City of Mist

Nights of Payne Town



A STORY ARC OF CRIME, MAGIC, AND LOST SOULS

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See the full list of backers at the end of the book.

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CONTENT WARNING

This game contains mild language as well as strong themes of violence, crime, and immorality. Parental guidance is advised.

PRONOUN USE

Where the third person is required, this book refers to characters as 'she', players as 'he', and the MC as 'she' as well. This is an arbitrary division for the sake of readability and balance in the use of pronouns; characters, players, and MCs may be of any or no gender.

THIS IS A SUPPLEMENT PRODUCT

This book is an expansion for the *City of Mist Role-Playing Game*. The rules and setting of the game are described in the *City of Mist Player's Guide* and *City of Mist Master of Ceremonies' Toolkit*.

CITY OF MIST

NIGHTS OF PAYNE TOWN

A CITY OF MIST STORY ARC

SON OF OAK GAME STUDIO

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NEON LIGHTS, SMOKE, CAMERA ROLL, AND... ACTION!

The detective poised himself behind the blonde thief, blocking her way out of the alley. “Why’d you do it, Goldie? And don’t give me that too-hot-too-cold crap. I ain’t buying it no more.” Cornered, she turned around, her eyes like the eyes of a deer caught in the beam of his flashlight. With a mane of blow-dried hair and iridescent plastic bangles, you could hardly tell her from a Downtown streetwalker, but no, she was different.

“How’d ya find me? Listen, Holliday, I didn’t mean to…”

“Save it,” the detective brought his revolver up, “I just want to know why.”

“Look, I don’t know anything else, all right?” She dropped the duffle bag that was slung over her slender shoulder, “I’m reaching for a smoke, okay?”

The detective nodded. She pulled out a cigarette pack and, when she saw he wasn’t going to offer, a lighter. After a few puffs, she leered at the gun’s gaping barrel nervously.

“Everyone’s running from something, Tom. You know this better than anyone.”

“What are you running from?”

“Routine, I guess. A home. It scares the hell out of me, makes my lungs burn.”

“Sure it’s not the smokes? Never stopped you from getting into other people’s homes and taking what you want. And what’s so bad about a home, anyway? We could have had everything.”

She took another drag, “Sometimes I think maybe I could be happy, and then, this thing inside me, it wants to tear it all to shreds.”

“I’ll help you. We’ll get you the best doctors.”

“It’s not like that! You can’t see it. No matter how sharp a detective you are, you never see it. It’s this god-awful town, with its demons and kings. It’s built this way. All those dead-ended alleys.” She turned to stare at the tall brick wall that was blocking her escape on the other side. ”Someone built it this way, to make us hurt. I’m not sticking around, Tom. I’m gonna keep on running.”

"I can't let you go." A small sigh escaped him. "Not after what you did."

She picked up the duffle bag, slung it over her shoulder again, and put out her cigarette on the wet asphalt with the pointy tip of her shoe, "You do what you need to do."

The subway passed underneath, shaking the street and blowing smoke and steam into the alley. The thief dashed over to a nearby dumpster, ready to climb the wall at the alley's end. The street lights flickered. The detective took his aim.

A click, the kind that lets you know you've been fooled again. He quickly flicked his revolver's cylinder open; the rounds were gone. He heard them falling one by one from her spindly fingers to the floor, all the way there, by the dumpster. She seemed sad, tired, like she was feeling more than she could bear.

"How the hell did you do that?"

"Good bye, Holliday. Take my advice and get the hell outta Payne town. This place is ready to burn."

Welcome to *Nights of Payne Town*, the first published City of Mist story arc and collection of cases. Here, myths and legends are incarnated as gritty detectives and crooks, destined to reenact the drama of their ancient stories in a moody, modern, noir world. Bullets whistle through the air as street gangs and police exchange fire, only to be stopped by a knight's shimmering armor or an old witch's magic spell.

Greed, hatred, and a lust for power drive countless people to commit atrocious, but ultimately human, crimes: crimes of passion, crimes of pre-meditation, and crimes written in the stars. Their pain, and the pain of their victims, is glowing like neon in the night…

Will the lead characters, the PCs, try to stop them or join them? In doing so, will they stoop to committing wrongs of their own or betray one another? Will they try to heal all this pain and bring the City together? Or will they watch the City's open wounds fester until it's too late? Let us find out.



WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK

SPOILER ALERT

This book contains case information intended for the Master of Ceremonies (MC). If you intend to play as a player in one of the cases given in this book, reading the information here will reveal the details of the investigation and may spoil your sense of mystery and enjoyment.

***Nights of Payne Town* contains ten individual cases.** Each case has everything you need in order to run a *City of Mist* story: its background, an investigation flowchart known as **the Iceberg**, detailed information about the locations and the NPCs involved in the case, Danger profiles for all the threats, and some maps for visualization. Depending on your group's style of play and the specifics of the case, each case could take between one and four sessions to complete.

The cases in this book can be run separately from one another. However, **this book also contains information on how to run all cases as a single interconnected story arc**, allowing you and your group to play it as an entire series (campaign). All the cases in the book are laid out on a **story arc Iceberg**, which helps you navigate the connections between the cases and decide which case to run next or even in parallel. You can find more information about the story arc starting on page 12.

CASES IN THIS BOOK

The book is divided into three sub-arcs – the personal, the mystical, and the criminal – each comprised of three cases.

THE PERSONAL VEIN

Cases about and around individuals and their personal and emotional turmoil, instigated by minions and victims of the psychiatrist villain **Dr. Krystal Knight** (The Snow Queen).

- ***Case #1: Killing Her Softly***: A jazz singer asks for help with stopping a stalker, who she claims is responsible for the many strange deaths around her. (Banshee, Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come)
- ***Case #2: Carnival of Machines*:** A demented scientist, who draws a twisted sense of control from deconstructing Rifts, creates an elaborate fairground wonderland to lure them to their deaths. (Hephaestus, Goldilocks, King David, Paul Bunyan)
- ***Case #3: Broken Glass***: A psychiatrist turned Asylum patient and her army of malicious therapists poison Rifts against one another and plot to spread Rift-hatred throughout town. (The Snow Queen)

THE MYSTICAL VEIN

Cases about a strange cult that transforms Sleepers into Rifts, as contrived by the alchemist villain **Armand Kai** (Fulcanelli, a fabled master alchemist whose true identity is unknown).

- ***Case #4: The Furnace***: A new drug circulating in the City lures Rifts into a trap, where their very Mythos essence is drained out of them. (Hansel and Gretel)
- ***Case #5: Cult of the God King*:** A cult takes over the City's youth, using unwitting members as guinea pigs for mystical experimentation. (Magnum Opus, Yōkai)
- ***Case #6: The Alchemist:*** The Elixir of Life awaits in the manor of an aging alchemist, guarded by his disciples and alchemical creations. (Alchemy)

THE CRIMINAL VEIN

Cases about the crime lord **Vince Beaumont** (King Arthur) his attempt to take over the City, and the turf war that ensues as a result.

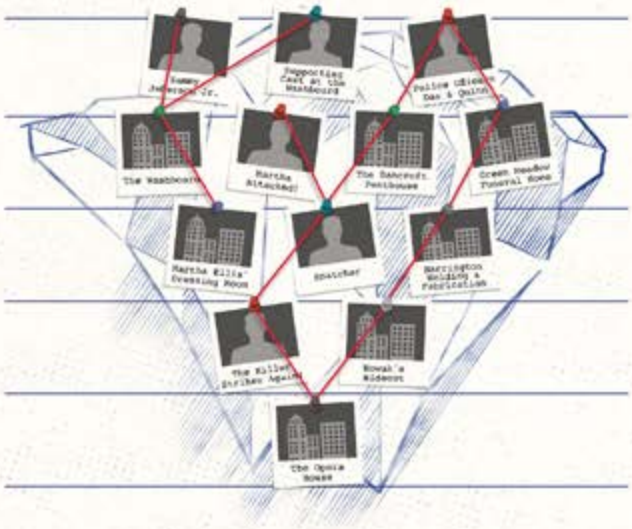
- ***Case #7: Albion Awakens:*** A gang of bike-mounted hooligans seeks to carve out a new and peaceful kingdom in one of the City's neighborhoods. (Knights of the Round Table)
- ***Case #8: Home Is Where The Heart Is:*** An aggressive real-estate agent takes over neighborhood after neighborhood, sucking the tenants' blood dry in more ways than one. (Wendigo)
- ***Case #9: The Streets Bleed Neon:*** The City is dragged into an all-out faction war as a crime lord from its past reawakens and attempts to violently seize power, vowing to protect the City from impending doom. (King Arthur)

Finally, the tenth case is an overarching case which can encompass the entire story arc, but can also be played as a standalone case.

- ***Case #10: Percival***: The PCs seek the truth about Corbin Payne, the City's long-forgotten construction tycoon, the Rift of the Fisher King, and keeper of the Grail. To stop him from hurting the City, they must find the only soul in town who uncovered the secret of the Grail. (The Fisher King, Percival)

CITY OF MIST CASE STRUCTURE

City of Mist is a cinematic "sandbox" game, which allows the players the freedom to choose how to continue in their investigation at each point (within the boundaries of the case). *City of Mist* cases are designed to support this style of play. Each case is described using a flowchart called **the Iceberg**, which shows the potential steps the PCs can take to solve the case.



The building blocks of the Iceberg are **locations**. Each location contains information that could lead the investigation forward or potential interactions that affect the investigation. Whenever the crew arrives at a location, a scene is played there.

THE WASHBOARD

Tucked in the basement of a grimey brownstone building overshadowed by Downtown's great skyscrapers, the Washboard couldn't be located any lower without dropping into the sewers.[...] The place seems scrubbed, as if trying to rise up to the occasion of having a fleeting shot at glory. The front door is covered with posters heralding Martha Ellis' next gig.

The Washboard is a long-standing establishment, a jazz and blues venue from the days the City was young...

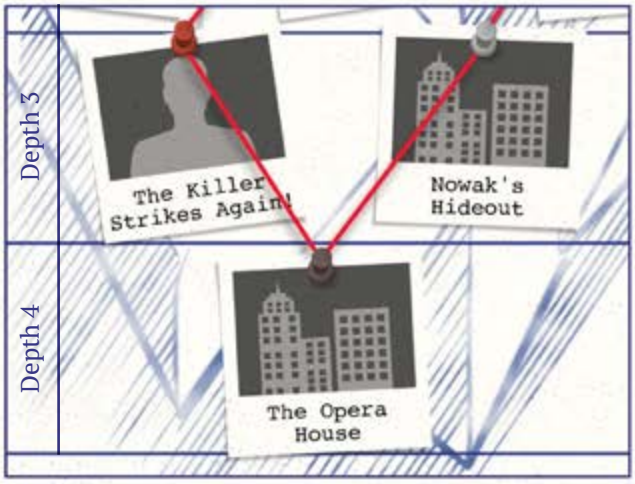
Another component of the Iceberg is **triggered scenes**, scenes that you, the MC, initiate when certain conditions apply, such as a gang attacking the crew or a serial murderer striking again, thus creating a new crime scene. Triggered scenes don't wait for the players to reach a location; they happen when the MC wants them to happen, drawing the crew in.

MARTHA WAS ATTACKED!

You're startled by the sudden ring of your phone. On the other side of the line, Officer Chaavi Das sounds infuriated. "The killer got to her. He jumped Martha Ellis. She made it somehow, but she's roughed up. You better come down here."

Sooner or later, Nowak finds his way to Martha Ellis ...

Locations and scenes are arranged on the Iceberg in **Depths**: the closer a location or a scene is to the final truth of the case, the greater its Depth. The bottom Depth represents the location where the ultimate truth of the case can be revealed.



At each location, the information pertinent to the investigation is arranged as **clues**, shown as yellow cards. This information is usually accessible to players when their characters investigate, using the **Investigate** Core Move. The players then spend Clues (game resource) to ask the MC questions and the MC should incorporate the information from the location clues into her answers. In other words, when the players spend their Clues to ask the right questions, they get the case clues in the yellow cards.

The coroner report says Darnell Fox died of unexplained heart failure.

Clues that point the investigation to another case on the story arc outside the current case are called **red clues** and have a slightly different design. Their use varies depending on the mode of play you choose (next page).

> In a locked drawer, among lots of memorabilia, there's the calling card of a therapist, **Dr. Selma Perrin**, of a therapist association called Mending The Broken. [...] See a possible encounter with a Mending The Broken therapist in the case *Broken Glass* (page 66).

If you're using the *Crime Board Map*, some few dozen clues (and several other story elements of importance) are represented as **printed cutouts** that your players can pin or tack on the Crime Board Map. Whenever the pin icon appears next to a clue box or paragraph, look for the corresponding cutout in the envelope enclosed with the Crime Board Map.

> There is one ticket to Martha Ellis' show at the Washboard next week on the piano.

Any threats to the PCs or their investigation at a location are described using **Danger profiles**. See Chapter 3: This is MY City! in the *MC Toolkit* book for guidelines on using Dangers in your game.

SYRUS, THE BOUNCER ★

Syrus has been a bouncer at the Washboard for the past few months. A typical muscleman, he towers over most patrons at 6'4" and has arms like logs and a torso like a barrel. A shining bald head, a tight black T-shirt, and a thin stache keep him cool but threatening.

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / BRIBE 2

- **Not on My Shift:** When Syrus enters the scene, give him *alert-2*.
- **Boxer Moves:** When Syrus is attacked with mundane hand-to-hand physical blows or weapons, reduce the tier of the resulting status by 1.

- Thump someone (*disoriented-2*) or put them in a headlock (*restrained-3*)
- Throw a disoriented or restrained person outside (*humiliated-2*)

- Look down on someone over his huge folded arms

USING CASES IN YOUR GAME

ADDING STORY ELEMENTS FROM YOUR SERIES

Your *City of Mist* series is more than just the content of its cases, it's about the lead characters and the crew. You can and should incorporate some of your series' **story elements** into the cases of *Nights of Payne Town* (see the *MC Toolkit* book, under Series Resources, page 105). *City of Mist* games truly shine when the campaign focuses on the lead characters and brings out their personal stories. This can be done by including:

- The nature of the crew, its goals, and its Mystery or Identity
- The lead characters' Mysteries and Identities
- The relationships between the crew members
- Symbolism related to their Mythoi
- Complications arising in their lives (their career, relationships, obligations, etc.)
- Their supporting cast, especially as victims, accomplices, or bystanders in the events of a case
- Nemeses
- Memorable NPCs from previous cases you played

As you play through the cases of *Nights of Payne Town*, you can add these story elements into the locations and scenes described in the cases. You can also give airtime to the lead characters' lives and interests by playing scenes that are not described in the case. Ideally, try to keep things connected and have the case and the series interpenetrate one another: supporting cast get mixed up in the case, around-the-clock case investigation hurts the PC's personal lives, etc.

PRE-WRITTEN CONTENT VS. ACTUAL PLAY

City of Mist puts a lot of power in the hands of the players, allowing them to drive the narrative (especially when they **Stop. Holding. Back.**). Your cases will not always go down the Iceberg as presented in this book: players may lose the investigation thread, the lead characters may befriend the crooks and betray the victims, or they may choose to sacrifice everything to destroy an arch-villain in one fell swoop. It's all good, because you're here to play to find out.

In practical terms, this means you may be forced to retrofit some of the locations, NPCs, and Dangers in the case to the new situation. Instead of ignoring unused content altogether, aim to find creative ways

to introduce NPCs and Dangers that were skipped in a different way than stated in the case. For example:

- When your crew is avoiding a key location, you can have an NPC from that location come to them.
- If the crew exposed the culprit in the case early in the investigation, focus the case on any follow-up actions they may want to take against (or with) the culprit.
- Convert a Danger that was supposed to guard clues at a location to one that directly attacks the crew as a triggered scene.
- Once the bulk of the case is solved, have an NPC ask the crew to clear up some of the loose ends.

MODES OF PLAY

You can use the cases in this book in a number of different ways, each with its own requirements, challenges, benefits, and downsides.

ONE-SHOTS (SIMPLE)

You can run each case in this book separately from the others, ignoring the story arc completely. The focus in each case becomes the crime or wrong at its center and any loose ends are either wrapped up or remain a mystery. This option is useful for casual games and one-shots, but it strips away the deeper subtext and mounting drama of the series.

This mode of play requires the least prep and tracking. It is advised to read each case before you run it, but there's no need to read or keep track of the greater story arc. During play, you should omit red clues or use them only as flavor, in order to avoid pointing the players in the wrong direction or to other cases in the arc.

CASE-BY-CASE (STRAIGHTFORWARD)

You can run the entire story arc, playing one case at a time. The investigation focuses on one crime or wrong at a time, bringing it to some kind of resolution before moving on to the next case. This allows you to enjoy the full impact of the story arc, without the overhead of tracking multiple cases at once (like in the sandbox option, below).

This mode of play requires you to become familiar with the story arc information for context, but you only need to prepare one case at a time. Red clues should be given at the end of each case, to avoid crossing over to another case in the middle of an ongoing investigation.

Case-by-case, vein-by-vein: The first nine cases in the story arc (all but the grand finale) are divided into three "veins". Each vein is a thematically-linked set of three cases that could be the subject of a single season. To make tracking clues even easier, you can run the story arc one vein at a time, completing a mini-arc before moving on to the next one. In this mode, avoid or downplay red clues that cross over to other veins until the vein is completed. This is the recommended mode of play if you are running the campaign for the first time.

SANDBOX CITY (CHALLENGING)

You can run this story arc as an open-world game, allowing the players to investigate multiple cases at a time. The lead characters can visit locations from different cases in the same session and get NPCs from one case involved with NPCs from another case. The spotlight then falls on the lead characters, their lives, and the state of the City as a whole, as they try to put together many threads and uncover what is driving all the wrongdoing around them. This is the mode of play most open to player input and creativity, emphasizing a 'realistic' approach, which has the potential of evolving into a very gratifying and grand detective tale.

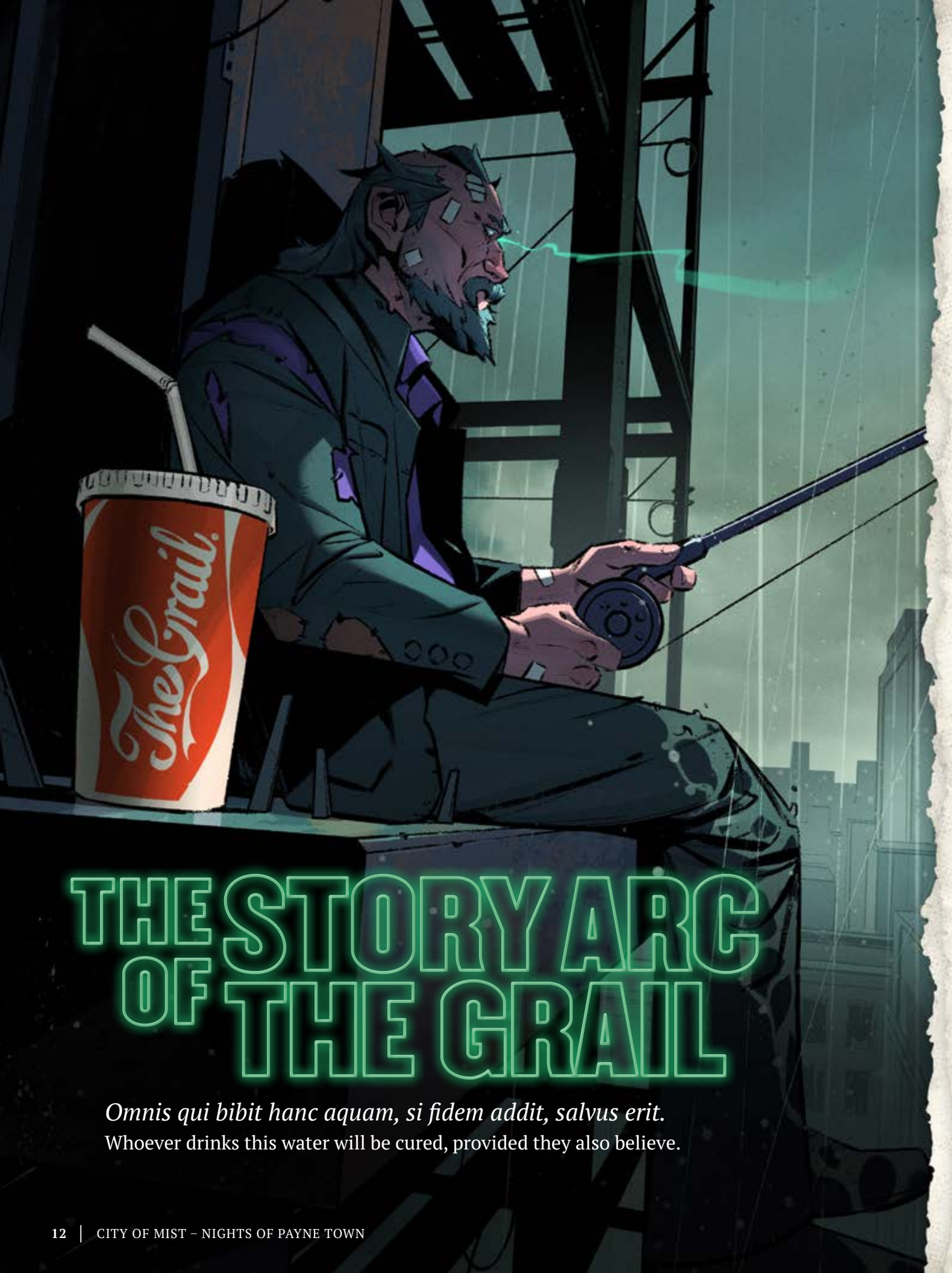
This mode of play requires the most of the players and the MC. As the MC, you will need to familiarize yourself with the story arc and its Iceberg to quickly switch between cases and you should either read the cases, have the ability to quickly glean what you need from a case during play, or be willing to improvise extensively. Red clues should be given whenever they are presented in the case. It is advised that players take it upon themselves to keep track of their clues and cases in order to take that duty off the shoulders of the MC. This mode of play also holds the risk of becoming as grinding and as technical as a real-world investigation if the players and MC don't hold fast to the cinematic consideration of "What would be interesting now?" and mix action, drama, and investigation to achieve a good cinematic balance.

THE ORDER OF CASES

The cases are numbered from 1 to 10 for ease of reference. While you can follow the numerical order of the cases to run the story arc, they can be played in any order that makes sense as explained above.

In each vein, the first two cases make good starting points and middle layers. The last case includes the details of the final clash with the vein's villain, so it should be played last in its vein.

When you play *Percival* in a story arc, it becomes a special case with three acts, each played after you complete a vein (see page 17).



THE STORY ARC OF THE GRAIL

Omnis qui bibit hanc aquam, si fidem addit, salvus erit.
Whoever drinks this water will be cured, provided they also believe.

CORBIN PAYNE

The Fisher King, Keeper of the Grail

Why is this town the way it is – dirty, corrupt, and self-devouring? Why do people here wrong one another at every turn? Murdering, stealing, selling drugs and weapons, cheating – all of this has become the routine in the City, on all strata of society. Is it cruelty, plain and simple, that has blackened the hearts of the people? Is it greed, that selfish and all-consuming desire to have it all? Is it an ever-growing sense of indifference, as the citizens' humanity is further and further eroded by the Mist?

If you had asked criminal psychiatrist **Dr. Krystal Knight**, decades ago, she would have said that cruelty, greed, and indifference could all drive people to commit anti-social wrongs, to hurt one another. But it is pain, she would say, that is the root cause of all of these. The wish to be free of it drives us mad. When we try to pass it on to another, we are cruel. When we try to hoard money and power to protect ourselves from it, we are greedy and aggressive. And when we shut ourselves out to the suffering of others, so that we don't hurt, we are indifferent. According to this renowned therapist of the past, it is our own pain – pain we were born into, pain we have been subjected to, and the pain of merely existing – that drives us to hurt the world around us.

By now, you already know this City is run by legends. In their quest to re-enact their Mythos on a Citywide scale, Avatars of desire, of war, of lies, and even Avatars of hope, have turned this City into what it is today. But even before the oldest of them attained Avatarhood, there was a force in the City that shaped its very foundations. Silent and hidden, he continues to torment the City from the shadows, poisoning it, sending his knights to sow more and more misery. This story arc is his story, a story of suffering and how we pass it on – and the purpose it may serve.

