely something the people are prepared for, and thus it can stress an already taxed labor force. If you want to read up on the topic, one great book that details the labor movements of the era, focusing heavily on New York, is Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below During the Long 1970s. It’s a collection of essays that span before, during, and after our setting here.

On the Shadow side, labor was hit hardest by the Court of Fair Wage’s departure. The Court of Fair Wage stood as the strongest collective of spirits in the region for decades, but one day, it just vanished. New York is a hard-working city; it represented the positive side of the American ideal. As the ruling court vanished, other spirits born of collective aspirations died out rapidly. The more energetic courts brought about by the manufacturing sector in New York rose as predators over all the more ephemeral concepts. The Hisil looked an industrial nightmare. Dump trucks with massive teeth patrolled the city streets, devouring lesser spirits and absorbing perverted versions into their frames. A giant, looming factory spreads conveyor belts out through the metropolis, twisting and winding in labyrinthine patterns, capturing and drawing spirits into its cavernous gut.

**Civil Unrest**

In the 1960s, African Americans and women fought hard for civil rights, and in a few landmark cases, won. Civil disobedience and protest movements shaped legislative and social change.

Many of these battles were fought over basic, common-sense rights, like the rights to education and voting. In many of the most famous cases, they fought over the right to eat in the same rooms or drink from the same fountains.

By the 1970s, the African-American-led Civil Rights Movement was largely done. The Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968 made wide-spanning changes to public policy regarding discrimination.
In the later part of the 1960s and the early to mid 1970s, the Black Power Movement stood to challenge the dominant practices of nonviolent protest and passive resistance. In the light of Dr. King’s assassination, strong, reactionary responses seemed the only logical course of action for some.

For the Uratha, challenging age-old prejudices becomes deadly. Predominantly black packs demanded to be taken seriously. Old-guard white packs stood their ground, often violently. In an odd turn of fortune, Uratha don’t often live as long as their human counterparts. They die violent, terrible deaths before they reach old age. So old prejudices, while stronger, died earlier than they did for humanity. In the Tribes of the Moon, old racists were a dying breed by the 1980s.

For women, the 1960s led to more social changes than legislative changes. With the 1960 approval of the birth control pill, women were able to take a greater, more self-determined role in their lives. In 1963, *The Feminine Mystique* reshaped social views, and that very year, physicist Maria Goepper-Mayer became the first woman to win the Nobel prize. Thanks to the war, women took stronger roles in the job market, and the 1960s also saw equal pay legislation make strides to — but not completely — implement wage equality. This second wave of feminist thinking moved to redefine a woman’s role in society, and in the work force.

Counter to the situation with black Uratha, women among the Forsaken never saw the same prejudices they saw in the human world. After all, who is going to tell a Storm Lord Rahu she can’t be alpha of her pack? But this period did lead to a trend toward more feminine totem spirits. At least one prominent Uratha stood briefly to claim that female-coded totems would start packs down a slippery slope toward adopting Lune totems. He vanished in 1975, never to be heard from again.

Everything we can say in this short space underserves the topic at hand. But in this time, in this place, you have to consider these events. They’re downright integral. We encourage you to dig in, and digest some media about the topic. Watching *Malcolm X* is a great place to start. Read *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years*, and *Voices of Freedom*. *Voices of Freedom* is of particular interest because it’s anecdotal, peppered with personal experiences, and it spans the 60s, 70s, and 80s over time. On women’s rights, *The Feminine Mystique* is a good starting point, but don’t stop there. Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* and Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* offer valuable insight into feminist thinking of the time period. In addition to important bits of education, they’re full to the brim with atmosphere that’ll add an air of authenticity to your stories.

**Vietnam**

Throughout American history, the American public mostly supported its war efforts. The American people fought one another in the Civil War, but public opinion favored those engagements. However, when the American government decided that involvement in Vietnam’s struggles was necessary to prevent the spread of communism, the people didn’t fall in line.

Not only did they not approve, millions of Americans stood in demonstrations and protests over the course of the war’s last decade. Popular media figures stood in unquestionable opposition. Woodstock brought 400,000 people together to celebrate peace and love, as a united front against forceful invasion.
While film played a part in earlier conflicts, the Vietnam War set new levels for television involvement in the war effort. Americans could turn on the TV set and see the effects of the conflict with unprecedented intimacy and accuracy.

The Vietnam War is also the first American war that ended in a clear defeat. The American troops withdrew without having accomplished their goals. The US spent countless dollars and lost thousands of soldiers with little to show for it.

American involvement in Vietnam ended around the middle of the decade. This setting assumes that your chronicle takes place right before or right after the end of the war. If you’re playing a longer-scale chronicle, consider planning your arc with the end of the war in mind, so you can play at the cultural shifts happening throughout the decade.

On the spiritual side of things, Vietnam was far enough away from New York that you couldn’t see its influence from day to day. However, if you’re playing through a chronicle of longer scope, Vietnam has long-term, lasting effects on the Hisil that wouldn’t be self-evident until the 1980s and 1990s. But with the insidious, subtle ways these influences change the shadowscape, by the time anyone notices, it’s too late to fix.

Finding source material for the Vietnam War and the culture surrounding it shouldn’t be difficult at all. *Platoon* is a great film that’ll remind you just why there were protests. *Full Metal Jacket* and *Apocalypse Now* are other obvious choices. The book *Against the Vietnam War: Writings by Activists* has a better portrayal of the home front, though, which is probably more valuable for the day-to-day affairs of your games. Let’s face it; unless you’re playing a game set in Vietnam, the characters in your stories only have exposure to the war via radio and television.

For *Werewolf* characters, Vietnam stands as a dark point of reference. Guerrilla war is not pretty, and never ends well. Not that war ever ends well, but guerrilla war leaves a mark on the soul. It’s very personal, since you see all your compatriots and have to reconcile losing people whose names you know.

**Stonewall**

June 28th, 1969, police raided the Stonewall Inn of Greenwich Village — the largest gay club in the United States. This was a common occurrence in gay clubs in the 1950s and 1960s. Aside from that, Mafia elements owned the Stonewall, which brought down even greater scrutiny. These crackdowns were deeply invasive, often violent, and disenfranchised an already hurt community. Officers would forcibly inspect bar patrons to verify that they were dressed in accordance with supposed gender expectations. Those not fitting the officers’ expectations would be arrested on the spot.

The difference this time was the people struck back. As rumors spread of beatings during arrests, bar patrons lashed out and threw things at a police wagon. The police beat a patron in plain sight, and escalated the conflict further. Over 500 people stood down the 10 police officers, who walled themselves up with some civilians and some captives. The crowd taunted the police, and shoveled burning trash into the building. Eventually, a tactical team rushed in to evacuate the officers. Not only did the people stand up to the police and force a retreat, it showed the public and the officers that society had pushed the gay community way too hard — something had to change.

Even though the Inn was burned, broken, and devastated, it remained open for months afterward. In the nights following, the riots renewed and grew, standing as a firm statement that the Inn’s
patrons would not be defeated. While the Stonewall eventually closed, its legacy continued with gay pride marches, which first made their way through New York City in 1970. That’s where our setting begins. Stonewall’s already happened. Now, it’s all about holding onto that. There’s a foundation of legitimacy that we’re building on, amidst the grungy and dismissive backdrop.

In the Hisil, Stonewall had some immediate, fiery consequences. Spirits clashed as people did. But as far as the Shadow was concerned, people beat people, people burned buildings. It looked like any other riot. It opened up the floodgates for later changes all over the country, but change would take time. For the Forsaken, most of the conflicts caused by Stonewall are more personal — friends and family hurt. The Forsaken know the struggles of the downtrodden and put-upon.

The aftermath of Stonewall is an ideal atmospheric anchor for Werewolf: The Forsaken, and in particular for this setting. Werewolf is a game about an unexpected community rising up out of mutual and immediate need. It’s a game about staking out territory, taking a firm stance, and making a statement that you will not be moved, no matter how hard the outside pushes. It’s about groups that think that they’re right, and that sometimes you’re in the way of that righteousness. It’s about not giving a shit what they think is right when it’s stepping on your safety and freedom.

If you want to look further into Stonewall and the events surrounding it, there’s plenty out there. Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked the Gay Revolution is a solid take. City Boy: My Life in New York During the 1960s and 1970s is a strong accounting of the era from a perspective in the gay community. The 1995 film, Stonewall, takes an important memoir and gives it screen treatment.

Damn, It Sucks To Be X

The 1960s didn’t end racism, sexism, or homophobia. In many ways, the Civil Rights Movement stirred a proverbial hornet’s nest. Even as marginalized groups celebrated historic victories, bigots clawed out from the woodwork to intensify their oppression. Mobs attacked citizens enjoying newfound rights. We don’t need to tell you this was terrible.

In the World of Darkness, it was just as bad. Maybe even worse in some cases. But here’s the deal: This is real shit that happened to real people. For some people, these wounds are still hanging wide open. Ourselves, our friends, and our families are hurt by these events, and continue to be hurt by these events. Sure, these things happened historically. But then again, they didn’t always happen. In the World of Darkness, we play exceptions to the rule. We play exciting, larger-than-life characters. We’re not constrained by the burden of averages.

We’re not going to tell you to avoid prejudice in your games. But we’d ask that you be sensitive. For example, just because someone wants to play an LGBTQ character in the 1970s doesn’t mean they want to deal with slurs and attacks. The point of a Storytelling game is to have fun, and if a player walks away hurt because of your idea of historical accuracy, you’ve lost the game.

What is to Come

In the 1970s, you’ve got to take the good, and you’ve got to take the bad. The people in New York, and in the greater United States, made much progress. Things also got worse in many ways. As the economy unraveled, people starved in the streets. Then again, other disenfranchised
people gained unprecedented rights. But those rights didn’t come cheap, and many of the leaders who helped push for those rights died or wound up in prison for their efforts. The 1970s weren’t the worst in any way, or the best.

Things are bad, sure. But this isn’t a pinnacle. This is a period. It gets worse. Racial tensions flare in the 1980s. The Reagan administration fosters further economic inequity. Society’s excesses boil over and spill on the underprivileged.

By and large, everything lightens up into the 1990s. The dot-com bubble helps out. As the Cold War coughs its last dying breaths, society has attention to pay to progress, both economic and social. This uptick continues until the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 send America spiraling back into chaos.

**Game Evolution**

What does this mean for your game? As we’ve noted, this setting plays loose with chronology. It doesn’t matter when things happen, so long as they happen. As Storyteller for *The Bowery Dogs*, your most important job is to keep momentum. The 1970s stand as New York City’s nadir. At any given point, the players need to feel as if this moment is the worst; things have to get better, right?

You do this by letting the story flow, letting the players react, and right before true resolution to a meaningful problem, drop the next event. Softball the locations. If the characters are in the Bronx, and you want to throw down an event like Stonewall, do it. The only important feature you need to focus on is the timing. Don’t let things calm down. Hit hard, and hit fast. You’re not trying to destroy hope, you’re trying to build conflict that can’t be fixed with just claws and teeth. In fact, the players shouldn’t think they can “fix” the setting. They can’t. If three to six people could fix the ills of 1970s New York, things wouldn’t have been so bad.

Don’t let your story fall into misery tourism. You don’t have to hit the pack head-on with every problem, but they should always feel invested. They should always feel as if these events are part of their lives.

**The Privileged**

The characters should always feel as if these events are part of their lives. How do you do that when the pack consists of politically or economically powerful characters who don’t regularly see the plight of Average Joe and Jane? What if the pack is a handful of Storm Lords and Iron Masters whose territory is the board of directors of a multinational company?