CORBIN PAYNE'S TIMELINE IN A NUTSHELL

As with everything in the Mist, historical details and dates become fuzzier the further back in time one goes.

A CENTURY AGO

- Corbin Payne is the City's foremost construction tycoon
- Tormented by the lack of substance in the City (caused by his growing awareness of the Mist), he awakens as the Fisher King
- He is shot in the groin (by his own Conjuration), an injury that marks the beginning of his demise
- The Grail appears in his possession and keeps him alive, but he cannot use it to cure himself
- His business empire crumbles, his death is announced, and he fades out of public memory

SEVERAL DECADES AGO

- Noble-minded Rifts seek Corbin Payne out for the Grail, but instead he breaks them and amplifies their own suffering
- They are sent back to the City as his so-called 'knights', further spreading suffering

TODAY

- The knights' plans or destinies come to fruition and they resurface from their individual dormant states

THE PAST

THE MAN WHO IS THE CITY

Corbin Payne built this City, but to most people, he is nothing but a fading name on a plaque. In the early roaring years of this town, when construction was booming and the City was expanding in every possible direction, Payne Construction Company was a name you couldn't escape. From residential neighborhoods to the financial district's most prominent skyscrapers and government buildings, this leading contractor built up the City like no other company, amassing a host of subcontractors under its financial umbrella. The Payne Construction Company logo and name were on every corner stone and its glorified founder cut one red tape after another.

At the time, newspapers estimated the company was involved in constructing over 60% of the projects in the City, and was branching out to the construction of the subway tunnels, expanding the port, and building a new airport for the City. Politicians were divided: some were alarmed by the sheer financial power of the construction giant while others commended its spirit of entrepreneurship which has generated tens of thousands of jobs for the City. Reporters started calling the City "Payne's Town" or "Payne Town", a name that in time would be the only legacy Corbin Payne left in public memory, as his empire would turn to figurative ashes. The tall, striking, and stout tycoon whose black-and-white picture once featured daily in every newspaper would soon all but vanish from living memory.

EXISTENTIAL TORMENT

Unlike his contemporaries, who were still largely unaware of their Mist-bound sleep, Corbin Payne achingly felt the futility of everything he did and the unreality of life in the Mist. While his endeavors to build up the City were celebrated, he questioned the point of it all, coming to a realization that the 'real world' was not as real as it seemed. This existential angst deepened and worsened, until it became the tormenting self-doubt which led to his awakening as **the Fisher King** (or the Wounded King), the guardian of the Grail in Arthurian legend. Whether to end his suffering or to perpetuate it, Payne subconsciously created a Conjuration of a hooded man who attacked him one day as he was alighting from his limousine, shooting him in the groin. The mythic gunshot wound, which was supposed to kill him, festered and crippled Mr. Payne instead. He shut himself off from the world, neglecting his construction empire.

Recession struck and Payne Construction Company collapsed, although economists and historians are undecided on which followed which. Some say the dashing tycoon became an eccentric recluse, that his heart was broken, or that he fell ill. Whatever spin the newspaper gave it, Corbin Payne left the public life around the same time his company declared bankruptcy and its assets were seized and foreclosed by the banks. What was left of Payne Construction Company was broken down into its many subcontractors, each going on to seek its fortune independently. Years later, Corbin Payne's death was announced and his meager estate was divided up to various past lenders, revealing that he had died virtually penniless. The Mist crept in, and this once great man was soon all but forgotten.

KEEPER OF THE GRAIL

Upon his awakening as the Fisher King, Corbin Payne discovered a strange cup on his desk. Every time he would look at it, the cup took the form of another type of receptacle. This cup was the Relic of **the Grail**, and it gave Payne hope that someday he may be cured; it also kept his wound from killing him by its mere presence. But the more he tried to activate the Grail, the more dormant the Relic became. Now forgotten by the world, Payne passed his days in the half-finished husk of his greatest construction project, **Corbin Tower**, which slowly transformed into an Enclave of the Grail Castle overlooking the City on one side and the sea on the other. Sometimes he would escape the broken spire to go fishing on a dilapidated dinghy off an abandoned port just outside town, but most days, he would sit in his empty chambers, in solitude.

THE KNIGHTS OF PAYNE

Decades passed by. Legends of the Grail started cropping up among the City's Rifts, and brave heroes and heroines set out on a quest to find Corbin Payne and the Grail. Many perished or lost their minds and souls in the process, but a handful of Rifts were able to penetrate the veil of Mist and find the wounded tycoon in his skyscraper ruin.

Unfortunately for all involved, they were ill-prepared for what they were about to encounter. The old king, twisted and tormented by years of mythical pain and having lost all hope of unlocking the secrets of the Grail, had become a living maelstrom of misery. He laid their own pains bare, exposed their bleeding hearts and squeezed them till they burst. The vanquished heroes, who tried to cure the Fisher King but did not have in them what it took to awaken the Grail, were cast back into the world, reeling with pain. They became his **Grail Knights**, his messengers, who would spread his pain across the City as they wrestled with their own suffering. Through them, Corbin Payne insidiously and subversively infected the entire City with his pain, becoming the Avatar of the Fisher King.

There were many Grail Knights over the years. *Nights of Payne Town* focuses on the Fisher King's four greatest knights, individuals who sought him in the heyday of the City (or were related to someone who did), decades after the demise of his empire, and were closest to healing him:

Dr. Krystal Knight (the Snow Queen), a criminal psychotherapist who hoped to treat Corbin Payne's depression, spent years in sessions with him. She

ended up losing herself in his sorrow, awakening as the Rift of the Snow Queen and vowing to sow hatred toward Rifts everywhere in the City.

Armand Kai (Fulcanelli) was a scholar who sought life everlasting. When he saw the crippling wound of the Fisher King he was so deeply appalled that he became obsessed with preventing his own mortality, creating a murderous alchemical cult with the sole purpose of allowing him to find the Elixir of Life.

Rio Beaumont (Percival) was the person with the greatest potential to unlock the Grail, but being too naive she fell short at the crucial moment. Seeking answers for her failure, she became a Sleeper and Denied the Beyond, disappearing to all Rifts in the City.

Holding the Fisher King responsible for the loss of Rio, her father, **Vince Beaumont** (King Arthur) swore to become powerful enough to stand against him, but his quest for revenge turned him into a crime lord, who would sacrifice anything for the power to defeat his enemy.

The three surviving Grail Knights have all disappeared long ago. The doctor was hospitalized in an Asylum, never to be seen again; Armand Kai shut himself in his lab until the world forgot about him; and Vince Beaumont died, shot dead by his cousin in a gunfight. Now, however, they have all resurfaced, ready to drown the City in the Fisher King's suffering. Rio remains inaccessible and forgotten, somewhere in the City.

THE PRESENT

Much to everyone's detriment, his own more than anyone else's, Corbin Panye is very much alive. The wounded king of a ruined empire, he is now a miserable and broken man on an epic scale, doomed to suffer eternally until a cure can be found for him. That cure remains infuriatingly close and yet out of reach in the form of the Grail, a fact which only adds to the old king's torment.

Corbin Payne wants this City to suffer. He wants to bear open her wounds – physical, historical, social, emotional – and rub salt in them until every individual shares his immense pain. So deep is his obsession with Citywide suffering and it is so blurred by his own physical and emotional misery that it's hard, even for him, to tell what started it. Does he simply seek relief by passing his pain to others? Is he enacting vengeance against the City that forgot him? Or is he using pain to educate the City and spur it to awaken from its Misty sleep? Whatever his reasons are, Corbin Payne is a pain-monger that feeds off the City's crime, corruption, and alienation and the negative emotional charge they produce. While this old tycoon remains hidden, waiting to be cured, his unwitting Grail Knights rain suffering and wrongdoing on the City, perpetuating the state of affairs in Payne Town.

OVERVIEW OF PAYNE

- **Agenda:** make the City suffer (and maybe thus find a savior)
- **MO:** hurt powerful Rifts so that they hurt others
- **Feeling:** pain
- **Motifs:** fishing, crows, modern-day chalices (the Grail)
- **Frontliners:** his knights' minions
- **Stronghold**: the abandoned Corbin Tower construction site

PAYNE'S MODUS OPERANDI

Payne is taken by his own suffering so entirely that he is only vaguely aware of his own agenda. Most of the time, the excruciating legendary pain contained within his mortal body blurs his mind, giving way to alternating anger, self-pity, and deadened apathy, and driving him to hurt others out of sheer spite. He is able to maintain a noble composure for a brief while, but it is just a temporary, fragile facade.

Nevertheless, there is a part of Payne that hopes that if he hurts the City enough, at some point someone will find him and figure out a way to either put him out of his misery or cure him. This mixture of knee-jerk reflex and wishful thinking is the closest thing he ever had to a plan.

Payne gets his release, and hopes to find his savior, by creating a vicious circle of misery. Just like in the story of the Fisher King, he attracts noble-minded Rifts that hope to heal him or who seek the sacred force of the Grail which he possesses. When these invariably flawed heroes fail to do so, he wounds them so deeply that they become beacons of suffering in his image. They then return to society as his Grail Knights, spreading misery to others in the same way, branching out and reaching more and more people (one of whom may be the savior Payne longs for).

The more suffering is caused through his Grail Knights (and perhaps even the more the City suffers in general), the more powerful the old tycoon be-

comes, because of his ability to control and manipulate pain. Right now his pain-mongering manifests as an old and forgotten festering wound, but there may come a day when he steps off his dinghy and out of the shadows to truly agonize the City.

PAYNE, OTHER AVATARS, AND THE GATEKEEPERS

Payne was never a mastermind nor an inspiring leader, so other Avatars and the Gatekeepers could have easily taken him out by now, theoretically. Unfortunately for all, he embodies the most primordial force of all, that which everyone is afraid of. Fearing untold suffering and the possible reopening of their old human wounds (thus ending their Avatarhood), the City's Avatars either keep their distance or reluctantly do Payne's bidding on the rare occasion he expresses it. He is a secret observing member in the Council of The Truth which strives to keep the status quo in the City (see Chapter 3: Don't Believe the Truth, in the *Shadows & Showdowns* expansion). He is using the council to perpetuate the City's state of misery, while keeping tabs on the secret pains of each Avatar in the pantheon, to be used if they ever turn on him.

During the events of *Nights of Payne Tow*n, the Avatars of the City and their operations are unusually absent, especially when it comes to interfering with Payne's knights. If this raises the suspicions of the lead characters, they could investigate, although getting the truth out of Avatars may prove virtually impossible.

The Gatekeepers, custodians of the Mist, have a special relationship with Payne. While intense pain can sometimes lead to awakening, suffering as a *routine* does a great job at keeping people Asleep (when every day is a struggle, one pays less attention to what's really happening). The venomous misery that Payne has been dripping into the veins of the City is making the Mist's work easier, generating powerful distractions away from the legendary. For this reason, and because they cannot overcome him without the help of other Avatars, the Gatekeepers are content to let Payne be and even enjoy the side-effects of his Avatarhood. This live-and-let-hurt policy is strained with the emergence of the Grail Knights, who are a more violent expression of what Payne has in store for the City. In the Criminal Vein, the Gatekeepers come into direct confrontation with Vince Beaumont (King Arthur), trying to contain him, while also indirectly assisting Payne (who Beaumont wants to destroy).

PAYNE'S OPERATION

Over the years, Payne has hurt and corrupted more than a handful of heroic Rifts that attempted to destroy or cure him and failed. His Grail Knights have returned to the City and carved out a place for themselves, continuing to spread misery insidiously or overtly. Some of the villains and NPCs encountered by the crew in the past or who are a part of the crew members' background could also be unwilling emissaries of the Fisher King, although today fewer and fewer Rifts are able to surmount the challenges of the quest to find him.

Each knight's operation effectively serves as a branch, or a vein, in the Fisher King's operation:

Dr. Krystal Knight (the Snow Queen) leads the Personal Vein, concerned with sowing Rift-hatred and self-loathing among Rifts in the City.

Armand Kai (Fulcanelli) leads the Mystical Vein, searching for the Elixir of Life by awakening new Rifts and then robbing them of their powers.

Vince Beaumont (King Arthur) leads the Criminal Vein, seeking to take over the City in order to protect it from the Fisher King, but in doing so hurting all who stand in his path.

HEALING THE WOUNDED KING

Even if his messengers can be stopped, the Fisher King is beyond mortal help. His very presence unleashes people's own pain, turning them into his unwilling torment-spreading knights as they hurt others around them.

Corbin Payne hurts because the City hurts. They are one and the same. He is the mythical representation of the suffering caused by the clash of two opposing forces: Mythos and Logos, the fake and the real, true nature and mere appearances, or any other set of opposites you choose to put at the core of your campaign.

The Grail is the key to healing Corbin Payne and ending the cycle of misery. Its healing power is absolute, but only those healed themselves are able to wield it. This requires one not only to overcome their own secret pain, but also to be attentive enough to even recognize it first. The paths to unlocking the power of the Grail are further explained in the final act of the concluding case, *Percival* (page 259).



HOW TO RUN THIS STORY ARC

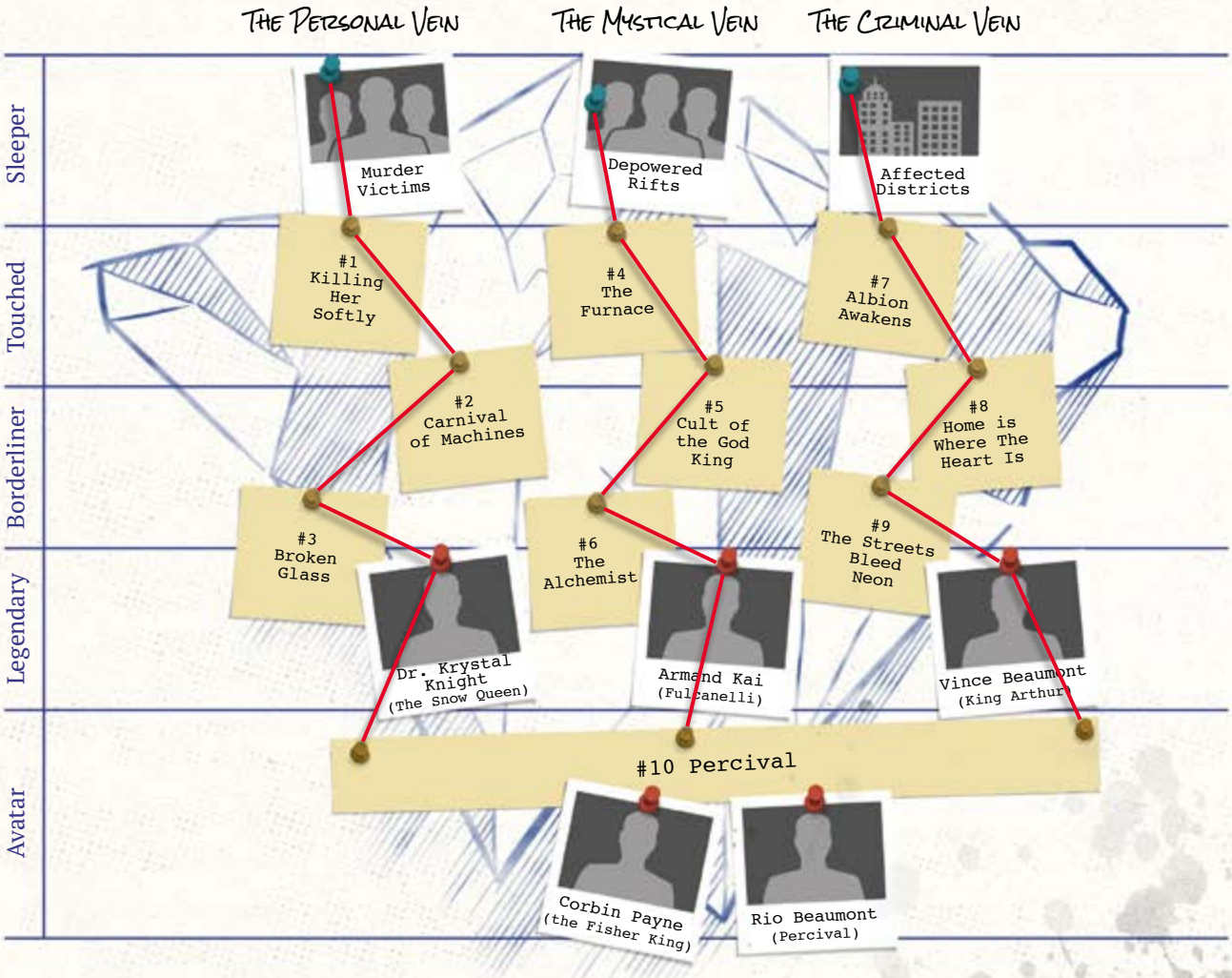
As explained on page 11, you can run the story arc vein-by-vein, case-by-case, or as an open sandbox. Here is the full story arc iceberg.

Cases #3, #6, and #9 end with an encounter with one of Payne's knights, those who have a direct relationship with him and know the most about him. Each such encounter reveals information that unlocks the next **act** of the overarching case #10, *Percival*. The act is unlocked whether or not the crew has the upper hand at the end of the encounter; in the moment of truth, the villains share the information necessary even if they are winning.

The order in which the knights are encountered (and not the identity of the specific knight) determines what each knight can offer the crew to bring them closer to the Fisher King. In other words, Dr. Krystal Knight, Armand Kai, and Vince Beaumont each take the role of the first, second, or third knight, depending on the order the crew reaches them, and share clues accordingly.

- **The first knight reveals the existence of Corbin Payne as an overarching villain** and warns the crew of him. However, the first knight is unable to tell the crew where to find Payne (whose hidden castle can't be visited twice) and does not have the means of finding him. This unlocks the **first act** of *Percival* where the crew may investigate the past but reveal very little about the present.
- **The second knight knows how to reach the Fisher King, but does not know how to cure him.** This unlocks the **second act** of *Percival*, in which the Fisher King emerges from his hiding and stages an attack on the City, upping the stakes.
- **The third knight has information about how to cure Corbin Payne**, about the Grail, and about Percival. Once the confrontation with the third knight is resolved, the **third act** of *Percival* is unlocked and the crew must find Percival and/or face the Fisher King.

Read more about how to unravel the entire story arc in *Percival* (page 259).



THE DOLOROUS STROKE

In Arthurian legend, the Dolorous Stroke is the strike that maimed the Fisher King permanently. For Corbin Payne, it is both the self-inflicted blow that ruined him and the means with which he passes on his pain to others. The Dolorous Stroke permanently amplifies the recipient's emotional or physical pain on a legendary scale, driving her to hurt others or herself (or both). In most cases, it turns the recipient into a villain. In game terms, the Dolorous Stroke is a tier-6 status (*the-Dolorous-Stroke-6*).

Each of the Grail Knights carries a mundane emotional wound turned epic by the Fisher King's Dolorous Stroke:

- Dr. Krystal Knight's wound is shame, nominally for her failure to help others, but in essence **shame for who she is**. It festered into hatred toward herself and those like her.
- Armand Kai's wound is a morbid **fear of old age and death**. It festered into avarice and the unbridled exploitation of others on his quest to cheat death.
- Vince Beaumont's wound is **grief for having lost his daughter**. It festered into anger and vengeance, and seeking the power to defeat his foe at all costs.

CURING THE WOUND

As you play through the story arc, the crew is encouraged to try and find a way to cure the Grail Knights of their wounds: firstly, because their wounds are evident, and secondly, because each of them is difficult to vanquish permanently and curing them seems like a viable path to ending their villainous career.

Curing the Dolorous Stroke poses a great challenge. Since the Dolorous Stroke is a tier-6 status, it cannot be affected by any of the Core Moves. Only a **Stop. Holding. Back.** move may affect this status: releasing a Grail Knight from the effects of the Dolorous Stroke for one scene requires a single no-return sacrifice or multiple significant sacrifices, while curing such a wound altogether requires a single ultimate sacrifice or multiple no-return sacrifices. Optionally, you may allow a *Dynamite!* **Change the Game** move to reduce the tier-6 status for the duration of a scene (as a 12+ effect improvement which costs 1 Juice to activate).

Such lapses in villany may allow the crew to discover important information about the wound or plant the seeds for a more elaborate plan. Temporarily curing the Grail Knight should not be used as an easier means for getting rid of her; it does not automatically take away her Rift powers and so the crew may find the Grail Knight is as hard to defeat as ever. It can, however, be used in an attempt to temporarily contain the Grail Knight, such as locking her up in a magical prison, by first relieving her of her pain and making her more agreeable.

The most straightforward path for curing the Dolorous Stroke is finding and activating the Grail. The Grail has the potential to heal any wound, including the Fisher King's original Dolorous Stroke. Having the crew care about curing a Grail Knight may spur them into investigating further in the story arc, finding others who know about Corbin Payne and the Grail. Instead of curing the Grail Knight, the crew may make the necessary arrangements (and sacrifices) to contain her while they seek the Grail. The process of obtaining and activating the Grail is described in *Percival*, the overarching case.

The Dolorous Stroke can also be cured by undertaking a different quest, in other words, a narrative solution of great difficulty. Perhaps the crew seeks out a hard-to-reach wise woman who tells them of a Rift, Familiar, Relic, or Enclave who could cure the wound, or they enlist the Gatekeepers to depower the Grail Knight and then help her work through her issues over months, in hopes the epic wound would be cured along with the mundane one.

WOUNDED LEAD CHARACTERS

The lead characters may also receive the Dolorous Stroke. If a PC takes a tier-6 status from anyone or anything in Corbin Payne's operation, especially if they were struck by someone, physically or figuratively, they may be afflicted by a similar emotional wound. Convert the status to *the-Dolorous-Stroke-6*. This is doubly true if the strike came from one of the Grail Knights. Corbin Payne himself can explicitly inflict the Dolorous Stroke as part of his abilities. Consider this possibility with the player, and if he accepts, discuss what his character's unique Dolorous Stroke would be, based on her **secret pain** (*Player's Guide*, page 63).

Lead characters who receive the Dolorous Stroke become failed Grail Knights, servants of the Fisher King. Their wound drives them to take actions that spread more pain in the City, whether or not they accept that it furthers Corbin Payne's agenda or are even aware that he exists. The PC then becomes a villain or a source for trouble for the rest of the crew, creating an even greater urgency to find a cure. This is a compelling effect created by the *the-Dolorous-Stroke-6* status; the player cannot choose to ignore it.

As per the rules for Championing For An Avatar (*Shadows & Showdowns*, page 137), the PC loses a theme (either Mythos or Logos) and gains a Mythos theme to represent the powers booned by the Fisher King Mythos. The new Mythos theme may represent a painful or pain-derived enhancement of the PC's own Mythos powers or an additional power set, such as a Relic.

As a champion Mythos theme, the theme has an Identity instead of a Mystery, describing the character's wound and what it drives her to do. Since the character is compelled to act out of her pain, this theme cannot incur Crack or be lost through the moves **Making a Hard Choice** or **Stop. Holding. Back.** (the PC can still **Stop. Holding. Back.** with the powers of this theme but she sacrifices other themes).

GRIEVER

Expression

IDENTITY

I'm going to enjoy hurting you.

POWER TAGS

inflict wounds, *absorb wounds, we hurt our loved ones the most, deepen an existing wound, exploit a defense weakness, blade expert, radiate pain, hobbling injury, sadistic mind, endure countless wounds*

WEAKNESS TAGS

easily wounded, those who do not feel pain, uncontrolled stigmata, avoided by most

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Love Hurts:** When you hurt a crew member using tags from this theme, take a Hurt point on them.

GRAIL KNIGHT PANOPLY

Bastion

IDENTITY

As long as I have my pain to shield me, I'm safe.

POWER TAGS

a knight's armor, *shield with a crow emblem, feather-light Avalon steel, protection from the otherworldly, shield bash, block thoughts and feelings, a cursed sword, guard the Fisher King, summon a murder of crows, charge an enemy*

WEAKNESS TAGS

outlandish and aloof, can't open up to others, vulnerable to Avalon-made weapons, devoid of empathy

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Tank:** When you are attacked by multiple enemies between your moves, hold off **Facing Danger** until all attacks are resolved. Then **Face Danger** for each status separately using at least one tag from this theme (you may reuse tags as if they were a single move). You may apply the best result to all attacks, and ignore the other results.

THE BROOMSTICK (SPEAR) OF DESTINY

Relic

IDENTITY

The holier they act, the more I want to hurt them.

POWER TAGS

fate-sealing spear, *spear jab, destiny manipulation, bleeds from the point, pierce any defense, sense an approaching fateful moment, kill self-righteous do-gooders, denounce good, unstoppable bleeding wound, throw and call back the spear*

WEAKNESS TAGS

drips blood everywhere, divine intervention, not against the bearer of the Grail, self-proclaimed dealer of judgement

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **The Dolorous Stroke:** When you deal a tier-6 status with tags from this theme, you may choose to deal *the-Dolorous-Stroke-6* (see page 18). If the target is a PC, her player must agree or you choose another tag for the status.

ACCESS TO CORBIN TOWER

Base of Operations

IDENTITY

I'd rather disappear than face this pain.

POWER TAGS

the Grail Castle, *cloaked by the Mist, vantage point over the City, medieval torture devices, a magical laboratory, Avalonian mystics, here time has no hold, easily disregarded, the presence of the Grail, a poor man's dinghy*

WEAKNESS TAGS

a gloomy atmosphere, reveals itself to worthy knights, prevaded by the King's pain, hunted by seeker of the Grail

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **It Is War, Then:** Once per season, gain a free batch of 5 Juice to summon an army of fallen Grail Knights. You can choose from the 10+ effect improvements.



THE PERSONAL VEIN

"Let your rage out, Martha. Don't you see? If you keep it inside, it will consume you. All your life people around you tried to silence you, to put out your fire. You have been wronged so many times. You need to allow yourself to heal, and your healing cannot begin while you still hold all this rage inside. So listen to me: it's time to let go. It's time to sing about your pain, so that everyone can hear you."

– Dr. Selma Perrin, Mending the Broken

OVERVIEW OF THIS VEIN

When **DR. KRYSTAL KNIGHT** left Corbin Payne, devastated and ruined at her failure to help him, he gave her a Relic, a broken mirror that reflected her self-loathing and contempt (the Devil's mirror in the tale of *The Snow Queen*, by Hans Christian Andersen). The spirit of the once-hopeful therapist, who believed in everyone's ability to reconcile their inner conflicts and transcend their pain, was now permanently shattered, like her mirror, and infused with more self-hatred than she could bear. Unable to strike back at her abuser, she turned this hatred toward herself and those most like her – the City's Rifts.

The former psychiatrist's operation aims to infect the City's Rifts with enmity and malintent toward one another and toward themselves. Its first line of interaction with the City's legendary citizens is the therapist association known as **MENDING THE BROKEN**, a group of Sleeper psychiatrists and psychologists Touched by Dr. Knight's powers. Mending the Broken therapists pose as aware and understanding mental healthcare providers who seek to help gifted individuals. In reality, they are equipped with the power to plant seeds of ever-growing hatred in the hearts of their patients, driving them to self-destructiveness or aggressiveness toward other Rifts.

Two of the most troubled victims of this organization have already started on their path of destruction. **MARTHA ELLIS**, a small-time jazz singer and the Rift of the Banshee, is using her supernatural laments to emotionally overwhelm her audience to the point of killing them with her songs. Another affected patient is **MAXIMILLIAN DRAKE**, a rejected genius and the Rift of Hephaestus. Since his scientific mind cannot explain the existence of legendary powers, he is bent on annihilating his fellow Rifts by figuring out which of their buttons to push and luring them into a deathtrap he has set up at an abandoned fairground, gaining a twisted sense of control.

While this is happening, Dr. Knight is preparing her ultimate attack on the City from the **Municipal Institute for the Criminally Insane**, simply known as **The Asylum**. While officially registered as a patient there since her encounter with the Fisher King decades ago, the Snow Queen has since taken over the Asylum and uses it as a base of operations, impersonating the head of the institute. Once she amasses enough hatred in her mirror, she plans to disseminate its magic through objects made of glass throughout the entire city and then shatter them, infusing the whole City with a feeling of enmity in one fell swoop and causing City-wide anarchy. This is made possible through another gift she received from the Fisher King, a subsidiary of Payne Construction Company titled **AURORA GLASSWORKS**, the company which has been producing most of the windows in the City for almost a century.

ADDRESSING MENTAL CRISIS AND ILLNESS

The Personal Vein touches directly on the subject of mental health. Dr. Krystal Knight is a victim of abuse who has become an abuser out of pain; her mental condition is a magical one, induced by Corbin Payne's Mythos as well as her own. Her minions and victims, who feature as villains in this vein, are under the same influence. The PCs themselves are likely to wrestle with intense emotions when facing these challenges.

The Personal Vein can be used as a platform for exploring emotions and themes of mental health, or it can be a cinematic foray – humorous or serious – into the dark side of the soul, or it can even be a combination of both. Whatever slant you intend to give it, **check with your group** what their boundaries are for incorporating these issues in your game and what language they are comfortable using when addressing mental health.

The language used in this vein attempts to strike a balance between the cinematic desire to convey the grit and brusqueness of the noir genre, and consideration toward the very real-world issue of mental illness.

THEMES AND MOTIFS

- **Private Investigation:** The Personal Vein focuses on individuals rather than the City as a whole. It highlights the everyday lives and hardships of City residents, and especially Rifts caught in the net of Mending the Broken. The cases in this vein are the closest to the classic noir style.
- **Emotional overload and mental health:** Dr. Krystal Knight herself and NPCs in this vein affected by Mending the Broken all deal with various forms of emotional hardship including despair, self-contempt, melancholy, and more. The PCs are also subjected to Mythos powers that can cause emotional overload.
- **Hatred and Self-Loathing:** In the tale of the Snow Queen, shards of the devil-glass cause people to see everything as ugly, and therefore hate one another. In this modern version, Dr. Knight's powers also make people hate themselves.
- **Broken Glass:** You can use broken glass as a recurring motif in this vein. Work into your narrative freak accidents regarding shards of glass to build up suspense. Whenever someone dies of a cause that is related to Krystal Knight's minions and the hate they spread, have it include the motif of broken glass: someone crashes through a high window and falls to their death in a shower of broken glass, a fire started by the sun focusing on a broken window causes a disaster, or someone gets violent with a broken glass bottle, etc.








CITY OF MIST
KILLING HER SOFTLY
A HEARTBREAKING CASE OF SOULFUL JAZZ AND HAUNTING DEATH

A soulful jazz singer needs the crew's help with deciphering a series of mysterious killings that circle her in a vicious ghost dance. From Downtown to Suburbia, people drop dead unexpectedly clutching their broken hearts, with the mysterious killer still rampant. As the body count rises, will the crew be able to save the City's residents from this haunting angel of death?

Killing Her Softly is a classic neo-noir "whodunit" investigation in which the crew traces the footsteps of a mysterious serial killer. Against the backdrop of a dicey jazz club and dirty alleyways, the crew examines crime scenes, crosses paths with NPCs from different walks of life, and overcomes altercations with dubious underworld figures. The case sets the players to falsely accuse an innocent NPC or simply assume he is guilty, while the real criminal feigns innocence and even seeks the crew's protection, fooling them, at least for a while.

A DUET WITH SORROW

Martha Ellis is one of the best small-time blues and jazz singers in the City, with a heart-rending voice whose grandeur is matched only by her melancholy. Perhaps due to her penchant for blues lamenting, Martha has awakened as the Rift of **the Banshee**, the keening Irish woman of the fair folk who would warn of a death in the family. After her awakening, she discovered that her voice could stir more intense feelings in her audience than before. Where once she brought tears to the eyes of a few sensitive listeners, she could now induce utter emotional collapse in an entire hall full of people.

When it first happened, Martha's manager spun it to the newspapers, labeling Martha as "Downtown's most soulful voice". But Martha struggled to keep her powers in check; her control of her audience's emotions was intuitive, but her own complex emotional state often tempted her to use her powers in ways she shouldn't have. As fewer people returned to her shows, following harrowing experiences, Martha's career went downhill. She fell into depression and alcoholism, and faced financial hardship. Very few music halls and cabarets would have her on stage.

MENDING THE BROKEN

Seeking help, Martha approached **Dr. Selma Perrin**, a psychiatrist associated with **Mending the Broken**, an organization offering help to Rifts (see page 66). Reframing her powers in a positive way, Dr. Perrin convinced Martha that her songs can help people feel the sorrow and the pain they are trying to avoid. Martha's role, even duty, was to penetrate their resistance and open up their feelings so they could cope with their buried wounds.

This new understanding of herself helped Martha come out of the darkness she was enveloped in and gave her a new hope. She was able to focus herself better and her performances became more balanced and enjoyable. She managed to get a regular spot at the seedy but active "**the Washboard"** club. While on stage, she would search the audience for that special person, someone whose pain she could feel viscerally, someone who she thought needed her help. In actuality, her Mythos' ability of sensing an impending death drew her toward her victims; little did she know that she would be the one responsible for their demise.

MEANWHILE, A VISION OF DEATH

Not far from the Washboard, in the Industrial Zone, **John Nowak**, a deaf-mute factory worker, caught a flyer blowing in the wind. It was advertising a night at the Washboard, with Martha's picture in the center. As soon as his gaze fell on the flyer, Nowak awakened as the Rift of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come (*A Christmas Carol*). His Mythos showed him a vision of Martha Ellis's possible death, filling him with sorrow and grief for the brutality of her untimely end, the wrongs she has committed, and the hate she was regarded with. Nowak felt compelled to warn Martha. He dropped everything, left work, and made his way to the Washboard.

THE FIRST VICTIM

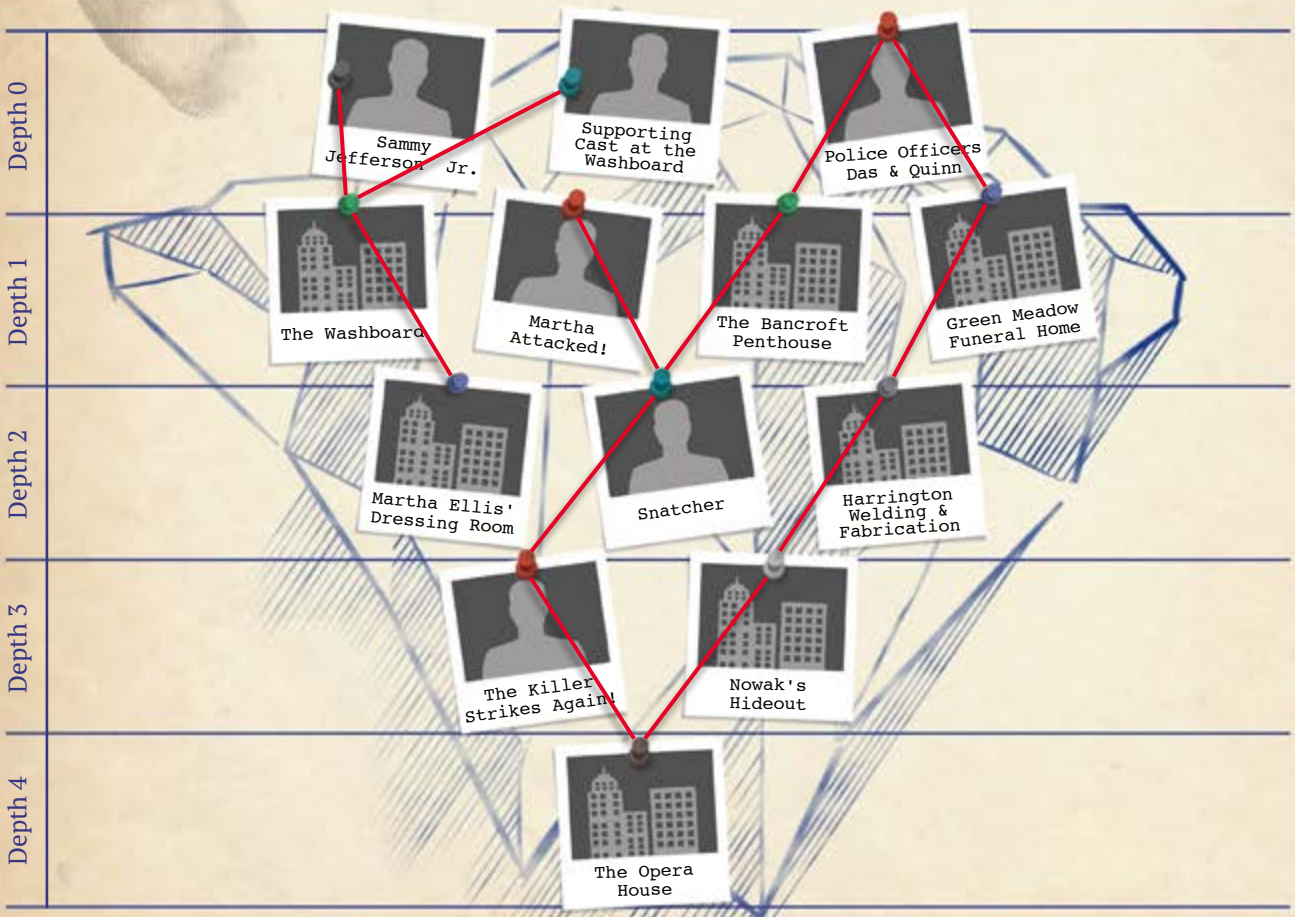
Darnell Fox was sitting in the front row that night at the Washboard along with two couples of his friends. Feeling himself a fifth wheel, Darnell seemed despondent and shy. All through the night, Martha felt her eyes drawn to the meek man. When his feelings of loneliness overwhelmed him and he left to get some fresh air, the singer took a break and followed him out. There, in the alley, she convinced him to stay for a private show – she would sing for him after hours, promising it would improve his mood. Darnell accepted out of politeness and the two later met alone on the Washboard stage.

There, in the solemn spotlight, Martha sang for him, voicing the Banshee's lament at its most sorrowful, singing about a boy who had no one to call his own. Darnell collapsed, overwhelmed with loneliness, but the more Martha sang the more in pain he seemed. The cathartic moment Dr. Perrin promised did not come. But Martha Ellis could not stop. She was both foretelling his death and enacting it, until finally his heart gave in and he died of his intensified sorrow (an unexplained heart failure, a Sleeper coroner would later say). Just as this happened, Martha saw John Nowak, a tattooed skinhead in a hoodie, at the far end of the club's floor, witnessing it all. Nowak handwaved and mumbled to warn Martha of the future that awaited her if she continued down this path, but lacking words his warning fell on deaf ears. Martha tried to lament him to death and naturally failed as he is deaf, so thinking on her feet she started crying for help. The Washboard bouncer, Syrus, arrived to see a dead patron on the floor and a suspect hooded figure fleeing the scene.

FURTHER LAMENTATIONS

Shocked at what happened and the predicament she was now in, Martha Ellis didn't know what to do. She swore never to talk to Dr. Perrin again and never to sing the song of the Banshee. But the more she repressed it, the more it tried to emerge in her evening performances. To keep her career, she had to find a way to let the Banshee have its fill. So far, two more victims fell prey to the Banshee's lament: an unhappy trophy wife whom Ellis killed at her Downtown loft and a man mourning for his dead son, who dropped dead when the singer performed at the funeral. This last death happened only a day ago.

In both cases, John Nowak was there to witness the killing and try to dissuade Martha from her destructive path. In both cases, Martha was able to pin the death on him or at least disassociate herself from it, at his expense. The police now have three unexplained Downtown deaths connected with Nowak. **Officers Chaavi Das** (*Gramadevata*, a town's guardian spirit in Hinduism) and **Matt Quinn** (Sleeper) are working the case, searching after their main suspect, the skinhead in the hoodie.



THE ICEBERG

MARTHA

Martha Ellis is a voluptuous woman in her mid 50s, usually enveloped in a flowing floral dress and headdress during the day and a sparkling evening gown that shows her curves at night when on stage. Her mannerisms and garb exude a sense of melancholy and drama, of someone whose time has passed, but is still holding on to the grandeur of the past. Her pitiful state is accentuated when she is inebriated (all too often these days). In the spotlight, however, her commiserating streak turns heartfelt, and she truly touches her audience with a deep and soulful mood.

PACING MARTHA

Martha appears throughout the case, across Depths. The PCs will likely have multiple interactions with Martha as they investigate the case and as their suspicion of her part in the deaths becomes more and more founded.

Try to use Martha's lies and deceptions to keep the PCs away from the truth long enough for the case to progress. At the same time, remember to **play to find out** and surrender the truth to them if they earned it fair and square. Remember, even if Martha is exposed early on, the crew still faces the challenge of incriminating her and apprehending her before she can do more damage.

To delay the revelation that Martha is the killer, give different types of clues when the PCs **Investigate** Martha:

- Provide only partial answers to their questions when they spend a Clue.
- If they roll 7-9, choose to give vague or part-true part-false answers in order to keep the truth hidden from them for a while longer. For example, if a PC is checking if Martha is lying you can let them know it is difficult to determine clearly due to her state or intoxication, or reply that she seems very much on edge, which may be due to lying but may also simply be a result of the stress of recent events.

When the pressure rises and the PCs demand answers, Martha will candidly reveal false information to the crew in order to maintain their trust and to provide a valid explanation for her behavior. Here are some **part-true-part-false clues** you can use; Martha can also reveal this even without the PCs **Investigating**.

To excuse her presence at a crime scene, Martha may feign confiding with the crew and revealing her powers. She will claim she can feel impending death and that she is irresistibly drawn to where the killer will strike, trying to warn the victim.

She will ascribe her own methods to the killer (and technically, she wouldn't be lying), hinting that she thinks the killer somehow causes the victims to die of grief.

Martha could even allege that the killer is the same person who sabotaged her performance in the past (see below) and that it's someone with a grudge against her, creating a red herring for the crew to go after.

Asking around about Martha or researching her background can reveal some of her tumultuous history:

Martha is one of the best small-time blues and jazz singers in the City. She briefly gained fame as "Downtown's most soulful voice".

After a fiasco where the entire crowd at her concert had an emotional breakdown, and medical services had to be called in, the papers labeled her as too intense, and her career tanked. She was quoted saying the incident was an act of sabotage against her career and that the perpetrator used psychoactive drugs in the drinks that night.

She then took to drinking, became a depressed eccentric, and was only ever seen again publicly in the lowliest and most obscure of Downtown clubs.

PAIN BEHIND THE EYES

Martha is naturally attracted to lamentable emotions in the people she meets. When she senses someone's pain, she remembers it and can tap into it with a song later on.

When a PC **Investigates** and scores a 7-9, or as a hard move, you can choose to ask the player about their character's own sorrow and assume that Martha knows it (per her custom move **Pain Behind the Eyes**). This is a good chance to give the character's themes and backstory some airtime.

At first, Martha appears deeply sympathetic and understanding. However, revealing the PC's private pain also sets the PC up for Martha's keening hard move.

Martha's Danger profile appears on page 38.

DEPTH 0:
THE HOOKS

The crew may become involved in the case in the following ways:

- **The police** could be reaching out to the crew for help with their mystery killer, especially if the crew previously worked with the police or runs an investigative agency. Officers Das and Quinn just began investigating the strange occurrence at the funeral house, and are stumped at this point in the investigation: they have three seemingly unrelated suspicious deaths where the skinhead in the hoodie was placed. Their boss seems to think it's a coincidence and has given them 72 hours to reach a breakthrough in the case, after which they will have to drop it. Both Das, who is a Rift, and Quinn, a Sleeper, believe they have a serial killer on their hands, but they don't have a clue about his motive or method yet. (They still haven't connected the last two deaths to the Washboard, so they don't suspect Martha Ellis in the slightest). To recruit the crew, Officer Das will make contact by phone or show up at the crew's hangout; she'll relate the details of the case and ask for help but stress that the killer should be brought to justice and that the matter must be resolved in accordance with the law.
- The owner of the Washboard, **Sammy Jefferson Jr.** (Sleeper), may contact the crew to bring the Darnell Fox death to rest. Not so much shaken by a death in his club as he is worried of interrupting his singer's lucky streak, old Sammy senses that his diva is on edge since the case and wants to make sure no harm comes to her. Likely connected to PCs who lean toward the wrong side of the law, Sammy could hire the crew to find the fellow in the hoodie and make sure he doesn't pull that kind of stunt again in his club. Sammy is a middle-aged man usually wearing a stained dress shirt, suspenders, and dress slacks, and adorning a typical jazz-club-owner panama hat. He's a shrewd businessman and plays a mean bluegrass tune if you put a banjo in his hands.
- **A member of the supporting cast could become a victim of Ellis.** Someone close to one of the PCs could invite the PCs to the Washboard for a performance of Martha Ellis. Choose a character that is carrying some distinct personal pain and could easily become Ellis's next mark. The supporting character could be found dead the next morning or, if you'd like to give the crew a chance to save her, be a part of the Killer Strikes Again! triggered scene on page 38.

DEPTH 1:
LAMENTING OF THE PAST

In this depth, the crew studies the crime scenes of the strange deaths that occurred Downtown. At first, they seem unrelated, but as the crew starts putting together the clues, it becomes evident that the Washboard club and its foremost singer, Martha Ellis, are at the center of it all.

THE WASHBOARD

Tucked in the basement of a grimey brownstone building overshadowed by Downtown's great skyscrapers, the Washboard couldn't be located any lower without dropping into the sewers. Faint cello and piano notes echo in the maze of alleyways and underpasses that leads to its front door, below street level. The place seems scrubbed, as if trying to rise up to the occasion of having a fleeting shot at glory. The front door is covered with posters heralding Martha Ellis' next gig.

The Washboard is a long-standing establishment, a jazz and blues venue from the days the City was young. But unlike its more respectable brethren who started out low and built their dignity and reputation with the years, the Washboard was always a spot vaguely associated with the wrong kind of crowd. While the truly big crime lords stuck to their own clubs, this was a place where hustlers and good-for-nothing lowlives often congregated. In its heyday, the Washboard also attracted a flux of middle-class Downtown professionals who craved some edge and came here to rub elbows with the rougher regular clientele, and so business was good for everyone, for a while. But trends moved on and the masses with them, forcing owner after owner to sell the joint to the next hopeful entrepreneur.

The current owner, **Sammy Jerfferson Jr.**, moved from the neighborhoods to the alleys of Downtown decades ago. He dabbled with pretty much everything one can on the streets, but he always had a love for music, and when the opportunity came, he purchased the club. Sammy knew all too well that to keep the place running he'd have to run other activities from the back room, yet his dream has always been to truly make it as a club owner.

The Washboard is a roomy club, capable of holding up to 200 patrons. The red-tinted lights set the mood but also give the place a dark and seedy vibe. There are two long bars lining the main room, and about 20 small circular tables scattered in front of a medium-sized stage. In the back there's a kitchen, a dressing room, and storage space, as well as an office for Sammy. A back door leads to a dirty back alley, even narrower than the one that leads to the front door.

INVESTIGATING THE DEATH OF DARNELL FOX

The coroner report says Darnell Fox died of unexplained heart failure.