Of course you could always take that power and influence away from them. You could have them removed from office. You could make their stock prices fall and bankrupt the company. But that might (reasonably) bother the players. After all, if they made characters with these things in mind, this is a clear statement about the type of game they want to play. Taking all that away is a bait and switch. It’s deceptive. It also leaves you with characters unprepared to face the realities of the story. Have you ever read a book where the protagonist didn’t seem to fit into the story being told? It can be done well, sure, but it’s generally jarring and uncomfortable for the reader.

The other choice is to remember that every corporation, every government, every organization exists because of the masses. If the players play the 1%, you have 99% of the populace to contrast and complement their experiences. In that corporation, their workers are hit hard by the
labor strikes. What does a company do when it literally cannot get rid of the massive stores of garbage it's accumulating? What happens to employee productivity when the school boards close, and leave workers needing to stay home with their displaced children?

Make it personal. That secretary she’s banging? His roommate’s in jail for protesting his hard-earned pension being used to bail out an irresponsible city government. He’s about to lose his house because of the loss of a paycheck. Sure, you could just ignore it. But he’s talking about taking a job with his grandfather in Boca.

The Downtrodden
If the pack lives on the streets, New York’s problems will come into play first hand. Avoiding those issues just isn’t possible. The good part of this is, it’s not hard to show off the features of the setting. You can bring in any of the major events of the decade, and you’re likely to see plenty of effect, plenty of sympathy. The downside is, when it’s easy to introduce, you’re liable to take it for granted. It’s easy to dump a pity party on the downtrodden, but that’s an easy trope, rife with simplicity and stereotypes.

Don’t take these struggles for granted. Don’t parrot off another generic story about the poor. Draw from anecdotes. Look for the gut-wrenching specifics, and think hard about how to adapt them to the very specific circumstances of the characters and their friends and families. Social ills are a lot like death. If you tell one person’s story, people will listen, people will cry, people will commiserate. If you tell the story of 10,000 deaths, people glaze over. They understand academically, but they can’t connect with the story.

Territories
To the Uratha of New York City, everything’s a scramble. Everything’s a desperate grab. Territory changes hands as rapidly as the stock market fluctuates. Outright loss and full land grabs might be rare, but borders bend, twist, ebb, and flow. A pack never really knows where its territory ends and another’s begins. No amount of scouting can keep all monsters from the door.

As part of your planning, consider territories. Two basic approaches will help determine the scope of your chronicle. You can look at blocks, or you can look at neighborhoods.

The default assumption is that, in New York, most packs can manage a block or less. City blocks can house thousands of people in some cases, and those blocks might be more eventful than a smaller city by themselves. Play your cards right, and a New York city block could even be the entire setting of a chronicle.

The problem with the block approach is that there’s not a lot of room for give or take. At least, not on the surface. If you’re willing to do a little legwork, and list or even map the area, individual buildings, offices, apartments, and alleys can shift hands. The advantage is that you can put a face and a name on every shift in power. You’re not just talking about losing the 83rd street block. You’re talking about Mr. Wu’s little Chinese place, the one with the skewers everyone talks about. Those Azlu aren’t pushing into Melrose; they’ve possessed the Santiago family.

The opposite approach, looking at territories as neighborhoods, will give your game a bigger, more grandiose scope. Actions resonate hard, everything makes for dramatic changes. If you’re not careful, you lose a bit of the value in the individuals who fill your setting. Make sure every action has a face tied to it. If the players do something, if antagonists do something, it has to
affect someone. If you can’t find someone to affect, some way to exhibit that, is it worth showcasing in the story?

With both approaches, you have one great tool at your disposal to tell *Bowery Dogs* stories: the ensemble cast. When starting your game, have players define all their characters’ Social Merits and associations. If someone brings up a business, ask about who runs it. If someone brings up an alley, ask who sleeps in it. You don’t need to flesh out each as a full character sheet. You could use the Retainer Merit as a basis for bit characters (see *The God-Machine Chronicle*, p. 170). Just rate every one by order of importance, even if they aren’t actually Merits on a character’s sheet.

Look at these characters as a huge extended family. They aren’t always around, but they can be whenever the need arises or it just feels right to bring everyone together. They shouldn’t overshadow the primary pack, but they pop up when it counts, for better or for worse. As Storyteller, you have to play numerous characters. Using ensemble play removes that burden, and allows a spotlight on the occasional supporting character without it feeling like a ramrodded story rather than player intent.

**Burning Down**

New York is falling. Buildings in this period go without tenants, as citizens rush to greener pastures. Without proper maintenance, buildings return to the Earth from whence they came. To a casual observer, New York is decaying faster than it grows. That’s the state of affairs in *Bowery Dogs*.

Reflect this on both sides of the Hisil.

Hungry spirits whose feeding grounds have spread too thin should be common. Spirits of decay, of decomposition, and of overgrowth should pester everything and everyone. Nature wants to reclaim, and the Hisil makes that literal.

But in the flesh world, it’s pervasive and constant. Walls crumble. Buildings creak and tilt. Everything drips something that smells like dirt, rust, and less savory things.

For starters, in any physical action scene where a character achieves a dramatic failure or exceptional success, in addition to any other effects caused, introduce the Urban Collapse Tilt (see the sidebar). Note, this only applies to physical actions. The roof won’t collapse on your head in a debate. But if you’re chasing a drug dealer through tenements, it might.

**Urban Collapse Tilt**

The ground, walls, and ceilings around the scene are unstable, and fall apart with little motivation.

**Effect:** The Tilt makes traversing the scene challenging. Characters moving more than half their Speed in a turn must succeed in a reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll at a –3 penalty or suffer three points of bashing damage and the Knocked Down Tilt (see *God-Machine Chronicle*, p. 211). However, by taking a –2 penalty to attack (or other reasonable) rolls, a character can impose this effect on a victim, forcing them to roll or suffer Knocked Down.

Additionally, any dramatic failure is met with full collapse. This causes five points of bashing damage, and the character is trapped under a mass of rubble.
Removing the rubble requires a Strength + Stamina roll at –5 penalty. Every such failed roll causes an additional point of bashing damage. Other characters can contribute to lift her out similarly. Additional assistance removes the penalty on a 1-for-1 basis.

**Causing the Tilt:** In the decaying urban jungle of New York, the first dramatic failure or exceptional success in an action scene brings this Tilt into effect. This is completely up to Storyteller discretion. If she doesn't believe the given scene has enough decay or neglect to allow for it, it's her call. However, any time Gauru form comes into play, collapse should be a risk.

**Ending the Tilt:** The Tilt ends with the scene. Ingenious characters may come up with stopgap solutions in the immediate that could mitigate its effects during a scene. Note that even if the Tilt ends because of the end of an action scene doesn't mean the location is safe. Once a location suffers the Urban Collapse Tilt, it'll automatically suffer it in any subsequent action scenes. Removing this damage requires extensive construction work to repair and reinforce the infrastructure.

From a Storytelling perspective, you can emphasize this thematic element by showing a lack of structural integrity in all things. Run with the metaphor. City Hall can’t get the funding to bring out the snow plows. When the rain pours and the wind hammers the city, trees come up at the root because the dirt just can’t hold them. A car crash is never a car crash; it’ll take down a power line along with it. The point is, always make it look like more things are falling apart than coming back together. Entropy should be on the tip of your tongue as a Storyteller for this chronicle.

**Fires**

New York has a hostile climate, mixed with an absolutely overwhelming population density. Buildings press up against one another, and there’s not much room to stop a fire once it starts. While the city technically has mechanisms in place to stop fires, overcrowding keeps a fire engine from properly traveling through the streets. Apathetic people would rather block its passage than lose their place in the traffic crawl.

In your chronicle, fires should be complications. Sure, you can put them out. But something always comes up. Something always gets in the way. There’s always lasting damage.

In the real world, what seems like a random fire could lead to a greater plot entrenched in New York’s factual history. For example, look into the Gulliver’s Nightclub fire of 1974. Burglars lit a bowling alley ablaze to hide a burglary, and the fire spread to an adjacent nightclub, killing more than 20 people. This sort of event could ripple all throughout the possibilities of a *Werewolf: The Forsaken* chronicle. Perhaps the burglary and the arson were both false fronts for something altogether different. Maybe a pack of Pure aimed to cause terror and dissent in a Forsaken neighborhood. Or perhaps the place held a nest of *Azlu*, and a young Forsaken panicked and did something awful without thinking.

On a more directly malicious note, the Armed Forces of National Liberation, or FALN, launched numerous bombing attacks on New York soil during this decade. They stood in opposition to any government not espousing Marxist policy, and attacked places with active populations using dynamite. If your chronicle wishes to touch on the Summer of Sam killings, David Berkowitz was implicated on numerous arson charges as well as his shootings. Some stories put the arsons
at well over 1,000 instances. The riots during the 1977 blackout could also be a cause. For two
days, New York went without power, and looting, vandalism, and rioting peaked.

The Summer of Sam
The summer of 1976 took on an identity of its own in New York, thanks to the Son of Sam
killings. In your chronicle, the Summer of Sam is a hotbed of stories waiting to be told.

David Berkowitz was an adopted child who, once he discovered his origins, grew increasingly
troubled. He had a tour in the Army, then his explosive life of murder started in his 20s.
According to his stories, he began stabbing young women in 1975. His spree took place mostly
over 1976 and 1977, when he killed at least eight people. He was caught in 1977, in one of the
most popularized, media-absorbed spectacles of the era.

According to Berkowitz’s statements, his neighbor’s Labrador retriever was possessed by the
devil, and demanded of him the blood of young girls. He told the police he was deeply involved
in the occult, and that fueled his rampage. Over the years, his story changed, adding and
removing elements. In some of his stories, he had a cult of accomplices who never saw charges.
Some evidence suggests at least some credence to his story. His apartment was full of Satanic
graffiti, for example.

In your chronicle, the strange story of Berkowitz and his many victims could take many forms.
At its simplest, he could simply be David Berkowitz, a deeply deranged individual who
murdered numerous people. After all, he didn’t need supernatural influence to shake the
community in the real world. When dealing with Claimed, Ridden, and Urged, Forsaken have
relatively straightforward solutions to lean on. But when the neighborhood’s terrorized by a
mundane, breathing person, what’s an Uratha to do?

On the other hand, plenty of the Shadow’s more chaotic elements could have pushed him over
the edge, or even committed some of the crimes for which his convictions and confessions
weren’t so tight. Look to the end results for inspiration. What would a creature of the Hisil want
entire neighborhoods indoors for?

The Tulpa of Sam

One take is that the possessed dog in Berkowitz’s story didn’t exist until
Berkowitz came along. If you take Berkowitz’s story literally, a possessed
neighbor dog came to David, and told him to murder. What if he wasn’t so far off
base? What if his mind were so far out in left field, it created the “demon” to
fulfill that role? What if it was a physical manifestation of a defense mechanism?

In some forms of Buddhism, the concept of the tulpa is that of a thing made real,
made physical, by manifest thought or spiritual presentation. The idea aligns with
many “invisible friend” stories. So if you go this route, David Berkowitz’s strange
dog is actually a highly intelligent Jaggling, created by Berkowitz’s psyche in
order to reconcile his sinister urges.