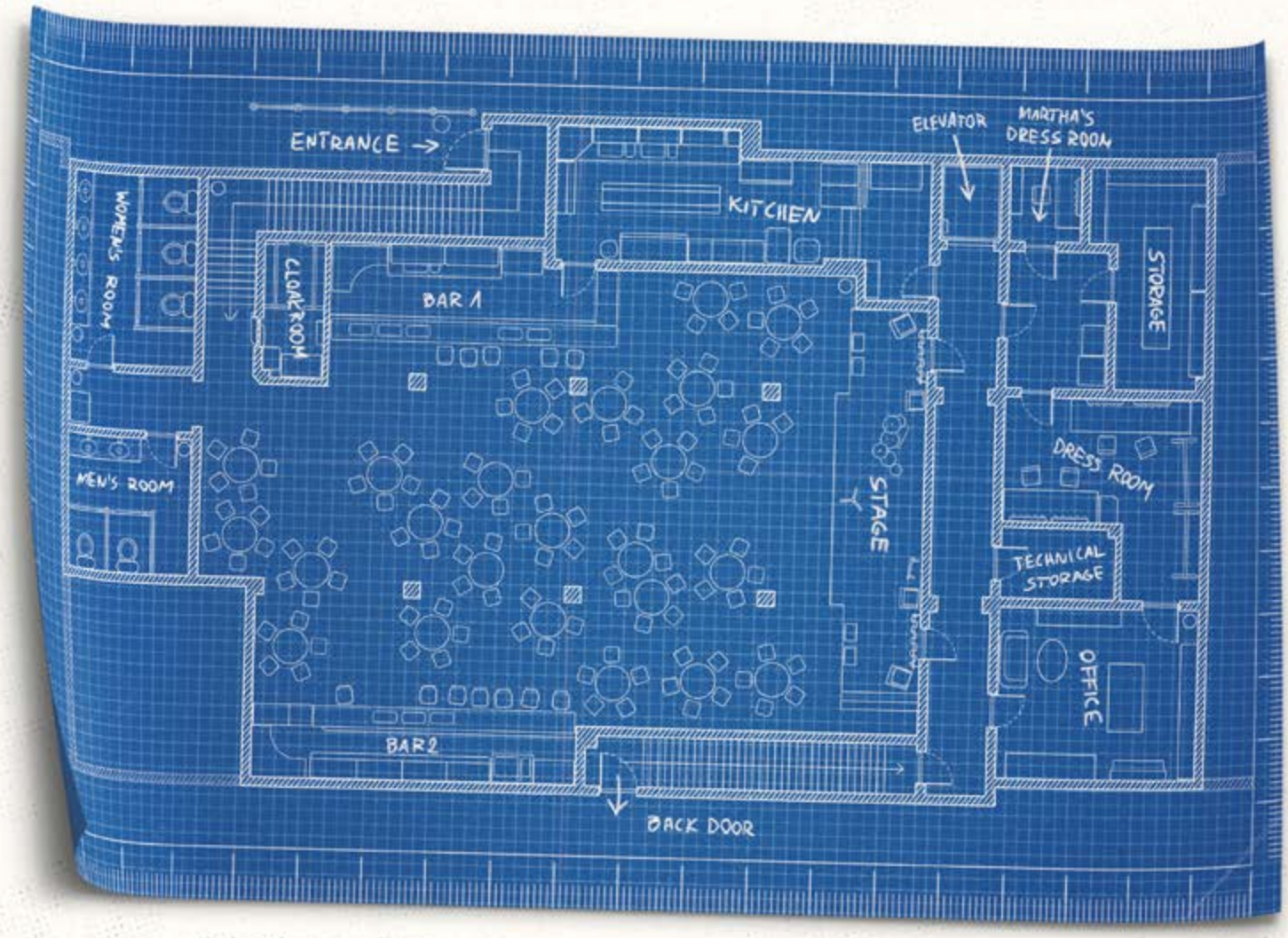
Everyone at the Washboard tells the same story: Martha and Syrus the bouncer walked in on Darnell and the killer having words, when they saw Darnell collapse and the killer fleeing. (This is a lie Sammy and Martha came up with, but all regular patrons accept their word as truth.)

The alleged killer must have broken the lock on the back door with a crowbar and slipped in while Syrus the bouncer was locking up the front.

Investigating Syrus could reveal Martha was already there when he arrived. Sammy gave him a bonus to say otherwise, to keep her out of it.

If confronted with the above fact, Martha would say Darnell asked to meet her after the show and then declared his love to her. It was normal for a lonely fan to get enamored with a performer, so she politely declined; but then the killer arrived and Darnell fell to the floor.

No one at the Washboard really knew Darnell or his friends. Asking around, Sammy and Syrus learned they were a group of young professionals looking for a place for a double date.



Darnell's friends are easy to find. They are still in shock, and ascribe his death to an undiagnosed cardiac condition. They tell of a shy and meek man who never mentioned being in any need of help, but if asked privately, some of the ladies would reveal he seemed extremely lonely. They all work for a local advertising firm.

Beyond the Mist, the place is a dreary bog of gloom and intense loneliness, both emotionally and symbolically, with muddy ground covered by low fog. An old sad tin whistle tune is playing far away. If a PC can contact Darnell's spirit, he is *overwhelmed-by-sorrow-4* and believes he died because he simply could no longer bear carrying on.

INVESTIGATING THE WASHBOARD

Sammy is using this place for more than just music. A little bootlegging, a little illegal gambling, sometimes even fencing low-risk stolen goods, but nothing more. He is willing to pay the crew to keep it under wraps, or pay Syrus to bully them into keeping quiet.

Sammy is betting all his chips on Martha Ellis' success in hopes of going legit and letting go of some of his dubious back room activities. He seems like he is willing to go to great lengths to keep the singer – or her singing – from harm.

Someone in the regular crowd at the Washboard heard of another patron who recently died of a heart attack, pointing the crew at the Bancroft Penthouse. Another person says the singer, Martha, was involved in a drama at the Green Meadow Funeral Home not two days ago.



SAMMY JEFFERSON JR. ★

HURT OR SUBDUE 1 / BREAK SPIRIT 3

- **Shifty:** When you Investigate Sammy, he first takes *shifty-2*.
- **Weather the Storm:** When Sammy makes you an offer, the MC will put a reward on the table as a temporary story tag. If you accept his bribe, you get the tag.
- **Keeping Tabs:** When Sammy decides to turn on you, he gives you a status of *implicated* with one tier for every tag you accepted from him through **Weather the Storm**. You may **Face Danger**.
- **Defuse the Situation:** When Sammy grabs a banjo and starts playing, everyone who can hear him chills the hell out. As a soft move the MC can choose one for each listener: reduce an emotional status by one, burn an emotional tag, or give *chill-1*.

- Threaten someone with a holdout pistol or a crowbar (*back-to-the-wall-2*) or make good on his threats (*flesh-wound-2* or *banged-up-2*)
- Help someone relax (reduce an emotional status by one, burn an emotional tag, or give *chill-1*)

- Welcome someone with a smile and open arms
- Suggest to step aside to talk business
- Tell the band to start playing, now

SYRUS, THE BOUNCER ★

Syrus has been a bouncer at the Washboard for the past few months. A typical muscleman, he towers over most patrons at 6'4" and has arms like logs and a torso like a barrel. A shining bald head, a tight black T-shirt, and a thin 'stache to keep him cool but threatening.

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / BRIBE 2

- **Not on My Shift:** When Syrus enters the scene, give him *alert-2*.
- **Boxer Moves:** When Syrus is attacked with mundane hand-to-hand physical blows or weapons, reduce the tier of the resulting status by 1.

- Thump someone (*disoriented-2*) or put them in a headlock (*restrained-3*)
- Throw a disoriented or restrained person outside (*humiliated-2*)

- Look down on someone over his huge folded arms

OFFICERS DAS & QUINN

Whether they requested the crew's help or they are just hovering around the crime scenes looking for answers, Downtown beat officers Chaavi Das and Matt Quinn will find a way to stick their nose into the crew's business.

This devoted dynamic duo make everything that's happening Downtown, and in the City, their business. Officer Das is a short, feisty, and direct policewoman who proves big punches come in small packages. As the Touched Rift of Gramadevata, a town's guardian spirit, she wields – alongside her taser and pistol – the protective powers of a tutelary deity. She can create magical shields that shelter people and property from harm, both physical and magical.

Officer Quinn – a tall, handsome, cornfed hunk – is actually a big teddy bear who prefers to avoid violence (until duty calls, at which point he proves a capable combatant). While he is a Sleeper, he is the kind who believes all conspiracy theories but never really delves into them. He will follow Das through thick and thin, even when he can't see what she sees. While he often says he wishes he could see through her eyes, he really doesn't, a fact which keeps him firmly asleep.

The pair can serve as backup or support NPCs that help, tip off, and guide the crew throughout this case, vein, or story arc. They can also serve as a royal pain in the butt for PCs that run illegal activities, always showing up when it's least convenient. If they become temporary or permanent allies of the crew, they can be represented by an extra theme.

DAS & QUINN

Ally

IDENTITY

It's our job to keep the streets Downtown safe.

POWER TAGS

working the beat, *police work*, *banish evil*, *devoted to their work*, *combine brawn and brains*, *create a magical shield*, *interview witnesses*, *access to police files*, *the usual suspects*, *heart of gold*

WEAKNESS TAGS

must report ANY illegal activity, *Das is a blunt force instrument*, *Quinn is a big softy*, *trouble with the boss*

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Sacrifice:** When you get a hit on **Face Danger**, you can always choose to extend the outcome to one person or object around you that you can protect, at the cost of exposing yourself. On a 10+, they take no status and you take the status with -1 tier. On 7-9, they take the status with -1 tier and you take the full status. If the move is *Dynamite!*, on a 12+, you can choose to fully protect both of you (instead of one of the other 12+ options).

DAS & QUINN ★★/★

While they are both beat officers, both Das and Quinn use the Detective Danger profile (MC Tookit, page 148) to reflect their exemplary police skills. Officer Das also has the Mythos Power Set Messenger of the Light (*MC Toolkit*, page 154).

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / CORRUPT 5 / OVERRIDE AUTHORITY 3

- **Powers of Deduction:** When Das or Quinn survey the scene for the first time or as a hard move, the MC will ask you one question. You must reply with a straight answer or a solid lead. The officer knows your answer, even if your character didn't speak it.
- **On the Ball:** When Das or Quinn enter the scene, give them *alert-1*.
- **Protection from Evil (Das only):** When Officer Das takes a status from a source that is inherently evil or dark, reduce the tier of the status by 2.

- Put someone on the spot (tell the truth or take *pressured-2*)
- Shoot a suspect or a threat with a firearm (*gunshot-wound-3*) or taser (*stunned-3*)
- Cuff a suspect or tighten the handcuffs (*handcuffed-2*)
- (Das only) Bless or enchant someone to protect them from harm (*protected-2*)
- (Das only) Banish the forces of evil or darkness (*banish-3*)

- Observe a scene and discuss it with each other
- Find a piece of evidence
- When alone, call for police backup

THE BANCROFT PENTHOUSE

Meticulously furnished with the best and trendiest interior design money can buy, every corner in the Bancroft penthouse is a demonstration of wealth and power. Stepping inside on the reflective marble floor, you realize it's all just a lead up to the grand finale: a panoramic view of the City rooftops surrounds the condo. Breath-taking, but boy, does it feel empty.

Tiffany Bancroft was Martha Ellis' second victim. A beautiful woman in her late 30s, Tiffany turned heads everywhere she went, and the Washboard was no exception. Martha noticed her walking in with her husband, **Ross Bancroft**, who she later learned was a high-flying executive in a Downtown-based hedge fund. While outwardly the couple looked glamorous, Martha sensed a sadness in Tiffany. She met her at the ladies' room and invited her for a smoke and a drink in her dressing room. When Tiffany opened up about her loveless marriage and her unfulfilled life, Martha realized the young lady was feeling trapped in her perfect existence. She wanted to help her, so they exchanged numbers and agreed to meet the following week.

Martha paid a visit to the Bancroft penthouse and when the opportunity came, after much talk and wine, sat by the Bancrofts' grand piano and sang her hostess to death. Nowak showed up just in time to witness her kill Tiffany but he was already being pursued by the building security. Realizing he was late, Nowak fled the scene. Hearing security nearby, Martha Ellis took the opportunity to leave via the service stairs, unseen. When security arrived, they split between Nowak, the alleged perp, and the victim, but no one thought to look for Ellis.

INVESTIGATING THE DEATH OF TIFFANY BANCROFT

The coroner report says Tiffany Bancroft died of unexplained heart failure.

According to the building's chief of security, a skinhead in a hoodie, about 25-30 years old, tricked the guards and made it to the elevators. From there he went on to the Bancrofts' penthouse and probably scared Tiffany Bancroft to death. He narrowly escaped the guards by crashing through a window and falling onto a dumpster, fleeing the scene before he could be apprehended.

If the search is expanded beyond the incident with the intruder, security cameras or a jolt to the concierge's memory would disclose that Martha Ellis paid a visit to the victim about three hours before the intruder showed up. She was not seen leaving.

The neighbors heard the piano playing before Tiffany died, but Ross Bancroft knows the piece was just for show and that neither him nor his wife could play.

There is one ticket to Martha Ellis' show at the Washboard next week on the piano.

Someone (Martha) called Snatcher's number from the loft, around Tiffany's time of death.

Beyond the Mist, the penthouse seems afflicted by the same swamp as the Washboard, albeit with gnarly dead trees giving off the feeling of long-dead hopes and dreams and a prevailing emptiness. If a PC can contact Tiffany's spirit, she is *bitter-and-angry-3* and doesn't really want to discuss what happened, believing she died because she finally realized it was her only way out.

INVESTIGATING ROSS BANCROFT

Ross Bancroft, husband of the late Tiffany Bancroft, is a cold-hearted hedge fund executive that was looking to get out of his suffocating marriage and keep his fortune by murdering his wife. He is a red herring, because he never got to enact his plans and he is not the killer in this case. Fearing that an investigation will reveal his former plan, he is *uncooperative-2* and wants the case dropped as soon as possible.

Ross Bancroft seems to be maintaining his normal routine, working late at the office of his hedge fund and drinking whiskey alone at the apartment at night. He doesn't seem as heartbroken as you'd expect.

If asked about the reason for his wife's death, he would curtly say that his late wife was so accustomed to her bubble of refined perfection, that she was scared to death by the sight of an intruder, and her heart betrayed her.

Ross Bancroft was planning to use an expensive poison that simulates a heart attack. He flushed the vial down the toilet when Tiffany died but it snagged somewhere in the building's pipe system. Simple bloodwork cannot detect the poison, or lack thereof, but Mythos powers or advanced lab work would show Tiffany didn't have it in her system. To access the body, the crew must hit the morgue.

If the crew snoops around Ross Bancroft too much, he may reveal his true colors and hire someone to get rid of them. Ross can afford anyone, especially old enemies and Nemeses of the crew who would work for money. Otherwise, his go-to crew for this kind of work are the paramilitary mercenaries the **Valhalla Boys** (Varangian Guard, an elite unit of Norse warriors who served as the personal bodyguard of the Byzantine Emperor). The Valhalla Boys are instructed to ensure the crew doesn't investigate Tiffany's death.

THE VALHALLA BOYS ★★★

The Valhalla Boys are run-of-the-mill mercenaries, usually dressed in a mixture of military and leather that perfectly marries functionality with intimidation. Tactically-trained and battle-hardened both in their Mythos and in their mundane training, they're capable of taking out most low- to mid-power Rift teams they face. The Valhalla boys wield shotguns, crossbows, throwing axes, and grenades.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / BRIBE 4 / THREATEN 5

- **Collective:** This collective has a few members and a size factor of 1.
- **Trained Paramilitaries:** When the Valhalla Boys enter the scene, give them *body armor* and *alert-2*.
- **Berserker:** When the Valhalla Boys take a status of physical harm or subdual, if *hurt-or-subdue* isn't maxed out, the MC may give them *berserk-2*. This status applies both to attacks targeting the berserkers (including mental attacks) and when **Facing Danger** against their attacks.

- Signal each other silently or with clicks and then execute a tactical routine (giving themselves *tactical-advantage-2* or removing up to two tiers of negative tactical statuses)
- Overwhelm a target with suppression fire (*cornered-3*) or aggressive firepower (*gunshot-3* or *bleeding-gash-3*)
- Give their defeated enemy a message from their employer (give an *intimidate* status with a tier equal to that of a physical harm or subdual status the target has)

- Deploy in a star formation, back-to-back, showing their training

GREEN MEADOW FUNERAL HOME

There's a CLOSED sign hanging on the knob of the front door of this deathly-silent suburban funeral home, but the door is slightly ajar, and someone is heard working inside. The old house seems to creak and whisper when you enter. Inside, there is a portrait of yesterday's dearly departed on the floor of the foyer, a teenager. There was some kind of struggle here, it seems. The shattered glass from the broken picture frame has not yet been swept.

Adam Walsh was Martha Ellis' third and latest victim. A single dad of three who had recently lost his 15-year-old kid (Teddy) to an illness, Adam was drowning in despair. Martha, who was hired to sing at Teddy's funeral and felt the depth of his darkness, almost felt like his savior when she channeled the Banshee in her and sang about his endless sadness.

Nowak showed up uninvited to the funeral, barging through the doors and kicking up a ruckus just in time for everyone to see him exchange surprised looks with Adam Walsh. Adam Walsh, who didn't recognize this man, suddenly felt a sharp pain in his chest and rushed to the men's room, where he collapsed, hearing the last notes of the song that killed him echoing from the funeral hall.

This time Martha was caught face-to-face with her ghostlike pursuer and, knowing she couldn't outrun him, resorted to shouting "It's the killer!", driving the crowd to besiege Nowak and push him out the front door. Martha hurried to her car and drove away; Nowak fled by the skin of his teeth again, with bruises and cracked ribs.

INVESTIGATING THE DEATH OF ADAM WALSH

The coroner report says Adam Walsh died of unexplained heart failure.

Adam Walsh was mourning the death of his son Teddy, who had died of an illness. The family lost the mother years ago. Adam had two girls who now live with relatives, at least until the end of the investigation.

All who knew him can tell that, understandably, Adam Walsh was crushed by the death of his son.

The attendants of the funeral saw him clutch his chest when he laid his eyes on the intruder in the hoodie. Then the singer shouted "It's the killer!" and the people in the room pursued him out of the funeral home, some of them getting physical, but he got away. Adam Walsh was found dead in the bathroom moments later.

Observant attendants describe the intruder as smelling of machine grease and burnt chemicals. Studying the spot where he was wrestled to the ground, collecting chemical samples from a torn piece of his hoodie, and/or tracking him in other mundane or mythical means could lead to Harrington Welding & Fabrication.

The owner of Green Meadow Funeral Home, **Sylvia Martinez** (Sleeper), was the one who invited Martha Ellis to sing in the funeral. She did this as a favor to her friend Sammy Jefferson Jr, owner of the Washboard and Martha Ellis' manager.

Beyond the Mist, the funeral home is a cacophony of *loud-and-angry-3* deceased spirits, and it's hard if not impossible to find Adam Walsh's ghost, who is still hugging his son's ghost and weeping somewhere in a dark corner. Any of the spirits here would say they witnessed Death himself visiting the funeral home today (Nowak, Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come), and heard his herald (Ellis, the Banshee). There are traces of the same swamp as the Washboard and the Bancroft penthouse, but it is muddled with much afterlife activity.

MARTHA WAS ATTACKED!

You're startled by the sudden ring of your phone. On the other side of the line, Officer Chaavi Das / Sammy Jefferson Jr. sounds infuriated. "The killer got to her. He jumped Martha Ellis. She made it somehow, but she's roughed up. You better come down here."

Sooner or later, Nowak finds his way to Martha Ellis and tries to warn her of her miserable future. This occurs off-screen, without the knowledge of the crew, most likely at the Washboard or at her apartment. Unfortunately, Nowak is not very planned; he tries to communicate but can't get his message across clearly (on top of being mute, he is borderline illiterate; he has basic reading skills, but can't write very well). Knowing from their first encounter that she can't sing him to death, Ellis pulls out a holdout gun; Nowak wrestles it out of her hands, and in the process, she gets bruised. When things get physical, Nowak hesitates, realizing he won't get through to Ellis, and flees again. Optionally, he comes out with a gunshot flesh wound, leaving blood at the scene.

When the crew arrives, Ellis is sitting in the back of an ambulance covered in a blanket. She is both *shaken-2* and *inebriated-2*; failed attempts to remove these statuses may end with the paramedics taking her away abruptly (**Deny Them Something They Want**). As explained above under Martha (page 26), the singer will try to spin this incident to her advantage.

Martha will claim to have been attacked. Her recounting of the event would be accurate except for the assault she tries to pin on Nowak.

If asked how she survived and if she discerns that the crew are Rifts, she may reveal herself as a Rift and say she was able to resist the killer's magic, which tried to drain her life away.

Martha asserts that the killer has a personal interest in her. If she's revealed herself as a Rift, she'll tie it to the legendary connection they share.

The scene of the fight shows signs of breaking and entry and of a struggle consistent with Martha Ellis' statement.

Beyond the Mist, the place has the same swampy feeling as the other crime scenes. However, closer inspection shows the source is Martha and not Nowak.

Optionally, Nowak can be identified via a print he left at the scene and/or blood, if he was shot. His police record has a battery conviction over a bar fight, and his parole officer can point the crew to his workplace, Harrington Welding & Fabrication. His police file or parole officer could also reveal he is deaf (this would speed up the case).

DEPTH 2:
FALL ON DEAF EARS

MARTHA ELLIS' DRESSING ROOM

Martha Ellis's so-called dressing room smells of dead flowers and alcohol. The small, cramped converted storage room at the back of the Washboard was probably all the owners could spare to satisfy the diva's demands. The walls are lined with newspaper cutouts and posters of her glorious past. The title "Downtown's Most Soulful Voice" seems to stick out. Under the vanity, there's a bin with dozens of small plastic liquor bottles. The poor soul was just starting to pull her threadbare life together, and now this.

Searching Martha's dressing room at the Washboard could provide some insight into the singer's past, but it's not easy to access. When she's not there, the room's door is *locked-2* and Sammy or Syrus are always *watchful-2*, mindful of anyone snooping around the back rooms.

Some of the newspaper clips on the walls have parts that were cut out or redacted with a black marker. Comparing to the originals (perhaps through microfilm research) will show these are the sections where Ellis is criticized for her over-emotional performance.

Beyond the Mist, the dressing room has a faint print of the Banshee Mythos, represented as a vision of a melancholic bog, with faint trills of a tin whistle in the distance.

In a locked drawer, among lots of memorabilia, there's the calling card of a therapist, **Dr. Selma Perrin**, of a therapist association called Mending The Broken. If the crew calls Dr. Perrin, she may reveal details of Ellis' troubled past to get rid of them. If she realizes they are Rifts, she may take an interest in them, inviting them to meet her. See a possible encounter with a Mending The Broken therapist in the case *Broken Glass* (page 68).

HARRINGTON WELDING & FABRICATION

Driving outside of the city center and down this part of the Industrial Zone always has a sobering effect. Over there, people dream of money and fame, while over here, the people labor day and night just to make ends meet. Harrington Welding & Fabrication is just this kind of place, a greasy workshop where the sounds of buzzsaws and machinery is loud enough to keep conversations private, but the local eyes follow you everywhere you go.

Harrington Welding & Fabrication is John Nowak's workplace, but he hasn't shown up to work for a week. The foreman, **Miles McFarland**, can answer some questions about Nowak, but he's *suspicious-3* of the crew and has a soft spot for Nowak, so he wants to make sure he isn't assisting anyone who wants to hurt Nowak. If the crew convinces him that Nowak was involved in the murders or if they threaten his business, he may open up (reduce the status accordingly).

John Nowak is deaf and mute. This is an important clue because it rules him out as the person who called Snatcher and it rules him out as someone who uses singing to kill.

Foreman Miles has not seen John Nowak or heard from him since that afternoon last week, when he saw Nowak pick up a jazz club flyer on the wind and strangely stare into the distance for a while, looking sad. Miles kept the flyer; it's the Washboard ad for Martha Ellis.

John Nowak is alone. His elderly parents died years ago, he has no known relatives.

John Nowak is a stand up guy and everyone at the factory will attest to that. His battery charges were a result of a misfortunate altercation where he tried to defend a friend in a bar fight, and ended up being sued.

John Nowak knows the Industrial Zone well and can survive on the streets. If he doesn't want to be found, he is probably squatting in some abandoned factory or rusted silo. (See Nowak's Hideout for details about finding him.)

SNATCHER

A harrowing face covered in oozing scabs and scars is the first thing that strikes you about Maurice, AKA Snatcher. Then you notice that he's wearing a thick, battered, and blood-stained plastic apron, and carries around an unusually large meat cleaver. You reassure yourself that it's normal for a butcher, but you also can't stop wondering exactly what sort of meat comes under his knife.

Maurice Alrawi (Ghoul), known in the criminal underworld as Snatcher, offers a no-questions-asked body removal service. He works out of an old butcher shop in the Industrial Zone, where he carves up and devours the bodies he is hired to hide. The body is most often the key component of his payment.

Snatcher is a dangerous witness, who has a small but vital clue that can turn the investigation around. He can be played as a **location**, where the crew seeks him out at his butcher shop to get answers about the call made to him from the Bancroft Penthouse; or he can be played as a **triggered scene**, where he shows up angry when the Killer Strikes Again! to claim the body he was promised. In both cases he is uncooperative, and the crew must strike a deal with him or force his hand in order to get the clue.

The person who called Snatcher to get rid of the body changed their voice to mask it, a common tactic in this business. (This indicates the killer can speak, ruling out John Nowak.)

Snatcher couldn't even tell if it was a man or a woman, which he admits is unusual (and may point that the caller had some skill or training in changing their voice).



SNATCHER ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / THREATEN 4

- **Monstrous:** When Snatcher takes a status that is countered by his wide frame or by his rotting flesh, reduce its tier by 1. When the MC makes a hard move with Snatcher, he can hit two targets or hit a single target for +1 tier.
- **Hangry:** When Snatcher is denied a body promised to him, give him *hangry-3*.
- **Gravediggers:** Snatcher can call for his assistants for help (Create a new Danger: Gravediggers, with *hurt-or-subdue:3*, a size factor of 1, and cleavers causing *nasty-cut-2*).
- **Who's Your Daddy:** When Snatcher feeds on a body but does not consume it, the body turns into a ghoul with the same abilities as Snatcher's except the ghoul slashes with their claws, does not have the move **Gravediggers**, and has *exorcise:2*.

- Go for a limb with his cleaver (*slash-3*) or wrap a metal chain around someone and drag them along (*chained-3*)
- Violently break free of restraints (remove up to 3 tiers or burn up to 3 tags)
- Feed off flesh (*vicious-bite-3* and reduce one tier of harmful status or give himself one tier of positive status for each tier inflicted)

- Screech and growl, exposing sharp and bloody yellow teeth
- Take the form of a body he devoured

DEPTH 3: TOLL THE DEATH KNELL

NOWAK'S HIDEOUT

The Industrial Zone looks like one big haystack. Everywhere you turn you see abandoned factories with grimey, broken glass windows; piles of concrete pipeline parts; endless lots with fleets of parked trucks. John Nowak could be anywhere. Your faraway gaze meets the smoke and steam rising above the district, as the foghorn in the docks nearby blows unnervingly like a funeral toll.

When he's not following Martha Ellis around, trying to warn her of her impending doom, John Nowak, Rift of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come, lays low somewhere in the Industrial Zone. He may be deaf and mute, and he may have very little to his name, but Nowak knows the streets here and he is a veteran urban survivalist. Currently, he has settled in a machine-operated section of a car factory that is only rarely visited by personnel.

FINDING THE HIDEOUT

Finding the hideout won't be easy. Nowak is *covering-his-tracks-3*, and any wrong turn the crew takes in the dark, empty streets and forsaken buildings of the Industrial Zone could have them facing local gangs, industrial-grade hazards, or stray Conjurations emerging out of the many thin places around. The Valhalla Boys, Snatcher, or any of the crew's Nemeses could take this opportunity to strike.

CAPTURING NOWAK

Once the hideout is located, seizing Nowak may prove harder than expected. If the PCs score 7-9 on their **Investigate** move to find Nowak, you can choose to have Nowak know they are coming, in which case he will flee, starting a chase. If Nowak escapes, he will show up again when the Killer Strikes Again! or during Martha's performance at the Opera House.

NOWAK'S HIDEOUT ★★

CAPTURE NOWAK 4 / NOWAK ESCAPES 3

- **Factory Hideout:** When you enter Nowak's Hideout, take *watched-2* and give Nowak's Hideout *deafening noise*.
- **Strings and Tripwires:** When you **Sneak Around** Nowak's Hideout without first **Investigating** the scene, you trip his system of visual cues. On a 10+ or 7-9, Nowak knows you're coming, but he can't see you yet.
- **Chase:** When *capture-Nowak:4* maxes out, Nowak is cornered. When *Nowak-escapes:3* maxes out, Nowak flees (**Deny Them Something They Want**).

- Provide Nowak with an escape path (give Nowak *escaping-1*)
- Block pursuers with a dead end, a metal grate, or a collapsed pile of gears (remove one tier from *capture-Nowak* or give someone *stuck-2*).

- Churn and clank loudly

NOWAK ★★

John Nowak is a tall, lean, and wiry man in his late 20s. He has an intimidating air about him, whether because of his Mythos' atmosphere or because of his broken nose, shaved head, and many tattoos, ranging from cheesy Christmas-themed illustrations to creepy skulls, tombstones, and crows. He usually wears a dirty hoodie pulled over a tanktop, worn-out cargo pants, and work boots.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / (BANISH OR BIND 4)

- **Apparition:** When Nowak's *hurt-or-subdue* maxes out, he doesn't die or pass out. Instead, his body becomes incorporeal. *Hurt-or-subdue* becomes an immunity (*hurt-or-subdue:–*) and all statuses on it are removed. Nowak gains *banish-or-bind:4*. Until he learns to control this ability, he materializes after the next downtime.
- **Deathsense:** Nowak can sense an approaching death. As a side effect, he can instinctively dodge attacks that would kill him. When Nowak takes a status that would kill him and that can be dodged given his precognition, he ignores the status instead.
- **Silent Toll:** When Nowak's deafness first becomes apparent or relevant in a scene, give him *deaf*. He is immune to Martha Ellis's Banshee keen.
- **Flash Forward:** As a hard move, Nowak forsees the grim future of a person he can see and makes a rough sketch depicting it. Upon gazing on the sketch, the person whose future is depicted sees his predicted fate and becomes *emotional-3* or *terrified-3*.
- **Urban Survivalist:** When Nowak enters the scene give him *alert-2*. At the end of each downtime, if he lost his last hideout, he finds a new one (Create Danger: Nowak's Hideout).

- Throw a powerful punch at someone (*staggering-3*) or grapple them (*restrained-3*)

- Wave his hands and mumble in warning of what's to come
- Receive a vision about someone's death or grim future

INTERACTING WITH NOWAK

Once cornered, Nowak will wait to see what the crew does next. If the crew is still suspecting Nowak at this point, they might attempt to subdue him or even take revenge for his alleged victims and hurt him.

Communicating with Nowak is difficult; being deaf, mute, and partly illiterate, John Nowak is an isolated man. Most conversational skills (and power tags) won't work here, and he must be assuaged before he can be approached. When someone tries to gain Nowak's trust, give him *apprehensive-2* if the crew has not acted violently against him, and *afraid-for-his-life-4* if they have. Once cooperative, Nowak can easily answer yes-or-no questions, point at people, objects, or pictures, etc.

When he saw Martha on the Washboard flyer, Nowak had a flash of her future. He's vague about the exact details of Martha's future, but if pushed he could sketch a newspaper page with Martha's picture titled MURDERER.

Sensing the impending deaths, Nowak tried to stop Martha at each of the crime scenes, but he was too far or arrived too late. He needed to be closer to Martha to be able to intervene in time, but the crew and/or the police forced him to lay low and keep his distance.



Nowak is immensely frustrated with his inability to communicate and doesn't understand why he was given this morbid gift of foresight if he cannot even help anyone. He is on the brink of despairing.

He is also genuinely sad and sympathetic for Martha, who is too caught up in her own pain to see the harm she's inflicting on others.

THE KILLER STRIKES AGAIN!

Left to her own devices, Martha Ellis will strike again, seeking an outlet for her complicated, tormented soul. Whether the crew suspects her or still believes she is the victim, it is time to throw a fat clue their way. This time around the crew will arrive in the nick of time to witness Ellis and Nowak battling it out.

The victim of Martha's next strike should be someone close to or liked by the PCs. Ideally, it should be one of the crew's supporting cast. Otherwise, Ellis may target a favorite NPC from the case such as Sammy Jefferson Jr. or police officers Das or Quinn, etc.

This triggered scene can play out in several ways:

- If Nowak is still on the loose, he arrives in time to interrupt the ending of Martha's song, but she locks him up in the bathroom, capturing him.
- If Nowak is locked up or worse, and the PCs already suspect Martha, they could be the ones looking for her, arriving in the middle of her song.
- If Nowak is locked up and the PCs don't suspect Martha, Officers Das or Quinn can walk in on Martha and the victim, and then call on the PCs to investigate, raising the possibility that they got the wrong man.

The attack occurs at the victim's home. When the crew arrives, Martha is *distraught-3* and of course *drunk-3* as last time. However, the victim isn't dead; the song was interrupted and they lost consciousness, conveniently falling into a coma.

Martha isn't aware that the victim isn't dead (not even her Deathsense can operate at her current level of intoxication). She relates to the victim as having passed away until someone notes that the victim is still alive, at which point she becomes very nervous.

Martha insists that 'the hooded killer' was the one who affected the victim (whether or not Nowak was at the scene). If she's told Nowak is locked up, she'll insist there's another killer.

Confronted about her song, she will claim that she was trying to help the victim.

MARTHA ★★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 1 / BEG FOR MERCY – / EMOTIONALLY HEAL 5 / (BANISH OR BIND 4)

- **Apparition:** When Martha's *hurt-or-subdue* maxes out, her body becomes incorporeal. *Hurt-or-subdue* becomes an immunity (*hurt-or-subdue:–*) and all statuses on it are removed. She gains *banish-or-bind:4*. Until she learns to control this ability, she materializes after the next downtime.
- **Deathsense:** Martha can sense an approaching death. As a side effect, she can instinctively dodge attacks that would kill her. When Martha takes a status that would kill her and that can be dodged given her precognition, she ignores the status instead.
- **Keen of the Banshee:** When Martha is incorporeal, anyone hearing her song is affected as if she is singing about his or her personal pain.
- **Alcoholic:** When Martha Ellis enters the scene, give her *drunk-2*. As a hard move, she can give herself *drunk-2*.
- **Broken:** When you first try to discover or affect how Martha Ellis feels, she takes *full-of-self-hate-4*.
- **Pain Behind the Eyes:** As a hard move, the MC will ask you about your character's greatest pain. Martha can sense your answer.
- **Opera House Showdown:** When Martha sings to everyone at the Opera House, give the Opera House audience a spectrum of *rend-hearts:6*. When *rend-hearts* is maxed out, everyone in the Opera House audience dies of grief.

- Sing about one's pain, if she knows it (*emotionally-overwhelmed-4*, if the target is a PC and the pain is attached to a theme, they can mark Crack or Fade to let go of the pain and avoid the status)
- Push someone back with drunken force (if she's not incorporeal, *prone-2* or *bruised-2*)
- Pull out a concealed holdout gun and shoot someone (*gunshot-3*)

- Grab the mic

If exposed and threatened with consequences (such as arrest), Martha will drop her act, revealing the restless soul behind the facade. She will pick out one of the lead characters present and start singing, hoping to bring her would-be-captors down one by one and unleashing all the hatred and anger she has built up for those who misunderstand her and stand in her way to glory and fame. Unless she is helped, she won't calm down until she has killed someone with her keening. She would then come to her senses and attempt to flee the scene.

DEPTH 4: A DEATHLY NIGHT AT THE OPERA

THE OPERA HOUSE

"Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the Opera House. Tonight we have a very special lineup of musicians and performers who will share with us the magic and mystery of jazz music. From the City's most beloved big band tunes to the most alluring and melancholic melodies, we have it all. Prepare yourselves for a long night of the soul… And now, to open up the performance, please welcome Downtown's most soulful voice, the enchanting - MARTHA ELLIS!"

This triggered scene offers a grandiose ending to the case in the event Martha Ellis has not yet been stopped, or if she was set free for lack of evidence. The crew catches wind of Martha's next performance: Martha Ellis will go on stage in a special jazz night at the City's Opera House, in a pivotal gig landed thanks to the relentless efforts of Sammy Jefferson Jr.

The PCs could arrive at this scene with different ideas in mind, depending on what they had discovered so far. They may wish to stop Ellis, to confront her, or, if she was able to fool them thus far, to listen to her music. They may also hear about this event as it unfolds and rush to the scene.

Martha Ellis, in any case, will reveal herself on stage as the Banshee she truly is. She's only partly aware of the feelings brewing in her, feelings of hatred and anger, guilt and extreme sadness – all circling around a deep sense of mourning for the past, her failing career, and the crimes she committed to save it. These feelings were always there, in every killing she carried out, and tonight they will push her to try and sing her ultimate performance, the quintessential swan song, and unlock the darkest emotions of not just one person but everyone in the audience at once. If she is not stopped, the result would be a public disaster that will be etched forever as a painful memory in the history of the City.

Depending on their situation and what they know about Martha Ellis, the NPCs in the case may take different roles in the scene:

- As the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come, John Nowak still wants to warn Ellis from making the biggest mistake of her life and being forever hated by everyone around her. If he is free or able to break free, he will show up at the Opera House.
- Sammy Jefferson Jr., if he is still oblivious to the part his singer and client had in the killings, will be there, wearing his tackiest suit. For him, this night is about finally legitimizing his shady business and starting to make some real money. The bouncer Syrus may also be invited, serving as a personal bodyguard for the diva.
- Officers Das and Quinn could be doing traffic duty outside the Opera House on this busy night; they could be chasing an escaped Nowak on his way to the Opera House; or, if they suspect a crime, they might be there to "inspect the security arrangements" and keep watch.

MORE BROKEN GLASS

During this scene, when Martha's wailing hits a crescendo, every artifact of glass in the Opera House shatters – from stained-glass windows to lightbulbs – showering the audience with shards of glass. This is mostly for effect; the glass causes mostly panic and minor scratches but no substantial harm.



AFTERMATH

Here are a few questions to consider and points to revisit when you wrap up this case:

- What was the end of Martha Ellis? Was she healed, imprisoned, or killed? Even if someone found a way to banish or destroy the Banshee, Martha's emotion may have left a powerful print that continues to echo behind the veil of the Mist. If she was stopped in time, is she being helped to work through her issues? How are her powers contained? Perhaps she is admitted to the Municipal Institute for the Criminally Insane, where she will be groomed directly by Dr. Krystal Knight and resurface as part of her doomsday plan in *Broken Glass* (page 63).
- What about Nowak? Was he able to help Martha and accomplish what he set out to do? If not, does he continue to stop villains from ruining their future as a ghostly messenger of death, or did he despair and turn to evil, or back into the sleep of the Mist? Did he get to keep his job or was he sent to prison?
- With the similarities in their Mythoi, and their rather opposite mundane personas, do Martha and Nowak become mortal enemies or do they develop an inexplicable love that crosses space, time, and prison bars?
- What kind of relationship formed between the crew and officers Das and Quinn: a cold rivalry or a friendly alliance? Somewhere in between?
- How did the legal aspect of the case close? Was someone formally charged with the deaths of Darnell Fox, Tiffany Bancroft, or Adam Walsh? Did anyone help their families reach closure, or is it better to leave them in peace? Do their souls rest in peace or are they restless, seeking revenge?
- What is the future of the Washboard? Did Sammy Jefferson Jr. finally go legit or did he return to his usual sources of income?




CITY OF MIST
CARNIVAL OF
MACHINES
A CREEPY CASE OF MECHANICAL DESIRES AND KILLER RIDES

When a Rift love triangle ends in a tragic car crash at a Downtown junction, the crew must trace the chain of events back to its source. Was this just another sad story, so common in this City, or did a guiding hand have a part in this? The more they learn, the more the crew members sense that they are being led down a path from which they can't escape, toward the same end as the victims of the crime they are investigating.

Carnival of Machines starts out as a neo-noir murder investigation but pivots mid-case into a classic comic book "death trap" scheme. In its investigation-heavy, moody first half, the crew unfolds the personal misfortune of three Rifts whose Mythoi caused them to become involved with one another. In the second half of the case, the crew reveals the scheme behind the tragedies and must survive a creepy, forsaken, and boobytrapped funfare, designed solely to kill them and those like them. The case also features an NPC on a crash course, Goldie, whose fate is determined by the PCs actions.

MECHANISM n. The philosophical doctrine that all natural phenomena, including life and thought, allow mechanical explanation by physics and chemistry.

THE MECHANIST

Maximilian Drake used to think he had the capability to understand anything. For him, the universe, life, and people were nothing more than complicated machines who could be understood through analysis. He was a genius of applied sciences, making groundbreaking discoveries at Helix Labs, before he awakened as the Rift of **Hephaestus**, Greek god of blacksmiths, craftsmen, and volcanoes. Sight beyond the Mist exposed him to phenomena he could not explain, and he became more and more anxious. This was exasperated by the fact his awakening came in the wake of a lab accident which injured his spine, leaving him with a walking disability. His spirit and body broken, he left Helix Labs, sentencing himself to exile from his beloved sciences.

In his darkest hour, Drake sought the help of what he referred to as a "brain mechanic": the psychiatrist **Archibald Tennant**, a member of **Mending the Broken** (see page 63). The psychiatrist seized the opportunity and poisoned Drake's mind, stoking his obsession with understanding through logic and empowering him to regain control over his life "by *eliminating* the unpredictable variables in the equation". For Drake, those unpredictable variables are the wielders of legendary powers: Rifts, whose 'magic' he both mocks and detests. Drake sidelines his own Rifthood, convincing himself his powers are a form of intellectual evolution, capable of bringing order to a chaotic world.

THE CARNIVAL

As an expert engineer, Drake applied his genius to studying and deconstructing Rifts. Researching folklore and comparative myths, he was able to discover the patterns that govern legends. He came to understand the logic in Rifts' powers, and most importantly, the driving force of their legend. Based on this knowledge, he surmised that **Rifts can't help but follow their Mythos**, and devised a plan based on this law: to build a fairytale fairground that will attract Rifts into customized death traps that will kill them when they take the mythic bait.

To that end, he teamed up with an impoverished traveling carnival set up just outside town, the **Lemnos Carnival**, and its members, who refer to themselves as "**Carnies"** (the Sintians, a folk of plunderers who tended to Hephaestus after his fall from Olympus). Touched by Drake's Mythos, the Lemnos Carnies accepted him as their messiah and worshipped him as a god, and he gifted them the uncanny science that would bring their funfair devices and mannequins to life.

To help him collect information on potential Rift targets, Drake hired **P.I. Tom Holliday** (Sleeper) and equipped him with a camera with a lens that can see through the Mist. He sent the private investigator to find and profile Rifts for him. He then used his Carnies and their lifelike mannequins to lure hapless targets into the death trap fairground.

Drake's hypothesis turned out to be true. Fascinated with Rifts' nearly-mechanic, predictable behavior, Drake devised traps for each victim, deriving a twisted sense of control and pleasure out of the victory of science and logic over his legendary prey. He killed as many as a dozen Rifts before P.I. Holliday sent him three profiles of interconnected Rifts (and one Sleeper), who posed an interesting jigsaw for Drake's intellect to solve.

A DOWNTOWN LOVE TRIANGLE

Drake's new targets were the following.

- **Pauline Woodworth** (Paul Bunyan, a giant lumberjack in American folklore) was a private construction contractor who possessed immense strength as well as the power to grow bigger. She had her own business, **Woodworth Builders**, and a beautiful wife, **Ellie Woodworth** (Sleeper). Her Mythos urged her to settle the wilderness, so she was interested in construction projects outside town.
- **David Nguyen** (Rift of King David) was a high-flying executive in Orimaka Finance. His Mythos allowed him to slay giants (David and Goliath), but also pushed him to covet someone else's wife (as the biblical king did).
- Samantha Goldstein, or **Goldie** (Rift of Goldilocks) is a master thief with the power to get into any home, bypassing locks, security systems, etc. and the drive to take what other people own.

Drake set in motion the machinations that would lead them to their deaths:

- He lured Pauline with a project of rebuilding the abandoned fairground at the edge of town (settle the wilderness).
- He arranged for David to have a bad date at the same diner where Pauline and Ellie dined, predicting that the adultering king would set his heart on Ellie.
- During that date, he had P.I. Holliday tip Goldie off about a rich man in the Downtown diner who could be an interesting mark. Naturally, she showed up, and started casing David, planning to steal his money.

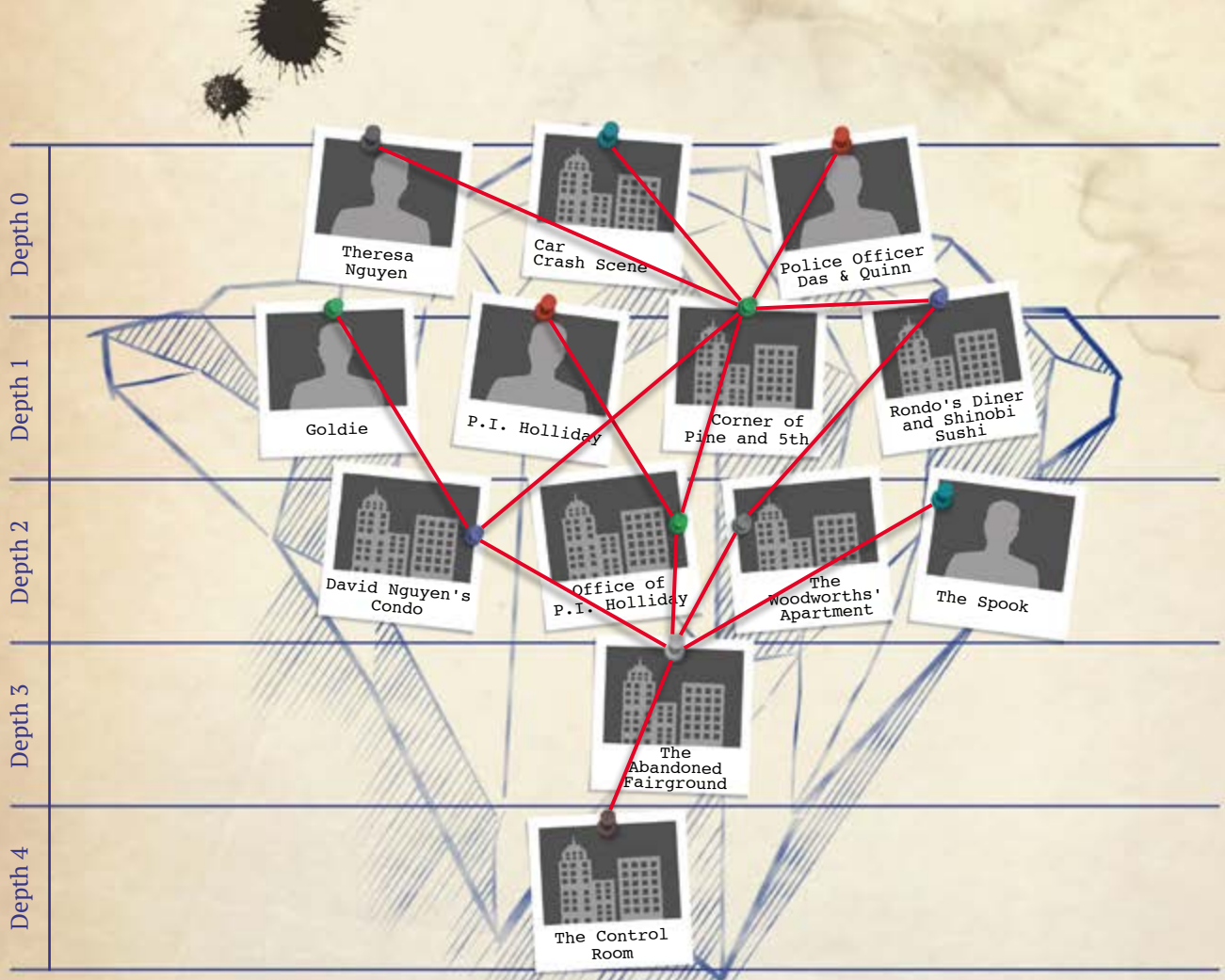
THIS FATEFUL NIGHT

A few weeks passed, with David harassing the Woodworths and Goldie sizing up David and trying to establish where he kept his fortune. Tonight, Drake's plan came to fruition.

- David followed Pauline to the fairground where they battled it out, David and Goliath style, and he killed her, shooting her with a revolver.
- Drake and his Carnies had a death trap waiting for David, a lifelike mannequin made to look like Ellie. When David kissed her, his lips started burning. The mannequin's lips were glazed with poison.
- Realizing he was deceived, David raced back to town to find the real Ellie and get medical help but it was too late. The poison killed him and he crashed his sports car close to the diner where they first met.
- Goldie was present at the car crash site, where she realized David was involved in something bigger and that in order to find out more, she must find out where he came from. A customized death trap already awaits her at the fairground.

The case begins with the car crash.





THE ICEBERG

DEPTH 0: THE HOOKS

The most cinematic way to open the case is by having **crew members present at the** corner of Pine and 5th that night, when David Nguyen's sports car comes hurtling down 5th Street. As the crash takes place in a busy Downtown junction, some of the crew members may be there as part of their daily routines and start the scene as accidental bystanders. Precognitive Rifts could have had a vision of the impending crash, arriving at the scene in time to try and prevent it. Perhaps the crew sits down for a late dinner and conversation, in a diner close to the junction such as Rondo's Diner or Shinobi Sushi.

Those at the scene first hear the rumbling growl of a sports car engine, then spot the out-of-control vehicle running rampant on 5th street, about to crash. The driver seems to be unconscious, head against the steering wheel. **Even if the crew brings the car to a safe stop, David Nguyen is already dead**, killed by fake Ellie's poison kiss.