Of course, that raises the question: If a man’s mind can create a powerful spirit to
justify his actions, can it create more? And if something in the Hisil — or one of
the Pure tribes — discovers this dark gift, to what ends will they go to take it for
themselves? Consider that not all of Berkowitz’s convictions are fully verified.
Some investigators believe he had accomplices, or was completely innocent of a
few of the charges. Perhaps a group of the Pure used some of these killings to harrow Berkowitz, convincing him he was even more depraved than he truly was.

Institutional Violence

On April 28th, 1973, an undercover police officer shot and killed 10-year-old Clifford Glover. Glover and his father were walking through the South Jamaica neighborhood of Queens when the shooting occurred; the two officers later testified that the father and son were guilty of a robbery. This caused massive unrest in Queens. When the officer was acquitted of murder charges, riots ensued.

Clifford Glover’s story wasn’t the only story of institutional violence in this era, but it’s iconic. Corruption grew so rampant that police slaughtered a 10-year-old boy who was walking with his father. Earlier, we mentioned Stonewall. The era features numerous stories of institutional power striking down at the people. Many of these stories end with the people striking back. Trust in the system was at an all-time low, thanks to incidents like these, and fiascos like the Vietnam War.

These kinds of events can occur at any time, in any place in the World of Darkness. But what’s important about these events in *The Bowery Dogs* is that the people are taking notice, and that sends reason flying out the window. The people fight back. That sounds like a good thing, but in the immediate, it means further tensions and further institutional violence. Police don’t take kindly to vigilante justice, especially when that justice is targeted at other police.

What does this mean for your chronicle? It means pull out the stops. Sometimes shit happens, and it makes little sense to your average person. After all, who would shoot a 10-year-old boy? Why would anyone think that’s the best course of action? It’s complicated. A million variables went into that devastating, horrible decision. But when it’s someone close to you, you (rightfully) don’t care about those variables.

It also means that you don’t let anything happen without ripples. At this point, the people are starting to see that if they stand up, they’ll be heard. If enough of them stand up, the institutions quake. That’s a powerful realization. And unfortunate as it may be, those ripples come back. Everything’s cyclical.

Take notes. If you’re running through an extended chronicle, bullet point every institutional conflict you’ve touched upon so far. During every game session, show one little shard, one ripple. Even if it’s just an editorial in the New York Times that comes up during a character’s breakfast, show it. And during each session, showcase one small scene that brings one of those ripples to the forefront. Build momentum. Give actions consequences, and give consequences more consequences.

New Tilt: Riot (Environmental)

Tension thickens the air into a greasy cloud. Everything hangs in a delicate balance, as everyone wonders what happens next. Then someone throws a bottle.

**Effect:** Every turn, all characters in the midst of the riot are bumped, struck and pushed by the maddened crowd. Roll Stamina + Athletics (reflexive action) each turn; failure on this roll means the character suffers two points of bashing damage. Any other effects — smashed storefronts, destroyed public property, beaten/murdered public figures — depend on the location of the riot and are down to the discretion of the Storyteller.
Causing the Tilt: Mostly this Tilt will be applied as the story dictates, not by anything the characters control. If the characters do something stupidly high-profile in an already-tense situation, though, like taking Gauru form in front of a panicky mob, they just might find themselves touching one off. Certain Gifts, especially Rage and Inspiration, might also allow werewolf characters to start a riot.

Ending the Tilt: Barring supernatural powers, most characters don’t have the ability to stop a riot once it really gets going. Depending on the size of the mob, the nature of the triggering event, and the ability (and willingness) of authorities to respond, the riot might run anywhere from a couple hours to a few weeks.

Corruption

In 1967, New York Police Department investigator Frank Serpico released credible evidence exhibiting widespread police corruption, but was summarily ignored. In 1970, he contributed to a front page story in the New York Times, whistleblowing on the corruption in the NYPD.

The following year, during a drug arrest, a suspect shot him in the face. His supporting officers refused to make the proper calls for help, and he was only saved thanks to a civilian witness. Some evidence suggests the officers brought him to the bust to be murdered.

Serpico’s leaks changed everything. The public saw the NYPD like never before, and their trust would never return. The police were no longer benevolent peacekeepers; they were self-serving street soldiers, willing to abandon the public interest if it meant turning a dollar. So your average citizen looked to herself first, and faced every cop with suspicion. When it comes to facing down a criminal, or asking the police for help, many citizens would take their chances, since the police were just professional criminals.

This distrust makes good cops jaded. This draws them into the fold of the crooked police. This in turn causes more distrust. The cycle grows, and everyone hurts for it.

If your chronicle deals with the cops (and what urban Werewolf: The Forsaken game shouldn’t?) consider introducing these elements. Not all cops are crooked. Some actively want to stamp out corruption within their ranks. And for an Uratha interested in securing a neighborhood, helping a nice guy cop root out the bad elements at the precinct is one great way to ensure some degree of security moving forward. Or if the characters are so inclined, finding a crooked cop and greasing her palm is a guaranteed source of privileged information about one’s territory.

Rebuilding

New York is being built anew. Sure, walls are coming down all over the city. But in the prime real estate of New York City, every collapse is a business opportunity. Every eviction is vacant floor space. Even if something isn’t collapsing, it’s worth tearing it down and building something bigger in such a crowded place.

The World Trade Center

You can’t talk about construction in the 1970s without talking about the World Trade Center complex. From 1966 until 1973, the Port Authority and numerous contractors built the two behemoth towers of the World Trade Center, each over 100 stories in height. At the time, they were the largest man-made structures in the world. They quickly became iconic representations
of the New York spirit, and were recognized the world around as a staple of the New York skyline.

What the World Trade Center towers symbolized depended on to whom you spoke. To many downtown, the towers symbolize America’s dominant economic position, and New York’s place at its heart. To those in Queens, it represents the disparity in New York’s priorities. In one neighborhood, they’ll invest hundreds of millions to build shiny towers. In the next neighborhood over, they won’t even fix the potholes destroying our cars.

Depending on where you want to plot your chronicle, the World Trade Center could be stuck in the bureaucratic nightmare of planning, it could be under construction, or it could be a new fixture on the city skyline. Being that the tower complexes are so big they have their own zip code, they’re a shoo-in for an enterprising, up-and-coming pack to claim as territory. After all, that amount of space and foot traffic is bound to draw spirit attention. It’s not as if the planning commission consulted with someone versed in loci and verges.

Alternatively, you can move away from the static idea of the towers’ status. If you have an arc in mind for your Bowery Dogs chronicle, you can use the towers’ erection as a visual representation of that arc. Start the chronicle in the planning stages, where the city clears out Radio Row, forcibly evicting private businessmen and tenant families. Then move through the complicated construction as your story heats up. Once the action reaches its high point, the towers open for business. This way, the characters can literally watch this massive structure rise as the city falls apart around them. Even if the characters never set foot in the neighborhood, they can see the building slowly rising in the backdrop; mention it during your descriptions.

King of the Mountain

If you want to use the World Trade Center as the heart of your Bowery Dogs plots, look to its newness. New things always come up in New York, but nothing so new, so big. Everyone wants a piece of it. As of this point, it’s the biggest territory dispute since New York’s initial founding and the Revolutionary War.

On the Forsaken side, it’s a sign of power. Whoever controls the tower has nigh-unlimited access to political and financial power. It’s all about access and availability. With the towers at your disposal, nobody can tell you no. For spirits, it’s uncharted territory. It’s 200 stories of new ground that could mean anything. There’s enough inspiration and innovation moving in that for hungry court to eat to their hearts’ content. The Azlu and Beshilu see room for expansion. After all, New York’s crowded as hell, and it’s no different for the city’s vermin. The World Trade Center is fresh, new, and clean. It’s miles of lucrative real estate for enterprising pests.

Movements

Gay rights. Civil rights. Women’s rights. Worker’s rights. Sexual liberation. In this slice of the world, everyone had an issue. Everyone had a movement. While the buildings in New York fall into disrepair, movements build and grow. A movement is a great grounding point for a pack; it takes some of the weight of character creation off the players’ shoulders. They just have to determine how their characters relate to the common ideal.
If going this route, look to totems that stand symbolic of that ideal. Look to the persistence of urban wildlife. Opossums, raccoons, rats, alley cats, and junkyard dogs are a great place to start. Then look to more conceptual designs. Do an Internet search for the wheatpaste posters supporting these movements. Co-opt the art styles and messages, embody them, personify them. Those are your best Bowery Dogs totems.

Music

The births of punk rock and hip-hop aren’t inherently Uratha phenomenon. They would have happened, completely independent of any werewolf influence. However, they give a strong model for Uratha life in the period. Both styles tell a harsh, bleak story about urban life. Both speak to a need for rebellion, for a need to rise up and solve problems yourself because the system stands against you. The status quo can’t be acceptable, by nature of being the status quo.

Best of all, if you focus on hip-hop and punk rock themes for your Bowery Dogs games, the soundtrack writes itself. There’s even quite a bit more crossover than some people would like to admit. For example, Blondie was partly responsible for helping hip-hop achieve mainstream radio play.

If you want to dig far enough, New York punk rock goes back well into the 1960s, but arguably saw its birth in the early 1970s with acts like The New York Dolls, Patti Smith, Television, The Velvet Underground, Blondie, and The Ramones. Some acts from nearby regions like The Talking Heads saw prominence thanks to shows in New York at classic venues like CBGB. If your chronicle leans toward the later part of the decade, you can even draw from second-wave punk like Teenage Jesus and the Jerks or The Misfits.

On the hip-hop side, you have just as rich a history to draw from. Hip hop started at block parties in the Bronx that drew from funk and soul music, and beat-breaking styles from Jamaican immigrants. New York had a saturation of brilliant acts like DJ Kool Herc, Pete Jones, Grand Wizzard Theodore, Erik B. and Rakim, Afrikaa Bambaataa, and of course Grandmaster Flash. The going theory was, hip-hop was an answer to the popular disco music of the time.

There’s a ton of material on the genesis of these two important musical styles. Every individual act has a story that could be fodder for a chronicle in and of itself. You can look to the music directly for inspiration. For example, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five’s “The Message” paints a painful picture of New York in the 1970s. It’s a powerful anthem, one you’d be wise to pay close attention to while designing your chronicle and describing the city streets.

The thing about this music is, it’s all written and sung from experience. It’s direct. It’s raw. It’s unfiltered. It’s perhaps the most accurate accounting of the time period you’re going to find. Don’t let that resource go to waste.

The World Beneath

The Hisil mirrors New York’s conflicts. It takes all the complexities of urban life on the downswing, and filters them through a toothy, slimy, dark metaphor. The predators of the Hisil exist because New York’s predators exist. In the Shadow, the Court of a Fair Wage left town. Nobody knows where it went. They were the ruling spirits in New York; they kept a solid equilibrium, dealing in Essence and lesser spirit life, and that power vacuum could mean disaster for any weaker entities.
The New York *Hisil* embodies scarcity. As the people see fewer resources and greater needs, so does the other side. To the denizens of the Shadow, everything looks like the next — and maybe last — meal. There’s never enough Essence to go around. Every locus is overtaxed. Every pack is overworked.

The Moon Landing

Astute readers might remember that on July 20th, 1969, the Apollo 11 mission landed on the moon. For the Forsaken, this changed everything, since it opened the door for the idigam.

Of course this means that our setting is a time period where the idigam ran wild. Where were they in New York? That’s a good question. And it’s a question for which the Forsaken have no answers. New York would be a great stomping ground for the ancient demigods. But for some reason, none appear to have taken hold in the region. Do they know something the Forsaken do not? It’s likely.