OUT-OF-CONTROL CAR ★(+★★)

SAFELY BRING TO A STOP 2 / CRASH 2

- **Sports Car:** When Out-of-Control Car enters the scene, give it *speeding-4*.
- **Collision Course:** When *crash:2* maxes out, the Out-of-Control Car crashes into whatever hard barrier is in its path.

- Speed toward an impact point (*about-to-crash-1*)
- **+★★:** Hit someone who isn't being careful or who can't get out of the way in time (*hospitalized-5* or **Make Something Horrible Happen**)

- Speed down the street, engine growling
- Pass a bystander, creating a doppler effect sound

The crew may also become involved in the case in the following ways:

- If the crew has a reputation of working on the wrong side of the law, David Nguyen's grandmother, **Theresa Nguyen**, may contact them an hour after the accident. Icy cold on the phone, the elderly and extremely wealthy lady offers a substantial bounty to anyone who could bring her the head of whoever is responsible for her grandson's death on a literal silver platter. If the crew doesn't take her up on her offer, she'll move on to another crew, but she can still be convinced to pay for information about her grandson's killer.
- **Downtown beat officers Das and Quinn**, who feature in *Killing Her Softly* (page 30), will be called to handle the crashed car and the surrounding commotion. If the crew has established a working relationship with them, they may call upon the crew for help with investigating David Nguyen's death.

INTERESTED PARTIES

While the crew is investigating the scene of David Nguyen's car crash, they are watched from a distance by two persons who take great interest in the accident. Alert PCs (and players) who **Investigate** to check if anyone is watching them, may notice either or both individuals spying on them. You can also let the players know they are being watched if you want to introduce these characters. Goldie may approach the crew and introduce herself, as explained below.

GOLDIE

Samantha Goldstein (Goldilocks), known as Goldie, plays the role of the redeemable criminal, an NPC who is on the wrong path and whose fate will be determined by the actions of the PCs. She is a hustler and thief who excels at breaking and entering and robbing people of their wealth. Goldie has a distinct 80s streetwear style: she sports a mane of blow-dried bleached hair, a torn jeans jacket, and lots of iridescent plastic bangles. She is able to shape inanimate objects by declaring they are "too hot", "too cold", "too big", "too small", "too hard", or "too soft", which then becomes true.

GOLDIE ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / REDEEM 5 / CATCH 5

- **Other People's Things:** Once in the series, Goldie can stop holding back and transfer into her possession any single object, privilege, or power possessed by someone else, as long as she can see either the object or its owners. She then leaves town.
- **Too Hot, Too Cold:** Once per scene, Goldie can use her powers as an intrusion to defend herself, nullifying a single status of physical harm of tier-5 or lower by making it too hot, too cold, too hard, too soft, too big, or too small to be effective.

- Make her pursuers' clothing "too hard", "too big", or "too small" (*entangled-3* or *can't-breathe-3*), slow them down by making the floor "too soft" (*slowed-3*), or escape them altogether by making a passage "too small" for them to follow (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
- Steal something, or force someone to drop an object by making it "too hot" (burn up to two tags and give herself appropriate tags)
- Escape restraint, making an object "too big" to restrain or imprison her (remove up to 3 tiers of restraint statuses or burn up to 3 retraint tags)
- Expertly circumvent security measures, making locks "too small" and security systems circuitry "too hot" to function (give a security system *override-3* or burn 3 of its tags)
- Turn on a dime, shirking responsibility and abandoning all the progress she's made (remove 3 tiers from any statuses on her *redeem* spectrum or guilt and responsibility statuses)

- Smile ear to ear and flick her hair joyously as she escapes

Mythically attracted to other people's things, Goldie craves a chunk of David Nguyen's fortune and will do whatever it takes to discover where he hid something of value, be it cash, gold, diamonds, bonds, whatever. This legendary kleptomancy already has her ensnared in Maximilian Drake's trap, carefully designed to push all of her Mythos buttons. If she follows David's trail and reaches the abandoned fairground, as Drake expects she would do, there's a death trap waiting there just for her.

Goldie will try to use the crew. Once she sees them investigating the accident, her most obvious course of action is to team up with them. She will lie to, steal from, and eventually probably betray the crew, but only as long as no one gets badly hurt, since in

those cases her dormant conscience wakes up for a moment. For example, she may initially pretend to be Ellie Woodworth and try to get the crew to break into David Nguyen's Condo or to share what they discover about his recent whereabouts. Play her as a believable and friendly ally, who then shrugs sweetly when she screws the crew over, as if she can't help it and can't be expected to. Try to keep her betrayals taunting and humorous rather than grievous and play up her charm to get the crew to take interest in her fate.

Goldie has been casing David Nguyen and knows the clues listed under **Investigating David Nguyen** on corner of Pine and 5th. She also knows all the public details of his involvement with Pauline and Ellie Woodworth, given under Rondo's Diner and Shinobi Sushi, and can bring the PCs up to speed.

P.I. HOLLIDAY

The other individual watching is **Private Investigator Tom Holliday** (Sleeper), the gumshoe working for Maximilian Drake who nonetheless never heard his employer's name or met him (see sidebar). Always in the classic rain coat and fedora hat, P.I. Holliday is well-equipped for Downtown's rainy alleys. A heavy smoker, he leaves a scattering of cigarette butts wherever he's staking out a target.

P.I. Holliday doesn't care who he's working for; in fact, he doesn't want to know. He only wants to get paid at the end of the day. He doesn't see himself responsible for other people's problems ("nobody is innocent"), and he has seen enough dead bodies of people whose problems caught up with them to care. He's a sleazeball, but he's not evil; confronting him with hard proof that his work is used to hurt people would make him think twice about taking on additional work from his mystery employer.



P.I. HOLLIDAY'S TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

P.I. Holliday is employed strictly via mail correspondence and has been offered double his normal fee for profiling Rifts. He received a special camera, with a Mist-penetrating lens through which he can see and take pictures of a Rift's true form and powers (the photos he takes with the camera only reveal legendary phenomena to its bearer and to Rifts). Since then he has been shadowing Rifts all over Downtown at the behest of his employer, sending the report dossiers to an obscure mailbox.

The mailbox is checked twice a day by one of the Carnies who drives into town. Assume that P.I. Holliday is immediately reporting all findings to his employer, perhaps even using an emergency telephone number if he feels what he found was very valuable or pertinent (the same Carnie also answers the phone). Once Maximilian Drake receives the first reports of a new set of Rift targets – the crew – he sets out to build custom death traps for them.

PROFILING THE CREW

Throughout the case, when the PCs score 7-9 on their **Investigate** score, use the counter question option to ask them about their Mythos and Mythos powers.

When a PC uses her powers and P.I. Holliday can see them, ask:

- What is the nature of your powers?
- What do you think could block your powers or contain them?
- Could your powers be turned against you?

When a PC displays a behavior related to their Mythos, ask:

- What does your Mythos really want from you?
- What does it wish for you to find out?
- Which character in your Mythos is most important to you?

Note down the answers and use them when you describe the death traps Drake prepared for the crew at the abandoned fairground. The character doesn't have to reveal the whole story for this to happen; you can assume that both P.I. Holliday and Drake do their research and extrapolate a great deal of information from just a few key details.

FOLLOWING P.I. HOLLIDAY

Giving P.I. Holliday the slip and then following him isn't easy. His custom move **Street Smarts** and his familiarity with the alleyways Downtown, reflected by

the hard move **Deny Them Something They Want**, make him hard to shadow. If the crew manages to follow the private eye, they will find him at his office (Office of P.I. Holliday), following Goldie or spending time with her, or dropping a package into the mail collection box on the street.

SHIPS IN THE NIGHT

To complicate things further, P.I. Holliday fell in love with Goldie while profiling her over the past weeks. He approached her, or rather, allowed himself to be seen by her, and the two now lead a no-strings-attached, on-and-off romantic affair. David Nguyen's car crash has P.I. Holliday worrying about what his employer plans for Goldie, and this concern for her may or may not be enough to drive him to cross his professional red lines and become involved.

Goldie can become a means for the crew to reach P.I. Holliday, but it works both ways: information about the crew, their powers, and their plans can leak through Goldie to P.I. Holliday, and from there to Drake himself.

P.I. HOLLIDAY ★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / BRIBE 4 / THREATEN 4

- **Powers of Deduction:** When P.I. Holliday surveys the scene for the first time or as a hard move, the MC will ask you one question. You must reply with a straight answer or a solid lead. P.I. Holliday knows your answer, even if your character didn't speak it.
- **Street Smarts:** Whenever you try to follow or fool P.I. Holliday, first give him *alert-2*. This status cannot exceed tier 3.
- **Thinks On His Feet:** When P.I. Holliday takes a status he can avoid or soften with common sense or resourcefulness, reduce its tier by 1.
- **Professionalism:** The first time in a scene you try to get information from P.I. Holliday about his employer, if *bribe* or *threaten* have not maxed out, first give him *my-lips-are-sealed-3*.

- Draw out his revolver and threaten someone to back off, or he'll shoot (*wary-2* or *gunshot-wound-3*)
- Dash down a smokey alley and disappear or fool someone trying to shadow him (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
- Grease someone's palm when they're giving him a hard time (give them *wad of cash* if they get out of his way)

- Watch silently from a distant street corner, smoking

DEPTH 1: DOWNTOWN DISASTER

CORNER OF PINE AND 5TH

Steam rolls up from the engine of the crashed sports car and the acrid smell of burnt tires fills your breath. The car lights flash in tandem with a restaurant's neon sign on the side of the building, drowned in the cacophony of alarms from nearby cars. The streetlight above the signpost of Pine Street and 5th Street flickers and then dies. The windshield, smashed into a million glass pieces, still desperately holds onto its frame, hiding everything behind it except for a big, round, blood stain.

The corner of Pine and 5th street is a bustling Downtown junction with a few businesses, including some popular cheap eateries. This is both the scene of David Nguyen's car crash and the setting for his one-sided love triangle with Pauline and Ellie Woodworth, whom he first noticed at one of the local joints, Rondo's Diner. The Woodworths' Apartment is only a block away; this area used to be their go-to destination for a quick bite, and people here know them, at least by their looks.

Following the accident, an influx of curious bystanders swarms the crash site, soon followed by an ambulance and then the police (possibly officers Das and Quinn), who mark out the crime scene and push onlookers back. If the crew members are there first, they can **Investigate** the car and the driver before the police arrive, but they are seen doing so (unless they first **Sneak Around** or create an equally dramatic diversion).

DEATH BY GLASS

If the car crashed, David Nguyen's body is found in a gruesome state, with a large shard of windshield glass embedded in his skull. Modern windshields don't break like this, a fact which you can mention for added creep factor.

The driver is dead. It's hard to tell what exactly killed him, especially if the car crashed. Careful examination will show his lips have traces of lipstick on them, seemingly from a kiss.

According to the driver's license, this is David Nguyen. He is clearly a wealthy person, wearing an expensive suit, watch, and shoes and driving that fancy sports car.

There is gunshot residue on Davids' hands. **He recently fired a firearm.**

Considering tire tracks, the collision course, and additional dents on the car, Crime Scene Investigation analysis would show **David lost control of the car a few moments before it crashed.**

It's impossible to determine where exactly the car came from. Extensive and tedious CCTV cameras research or magical means of tracking may show that it drove in from out of town, but that's where the trail goes cold.

A careful investigator would notice **David's shoes have mud on them.** The same mud can be found in the car's tire grooves. Analyzing the mud can indicate it came from out of town, but sending it to a lab could take one to several downtimes to get results (if the Mist doesn't make the lab lose the samples).

If the deceased's memories or mind are accessible by magical means, the last image he recalls is the sight of Ellie Woodworth when he kissed her (not knowing it was her mannequin clone).

Beyond the Mist, David Nguyen's spirit is still in shock and is *transitioning-3* to the afterlife, or the void. When he comes to, if he's still around, he will become obsessed with Ellie Woodworth and seek her out, possibly going to the Woodworths' Apartment, but he won't willingly share any information about what he had done earlier that night, and, either way, he doesn't know. (Unless he is aided by a Rift, his spirit cannot affect Ellie in any way.)

Beyond the Mist, the Lemnos Carnies' poison which David breathed in gives off a vague Mythos footprint of Greek pirates and plunderers.

Further beyond the Mist, there is an almost impalpable trace of malice in the broken windshield. It's impossible to associate it with anything or anyone related to the case at hand, only with some faraway malintent.

INVESTIGATING DAVID NGUYEN

Once they put a name to the victim, the crew may try to gather more information about David.

Someone local would recognize David or his car, saying they have seen him hanging around recently at Rondo's Diner or Shinobi Sushi.

David Nguyen is a filthy rich high-flying executive in his 30s, an Associate Partner at Orimaka Finance. His success seems to be ascribed as much to his family connections as it is to his talent and hard work.

He is single, and has been active on dating sites / speed dating cafes / newspaper personals. About two weeks ago this activity stopped after **he had one last date with Emma Bailey**, a flight attendant who also hangs out at Shinobi Sushi.

He owns a luxury condo in one of the fanciest apartment buildings Downtown (David Nguyen's Condo).

Later, if the crew has access to the morgue and/or the coroner report, they will learn David died from respiratory failure caused by a poison, most likely ingested or breathed.

RONDO'S DINER AND SHINOBI SUSHI

Standing in the rain on the corner of Pine Street and 5th, you notice two bustling eateries on opposite sides of the road. On one side, with red booths lined with pink neon, Rondo's Diner looks like the joint that will serve you a greasy meal or a pancake stack and watery coffee any hour of the night. On the other side, under a blue-lit sign, Shinobi Sushi looks like a place for people who are trying too hard to be seen. Both places seem packed, though, so you figure someone around here must have seen or heard something.

The two local eateries at Pine and 5th can help the crew unravel David's past and point at his connection to Pauline and Ellie. The Woodworths' were regulars in both the diner and the sushi place, so other regulars know who they are and what they've been through recently.

David Nguyen was first seen around these parts on a date at Rondo's Diner with Emma Bailey, a mousy flight attendant (who is eating tonight at Shinobi Sushi). The date night was ruined because he couldn't stop staring at Ellie Woodworth. Emma mentioned to him that Ellie was spoken for, that she's with Pauline, but David didn't seem to lose interest.

David Nguyen started stalking Pauline and Ellie and on some occasions tried to impose himself and join them at dinner. He made overt advances at Ellie in front of Pauline. They refused him politely at first, but at some point Pauline threatened to hurt him if he didn't leave them alone. He kept stalking them, hanging around this part of town more and more often.

It was Emma's request to have the date at Rondo's Diner, a curious choice because Emma doesn't usually frequent the diner. She didn't plan on staying in 'that cheesy place', preparing to be picked up there and move on to a nicer restaurant, but then David saw Ellie.

Questioning Emma reveals a mysterious third party wanted David and Ellie to meet. Someone (P.I. Holliday) who knew she had a date with David left her a note, promising to take care of next month's rent for her if they went to the diner first. She was tight for money so she agreed, thinking it was a publicity stunt, and then forgot about it. After the date, next month's rent was paid.

The Woodworths live just around the corner, less than a block away (the Woodworths' Apartment).



DEPTH 2: A WELL-OILED MECHANISM

THE WOODWORTHS' APARTMENT

Looking up the drab brick building facade, you spot her, the sweetest sight, waiting at the window, raindrops like dew on her figure. The look on her face tells you she's waiting for someone, someone who isn't coming. Is it the love of her life? The dead guy in the car? Someone else? You ring the doorbell and she bolts to buzz you in. You brace yourself for the disappointment in her eyes when she sees it's just you, and for some greater pain you feel you're about to bring into her life.

The Woodworths' live in a modest apartment in one of the few affordable residential buildings Downtown. Ellie Woodworth (Sleeper) is home waiting for Pauline, who did not come back from work today and is not answering any of the messages Ellie left. Ellie is a pretty and petite young woman, gentle and soft spoken, and wears a casual dress. When the crew introduce themselves or when she learns about what happened to David, Ellie's fear overwhelms her, and she starts pacing back and forth, wringing her hands.

Pauline has not returned from work today. Pauline has projects all over town so Ellie doesn't know where she was working today.

David Nguyen has been stalking them for two weeks, making inappropriate advances at Ellie. Pauline was furious and wanted to teach him a lesson, but **knowing how strong Pauline is** (even if not why), Ellie feared a disaster and begged her to stay out of trouble. They reported David once to the police but the case was dropped. They thought of seeking legal help, but realized their budget was no match to David's.

Pauline has been somewhat distant lately and vague about her work. Ellie thought it was something to do with David's harassment but she also thinks Pauline has been hiding something. Maybe a surprise new home in the suburbs?

Ellie's lipstick matches the shade and brand of lipstick found on David Nguyen's lips (except it's not poisoned).

SEARCHING THE APARTMENT

To search the apartment thoroughly, the crew will have to get Ellie's permission or sneak in when she's not there. Ellie will want to know who the crew members are and why they are interested in the case before she gives her permission.

Under the Woodworths' shoe rack, there's mud that matches the mud found on David Nguyen's shoes and tires. Analyzing the mud follows the same routine.

Hidden between two boards in the clothes cabinet (Pauline was hiding such a Mythic project from her wife), **there's a folder with construction plans**, describing a theme park to be built just outside town, where now there's the abandoned fairground.

OFFICE OF P.I. HOLLIDAY

Private Investigator Holliday could not have chosen a more typical Downtown P.I. office. Accessed through a narrow stair between two street-level businesses, the second-floor corner office has a nice view of the junction below. The block lettering on the milky glass door, the broad hardwood desk, and the green desk lamp all tell you he's one of those traditional detectives. The Murphy bed folded with the sheets still on and a bottle of whiskey stashed in the file cabinet do a double tap on that assessment.

P.I. Holliday's office is located a few blocks away from the corner of Pine and 5th. If P.I. Holliday is present when the crew arrives, he welcomes them and pretends to be helpful, but keeps his lips sealed regarding his current assignment (tracking the crew and Goldie) or past assignments (profiling other Rifts including Pauline Woodworth and David Nguyen) as per his **Professionalism** custom move. He will use the occasion to collect more information on the crew, trying to discover their Mythoi. If the crew gets information out of him, possibly by bribing or threatening him, he reveals what he knows, partially or wholly.

Searching the office proves difficult as any evidence has been *well-hidden* by the veteran P.I.; if the P.I. is present, searching under his nose triggers his **Street Smarts** custom move, giving him *alert-2*.

A phone number P.I. Holliday recently called or a mailbox address etched in his notepad could lead the crew to the Carnie that receives his communications. Following the Carnie successfully could lead them to the abandoned fairground.

P.I. Holliday keeps a copy of all his profiling dossiers. There are about twenty of them stashed in a cardboard box hidden in a hole in the wall, behind a bookcase. They include the profiles of David, Pauline, and Goldie, but not the files on the PCs, unless P.I. Holliday had a lot of downtime to put together an organized folder.

The profiles contain a host of interesting details and pictures, not an analysis. A good detective can surmise P.I. Holliday didn't really know what exactly his employer was looking for, and therefore just described the subjects' lives and special abilities. The profiles can also point the crew to the Woodworths' Apartment and David Nguyen's Condo.

David's profile contains a pictures of his lavish condo, with some antiquities and archeological artifacts hanging on the walls, most notably an ancient shield with a Star of David on it. There is a picture of him playing a guitar in some Downtown dive with a note behind it: "When I woke up, he was gone, everyone in the room was asleep." (This alludes to King David's magical lyre playing.)

Pauline's profile has pictures of her working in a construction site as a giant, lifting a pallet of bricks from the ground to the third floor. There's a map of the City with the locations of her projects; all of them are on the outskirts of town. There's a scribble on the map: "urban expansion?". There are also photos of her and Ellie hiking and kayaking.

Goldie's profile is a fat bundle of police reports, describing unsolved burglary cases. There are photos of shrunk down doors fallen off their hinges and charred alarm devices. Some fetching portraits of her, taken clearly without her knowledge, betray the P.I.'s feelings toward her.

SOMEONE ELSE?

P.I. Holliday's box of profiles can contain a profile on another Rift – a supporting cast character that the crew cares about, a series regular (like officer Das), or perhaps even a Nemesis. The crew must warn this person in time, otherwise they may meet this character at the abandoned fairground, or worse, find her dead in one of Drake's traps.

DAVID NGUYEN'S CONDO

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To get to David Nguyen's place, you cross
over to the other side of Downtown, the
side with the clean streets and endless
promises. Amid shiny skyscrapers and lavish
hotels, you find an expensive-looking
apartment building with a valet waiting
outside. In the lobby, a snooty concierge
stands watch to fend off any unwanted
visitors. He may have died like a dog on
the street, but David Nguyen sure lived
like a king.
```

The up-and-coming financial advisor David Nguyen owned and lived in a beautiful 30th floor apartment, overlooking the Financial District, a stone's throw away from his Associate Partner office at Orimaka Finance.

This location contains a few clues about David Nguyen's Mythos and his obsession with Ellie Woodworth. It also serves as a point of obsession for Goldie's wild goose hunt for any tangible assets David left behind.

GETTING INTO THE CONDO

If the crew was hired by Theresa Nguyen or has a warrant allowing them to investigate the circumstances of David Nguyen's death, getting into the condo shouldn't pose a problem.

If they have Goldie with them or if they are following her, getting in won't be a problem but it is illegal and while Goldie can take care of herself, the crew members still need to **Sneak Around** to avoid being caught.

If the crew is breaking-and-entering on their own, they have the condo's security measures to contend with. They may also find that Goldie already broke into the apartment, or perhaps she's still there, dealing with David's pet spider (she didn't break in there until she saw David was dead because she has a terrible tendency to hang around for too long and get caught red-handed by the owners). If the police are alerted, officers Das and Quinn are likely to show up.

HIGH-END SECURITY SYSTEM ★★

ALARM 2 / OVERRIDE 5

- **Red Alert:** When *alarm* is maxed out, create a new Danger: SWAT Team / Elite Security (*MC Toolkit*, page 150) and give *locked-in/out-5* to unauthorized personnel in the perimeter.

- Increase its internal threat level (give itself *threat-1* on the *alarm* spectrum)
- Make anyone trying to override it *nervous-2* or give them *sweaty-hands-2*

- Present another security countermeasure that must be overcome, such as a magnetic lock, a keypad, a window alarm, a motion detector, an unexpected safe mechanism, etc.

INSIDE THE CONDO

While there are certainly a couple of expensive items to steal in the condo, the secret hoard that Goldie assumes David is keeping somewhere is nowhere to be found. If she is present, Goldie will search the place from top to bottom, possibly helping to uncover some clues, and eventually conclude that David must have stashed his wealth somewhere else, probably wherever he was driving back from on the night he died.

Searching the apartment can yield the clues below, but also holds the risk of triggering the alarm, or more dangerously, attracting the attention of David's **giant pet spider**.

There are ancient artifacts hanging on the wall: a bronze shield, a sling, and a blood-ied rock. The shield is etched with the Star of David (also known as the Shield of David). Looking Beyond The Mist will reveal a biblical battle scene where David Nguyen, hiding behind this shield, uses the sling and rock to slay a giant warrior.

David was obsessed with Ellie. There are photos of her on the glass-and-gold coffee table, seemingly taken by a P.I. (not Holliday). There is also a telescope in the window, pointed at the junction of Pine and 5th St. (revealing that the condo is on a street that continues Pine St.).

David was tracking Pauline. Hidden in his cabinet or on his computer, there are the results of a financial research he made into Woodworth Builders, revealing that Pauline was working on a big project in the abandoned fairground just outside town.

GIANT PET SPIDER ★★★

There's a story about King David being helped by a big spider when he flees the soldiers of his political rival, King Saul. The spider spins a web that covers the cave David hides in, making it look as if he couldn't have gone that way. This story is manifested in the City as a huge Familiar loyal to David Nguyen, who watches over his condo against intruders.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / SCARE OFF 5

- **Giant:** When the Giant Pet Spider takes a physical harm status, reduce its tier by 2, unless it affects all of the Giant Pet Spider.
- **Creeper:** When Giant Pet Spider enters the scene by surprise, the MC can make one hard move. Additionally, give everyone around *terrified-3*.

- Spit out a jet of sticky webbing (*glued-3*), setting up its prey for a bite
- Bite its prey, injecting venom (*poisoned-3* and the target takes the same status again at the beginning and at the end of each Downtime thereafter, until the MC rules they survived the poison. Poison-curing effects only need to remove the poison status once to stop it from repeating.)

- Hiss and poke at its prey with furry legs

THE SPOOK

Once Drake has received enough information from P.I. Holliday about the crew, he may attempt to lure them into his trap by sending one of his lifelike, animated mannequins. These creepy robotic clones are made in the image of someone the lead characters would take an interest in. Drake is not limited in the repertoire of characters and special effects he can create, but he's smart and knows how to elegantly arouse curiosity without giving too much away, so he will target only one crew member first, to make the encounter more believable.

The appearance of the spook is a cinematic moment, meant to fool the lead character as well as the player. The spook is most likely to show up in an alley, in the fog or rain, and at a good distance from the lead character, enough for the character to partially identify this figure, but far enough so it's *hard-to-see-3*. It will then disappear, leaving behind it a message that points to the abandoned fairground. The message would be left in a manner appropriate to the form it took: a mysterious agent will leave a sealed letter, a fiery being will burn its message on the alley wall, etc.

The spook could take the form of any person or character, as long as it's shaped after someone Drake knows about and that it makes sense this person would point the crew to the abandoned fairground. It could be:

- A major character from the PC's Mythos
- A character from the PC's personal life, dead or alive
- A member of an organization or group the PC is seeking
- Someone likely to have information the PC has been searching for

Try to trigger the PC's Mysteries and Identities, tempting them to pursue the spook or mark Fade/Crack.

Attempting to catch the spook can spark off a chase (*catch:5*), but the spook starts with *far-away-3* and will vanish the first time the MC makes a hard move (**Deny Them Something They Want**).

DEPTH 3: SUCH A FUN WAY TO DIE

THE ABANDONED FAIRGROUND

Wind blows over the open gray flats where the old funfair stands, a cluster of rickety booths and faded tents. Once-flashing signs now hang crooked with broken neon tubes and washed-out lettering. Torn and colorless tent tarps flap repetitively. A Ferris wheel looms above the countless crests of rides, games, and oddity shows. The big archway sign, one side of it collapsed, reads THE LEMNOS CARNIVAL. There isn't a soul in sight.

The abandoned fairground was once the home of a successful business operation, run by the Lemnos family, a family of distant Sinti (Romani) descent who over the years assimilated carnival folk from many different ethnicities. The carnival was one of the strangest and most popular shows in town, and it basked in its unregulated status outside City limits.

The more successful the Lemnos family became, the more others envied their unregulated status. Government officials started badgering the Lemnos family, gradually constricting their business activities until the carnival went bankrupt. Some of them left the fairground and emigrated to the city below the City to join the trash-digging Marginals (see *The Undertrash*), while others held out and survived by stealing food and stooping to petty crime. Their seer, **Masilda**, told them a god will eventually come to lead them. The fairground spent years in a state of disrepair, rotting and fading. Until, one day, Maximilian Drake rolled up into the fairground on a wheelchair, an outcast-by-choice, mysteriously attracted to this bizarre place.



The clan, who called themselves the Lemnos Carnies (Carnival employees), embraced the Rift of Hephaestus as their newfound god and cared for him; in return for their kindness, he taught them his Mythos-powered sciences and made them weapons that enhanced their abilities and turned them into super-powered marauders. Touched by his Mythos, they awakened as Rifts of the Sintians, becoming his guard, his spies, and his family. Together, they started executing his plan to eliminate Rifts in the City, building the fairground into the fairyland death trap that it is today.

NAVIGATING THE FAIRGROUND

The fairground spreads over many acres of land, most of it densely covered with dilapidated pavilions and broken down game booths and rides. All Hephaestus-powered devices installed across the fairground serve one of three functions: **separate**, **lure**, or **kill**. All of the devices are operated remotely by Drake from the control room using a combination of mundane technology (according to the technological age in which you play) and mythic mechanomancy (which exceeds the technology of the age, giving it a magical twist, in this case, the mysterious magic of the Greek god of metallurgy and crafts).

PREPPING FOR THIS SCENE

Before you run this scene, take a moment to consider the lead characters' abilities, Mythoi, Mysteries, and Identities, and devise a lure and a death trap for each as described below.

1) SEPARATE GROUPS INTO INDIVIDUALS

When a group tries to advance through the fairground, Drake will remotely trigger:

- Props that collapse and block their path, like a huge hot dog from above a hot dog stand
- A tarp that drops between them, separating them among different parts of a pavillion
- Broken revolving doors and turnstiles that let one person in but shut immediately after
- Rides such as a carousel, a Ferris wheel, or bumper cars that come to life just as the PCs cross them, forcing them to wait a long time to reunite

None of these devices are truly dangerous or threatening, and any barrier formed between the PCs can be easily circumvented, if the PCs split up and try to go around. If the PCs insist on reuniting there and then they must **Take the Risk** to scale or cross the barrier. A miss could result in:

- Getting injured or stuck
- Getting lost, coming out a different way than expected
- Triggering a trapdoor that leads to another level of the fairground, such as an underground room, a service corridor behind the tents, etc.

Once an individual is visually separated from the crew, they are considered lost, and need to **Investigate** to locate the other crew members. Musical rides suddenly turn on if the crew tries to communicate by shouting. To keep his prey in the dark, Drake has also rigged the place to interfere with mundane communications and scanners (all tech takes *jammed-5*) and may devise a contraption ahead of time to tackle any Mythos divinatory powers he is aware of.

2) LURE INDIVIDUALS INTO THEIR PERSONAL DEATHTRAP

When an individual moves alone through the fairground, Drake will remotely trigger his mannequins to tease that individual's specific Mysteries, Identities, or other motivations (see under The Spook, above). Drake will also use extensive special effects such as fog, smoke, lighting, sound effects, etc. to make the experience seem realistic. The purpose of this show is to make the target follow the lure, away from their team and into a separate booth, pavilion, or section of the fairground.

Describe the lure to your players as you would describe a regular scene, e.g., as if the PC truly had a vision of their guardian spirit or as if an informant was really beckoning them to follow him into a pavilion. The only exception to this is that, as a side effect of Drake's mockery of creatures of magic, fantasy, and myth, they all look just a little over the top.

Here are some optional clues for suspicious or observant PCs who **Investigate** what they see:

> Everything *seems* real. So why do you still feel like someone is mocking you?

> Beyond the Mist, there is only legendary machinery and the din of a hammer striking the anvil.

> Any beings that appear mythical to the naked eye do not have a Mythos print beyond the Mist.

If their suspicion is aroused, PCs can **Change the Game** to prepare for whatever is coming.

3) THE DEADLY FINALE

Drake is the master of machines, and he is out to prove human beings in general and Rifts in particular are just different kinds of machines. Once he figures out what makes an individual tick, he uses their deepest wish or fear to manipulate them into the trap.

When an individual enters their personalized pavilion, booth, etc., she beholds a spectacle carefully designed to appeal to her deepest mythical questions, for example:

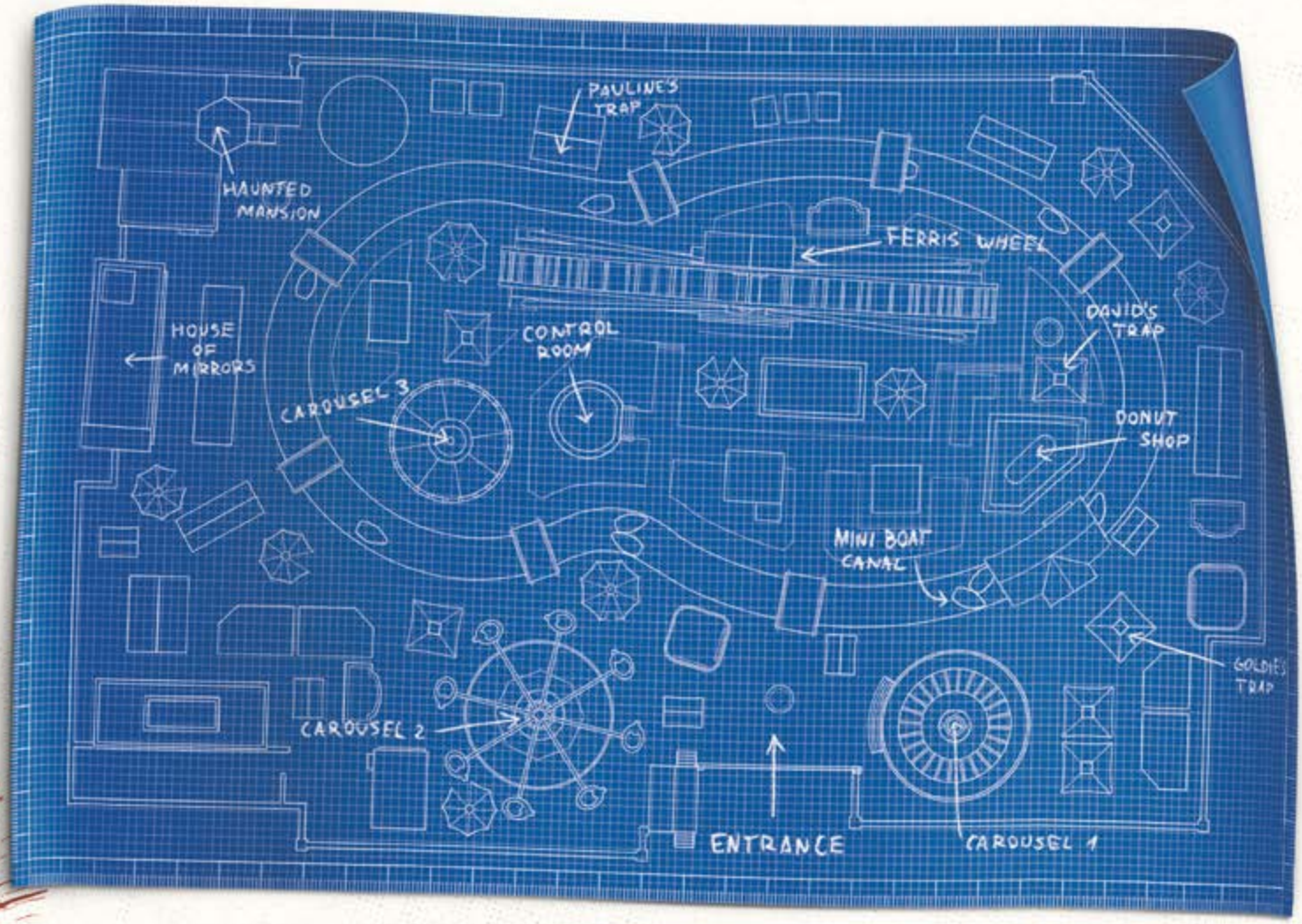
- If she comes from another realm, such as the Pits of Hell or the Enchanted Forest, the trap will be designed to look like that.
- If she was the product of a lab experiment, she could discover a secret lab, leading her to believe the origin of her powers might be inside.
- If she has been searching for someone or something, this person or object would be standing right there (an animated mannequin, of course).

The purpose of this spectacle is to draw the target to the focal point of the room, where a specialized trap awaits.

The trap triggers as a soft move (by now, there have been plenty of fair warnings) and the character is hit by a tier-5 status chosen specifically to overcome her abilities:

- A speedster Rift would be beset by a chain of explosions, firing a thousand sharp javelins all around her, so that wherever she's running, she's running toward a shower of javelins (*impaled-from-every-direction-5*).
- A physically invincible Rift could be buried in a tank of molten armored steel, which is then instantly cooled off (*caught-in-a-solid-block-of-steel-5*).
- A Rift that can become incorporeal is shackled with magical bonds (*materialized-5*) before being crushed by an iron weight (*crushed-5*).

PCs get to **Face Danger** if their players can explain how they avoid the death trap; only tags relevant to that method of escape apply. Alternatively, PCs can **Stop. Holding. Back.** and make a no-return sacrifice to avoid getting caught, or to free or heal themselves.



GOLDIE'S TRAP

Goldie arrives at the fairground looking for David's tangible assets. In one of the pavilions, there's a lavish apartment not unlike David Nguyen's Downtown condo. Strangely, however, the apartment has three steaming bowls of porridge on a nice modern glass dining table; three mid-century modern chairs of different sizes around a faux white bearskin rug; and three king-sized beds of different firmness. Not knowing her own Mythos that well, Goldie is not sure what to make of it, but it piques her curiosity in ways she can't explain. After she samples the first eight stations, she finds in the most comfy bed a duffle bag full of money. Satisfied like never before in her life, and under the influence of the sleeping pills mixed into the third bowl of porridge, she goes to sleep hugging the duffle bag and never wakes up. The bed is also equipped to electrocute her to death if she skips the porridge, so her fate is sealed. That is, unless one of the lead characters does something to stop all this from happening.

AFTER THE TRAP TRIGGERS

So long as there are other Rifts navigating the fairgrounds (not including Drake and the Carnies), Drake will have the Carnies bring incapacitated Rifts to him at the control room. He simply wants to prove a point, and he's not getting any satisfaction from preaching to his choir of Carnies, so he is looking to keep incapacitated targets alive for a few more minutes just to show them how he kills the rest of the Rifts. At your option, and if your game group's social contract permits it, the final trap to trigger will deal a tier-6 status, following which Drake will proceed to kill or get rid of his incapacitated audience.

PCs who survive their personal trap are now aware of the situation and can ignore any lures they encounter and warn others (if they can find them or communicate with them). They can also proceed to investigate the fairground without further distractions. Drake won't waste more time trying to lure such a character. Instead, he sends the Carnies to finish the job.

INVESTIGATING THE ABANDONED FAIRGROUND

Once the PCs figure out that the lures are false and turn their attention elsewhere, there are many secrets they may uncover:

There's an area by the edge of the fairground styled to look like a biblical setting with fake stone buildings and palm trees. **The mud here matches the mud on Pauline's boots and David's shoes and car tires.**

There's **a high-caliber revolver** haphazardly stashed behind one of the fake stone houses. The cylinder has only five out of six rounds, having fired the bullet that killed Pauline Woodworth. It matches the gunshot residue on David Nguyen's hands.

There's a large patch of turned earth in the middle of the biblical land display, big enough for a giant to be buried in. Digging for a while reveals **the giant body of Pauline Woodworth**, shot between the eyes.

Beyond the Mist, an act of giant-slaying took place here, echoing with visions of a giant falling to the ground as the earth shakes.

The interior of one of the pavilions looks like a king's palace, where a life-sized mannequin that looks just like Ellie is standing motionless. The lipstick on its lips, identical to Ellie's, has peeled off, corroded by **the same poison that killed David Nguyen**.

Electrical wiring and radio transmissions all point toward an inconspicuous but tall scaffolding structure at the center of the fairground, covered by a patchwork of corrugated metal and endless lights, props, and signs. This is where the control room must be.

Beyond the Mist, seeking the maker of the mannequins or the fairground machinery also leads to the control room, which burns against the horizon as a rusty iron tower overflowing with molten metal.

THE LEMNOS "CARNIES"

The Lemnos Carnies have been living in the abandoned fairground for years, scavenging and stealing for survival after their funfair empire collapsed. Building upon their years of living on the margins of society, Drake's Mythos Touched them, casting them as the Sintians, a strange traveling folk of raiders, pirates, and plunderers who nursed Hephaestus back to life after he fell from Olympus, later becoming his followers. Today, they serve as the carnival's behind-the-scenes operators, builders, and guardians.

The Lemnos Carnies respect outcasts, social pariahs, and those who survive on their own. They have a chip on their shoulder when it comes to City slickers and conformist members of mainstream society (who have turned on them before), nor do they particularly like sociopaths and nihilists with no respect to others and no familial tradition or code. For now, they believe their master's rants that Rifts are abominations who defy the laws of nature, and willingly take part in his quest to eradicate the City's "devil spawn" as they see it. Carnies may, however, find themselves facing a dilemma if someone they see as a social outcast Rift asks them for help or if someone opens their eyes to the truth about Rifts.

The Carnies are often seen in work clothing: a grease-stained sweater, torn jeans, and wooly hat. Many of them embraced a rugged and disheveled exterior, and like to stick long menacing stares at any urbanite who stares at them too long. Their tools glow red like metal out of the furnace when they channel Hephaestus' magic with their **Mechanomancy**.

Individuals among the Lemnos Carnies became independent Rifts of legendary versions of traditional carnival shows. Drake's strange science further enhanced their abilities. These four Carnies serve as Drake's personal guard and follow his commands unequivocally.

- **Yulanda, the Iron Jaw**, received a literal jaw implant made of smith-god steel.
- **Mariush, the Human Cannonball**, got special fiery boots and an unbreakable helmet that allow him to shoot himself at his foes.
- **Ismail, the Fire Eater**, was gifted an unknown number of flaming scimitars that he can store in his belly and cast at his foes. The swords then fly back to his hand (or mouth).
- **Bartley, the Trick Shooter**, received a pair of six-shooters that never run out of ammo.



LEMNOS CARNIE ★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / THREATEN 3 / TURN 5

- **Rough Exterior:** When you first see a Lemnos Carnie this scene, if you're a City slicker or conformist, take *apprehensive-2*. When a Lemnos Carnie takes a social, emotional, or mental status, reduce its tier by 1.
- **Mechanomancy:** Once per scene, as a soft move (or any time as a hard move), a Lemnos Carnie can bring back to life a carnival ride, booth, death trap, or any other machinery that is broken or malfunctioned. Remove all negative statuses on that machine and restore its tags, if burnt.

- Start a mechanical carnival ride to distract the crew (*distracted-2*, temporary) or block their path while the Carnie gets away (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
- Touch a machine and get it to attack someone (*thumped-2* or *zapped-2*)
- Get violent and stab someone with a pocket knife, a screwdriver, or a broken bottle (*bleeding-2*)

- Stare intently, tapping a tool on her palm

YULANDA, THE IRON JAW ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / TURN 6

- **Impossible Acrobatics:** When Yulanda takes a physical or subdual status she can dodge, reduce its tier by 2.
- **Self-Disciplined:** When Yulanda takes a social, emotional, or mental status, reduce its tier by 1.

- When in a circus tent or close to high structures, perform an acrobatic trick, grabbing someone and throwing them in the air (*broken-bones-3*) or hanging them from a rope (*entangled-and-suspended-3*)
- Snap her iron jaw shut on someone (*shattered-limb-4*) or something (*shattered-4*)
- Chew off restraints (remove up to 3 tiers of restraints statuses, hers or others)

- Tumble and flip overhead

MARIUSH, THE HUMAN CANNONBALL ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / TURN 6

- **Absorb Concussive Force:** When Mariush takes a physical impact status, his magical helmet absorbs it. He converts it to a temporary *velocity* status of the same tier.
- **Olympian Headgear:** When Mariush takes a mental status, reduce its tier by 2.

- Launch himself at someone or something (*broken-bones-3* or *broken-3*; if he has a *velocity* status, it either enhances the tier of the *broken* status or impedes attempts to **Face Danger**)

- Ignite his boots, levitating unsteadily a few inches in the air

ISMAIL, THE FIRE EATER ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / TURN 6

- **Flurry of Flaming Scimitars:** Ismail's magical scimitars can parry almost any melee strike or projectile including bullets, beams of energy, and magical bolts. When Ismail takes a status he can parry, reduce its tier by 2.
- **(Almost) Immune to Fire:** When Ismail takes a heat or fire status, reduce its tier by 4.
- **I Know This Trick:** When Ismail enters the scene, give him *alert-2*.

- Cast flaming scimitars at multiple targets and have them boomerang back and hit again (*scorching-cut-2* four times)
- Spit fire in a cone in front of him (*extensive-burns-3*)
- Hold someone's attention with incredible juggling of flaming swords (*entranced-3*)
- Cast a scimitar to hover around a teammate and parry incoming attacks (negate up to three tiers of incoming attacks on that teammate)

- Pull out yet another flaming scimitar from his throat

BARTLEY, THE TRICK SHOOTER ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / TURN 6

- **Quick Draw:** When you attack Bartley, he first gives you *gunshot-3*.
- **Controlled Ricochet, Placed Shot:** When you **Face Danger** or **Change the Game** against Bartley's gunfire, you cannot use tags or Juice that describe cover or armor unless they provide complete protection.
- **Sharpshooter:** When Bartley enters the scene, give him *aim-2*.

- Fire multiple shots at a single target or multiple targets (*flesh-wound-2* three times)
- Execute a trick shot so that something heavy breaks loose and falls on someone (*obstructed-2*, *prone-2*, or **Complicate Things, Bigtime**, usually forcing them to **Take the Risk**)

- Spin both of his revolvers on his trigger fingers

DEPTH 4: WHAT MAKES FOLKS TICK

THE CONTROL ROOM

Drake's control room lies at the heart of the fairground labyrinth, within a makeshift tower of scaffolding and corrugated steel, covered from top to bottom with signs advertising the various rides and attractions of the funfair. If they haven't been taken out of the equation, the four Carnies that constitute his guard will defend the control room to the end, as their brethren watch from all around the fairground.

Inside, the dark, rusty, and cramped space is filled wall-to-wall with monitoring equipment, such as screens and displays, that allows Drake to know of everything that is happening in the fairground. There sits the demented genius in his motorized wheelchair, monitoring the traps and timing them perfectly while at the same time sketching schematics for new traps.

Masilda, the Carnie elder and tarot reader who helps Drake interpret the information from P.I. Holliday and decypher what each Rift victim wants, is also here. She is watching the traps as they snap shut on the gullible Rifts with enjoyment; as long as they're treacherous City folk, she cares not. If things get messy, she'll try to creep out unnoticed.

THE SPEECH

Maximilian Drake has an axe to grind: he wants someone to understand and reaffirm the genius of his plan, of how he deconstructed the motivations of Rifts as he would little wind-up toy drummer monkeys. As described above, if he captures incapacitated Rifts and forces them to watch their friends fall prey to his traps, he will regale them with the details of his brilliant plan and Mechanist philosophy. This could be an opportunity for PCs that are perhaps physically incapacitated to use other abilities to escape or dissuade Drake from going forward with the killing.

SURRENDER?

Drake is more of a scheming mastermind than a stand-up-and-fight kind of villain. He's a powerful Rift, and has the upper body muscles of a divine blacksmith, but he lacks the guts and motivation required for a physical altercation. If the tides turn against him, and depending on how he gauges his chances, he may opt for different tactical approaches; in deciding how to end the case, factor in your cinematic considerations, e.g., is the story suffering from combat fatigue, etc.

- If he thinks the crew will spare him, Drake is not above surrendering. He figures no ordinary jail can hold him for long (metal has a way of bending to his will), so he could be back on the streets again soon.
- If he thinks the crew is out to avenge the Rifts he killed, he'll try to escape, ejecting himself through a vertical shaft into a converted getaway car (*catch:5*). The crew will have to take action to stop him from escaping.
- Finally, if the crew are on their last legs, Drake might don a suit of armor he created, dubbing himself **the Mechanist** (he's a nerd). This exoskeleton, shaped like a rusty-red metal armor, allows him to walk and take a beating, and so he'll make a final stand, trying to complete the job and kill the crew.

Even if he's caught and defeated, Drake will nonetheless give his speech, only it will be bitter and seething, explaining how concepts like 'magic' and 'gods' always put a wrench in the plans of 'true' logical thinkers. He has a full belly, and he won't miss the chance to unload his anger in the ears of anyone who would listen – even officers Das and Quinn as they escort him to prison.

If the crew interviews Drake about what drove him to turn to such drastic methods and to act upon his philosophy, he will relate his story, mentioning the name of the psychiatrist who helped him cope with his disability: Dr. Archibald Tennant, of an association called Mending the Broken.

Drake's personal phone has only ever made calls to one number: the Mending the Broken helpline. He always asked to be connected with Dr. Archibald Tennant.

Drake carries a pill bottle with an anti-depressant psychiatric drug. The sticker indicates it was prescribed by Dr. Archibald Tennant. The pills have trace amounts of glass powder in them, possibly due to a faulty manufacturing environment.

THE MECHANIST ★★★★

DECOMMISSION 5 / CURE OF HATRED 6

- **Poisoned by Hate:** When the Mechanist enters the scene, give him *seething-with-hatred-2*. This applies to any attempts to convince him or cure him of his hatred to Rifts.
- **Olympian Exoskeleton:** When the Mechanist armor takes a physical or subdual status, reduce its tier by 2.

- Use mechanomancy to create a weapon that would counter a Rift's special abilities (giving an appropriate tier-3 status but giving himself *embarrassed-1* for using magic)