From a thematic perspective, the idigam are bigger than the intimate, street-level aesthetic we’re going for with *The Bowery Dogs*. It’s very easy to place the blame for all the world’s ills on a “big bad,” but the real world is far more complicated than that. We hit on many social ills in the period and the region. They’re touchy, hurtful issues with countless institutional causes. If you can just punch and claw those problems away, the Forsaken become something entirely different.

If you choose to use the idigam in your chronicle, consider using them as plot devices and catalysts for action, as opposed to direct threats. You could even use them as a displaced threat; an idigam could inhabit what was formerly called the Burned Over District in west and central New York. It’d be far enough away that the Forsaken wouldn’t have much immediate need to address the problem, but close enough that they could feel its influence.

If you want to push hard on the gang metaphor, use the *Hisil*. After all, courts and choruses of spirits come about in a chaotic, organic fashion. Bigger courts absorb smaller courts through violent overthrow. Courts claim territories, disallowing any intrusion or trespassing, under pain of destruction.

Courts

In New York, a handful of powerful spirit courts comprise the majority of the *Hisil*. *Fair Wage* left town. There’s a vacuum, and the remaining courts seek to fill it and dominate the field. We’ve included the Court of Indulgence as an example of one of the Courts seeking to fill *Fair Wage*’s role in the city.

The Court of a Fair Wage

*The Kuspu Dinu*

The Court of a Fair Wage used to be the big player in town. For centuries, it grew in influence, peaking around the 1950s. It grew too big to stay stable, and began a path toward collapse in the 1960s. Recently, it vanished. Nobody saw a great struggle. Nobody knows where a court of spirits could have even disappeared to. But it’s gone, and the shit’s about to hit the fan. The few straggling spirits from the court seem unaware of the mass disappearance, which leaves them in a vulnerable place.
For Uratha aware of such things, the court’s disappearance is even more cataclysmic than it looks at first glance. With the World Trade Center’s construction, New York’s slated to grow into even more of a financial powerhouse than it was before. With the influence of other courts, the situation could grow terrible for the city’s people. Vice-ridden, monstrous spirits seek to claim the Kuspu Dinu territory. For example, one manager might pay normally 100 workers; but if possessed by a spirit of Gluttony, that same manager bleeds his workers dry. Those workers go hungry, which causes hunger spirits to come in force. Hunger and gluttony merge to become Unending Feast, which damages the cityscape as a whole. These sorts of problems ripple outward, and could cause unimaginable conflict. Smart Forsaken in the neighborhood should look to that power vacuum, and make sure it isn’t filled with something awful.

**Soldiers:** Fair Wage isn’t completely gone. Its foot soldiers still wander the streets. Every day, they number fewer as other predators team up to remove them.

Fair Wage Soldiers look the part of wartime patriotism propaganda. They’re steel workers. They’re riveters. They’re assembly line technicians. They’re blue-collar Americans with cut jaws, proud work ethics, and exaggerated tools of the trade. They carry rivet guns, sledgehammers, hydraulic rescue tools, and other massive implements of manufacture and destruction.

They look for instability and injustice as the Court defines it; they’ll home in on any situations where larger spirits are devouring smaller ones, but they have no problems with multitudes of smaller spirits destroying a larger one. In many cases, this is their own downfall, since they won’t fight back against “the little guy.” Their ban is to “never stop the underdog.” If this ban extended to the higher echelons of the court, it could offer a reason for their disappearance.

Crafty Eldoth manipulate circumstances in the Hisil, in order to recruit the Fair Wage Soldiers’ aid. Stack a conflict to look unfair, and the Soldiers will jump into action. But as the court vanishes day by day, Uratha interested in using the Soldiers to their advantage have to work to protect the soldiers from other predators, so it’s a two-way street.

**Locks:** They look like padlocks. They’re remarkably common, even though their numbers have declined dramatically in the past few years. Their entire purpose is to find things that are in desirable states, and keep them from changing — for better or for worse.

Their perception of what constitutes a desirable state appears arbitrary even to those that study the Court of a Fair Wage. The defining factor looks to be that there’s no predation or fighting in an area for a few nights’ time. The Locks look to the area as successful, and lock down further change. Mind, they don’t leave if fighting starts; they just prevent damage and change to the immediate environs.

Locks boast the ability to make objects and set dressing almost immutable. In game terms, they can spend Essence one-for-one to increase the Durability of all inanimate objects in the immediate vicinity for the remainder of the scene. This affects both sides of the Gauntlet. When they decide to be stubborn, their surroundings are untouchable.

**The Court of Indulgence**

*Ikkusunu*

The Court of Indulgence stands as one of the dominant courts in Fair Wage’s absence. The drug culture has shifted from the “friendly” drugs of the hippie movement, to harsher drugs like
mescaline, cocaine, and heroin. Sex moved away from “free love” and more toward a disco hookup culture. As these things changed, and the Court of Indulgence grew to prominence. It bolsters and feeds on the destructive impulses of New Yorkers, which New Yorkers provide in droves.

Unlike most spirit courts, the court itself has a ban. Its individual members have their own bans, but every representative shares the same limitation: “Do not stop before it hurts.” While this causes a high mortality rate within the court, the court compensates through raw numbers. They reproduce like little else. It doesn’t hurt that their driving principle is self-perpetuating; they push indulgence, and indulgence begets indulgence. When an addict robs a home to pay for her addiction, that’s just a little more fuel on the fire.

This has a side effect. The Court doesn’t have a contingent of powerful, ranking spirits. It’s all Gafflings and some lesser Jagglings. They come in seven different breeds, each roughly corresponding to one of the Seven Deadly Sins.

Mind you, these are not tempting demons. These are embodiments of cracks in society’s fabric. These are failures and pains from an evolving culture. Theirs is to do and die, to destroy and to decay.

**Greeds, Consumptions, Hubaa:** Greeds take the form of hot, glowing flows, not unlike lava. The orange and red fluid occasionally bubbles up, and when the bubbles pop, bits of world currency splash outward. They grow quickly, burning everything in their path, sometimes enveloping entire city blocks before they dry up and leave ash and fool’s gold in their wake. They’re currently the fastest growing breed of Indulgence.

**Prides, Privileges, Shaddim:** Prides look like nondescript, faceless, androgynous white people in business attire. While they hunt alone, when they find suitable prey, they break into many parts, their limbs skittering across pavement, and their abdomens crawling slowly. Their heads roll toward their victims and scream an ear-piercing static that distracts, deafens, and ultimately will kill if left unchecked.

**Wraths, Burns, Hihim:** Wraths are small, lanky humanoid covered in hot, viscous fluid. Those familiar with it identify the fluid as napalm, which burns so hot the fire is invisible to the naked eye. Their victims rarely get to look long for the source of the fire, as a Wrath rushes its prey and explodes, covering them in the burning gel.

**Sloths, Lethargies, Shiddu:** Sloths have no physical appearance; they cannot be bothered. This makes them among the most dangerous of the Indulgences. When they find prey, they cling to it, and cause time to slow around it. Its muscles become heavy, and it simply stops moving. Eventually, it becomes too lethargic even to breathe. This horrific process can take upwards of a week; many victims starve before they get to that point.

**Gluttonies, Overdoses, Shabu:** Gluttonies are snakelike creatures made of long, slender hypodermic needles. They perpetually depress their plungers, and the venomous green fluid from within flows down the neck of the syringe to re-enter the rear like narcotic ouroboroses. When they find a target, they’ll attach to it by needle, and pump their venom. The venom makes the target hungry for whatever they want most. The hunger is a deathly, existential hunger, one that’s not sated by indulgence. So the subject will consume and consume to the point of self-destruction.
Envies, Emptinesses, Enro: Envies look like nothingness. Light warps around them. To most eyes, they’re simply distorted space. In fact, they’re holes in existence that draw in everything around them. Inanimate objects absorb directly into them. Living things slowly disintegrate over the course of hours, losing structural integrity until they just cannot continue living. Fortunately for the world around them, they move slowly; most cannot move more than a foot in an hour.

Lusts, Wetnesses, Titu: Lusts are thin clouds of salty-sweet organic wetness. They arouse in the way pheromones might. They cause immediate and unmistakable obsession for all the things a person has been told not to do. If one of the breeds of Indulgence was the leader, Lusts would be that. They tend to trail along with other Indulgences, compounding their effects and making the victim want for their end.

Unique Manifestations
New York boasts some spirits that aren’t parts of the major courts; but remain powerful nonetheless.

Scoopers
Scoopers are industrial machines made of flesh and bone. They look like dump trucks, cement mixers, or cranes. They’re of exaggerated size, even for what they look like, sometimes taking up an entire city street. Scoopers are perverted spirits of hunger; they draw essence from fulfilling their need by any means necessary. For the scoopers, this means capturing and delivering one being to be consumed by another. They gather up numerous small spirits at a time, and bring them to greater spirits, which grow rapidly from the feasts.

Scoopers bring with them two very real concerns. First, they’re a quick ticket to power for whatever Court wishes to take Fair Wage’s place — but with rampant feeding comes the risk of turning magath. Secondly, as the Scoopers grow in numbers, a few interests have looked into the possibility of teaching them to manifest. One pack of Pure seeks to unleash them on the world of flesh, to terrorize and destroy the population of New York. If they succeed, New York could be the first city truly conquered by the Pure, and it would irrevocably shatter the Oath of the Moon.

Melting Pots
Melting Pots are less pots, more puddles. They’re primordial ooze, seeking to return everything they touch to its natural state. They barely move, instead waiting for things to become trapped in their quagmires. A creature that touches the Melting Pot is stuck fast. Over the course of days, it’s slowly absorbed, and the puddle grows.

To most spirits, they’re hardly a threat. Most of New York knows about these puddles, and simply steers clear of them. This keeps the Melting Pots from growing too large. A few very large puddles haunt certain intersections, and block all traffic going through the Hisil.

Most of the time, that’s all the threat Melting Pots pose. Sometimes, though, spirits are sucked into the puddle without being completely “digested,” as it were. As the Melting Pot slowly siphons off their Essence, these captive spirits turn on each other like cats in a sack, tearing into each other for what little Essence they have left. Every once in a while, this ends up creating a magath — and every once in a great while, the new magath is strong enough to burst the Melting Pot and escape. Hisil explorers are advised to avoid Melting Pots that bubble like molten tar; you never know what might come snarling out of one.
Running The Game

Here, we hit on the tools necessary to run the game, including the basic modifications to *Werewolf: The Forsaken* necessary to fit the setting. Then, we’ll give a basic model for a *Bowery Dogs* story, including a series of modular scenes you can piece together to build your own tale. Sure, you could run a game set in this setting with just the standard Storytelling System rules, but in this section, we hit hard on some genre conventions, and how to bring them home with the game mechanics.

The Punk Generation

This is an optional rule designed to emphasize some of the themes of the setting. Here, now, the downtrodden lash out, and in many cases they win. The status quo shakes at its foundation.

With this rule in play, events play out normally, until someone in a privileged position steps on someone less fortunate, and the less-fortunate person decides to strike back.

For the purposes of this rule, determine what Social Merit most closely fits the action at hand. If someone’s arresting the homeless, it’s Resources. If a cop throws around some false evidence to make an arrest, that’s Status. If the victim of the action has fewer dots in that Merit than the aggressor, the victim gains The Punk Generation Condition.

**New Condition: The Punk Generation**

Your character has been wronged by someone more privileged than she. While under the weight of that oppression, she suffers \(-2\) to all Resolve and Composure rolls.

**Resolution:** When spending Willpower to lash out at the source of the Condition, you can choose to use the rote quality on the roll instead of taking the normal +3. If you do so, resolve this Condition.

**Beat:** n/a

From a systems perspective, the rote quality allows the player to reroll all failed dice once in the roll. So, this quality is only a benefit if the player rolls four or more failed dice. But if it’s a dice pool where she’s giving it her all (and statistically, one that’s at least about six or seven dice), this can make for a devastating turn of the tables.

The Punk Generation cuts both ways; if the struggle shifts to a place where the victim becomes the privileged participant, he can find himself on the receiving end. For example, the cop that planted evidence has more Status than the junkie. The junkie would get the Punk Generation Condition. However, the junkie has more money, and thus more Resources. So if the junkie retaliates by finding the cop’s shit apartment and slashing the tires of his used Buick, the cop can turn the tables and lash out using the same Condition.

Drugs

In New York City, the 1970s was a time known for its drugs. While the rules for drugs in the *World of Darkness Rulebook* work fine for your average chronicle, a little extra attention can help to shine a light on that aspect of the setting.
Keep in mind, these drugs are a gross abstraction of reality, blended with genre conventions and
dramatic considerations. They’re not supposed to accurately portray real world addictions, any
more than a dot of Strength is supposed to model all the ways a character can be strong.

Taking Drugs

Trying to lump all drugs into one series of rules is difficult, because each interacts differently
with the body, and with the mind. There exist some rough categories, but mostly these exist
because of laws and certain common symptoms. Then again, in a game like the Storytelling
System, we abstract things enough that rough categorization can work. However, any given drug
can have specific rules that overrule the general drug rules. Use the specific rules for the drug in
question whenever possible. Unless otherwise noted, drugs that modify Attributes will modify
relevant derived traits as well as any dice pools. A drug that increases Strength will increase
Speed, for example.

Dosage and Overdose: Every drug has a “common dosage.” This is a single use. A “hit.”
Enough to get your average person high. This amount will give the drug’s expected effects.
We’re not listing specific amounts, because that level of pedantry doesn’t have a place in a
storytelling game. If your character takes the common dosage, roll Stamina + 3 to resist
overdose. If your character takes more, it’s a straight Stamina roll to resist overdose. Each
additional dose affords a cumulative –1 penalty. Willpower can be spent to add to these rolls, but
many characters with addictions won’t have Willpower available to spend.

Overdose causes lethal damage equal to the drug’s Toxicity rating, plus the number of doses the
character has taken. Unless otherwise noted, the damage comes one point per half hour until the
entirety of the damage has run its course.

Tolerance: A character who has taken a drug repeatedly will not feel its positive effects (but will
still suffer any negative effects) with a common dosage. A character who has suffered physical
or psychological addiction (see below) cannot feel the positive effects of a drug without taking
more than the common dosage. She can sate her physical dependency with a basic dose, but she
doesn’t receive the necessary rush to sate her psychological dependency.

Physical Addiction

A character’s body can become acclimated to the use of a drug, and grow to physically rely on
its presence to operate normally. Any time the character uses a drug, the Storyteller should roll
the character’s Stamina, plus or minus any modifiers the drug affords. Success means the
character avoids physical dependency. Failure means the character becomes dependent.

A dependent character who goes a whole day without indulgence suffers physical withdrawal.
While in a physical withdrawal, she will not heal normally. Every hour, she suffers a level of
bashing damage, and loses a dot of her highest current Physical Attribute. She’ll suffer damage
and lose dots equal to the drug’s Toxicity. From then forward, she can make Stamina rolls every
six hours. Each success returns one level of damage and one Physical Attribute dot. This affects
derived traits, and can cause massive complications due to lost Health boxes. Once she’s fully
healed, she can heal as normal. However, if she uses the drug again, the dependency returns
immediately without rolls. But if she takes the drug during withdrawal, the damage and lost
Attributes return.

Psychological Addiction
Psychological addiction is a much more insidious and subtle beast than physical addiction. Not everyone is prone to psychological addiction, and there are many factors that could determine whether or not a character is.

In game terms, a player decides whether or not their character has an addictive personality, and is prone to addiction. After all, psychological addiction is a terrifying thing. It can cause a loss of agency. Storytelling games are about choices, so that loss should never be inflicted lightly.

If you choose for your character to have an addictive personality, it takes the form of a Persistent Condition. The Condition gives Beats whenever the addiction meaningfully impedes the character’s life.

An addictive character becomes addicted after using a drug to escape from life’s issues. As the player, you determine when that is, since it’s a Condition. Once addicted, the character must indulge in her chosen vice daily. Any day she doesn’t, she cannot gain Willpower. As well, she loses Willpower every day, once per day, until she’s lost Willpower equal to the drug’s Toxicity, or she indulges. She becomes irritable and testy, suffering a cumulative –1 dice penalty (to a maximum of the drug’s Toxicity) to all Mental and Social actions. This leaves her needing to spend her few, dwindling Willpower points to succeed in all but the most menial actions. These penalties all go away the moment she indulges in her drug of choice.

Once at their most potent, the effects of psychological addiction will persist for an additional number of days equal to the drug’s Toxicity. After this, the penalties fade at a rate of one per day, and she becomes able to regain Willpower normally. However, psychological addiction can come rushing back at any appropriate trigger. If she sees her drug of choice, if someone talks about it too much, or she just feels too bored, the floodgates can open. When that happens, take a Beat, and the addiction returns fully and immediately, with the maximum possible penalties.

Alcohol
Toxicity: 1

Being legal, alcohol is the most common mind-altering drug in New York. You can buy it at the corner store, in dozens if not hundreds of varieties. What constitutes a common dose is fairly abstract, from a couple of beers, to a shot, to a glass of wine. Deaths from overdose are rare, but overindulgence leaves many people calling in sick from work the day after, spending hours in front of a toilet bowl.

Being drunk offers a +1 bonus to Presence, but a –1 to Dexterity. This increases to +2 Presence, –2 Dexterity, –1 Composure with more than the common dosage. Effects last a couple of hours.

Special Notes: A character is highly unlikely to suffer overdose from a couple of drinks. All rolls to resist overdose benefit from +2 additional dice.

Cocaine
Toxicity: 3

Cocaine saw a rise in popularity in the 1970s. It was stylish. It was hip. It was full of excitement, energy, and all the things pleasant hippie drugs were not. It was a drug that pushed disco that much further, and outlived its host. Used in limited quantities, it’s a drug that many people could walk away from with minimal lasting repercussions. That made it all the more tempting, and led to deadly excess.
A normal dose of cocaine grants a +1 to all Physical dice pools (not Attributes), and a −1 to Resolve. These effects double with additional dosage. The effects last about a half an hour, to an hour with higher dosage.

**Special Notes:** Even without overdose, characters who frequently use cocaine will suffer lasting effects. Consider temporary Flaws or Conditions exhibiting paranoia, general discomfort, or heart complications.

**Depressants**

**Toxicity:** 1–3

This is a general category for a broad group of drugs that reduce stimulation and relax the muscular and nervous systems. While alcohol is technically a depressant, its legality affords it a different enough delivery to warrant a separate entry. Quaaludes are a common example in the period; many weaker opiates and anesthetics can use these rules as well.

A character adds the drug’s Toxicity to Composure, and subtracts it from Dexterity. Additional doses levy a cumulative −1 penalty to all Physical actions. The character also ignores wound penalties equal to the Toxicity score. The effects last for a couple of hours.

**Special Notes:** The umbrella of depressants has a wide variety beneath it, and each has its own effects. When taking a depressant, determine a side effect. Reflect this with a conditional −2 penalty. For example, Quaaludes cause photosensitivity, so a character on Quaaludes suffers −2 to all actions taken under bright lights.

**Heroin**

**Toxicity:** 4

Heroin use became an epidemic with the return of Vietnam veterans who used the drug as an outlet during the war. Many couldn’t find the drug, so the effects of withdrawal stood fearsomely in the faces of many Americans. It’s a strong opiate well known for being highly addictive, with terrible withdrawal symptoms, and easy to overdose on.

A dose of heroin causes intense euphoria and numbness. The character ignores all wound penalties, and can ignore any penalties due to distraction or overwhelming circumstances. He also gains dice that he can divide however he’d like across any number of rolls. The number is equal to 3 + the number of doses taken. However, if he’s not using any of those bonus dice, he loses the 10-again quality on the roll due to lackluster performance and dedication. The effects last for one to ten hours, depending on the amount and quality of the drug.

**Special Notes:** Heroin is particularly addictive. Rolls to resist physical dependency suffer a −1 penalty. As soon as the drug wears off, the user immediately begins feeling withdrawal symptoms as if he’d been without for a full day.

**Marijuana**

**Toxicity:** 1

Marijuana is the most commonly used illegal drug in our setting. Many people barely even consider it a drug. Particularly since Vietnam veterans commonly used marijuana in the field, it’s easy to find on the streets of New York.
A dose of marijuana leaves the user slightly euphoric and calm, free of pain and often with a heightened appetite. It offers a +1 to Composure, but a −1 penalty to extended action dice pools for a couple of hours. Additional dosage doesn’t afford further effect, beyond an additional −1 to extended action dice pools. These effects will last a couple of hours.

**Special Notes:** Marijuana is not a particularly addictive substance. It doesn’t cause physical dependency. Your character may become psychologically dependent, however.

**Mescaline and Peyote**

**Toxicity:** 2

Mescaline and peyote are naturally occurring mild hallucinogens. They rose in popularity as the stronger LSD became less trendy. Mescaline occurs naturally within the peyote cactus, and is a common refinement of the plant for recreational use. While mescaline doesn’t generally cause full visual hallucinations, it enhances color senses, causes some minor visual phenomenon, and can give an altered sense of time. It can also cause synesthesia, where one sense triggers stimuli in other senses. For example, sounds may be perceived as having color, despite not having a visible appearance. Also, objects can appear distorted beyond physical possibility under certain circumstances.

In game terms, mescaline causes a −2 to Wits, as distraction takes over. However, the character’s newfound senses act as a secondary Vice, offering Willpower when the character explores her altered state. These effects last a couple of hours.

**Special Notes:** Peyote has long been used for spiritual awareness. Depending on your chronicle, you may wish to lend some credence to the drug’s abilities. If you do, a user can gain the benefits of the Two World Eyes Gift while the drug remains active. However, he cannot focus on either world at one time; both senses are forcibly active.

**Betrayal**

*The Bowery Dogs* apes certain genre conventions. That era of film was loaded to the brim with stories of loyalty and betrayal. You couldn’t trust anyone (except the one guy you could…) and everyone’s a possible backstabber.

When creating your *Bowery Dogs* characters, everyone gets their normal allotment of Merit dots. But atop those, everyone gets one free dot in Allies, Contacts, Mentor, or Retainer. For this style of chronicle to work, the characters have to be connected; they have to be grounded in the setting.

**The Risk**

When a character taxes her relationship with a Social Merit, the Storyteller rolls her rating in that Merit. Use the modifiers in the sidebar on p. XX to reflect the character’s behavior toward her associates, letting those behaviors influence the chance of betrayal.

If the roll succeeds, the connection stays loyal. With an exceptional success, the connection improves. The character gains a free dot in a Merit reflecting that connection. It may be an additional dot of the same Merit, or a different Merit broadening the relationship.

If the roll fails, the connection betrays the character. Maybe the informant snitches on his employer. Maybe the character’s wife has a one-night stand with his rival. The player has two choices at that point. He can roll with the betrayal, and keep the connection close. If he does that,
it builds a cool cynicism in the character’s disposition, and his character regains a point of spent Willpower. Otherwise, he can swap out the Merit dots reflecting that connection. Those dots can be spent on new Social Merits of equivalent ratings, reflecting a new connection. The new connection must make sense, but the player gets to dictate its introduction. For example, if his crooked cop buddy plants some hot drugs in his house, he might make friends with the dealer the cop took the drugs from, since they now have a common enemy. Whereas the cop might have been reflected in Allies 3: Police, the new dealer might be Allies 2: Street, and Contacts 1.

With a dramatic failure, the connection becomes a nemesis. Create the connection as a full Storyteller character. Make the nemesis with three Experiences per dot invested in the relationship. The player then receives equivalent Merit dots to reflect a new relationship, as if the roll were a regular failure.

**Betrayal Modifiers**
- Character betrayed the ally: −2
- Characters just broke up: −3
- The ally has a monetary incentive to betray: −1
- The ally has reason to fear for his safety: −2
- The ally has reason to fear for his life: −3
- Ally is a relative: +2
- Characters are in romantic relationship: +2
- Ally would lose a job with the betrayal: +1
- Character offered an incentive to guarantee loyalty: +1 to +3

**Keeping Your Enemies Closer**

This rules shift implies a lot of things. For one, almost nobody is truly loyal. But also, it implies that betrayal isn’t always the end of a relationship. So when you’re creating your characters, or buying Merits, think with betrayal in mind. When buying Social Merits, look to rivals, ex-lovers, and other “negative” relationships for possibilities. Look to film noir for inspiration. There’s no such thing as a worthless relationship. Everyone has a value, if you look at them from the right angle. And if you keep your enemies close, you don’t have to be disappointed when they betray you.

**True Friend**

One clear exception stands against the Betrayal rules: characters in the World of Darkness might have a True Friend. True friends are represented with the True Friend Merit from p. 172 of The God-Machine Chronicle. It renders a character completely immune to these betrayal rules; the Storyteller cannot force a True Friend to turn on the character.

**Events**

Instead of a full, cohesive story, this section favors modular events, things you can string together as you see fit. They’re designed to help you build momentum, not to deliver a complex arc. They’re important historical events — or events that happen in the periphery of those historic events — that help you to build the foundation for your Bowery Dogs story. They exist
to help you dress the set, and hit home on the themes and moods. The Storyteller characters tie
the scenes together and give them conceptual continuity.

Every scene offers an action that could be used to further the plot or resolve the issue at hand. This
of course is a suggestion; your players will likely take the threads of the plot and run far
with them. But use it as an idea of the directions you could take the story.

Whistleblowing
Frank Serpico’s famous whistleblowing caused a revolutionary change in the way the people saw
the police, and ended much of the corruption that was rampant in New York City. However, it
had unintended consequences for good cops. Detective Stephanie Dimera (p. XX) was one of
those good cops.

She was working on a murder investigation that coincided with a drug sting operation. The
victim and suspect lived in the same transient house with ten other addicts. The suspect was
wanted in the cases of at least three other murders. The problem came down to a leak in the
department, which put dozens of protestors on the scene when the police arrived. The protestors
asserted that Johnny Sampson, the suspect, was innocent, and simply guilty of a police smear
campaign. They wouldn’t hear logic.

At the moment the scene starts, Johnny’s using the opportunity to escape. Detective Dimera’s
attempting pursuit. The mob is trying to stop her. Unbeknownst to Dimera, one of the protestors
is armed, and this close to drawing and firing on the detective. Also unbeknownst to Dimera, her
culprit is Beshilu. Even if she avoids being shot by the civilian, she’s in for a much more
complicated arrest.

**Hook:** The crack house is a den of Beshilu, and on or otherwise near the characters’ territory.
Most of the junkies are infected with the rat hosts. The characters trace leads back to the house.

**Conflict:** The balance between the police on the scene, the Beshilu junkies, and the protestors.
To solve one of these problems, you need to push hard enough to set another ablaze.

**Example Action:** Distraction

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Subterfuge

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The diversion goes terribly awry. The mob becomes a riot. A handful of
rioters become infected with the rat hosts. Dimera counts herself among the infected.

**Failure:** The diversion fails. The mob continues their protests, blocking Dimera. If Dimera
doesn’t withdraw (which she won’t without an additional roll to convince her), someone in the
crowd will pull a gun and fire on her.

**Success:** The crowd parts enough to let Dimera through safely, along with any of the characters
who need to enter the Beshilu nest.

**Exceptional Success:** The crowd parts, and even manages to position itself in such a way as to
corral the Beshilu. Any attempts they make to flee suffer a –3 penalty, and pursuing them gains
+3.

**Recommended Modifiers:** Characters know protestors (+2), Characters threaten violence (–2),
Characters demonstrate violence (–4), Characters bring evidence of Johnny Sampson’s guilt (+3)
Blackout

A series of unfortunate lightning strikes caused the 1977 blackout. The 1977 blackout brought unprecedented bedlam in New York. This occurred in the midst of the Summer of Sam murders, an economic slump, and a time of general civil unrest. While the blackout didn’t necessarily cause the riots, it was the catalyst an uneasy population needed to step over the line. Thousands of businesses were looted.

In this scene, Hard Donny (see p. XX) and a group of rioters are tearing shit up in the characters’ territory. They’re smashing windows, kicking in doors, stealing anything they can carry, breaking anything they can’t, and otherwise devastating everything in sight. Not only does this cause complications for a pack looking to secure its territory, but it’s also a quick path to Kuruth, as anger overtakes Uratha whose homes are violated so thoroughly. Hard Donny doesn’t know shit about shit; he’s just trying to be part of the excitement. However, he’s highly intuitive, and will be the first to intervene when things start going south. This puts him right in the line of fire.

To make matters worse, it happens when most or all of the characters are sleeping. This riles the beast immensely. Those woken by the riots suffer a –5 penalty to rolls to resist Kuruth. Other characters suffer –3.

Characters trying to fight back the flood of people must not only shout over the members of the crowd to convince them, but must physically hold them back as they seek to trample anyone within.

**Hook:** This scene comes to the characters. It starts *in media res*, as a brick shatters a window. A door busts off its hinges.

**Example Action:** Fighting Back the Flood

**Dice Pool:** Strength + Expression

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The mob overcomes the character. Everyone in the immediate vicinity takes four points of lethal damage per turn they are trampled and beaten by the mob. Defense does not apply. Escaping the mob is an extended Strength + Stamina action requiring five successes, with one roll representing a turn of struggle. Any Uratha in the mob must resist Kuruth, requiring five successes.

**Failure:** The mob overcomes the character. Everyone in the immediate vicinity takes six points of bashing damage per turn they are trampled and beaten by the mob. Defense does not apply. Escaping the mob is an extended Strength + Stamina action requiring three successes, with one roll representing a turn of struggle. Any Uratha in the mob must resist Kuruth, requiring three successes.

**Success:** The mob withdraws after a slight struggle. Much property damage still occurs. Uratha exposed to the mob must resist Kuruth, requiring only a single success.

**Exceptional Success:** The mob withdraws rapidly, barely affecting the property.

**Recommended Modifiers:** Characters barricade the location (+2), Neighborhood knows and hates the characters (–3), Characters pissed Donny off (–2), Donny likes the character (+2)

**Institutional Violence**
In New York, roles get complicated. Protectors can be abusers. Abusers can be protectors. This era brings that uncertainty to light, as a few high-profile cases of police brutality shook the populace.

This scene doesn’t center on the death of an innocent person at the hands of the authorities, but on its aftermath. If that happens in play, this could follow. Alternatively, offer an experience point or Beat to a player who offers up a character in their character’s network, a friend, family, or associate, to suffer that tragedy.

The neighborhood is shaken by the loss. Protests, vigils, and patrols run all day and night. At one particular vigil, one the characters happen to attend, things go awry. Two factions emerge: the first is Pastor Washington (see p. XX), the second is a quickly growing gang. The gang is advocating an attack against the officer responsible for the tragedy. Pastor Washington believes that violence only begets more violence, and is trying to talk them down. The situation is tense, and could end badly for everyone. The gang doesn’t want to hear reason, only a chance for revenge.

An additional problem here is that the struggle is generating an immense amount of infectious Essence that draws something dark, something malevolent. And worse still, Pastor Washington is a living locus; a perfect way for the monster to come across and devastate the already downtrodden people. The characters must try to stop the spirit from coming across, while remaining unnoticed by the vigil’s participants.

**Hook:** The characters should know the victim, and thus have reason to attend the vigil.

**Example Action:** Intercepting the Spirit

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Stealth

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** This is the metaphorical equivalent of stepping on a twig in the quiet forest. The character goes loud, and draws the attention of everyone in the vigil. If the character is in the Hisil, all local spirits are alerted, and cause havoc. The spirit uses the opportunity to manifest.

**Failure:** The crowd just runs too thick and too attentive. The spirit finds its way to Pastor Washington, and uses him to manifest, but manifests slightly away from the crowd.

**Success:** The spirit cannot make it to Pastor Washington to manifest. The characters must find a way to deal with the spirit before it finds an alternative path through the Hisil.

**Exceptional Success:** The spirit is not only blocked from using Pastor Washington for entrance, but finds the pack overwhelming enough to flee, hoping to live to fight another day.

**Recommended Modifiers:** Character already in the Hisil (+2), Characters dispersed the vigil (+1), Pack argued with the gang (−3), Pastor Washington complies with the plan (+2), Thorough plan (+3)

**Stonewall**

The Stonewall riots happened because real people made real decisions that hurt other real people. Cornered victims lashed out, and the whole thing spun into something altogether bigger. It didn’t happen because of malevolent spirits, or unknown monsters. That doesn’t mean the monsters didn’t benefit.
A pack of Pure have been eyeing the Stonewall Inn for a while, since a few of their wolf-blooded males have been using the Stonewall as a shelter from life as Pure breeding stock. Unfortunately for the Pure, their regular tactics for retrieval wouldn’t work in the middle of the city. They’ve been looking for an opportunity to strike, and the riots are the perfect time for that. They’re staging a guerrilla operation to abduct their kin in the middle of the chaos.

Their operation assumes at least some of the Forsaken are in the area. So they’re prepared to fight, and fight ruthlessly. Their tactics are sound. If they uncover Forsaken, they’ll divide and conquer, gang up on a single member at a time for a quick and efficient kill.

Ultimately, their plan succeeds when all four of the wolf-blooded are removed from the site. The four Uratha in the strike team each have their own role to play. One dresses as a police officer, trying to “arrest” one of the kin and get him into a police car. One dresses as a bar patron, attempting to trick the kin away to “safety.” Two are posing as rioters, one physically kidnapping one of the kin, and one attempting to knock another out in the fray for ease of abduction.

Snuggy Roscoe (see p. XX) is around, since he makes a lot of his money dealing to the gay community. He’s not interested in having some of his prime customers hauled off. If he’s clued in, he may at least be able to support the pack’s plan.

It’s highly unlikely the Forsaken will emerge fully victorious here, as the Pure have extensive evasion plans, and the Pure will abandon packmates in order to get their prized breeding stock.

**Hook:** The characters have found evidence of the Pure encroaching into the area. All evidence points to an upcoming strike; the characters find some used stakeout locations near the Stonewall.

**Sample Action:** Halting the Pure

**Dice Pool:** Dexterity + Strategy, extended

This roll requires 20 successes. The characters have four attempts to make the goal. Each attempt is a half hour of strategizing and executing their plan. These rolls are teamwork rolls; the main actor makes a Dexterity + Strategy roll to situate herself in such a way as to intercept the Pure for engagement. The other actors may use other, relevant dice pools to support the primary actor.

Every five successes means the Forsaken intercept one of the four Pure, potentially saving one of the four wolf-blooded. When they intercept, cut away to a combat scene or other scene attempting to stop one of the abductions. With an exceptional success, the Forsaken could intercept two of the Pure with a single action. Situate them together, and let the Forsaken deal with them as a pair at that point.

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** Dramatic failure means that not only have the Pure succeeded in their actions, but the Pure procure some essential piece of evidence pointing to security breaches in the Forsaken territory. This lines them up for a later guerrilla assault from the same pack.

**Failure:** Failures add no successes to the total. Because of the limited number of rolls allowed, this could be devastating for the operation.

**Success:** Add successes to the Forsaken’s total. If they’ve reached five, 10, 15, or 20 successes, they intercept one of the Pure.
**Exceptional Success:** Add successes to the total. Whatever the current total is, the Forsaken intercept two of the Pure. This potentially lowers the total number of successes required for a fully successful operation.

**Recommended Modifiers:** Enemies in the gay community (–3), Enemies in the police (–2), Spies on the inside (+2), Spies in the police (+2), Thorough plan (+2)

**The Summer of Sam**

The David Berkowitz killings had much of New York looking over its shoulders on the way home at night. One man killed six or more people. That’s not much in the scope of New York’s population, but it was frightening enough to make a million people pay attention. Unfortunately for the Forsaken, attention’s the worst thing in the world.

In this scene, one of the pack, the one closest (but not necessarily that close) to David Berkowitz’s description, is assumed to be the Son of Sam killer. The citizen who makes the accusation doesn’t necessarily know the character well (but might), but knows enough of his or her daily habits to direct law enforcement to investigate.

Police detectives, including Detective Stephanie Dimera (p. XX), investigate wherever the character may have been seen, questioning witnesses and researching his actions. This could bring up some questionable material. Early on, characters with access to Snuggy Roscoe (p. XX) or Doubting Thomas (p. XX) could receive warning about the investigation, and have the opportunity to cut it off. Alternatively, either of these two could run interference for the character.

The problem is, a good enough detective will chance on something incriminating, something that’ll raise more questions. And a detective like Dimera won’t turn a blind eye to a solid lead. To avoid causing problems with the Oath of the Moon, the character will have to get shut Dimera down. They might cause her problems with her career, distract her, convince her they’re innocent, or even hunt down the real Son of Sam, but she won’t stop her investigation without damned’good reason.

**Hook:** One of the characters vaguely fits the description of the Son of Sam killer. Keep in mind, dozens of sketches went around the city, most of which looked nothing like Berkowitz.

**Sample Action:** Seeding False Evidence

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Investigation

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** Not only does the false evidence not fool Dimera and her investigators, she finds evidence that they’re trying to throw her off the trail. She hastens her investigation, and adds “impeding an investigation” to the list of charges.

**Failure:** Dimera continues her investigation, ignoring the false leads.

**Success:** Dimera follows the false leads, in turn investigating someone else, unrelated. She drops the investigation on the character. The case remains open.

**Exceptional Success:** Dimera drops the case, and follows the false leads. She closes the case, and a corrupt cop offers a significant bribe to stay silent about the invasion of personal privacy.
**Recommended Modifiers:** Character has Police Allies (+dot rating), False evidence is for another, real crime (+2), Character has a police record (–2, –4 for felonies), Character was witnessed committing a crime (–2)

**Blitzkrieg Bop**

The punk scene’s a good place to feel like you’re part of something. That is, unless you’re undergoing changes that even the young punks can’t understand. In this case, a teen is about to undergo her First Change, and the high energy of a punk rock show is just the thing to set her off.

It’s the full moon. The Ramones are playing at CBGB, and Hannah, our would-be Uratha, goes with a few friends to the show. With the traffic, the heartbeats, the music, and the aggression, Hannah’s this close to officially becoming Rahu. This will not end well for the people around her.

Hannah’s going to change tonight. It’s just a question of how long it takes, and where it happens. She’s a physically fit young girl that’s seen more than a few scraps in her short lifetime. So when she changes, it’ll be explosive. Whether or not it happens in a crowd of people — that’s up to the pack. Depending on the way this scene goes, the pack could end up with a new member before the night is through.

Hard Donny’s (p. XX) on the scene, and if he realizes something’s wrong, he’ll do everything in his power to help the pack evacuate Hannah. Doubting Thomas (p. XX) is right outside, braving for change from the young punks. He doesn’t want a bloodbath; it’s bad for everyone around, and puts his sleeping places at risk.

**Hook:** Tonya Lawson (p. XX) caught wind of the Change coming in Hannah. Since Hannah was living in the characters’ territory, she told them of it so they could keep an eye out and intercept.

**Sample Action:** Evacuating Hannah

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Empathy, and Dexterity + Socialize –2, extended

This action has two parts. First, in order to get Hannah out safely, she needs to be calmed enough to resist the change. So each turn, the characters must succeed in a Manipulation + Empathy roll to help calm her nerves. If successful, they can maneuver through the club to remove her. That requires an extended Dexterity + Socialize roll with a –2 penalty for the crowd. It requires a total of ten successes, with each roll, each turn representing one minute. Failed rolls — either the Empathy or Socialize rolls — impose a cumulative –2 to all further rolls.

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** Right there, dead center of the place, Hannah explodes into Gauru form, and enters Kuruth. Within seconds, two punks die. Each turn thereafter, she kills another until stopped.

**Failure:** Hannah lashes out violently, screaming, kicking, or even clawing at something as her body moves closer to its new form. She injures one of the crowd. All further rolls are made at a cumulative –2 penalty.

**Success:** The characters make headway toward the exit, and successes are added to the total.
Exceptional Success: The characters find a quick and easy escape, one that gets Hannah out with minimal risk to the bystanders. She has at least another five minutes before she loses herself to the First Change.

Recommended Modifiers: Characters do something to Hannah to piss her off (−3), Characters get Hannah a drink to soothe her nerves (+2), Characters get the music stopped (+2), Cops arrive (−2), Donny helps machinate an escape (+2)

Storyteller Characters

These characters tie together the various scenes. If you’re making characters to play in this story, encourage the players to take these characters as Social Merits. Most could be Allies, Contacts, Mentors, or possibly Retainers. This isn’t a requirement, but some initial connections with the characters will make for easier hooks.

They don’t have full character sheets; they’re meant to be supporting characters. So we’ve listed a few important dice pools they might use. They’re also mostly not Uratha. *The Bowery Dogs* assumes most plots will center on the Uratha and the people around them in the setting. Nothing’s stopping any of these characters from being Uratha; they could represent other packs in New York City if that’s the way you want to go. They’re positioned in prominent roles, so each could easily be an alpha. Snuggy Roscoe, for example, would lead a pack of prostitutes and dealers. Stephanie Dimera may be wolf-blooded, with her father being a prominent Uratha. She shepherds a large crew of wolf-blooded within the NYPD.

Doubting Thomas

*Cool out, baby. Things ain’t gonna explode if you take a deep breath. What’s the worst thing that could happen? You lose your house? Well, baby, I lost my house, and I’m livin’ it large. You gotta do better than that.*

**Background:** Doubting Thomas is an old homeless man, living wherever in the Bronx he feels like it from night to night. He has a story, but it’s not a remarkable one in this day and age. He worked in gas stations. As the economy slumped, people stopped buying cars. People bought less gas. Gas prices went up. Stations closed and consolidated. He tried working other jobs, but the job market just wasn’t there. So he lost his house. He didn’t have kids. His wife left him during the decline. So, he didn’t bother finding something else. He couch surfed for a while, then eventually ended up learning the shelter circuit.

He’s been doing this for a decade now, and knows the streets better than most anyone. The homeless of New York are all but invisible, so he can get wherever he wants with little hassle. He tells the people on the street that he was a religious man until he learned the truth, and figured out that God wasn’t listening. He goes by Doubting Thomas for that reason. Because of his alertness, and living all over and wherever, he’s stumbled upon more than a few strange coincidences. While he doesn’t understand the truths of his experiences, he knows there’s more to the world than the establishment lets on.

**Description:** Thomas dresses for everything. Which is to say, he wears numerous layers of varied, versatile clothing he’s acquired over the years. Underneath it all, he’s a tall, lanky old man with just a little bit of hair, all gray. With his clothing on, he looks big, bulky, and grounded. He wears hoods and hats which obscure almost his entire face. He usually wanders the town with an old wheelchair he’s been using as a cart for all his belongings.
Roleplaying Hints: He speaks slowly, as if nothing could make him rush. He’s always calm and collected; he’s seen enough tragedy to know that right now is never the worst it can get. Thomas genuinely likes helping people, but he’s been around the block enough to be suspicious of everyone. Because even if someone isn’t worth suspicion, that means someone else is lining up to take advantage of them.

Common Dice Pools: Causing Distraction (5 dice), Discreet Delivery (6 dice), Foraging (7 dice), Information Gathering (6 dice), Theft (5 dice)

Hard Donny

No, fucker. I don’t think anarchy’s cool because I think it’ll work and everyone will be peachy fucking keen. I think anarchy’s cool because I’m better than you.

Background: Hard Donny’s dad was a banker. If you ask Donny, he’ll tell you his dad was a fucking scumbag capitalist tool, set to enslave the working class and yadda yadda yadda. Donny was an overachiever. Brilliant in school. Excelled in everything he tried. He was smart enough that he got bored. And when he got bored, he turned to rebellion. Rebellion was exciting. He didn’t know that he wasn’t alone. He didn’t know he had kin in his rebellion. A high school friend dragged him out one night to a concert. It was an early New York Dolls show. From the moment they started playing, he was hooked. The music was okay. But there was a swagger, a power, an undeniable gravitas that he’d never seen before.

He dove in full-bore. He was part of the scene, right when the scene was born. By the time the Ramones came around, he was well known in the clubs. He got his name when that fucker Stacy busted a chair over his head, and he kept dancing. He’s made his reputation on being at ground zero every time there’s a riot, every time the people stand up and tell the authority to fuck off. Now, he’s pushing 30, and he’s the old mentor to all the young punks.

Description: Hard Donny is punk as fuck. He’s rocking a full Mohawk, a hand-riveted leather jacket, and jeans with more holes than a New York City street in February. Today, his Mohawk is blue. Next week, it’ll probably be green. He’s thin, muscular, and covered with little nicks, scars, and burns. They’re not awful; they’re kind of appealing if you’re into that sort of thing. His eyes are always wide, and when you look at him, he looks like he’s looking through you and back about 10 feet.

Roleplaying Hints: Be loud. Be uncompromising. Donny’s not a bad person, but he’s passionate enough about every little injustice, he might come off like it. The thing about Donny is, he’s been doing the counter culture thing since it was a thing. All these kids? They don’t know what it’s like, and they’re walking into the same mistakes he did when he was a kid. So he takes it upon himself to teach them before they fuck up and go through the same hell he had to.

Common Dice Pools: Carousing (5 dice), Fighting (5 dice), Inciting Riot (6 dice), Political Debate (5 dice), Teaching (4 dice)

Pastor Washington

Sure, it’s hard to see the light when you’re distracted by the piss smell of the city streets, and the sounds of the police sirens, wondering if they’re coming for you. The path wasn’t designed to be easy. You’ve got to put your chin up, your feet on the ground, and tell the world you’re going to find what you’re looking for.
**Background:** Pastor Washington grew up as Little Bobby Washington from Hollis, Queens. He was the good kid on the block, always getting good grades in school, and keeping his nose clean. But he never strayed from the trouble in his neighborhood. He delved right in, and tried to fix it. He would set good examples for his peers, and help show them a better path. His grandma taught him about Jesus, he taught his friends likewise. But it was always a casual affair, just a thing about Bobby Washington. And frankly, Bobby never had much luck. His friends ended up in jail, hooked on drugs, whatever. But Bobby kept trying, because like his grandma said, “if you save just one soul, your entire life’s worth it.”

His life changed when his friend Trevor died during a drug deal gone awry. Bobby was trying to get Trevor’s life back on track. Trevor was staying with Bobby at the time, to get away from the drugs. Bobby watched him well, until one day, Bobby had a couple too many beers, and Trevor snuck out. Trevor didn’t come home. Bobby swore he’d devote his life to helping any other Trewors of the world. Bobby became a pastor.

The thing Bobby doesn’t know is, he’s a channel, a living locus. When Trevor died, it wasn’t Bobby’s fault, but Bobby was the gateway for the spirit that infected the dealer and killed Trevor. Bobby remains unaware of his strange place in the world’s cosmology, but he continues to be a risk to those around him.

**Description:** He’s a young man, well put together. He has short-shaven hair. He wears inoffensive sweaters and khakis most of the time, unless he feels the need for a suit. He’s soft-spoken, but confident with his every word. He speaks with the wisdom of one way past his few years. His face is kind, empathic, and hard to say no to.

**Roleplaying Hints:** He’s only been doing this for a year or so, so he’s still got the fire, the passion, and the optimism. Right now, it looks like nothing could leave him jaded. Even though he’s in his late 20s, he has a bit of wisdom for everyone who will listen. He’s an expert at getting people to talk, and doesn’t mince words. He’ll offer his services any time he thinks it could prevent mistreatment of a prisoner.

**Common Dice Pools:** Calming Nerves (5 dice), Finding the Pain (5 dice), Getting Them To Talk (7 dice), Placating Authorities (6 dice), Spouting Relevant Wisdom (6 dice)

**Snuggy Roscoe**

*You want the good shit? Snuggy Roscoe can get the good shit. But you ain’t looking for the good shit. You’re looking for mandrake root? If you can smoke it, snort it, shoot it, or drink it, Snuggy Roscoe can get it. But… oh what the hell. But don’t say Snuggy Roscoe never did you any favors.*

**Background:** Snuggy Roscoe, born Thomas Worthington, went to a private school. Then, he went to Syracuse for a degree in Chemistry, with a minor in Business. Don’t ever let anyone say that in front of him. He didn’t live an awful life on the streets; he consciously chose to make his fortune out there. His friends all went off to get medical degrees, taking on insurmountable debt, working long hours, and tying themselves to jobs for 20 or more years. He decided instead to live the American Dream, and take advantage of his education. He became a dealer.

He started off by building loyalty with local street kids, offering free liquor, holding parties, and paying off cops. He used the neighborhood’s good will to help push out the gangs, because they’d cut into his business. Then, he got in good with the local prostitutes, using his new connections to keep them safe and in business for themselves. Quickly, with business acumen,
Snuggy Roscoe built a powerful network that locked down his territory. Now, he lives a comfortable life, with all the trappings, and none of the obligation.

Description: Snuggy Roscoe wears what he calls “the uniform.” He favors gaudy, fancy coats, expensive jewelry, and other over-the-top trappings of wealth. Without that context, he’s a rather average guy. But in costume, he walks with swagger and authority; every movement suggests he’s the king of his neighborhood.

Roleplaying Hints: Snuggy’s always looking for the edge, the lead, the advantage. He will find a way to profit from any situation, and he will pursue that profit unless it means hurting his bottom line later. He’s a ruthlessly efficient business strategist, and could make millions a few blocks down on Wall Street. Instead, he prefers to be the biggest fish in a smaller pond. He’d rather be the undisputed best than in the running with the other sharks. His voice should always be rhythmic, soothing, and confident. He’s always trying to calm the scene around him. Even in a firefight, he should be chill.

Common Dice Pools: Better Living Through Chemistry (6 dice), Business Negotiation (7 dice), Fitting In (5 dice), Strategy (6 dice)

Stephanie Dimera

I’m not here for you, unless you’re the one causing this ruckus. Are you causing it? Do you know who is causing it? Are you going to give me a better answer than that ‘I just got here, officer’ bullshit you give me every time we just happen to be on the scene together at a crime scene? I thought so.

Background: Stephanie Dimera did everything right. She performed well in school. She participated in extra-curricular activities. She volunteered at her church. But when her father, the chief of police, died of a gunshot wound, she took it as a personal punishment for not trying hard enough. She tried harder. She fought. She struggled. She spent every waking moment working toward her goals. And her new goal was to fill the void her father left in New York.

After college, she made the beat. She quickly saw a series of promotions, and is currently a homicide detective who consults in vice, her previous office. Everyone knows she’s the dead chief’s daughter, so they try to coddle her. She’s been turned down for more than a couple promotions because the chief just couldn’t stand to see her grind herself into the ground, but she’s advanced despite that prejudice. She’s not the ranking officer in her department, but she’s tasked with every major homicide case, since everyone knows she’s the best at her job. She’s seen some direct action, but more importantly, she trains constantly for the time she finds herself in an action movie scenario.

Description: She’s only 30, but everything about her demeanor and appearance says she’s lived a lot in those 30 years. She’s serious, wise, and weathered. She has broad shoulders and a strong, uncompromising posture. She’s solid, powerful, and imposing. Nothing in her behavior suggests she’s Unchained, but the air about her has a menace. She gives some Uratha a run for their money in that regard.

Roleplaying Hints: Whatever they tell you, you’ve heard it before. Nobody can lie to you.

Common Dice Pools: Bureaucracy (6 dice), Crime Scene Investigation (8 dice), Detect Dishonesty (7 dice), Firefight (6 dice)

Tonya Lawson
Doc says he’s not willing to give up this turf. But he says if you’re willing to stay away from the locus, and give 20% of your business here, you can come through and do your thing. I’m just the middle man. I’ve got ten packs to work with here, and I don’t have all day. Can I tell him you’re game?

**Background:** Tonya grew up with drugs, with violence, with abuse, and with all manner of awful things that so many other kids in New York grew up with. She got into prostitution young. She never graduated high school. Her story isn’t the best, or the worst. It’s just a story. At least until her First Change.

It took her a while to even meet another of the Uratha. She went under the radar for months. By the time a pack tried to recruit her, she was too used to being on her own; she decided to stay solo, a Ghost Wolf. As she met more and more packs, she organically popped up as a go-between for them. She’s a diplomat between territories, and keeps close tabs on each pack’s membership. She builds alliances with the alphas, and does her best to deliver messages, adjudicate disputes, and otherwise keep the peace. She’s like the Elodoth for the whole city.

**Description:** Tonya’s thin, always wearing colorful, flowing clothes that hang off her and catch the wind like a kite. Her afro-style hair is cut short and practical, and she wears minimal gold jewelry, just enough to catch the eye. Her cosmetics are simple but immensely effective: she doesn’t need to try to demand attention. Her alternate forms have soft gray fur. She’s lithe and muscular, but fluid in expression.

**Roleplaying Hints:** She’s impatient. She’s all about helping Uratha make the right connections and broker deals, but she wants it done now, now, now. She’s a busy woman, and she doesn’t have time to fuck around. Right now, she’s looking for something that’ll benefit her, because so far, she’s been doing this job free of pay.

**Common Dice Pools:** Identifying New Uratha (6 dice), Navigating the City (6 dice), Remaining Neutral (7 dice), Solicitation (5 dice)

**Inspirations**

*Across 110th Street* (dir. Barry Shear, 1972) — Brutal film, and one of the grittier, more *World of Darkness*-appropriate entries in the blaxploitation genre. It’s a solid little investigation story, with strong tension, some nice quips, and urgency. It doesn’t dig into some of the less dignified blaxploitation space.

*City Boy* *(Book)*, *Edmund White* — This great personal accounting touches on much of the themes and feel of this Dark Era. It hits on artistry, struggle, and intellectualism. It approaches cultural shifts toward sexuality, including Stonewall (which of course happened in 1969, but the ripples from those riots help to build the foundation for some of our stories) and life in a world that’s starting to recognize but not quite accept lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer lifestyles. The author encounters many known names throughout his tale; this not only gives great fodder for bringing famous people into your stories, but does well to frame exactly who they were during this time, in this place.

*The French Connection* (dir. William Friedkin, 1971) — Right time. Right place. It’s a strong take on real world events. It’s a lovely inspiration for any crime drama in your *Bowery Dogs* games, and could help to inspire compelling Storyteller characters. Most of it’s filmed on location in New York, so it’s a great source of authentic imagery. It’s also a solid way to get into
the mindset of a criminal investigator during that period, before all our modern technology and forensics.

*Serpico* (dir. Sidney Lumet, 1973) — In *Serpico*, Al Pacino plays the named police whistleblower. Pacino did his homework, spending time with Serpico, and getting deep in the role. His portrayal of the one honest man in a sea of corruption will ring true for your players. The Forsaken have purpose and duty, but that duty and purpose flies in the face of everything that surrounds them, and puts them in more danger, and gets them no thanks.

*Shaft* (dir. Gordon Parks, 1971) — *Shaft* is deeply stylized, and maybe a rough direct influence, but it carries much of the feel of the era from a theatrical standpoint. If you avoid the sequels like the plague, Shaft not only has a lot of bit elements you can nab for your chronicle, but it also boasts a soundtrack that’s bound to put anyone in the mood for The Wolf From Harlem.

*Soylent Green* (dir. Richard Fleischer, 1973) — Do you want a pre-made Hisil for your *Bowery Dogs* chronicle? Turn on Soylent Green. It’s a classic. Everyone knows the twist ending. But as this surreal, disgusting, hopeless cesspool of a world, it functions as an iconic Shadow for your games. The perpetual summer, the scoopers, the hunger, it’s all right there for the picking.

*Summer of Sam* (dir. Spike Lee, 1999) — Of course, earlier on, we touch on the Son of Sam killings. But this film goes above and beyond showing you that particular crime spree. It hits home on what the World of Darkness in the late 1970s might look like. Spike Lee fills the film with imagery, punks, and attitude. In fact, the crimes even happen on the periphery of the story’s strangely paced narrative. It’s full of atmosphere, and will give you all sorts of ideas to bring your chronicle to life. Its strength isn’t in the story, but in the stylized depiction of an era, a place, and a time. It does that wonderfully.

*Taxi Driver* (dir. Martin Scorsese, 1976) — *Taxi Driver* has the fever pitch and downward spiral that fits right in with the stories we’re telling. It’s full to the brim with misunderstanding, unorthodox justice, and tragedy. It’s dark. It’s painful. Even if you’re not watching it for your Werewolf chronicle, watch it. It’s renowned as one of the most important films of all time for a reason.

*The Warriors* (dir. Walter Hill, 1979) — This is probably the single best source for *Werewolf: The Forsaken* stories in this particular setting. It has the violence, the relationships, and the dynamics you should expect. The visuals are powerful and over-the-top in all the ways a good *Bowery Dogs* game should be.