- Use mechanomancy to magically fix the exoskeleton (reduce any status on *decommission* by 2 tiers but giving himself *embarrassed-1* for using magic)
- Punch someone, pick them up and throw them around, or slam them with his oversized blacksmith hammer (*broken-limbs-4*)
- Use a flamethrower (everyone in range gets *on-fire-2* and again after each time they make a move, until the status is removed or the fire is put out)
- Preach aggressively about how Rifts are not legendary, they are just machines (everyone takes *self-doubt-1*)
- Take off, propelled by a jet of fire, and fly away (**Deny them something they want**)

- Ridicule Rifts
- Patronizingly explain to someone why their powers won't work on him

AFTERMATH

Here are a few questions to consider and points to revisit when you wrap up this case:

- Did everyone in the crew and in the supporting cast survive Drake's trap? If not, how are the surviving members dealing with losing a friend? What emotions do each of them experience? Do they vow to hurt Drake as revenge?
- What was the fate of Maximilian Drake, the Mechanist? Was he able to convince anyone with his self-important philosophical rants? Did he see the error of his ways or did he finally accept that there is more in heaven and earth than could be explained by natural science? Has he become more staunch in his opinions, if that's even possible? How does the crew plan to prevent him from killing more Rifts?
- What happens next with the carnival? If Drake is free, will he complete his vision and open the Rift-slaying theme park he dreamed up? If their god is gone, what will the Lemnos Carnies do? Will they wait for his return in the ruins of the carnival? Or will they rebuild, and if so, would it be to reopen the place as a legitimate funfair or to continue their master's legacy?
- How does the crew plan to approach the organization of Mending the Broken? If you played through *Killing Her Softly*, they now have met two villains connected with the therapist group.
- What ever happened to that street hustler, Goldie? Did she make it out alive of the death trap Drake set for her, or did her mythical and worldly urges seal her doom? If she survived, did she repent, or continue to steal from the rich and give to herself? Perhaps she becomes a series regular and continues to tail the crew, getting herself into dangerous situations.
- And P.I. Holliday – did he make it safely out? Or did he follow Goldie and got caught up in the fairground drama? Will the crew blame him for his part in the deaths of Pauline Woodworth and David Nguyen?
- What about Ellie Woodworth? Is anyone going to tell her that Pauline is gone? That it was David Nguyen who killed her? Would seeing the giant body cause Ellie to awaken and join the Rift underworld? Or would the crew decide to spare her the truth and let her hope she'll someday see Pauline again?
- If Theresa Nguyen hired the crew, she'll want to know what happened with Maximilian Drake, unless she gets his head on a silver platter as she asks. Such a brutal elimination is bound to gain the crew a nefarious reputation on the streets.
- Finally, what about Drake's technology, lying about in the mud just outside town? Someone could pick up a magical part and use it as a Relic, wittingly or unwittingly, sparking off a whole new origin story.




CITY OF MIST
BROKEN
GLASS
A CHILLING CASE OF SHATTERED SOULS AND INNER TURMOIL

There's a secret kind of hate blowing through the streets these days, bitter-cold and blood-curdling. People aren't even sure what they hate anymore, they just *do*: they hate each other, they hate their lives, and they hate themselves. Could Mending the Broken, a support network for those who see beyond the Mist, be the lifeline the City needs? As the crew struggles to curb this wave of dark emotions, they may find that same chilling hatred has taken root in their hearts.

Broken Glass is a psychological thriller that pits the crew against a supervillain who can evoke intense emotions, providing opportunities to explore the lead characters' own emotional hardships. The investigation takes the crew through the ranks of the villain's operation, a twisted mental health organization. Fleshing out the case are several optional side scenes that can be inserted as desired, to add drama and action. The case culminates in a confrontation with the villain and a rush to save the City from her ultimate scheme.

Depending on how you intend to run the case, you may wish to discuss with your group how best to handle intense PC emotions and themes of mental health at your table (see Addressing Mental Crisis And Illness on page 21).

As the finale of the Personal Vein, this case includes encounters with powerful adversaries suitable for a well-prepared crew of veterans (such as an optional clash with a team of elite Gatekeeper stormtroopers who could potentially turn Rifts back to Sleepers). Adjust the challenge level to suit your crew.

THE HISTORY OF DR. KRYSTAL KNIGHT

GOOD INTENTIONS

In the early years of the City, Krystal Knight (The Snow Queen) was a promising psychotherapist who aspired to heal society of its emotional wounds. Born to a family of aristocrats, Knight used her family fortune to gain access to the City's exclusive cliques of therapists, some of whom studied with the first proponents of psychology and psychiatry. Under their tutelage, she trained as a psychiatrist and specialized in criminal behavior, spending two decades perfecting her therapeutic skill.

Captivated by the power of words to heal the wounds of the past, but disillusioned by the system's corruption, she began focusing on offering therapy to the City's white-collar criminals – its corrupt politicians and businessmen – helping them to become better people, hoping that with their power, they'll be able to cure the entire City. Her therapeutic services were in high demand among the rich and powerful of the City, but despite years of effort, social change did not come. A hidden force seemed to keep the City's people on track for alienation, isolation, and violence.

THE ROAD TO HELL

Dr. Knight continued to diligently practice her profession, overlooking her own mounting bitterness at the state of her life and her unfulfilled vision. When she heard Corbin Payne, "the man who was the City", fell ill and became depressed, she offered her services, seizing the opportunity to help the most powerful individual in the City. Not yet an Avatar, Payne thought he might still be cured and agreed.

The two spent years in intense daily psychoanalysis sessions. Like radioactive waste, the tycoon's legendary misery seeped into the doctor's soul and infected it, eroding her natural positivity and mental fortitude. Within their sessions, she still played the role of the optimistic healer, but outside of them her life was in shambles and she began hating everything and everyone around her.

Eventually, the king broke his would-be savior. To complete her transformation into his Grail Knight, he gave her a Relic, the Devil's Mirror (of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen*), which immediately took her as its bearer and awakened her as the Snow Queen. Every day, when she looked at herself in the mirror, the mirror showed her the worst qualities in her, that which was most loathsome and condemnable. Knowing the powers of the Mirror, Payne also left her one of his last remaining subsidiaries of his crumbling construction empire, **Aurora Glassworks**, who made windows, windshields, and display panes for the entire City (although, at the time, she didn't care about that). Then he left, shutting her out and leaving her with her failure, her self-loathing, and a hateful heart.

WHY DID THE THERAPY FAIL?

Both Knight and Payne had a long time to think about the past and make sense of it. Though she won't share it with anyone, the doctor knows her failure was a result of her childish obsession with healing everyone else, while ignoring the darkness she was harboring inside herself. This failure burrowed itself into her mind, feeding her self-hatred; she hates herself for having had a chance to do good and missing it.

Payne has a similar but slightly different take on the matter. For him, it was folly for a Sleeper, someone who is still asleep to their own true nature, to try and contend with forces beyond their comprehension such as the Mythos of the Fisher King. Some days, he thinks a part of him gave her the mirror so that she would awaken as a Rift, work through her issues, and come back with a real chance to heal him.

IN THE ASYLUM

Hanging in her bathroom, the Devil's Mirror drove Krystal Knight out of her mind until one day it shattered her spirit just as she shattered it with her fists. Tiny shards from the mirror lodged themselves in her eyes and heart; she had the rest sent to her glasswork factory to be melted down. The doctor then went into a self-destructive tantrum, was declared mentally unstable (in the jargon of the time), and was hospitalized in the **Municipal Institute for the Criminally Insane** run by her rival **Esther Monahan**.

Knight was subjected to all manners of crude and ineffective forms of therapy, including untested medication, shock therapy, and even a lobotomy. She could have frozen any of her medical staff solid but she held back, using the therapy as a mythic form of self-mutilation, an outlet for the hatred she felt toward herself. Broken beyond repair, she spent the next few decades in the depths of the Asylum in solitary confinement. Her frozen Mythos preserved her body, and she did not age.

CHANGING POLARITY

Due to the Mist, even the Asylum eventually forgot about Krystal Knight. When the torturing therapy slowed down and then stopped, Knight's self-abusive outlet for her legendary hatefulness was gone, and so her thoughts turned outward, as did her hate. Krystal Knight began planning her revenge on the City that her abuser, Corbin Payne, built. She would destroy it in a blizzard of hatred, starting with Rifts, as they were most like the person she hated the most: Herself.

MENDING THE BROKEN

It wasn't hard for a Rift of Knight's magnitude, so supercharged with hate, to take over the Asylum. She froze solid her confinement cell door, killed some guards and nurses, and tormented the now elderly Esther Monahan for days before disposing of her too. Then she forced everyone else in the Asylum to accept her as Esther Monahan or die, taking her place as the head of the facility.

Next, she turned to the psychiatric staff. By locking them up in padded cells and forcing them to attend "therapy" sessions with her, Dr. Knight convinced the team of psychiatrists and psychologists that Rifthood was a perversion. Since "healing" or "converting" Rifthood was beyond their power, the therapists had to come up with a different kind of "cure". They devised a type of therapy where they would reflect the disastrous implications of being a Rift back to the patient, and let the patient decide what to do. Imbued with Dr. Knight's powers, this usually ended in Rifts developing intense feelings of hate, and eventually either seeking to hurt themselves or hurt other Rifts.

Reaching out to the mental health circles of the City, Dr. Knight and her team published Sleeper-awakening studies that Touched many of those who read them. The therapists trained by her and her students formed **Mending the Broken**, a professional organization of awakened therapists who sought to "help" Rifts – by influencing them to hurt themselves or others like them. Mending the Broken gradually made a name for themselves in the Rift underworld as a support program Rifts could turn to in a time of crisis, with a helpline, free sessions, and advertisements. They avoided being connected to the dire outcome of their "therapy" by subtly putting the blame on the victims and their circumstances.

A BLIZZARD IS COMING

The efforts of Mending the Broken were only partially successful; they were all too often thwarted by other Rifts (perhaps recently by the crew, in *Killing Her Softly* and *Carnival of Machines*). Fortunately for Krystal Knight, she only needed a certain amount of hatred to power her final attack on the City.

While its owner was hospitalized, Aurora Glassworks continued to be the City's main glass provider for construction. Almost every glass pane in the City had a fraction of her mirror's power, whose shards she had molten in the company's glass factories, and Krystal could feel it. All she needed was enough hatred to **shatter all of the City's windows at once**, and the magical icy shards would spread hatred everywhere, creating a frenzied riot. Mending the Broken has just about provided her with a sufficient emotional charge, so she is about to unleash upon the City the loveless winter she so craves.



DEPTH 0:
THE HOOKS

The crew may become involved in the case in the following ways:

- **The crew may continue the investigation from previous cases**, *Killing Her Softly* and *Carnival of Machines*, where the villains are both out-of-control Rifts who came into contact with Mending the Broken therapists. Whether or not the crew believes their claims that their therapists drove them to do harm, they may wish to investigate this lead by locating Martha Ellis' therapist **Dr. Selma Perrin** or Maximillian Drake's therapist **Dr. Archibald Tennant**. Both therapists operate their own private clinics which would be easy to find. The crew may also investigate the Mending the Broken organization in general (see private clinic).
- **Down-and-out lead characters or supporting cast Rifts may seek the help of Mending the Broken.** A classic opening scene sets one or more lead character in a **Rift support group**, talking about her problems or listening to others with disdain. The support group is run at a local community center or private home basement by **Harry Yang**, a Sleeper starting to be Touched by Krystal Knight's new theories, who is nevertheless still on the good side and truly wants to help. Harry can refer a struggling lead or support character to a full-fledged therapist, who invites her to meet at their private clinic. Supporting cast characters who see a Mending the Broken therapist gradually become distraught or high strung, raising the crew members' concerns.

- **Officer Das** (see *Killing Her Softly*), if she becomes a series regular, may be the one seeking help from a therapist. Her particular powers may provide additional protection from Mending the Broken's insidious brainwashing techniques, so she can also serve as a whistleblower, alerting the crew to what the therapist organization is really up to.
- If you are playing this case as a one-shot, or if you want to add additional scenes, the crew can be called to help with **a domestic violence case** which will point them to Mending the Broken. **Felicia Pema Jones** (Palden Lhamo, wrathful protector goddess of Tibet and its spiritual leaders) is a young Rift mother who has become depressed and violent after giving birth. Her husband, Jeff, either called social services or the police for assistance with his wife, or, thinking her possessed, asked around and reached the crew. Following this lead has the crew starting at the Joneses' apartment.

DEPTH 1: A CRY FOR HELP

THE JONESES' APARTMENT

You can't believe your bad luck when you get caught in a torrential downpour just outside the block-wide tenement where the Joneses live. By the time you're inside their cramped apartment, you're soaking wet. Jeff Jones welcomes you and walks you to the nursery, telling you about the outbursts of anger that his wife, Felicia, has had since the birth of their first child, Mira. He knocks on the door, but there's no answer. Through the keyhole you see a gloomy nursery room, exposed to the elements blowing through the open window, by billowing, tattered curtains. Someone in the corner is singing a hushed nursery rhyme.

Felicia Pema Jones is one of Mending the Broken's many victims. Mother to three-months-old Mira, she awakened shortly after childbirth as the Rift of Palden Lhamo, the Tibetan tutelary goddess, possibly because of her deep desire to protect her child and, for her, protect all that is good in the world. Unfortunately, Palden Lhamo can be a wrathful goddess who violently attacks threats to those under her protection, including her own daughter, and Felicia didn't know how to handle that intensity of rage.

When things got worse, she turned to Mending the Broken and was referred to Jungian therapist **Dr. Drew Langstone**.

Naturally, things just got worse from there. Langstone instilled destructive ideas in Felicia's head, playing on her Mythos' history with infanticide; his endgame was to get Felicia to kill her own daughter and commit suicide (for everyone's best interest, so he believes). When the crew arrives, Felicia is on the verge of doing just that – she has locked herself up in the nursery with Mira and keeps shouting at Jeff to stay away. The crew might be able to undo the damage done by Langstone and gain Felicia's help in chasing down the truth, but first they have to save both mother and child.

If Felicia does the unthinkable, she does so by throwing herself and/or her child through the nursery room window, falling to a glass-riddled death, by way of the **broken glass motif** (page 22).

Jeff can bring the crew up to speed on Felicia's mental health history. She was fine until she gave birth to Mira. When Felicia's rage outbursts started, the couple tried to seek help but Felicia didn't feel the (Sleeper) therapist she met with could help her. She later saw a poster for Mending the Broken, called their helpline, and was referred to Dr. Drew Langstone, who is still her therapist.

Jeff is frustrated that he can't help Felicia and worried sick for her and Mira's safety. He explains Felicia's appearance and incredible strength as side effects of the rage.

While still enraged, Felicia may mumble words that betray her inner conflict: she is worried that her daughter may be a Rift too, which is a 'dirty, ugly thing', and contemplating hurting both herself and her daughter to prevent it from happening.

If Felicia is stabilized, she reports feeling safe with Dr. Langstone, who can see and understand her abilities. She claims that she always feels better after their sessions. However, **asking her to calmly reevaluate what was actually communicated in those sessions** makes her realize it was he who poisoned her mind against herself and her daughter.

FELICIA ★★★

At first, Felicia appears to be a normal sleep-deprived mother, dressed in loose and comfortable clothing, with a mane of uncombed red hair. When she taps into the power of Palden Lhamo, she takes on a horrifying visage: her skin turns blue, her hair bursts into flames, and a third eye opens on her forehead.

HURT OR SUBDUE 5 / RESTORE HER MIND 4 / LOSE HER MIND 4

- **Wrathful Goddess:** When Felicia enters the scene, give her *raging-2*.
- **Demonic Protection:** When you advance toward Felicia or baby Mira or take aim at them, you are pushed back or out by an invisible force, forcing you to first **Take the Risk**.
- **About to Snap:** When *lose-her-mind* maxes out, Felicia hurts herself or baby Mira (**Make Something Horrible Happen**).

- Punch someone or push them with invisible force (*broken-arm-3* or *broken-leg-3*)
- Place a ward on someone so they can't approach her, baby Mira, or the room (*pushed-back-3*)
- Scare the hell out of someone with her demonic visage (*palpitating-2*)
- Freak out and get even more upset (giving herself *raging-2* or *despaired-2*)

- Scream at anyone who tries to enter the nursery, turning blue
- Seethingly threaten someone not to come near her daughter

MENDING THE BROKEN PRIVATE CLINIC

You shudder when you walk into the shrink's office. Two comfy armchairs facing one another make you visualize clients spilling their guts over a hot beverage. Trauma, betrayal, secrets, unspeakable fantasies — these walls have heard it all. What would you tell the therapist if it were you in that chair? Dark thoughts creep up in the back of your mind, reminding you how you fail, how you come short, all the time and in every way. You feel what all of the clients that came before must have felt: broken beyond repair. The difference is you don't talk about it. Maybe some things are better left buried.

Mending the Broken has many member practitioners throughout the City. Each member runs their own private clinic and gets referrals from the organization's helplines. Here are a few names the crew may come across when looking for a Mending the Broken therapist.

- **Dr. Selma Perrin**, who worked with Martha Ellis (*Killing Her Softly*), is an expensive psychiatrist and psychoanalyst working in a luxurious private practice Downtown.
- **Dr. Archibald Tennant**, who counseled Maximillian Drake (*Carnival of Machines*), is a traditional psychiatrist with a clinic in the Old Quarter, who often mans the organization's helplines.



- **Dr. Drew Langstone**, Felicia Jones' Jungian therapist, has meetings in a clinic attached to his apartment in one of the Blue-Collar Residential neighborhoods.
- **Police Psychologist Dr. Tracy Wong** helps law enforcement personnel, meeting with them in their local precincts. She is the one most likely to work with Officer Das and has worked with security officer Ruben Stone (see Golem Gone Wrong).
- Life Coach and Nutritionist **Augusta Summers** started out in Suburbia, but is gaining a growing clientele in the City center.
- **Fr. Brian Kelly**, a priest taking confession in a local church.
- **Dr. Lauren White**, a social welfare psychologist in the slums.

LOOKING FOR ADVICE

If a PC seeks out a therapist as someone to talk to, play out a part of the therapy session. This should be an opportunity to give the PC a good deal of airtime and let her bear her inner world: her conflicts, her questions, her doubts, her pain. **This sets the scene for the upcoming conflicts with Dr. Krystal Knight (and potentially the Fisher King).**

Mending the Broken therapists are extremely intelligent and wise, so if the PC doesn't suspect the therapist or lets her guard down, **play the therapist as the ideal listener and confidant**, someone the PC feels they could really trust, someone who can see them through the Mist and not judge them for who they are. The therapist won't impose her ideas on the PC, but will instead listen for a while, humming, nodding, and asking questions to keep the PC talking.

When the PC asks for guidance, ask a deep open-ended question such as "Do you feel that whatever it is inside you is really a part of you?" or "Who do you think is responsible for what happens to you?" The therapist doesn't need to talk about her views openly to infect the PC with self-doubt and self-hatred – like the Devil's Mirror, it's the way she reflects things back to the PC that does the trick. After the PC leaves and has some time to think about the session, activate the therapist's custom move **Dark Thoughts**.

LOOKING FOR ANSWERS

If the crew comes looking for answers, they will be met with resistance. First, the therapist will avoid them or her receptionist will try to block them from going into the therapy room. The local security guards or beat cops may be alerted (*MC Toolkit*, page 148).

If they do finally corner her, questioning the therapist directly proves tricky. Her custom move **Hmmm** allows her to deflect questions and avoid being **Investigated** in a conversation. The protection provided by the **Hmmm** technique goes deep into the therapist's psyche, and she can use this move even when being telepathically probed (her mind answers with a question). To unlock the secrets in her mind, the crew must somehow break it. If there are no mentalists, psychologists, or psychics in the crew, finding one could be the subject of another scene (see **Saints and Psychics,** page 72). Furthermore, unless her mind is broken, the therapist will not admit that Mending the Broken's mission is to hurt Rifts, and keeps excusing and explaining the organizations' positions; the truth can still be gleaned from between her words, or lack thereof.

The information below can also be obtained in other ways: staking out and following the therapist, breaking into her office, interviewing her past patients or clients (see The Prison Visit sidebar), researching Mending the Broken, etc.

ABOUT MENDING THE BROKEN

Mending the Broken is a therapist organization that seeks to influence Rifts. They claim they want to help Rifts deal with their Rifthood better.

Officially, Mending the Broken "therapy" is a form of "mirroring" that aims to show the patient their life situation so they can take responsibility over it. In actuality, this twisted version of the technique only shows the patient what is wrong, negative, or painful about themselves and their Rifthood, causing them to develop negative feelings toward their Rifthood and driving them to take destructive action toward themselves or other Rifts.

The proponent of this theory is **Dr. Esther Monahan.**

ABOUT DR. ESTHER MONAHAN

Dr. Monahan has been running the **Municipal Institute for the Criminally Insane** (aka the Asylum) for decades, and should be well above ninety by now, but she never retired. She is single and childless by choice, having dedicated her life to her work.

Research may yield some of her published studies on the subject of Rifthood, a subject she became passionate about only in recent years. Treat a Rift who spends time reading these publications as someone who has been to a session with a Mending the Broken therapist, activating **Dark Thoughts.**

Due to her age, many of her records, such as a birth certificate, are not in the system. Further information may be available (physically or digitally) from the City's Historical Society.

ABOUT THE THERAPIST

The therapist keeps files on her former patients on a computer or in a file cabinet. The records are consistent with what the crew already knows about the victim(s), but studying them also divulges something about the therapist's disposition (see the clues below). This is also a great way to reveal that another NPC (or PC) is a victim of Mending the Broken, such as Ruben Stone (Golem Gone Wrong).

The therapist serves as a senior Mending the Broken member or reports to senior members at a weekly supervision meeting at the Old Quarter University (or, if you wish to skip this scene, directly at the Asylum).

Probing the therapist's psyche with mythical means will reveal a deep-rooted hatred toward Rifthood itself and a firm belief that all Rifts without exception are a perversion.

Beyond the Mist, there is a symbolic glass shard in the therapist's frozen heart. It can be traced back to the supervision meeting or the Asylum.

MENDING THE BROKEN THERAPIST ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / BREAK MIND 4 / EXPOSE 4

- **Dark Thoughts:** When you've had the time to consider everything you've talked about with the Therapist, take *self-doubt-1* or *bad-feeling-1* (each time this move affects the same target, regardless of its source, increase the tier of its status by one for that target to *anxious-2*, *despaired-3*, *self-hating-4*, etc.).
- **Hmmm:** When you **Investigate** a Therapist by asking her questions or when you get aggressive with her, she first gives you *self-doubt-2* by humming and asking a question, such as:
  - » Hmmm. Why do you feel aggression is needed here?
  - » Hmmm. Is this about me, or your father/mother?
  - » Hmmm. Where does this need to know comes from, do you think?
- **Sublimation Techniques:** When the Therapist takes a mental or emotional status, reduce its tier by 1.
- **Breathe Again:** When *exposed* is maxed out, the Therapist cannot use **Dark Thoughts** again on anyone to whom she was exposed. When *break mind* is maxed out, the Therapist cannot activate **Hmmm** or **Sublimation Techniques**.

- Raise poignant questions that make you doubt yourself or feel bad about yourself (*self-doubt* or *bad-feeling*, tier 1 or 2 as she sees fit)
- Call security (Create a new Danger: Beat Cops / Security Guards, *MC Toolkit*, page 148) and later, her lawyer (Corporate Lawyer, *MC Toolkit*, page 142)
- Analyze someone, accurately deducing their emotional situation (*vulnerable-1*)
- Hypnotize someone, first holding their attention and then slipping them subconscious commands (*hypnotized-2*)
- Escape through a back door (**Deny Them Something They Want**)

- Listen carefully to what you have to say



THE PRISON VISIT

While gathering information about Mending the Broken, the crew may need to compare notes with some of their former enemies and Mending the Broken victims, such as jazz singer Martha Ellis (the Banshee) or mad scientist Maximillian Drake (Hephaestus), or any other victim of the therapist organization. For example, one of their enemies or Nemeses could be found in one of the therapists' records, forcing them into an uneasy meeting.

Depending on how things ended in their previous encounters, the crew's enemy may be in a physical prison or in a spiritual one (such as Hell or the Otherworld), and likely still holds a grudge for the crew. Having had some time to think, away from the malign influence of Mending the Broken, the enemy could be softened or lonely, and ready to talk.

The crew's meeting with their old enemy could provide a chance for the PCs to scratch at old wounds, express their feelings, hash things out, and/or discover a new perspective about past events. This should be played as a roleplaying opportunity rather than a challenge, so the rules are not required.

Past enemies committed to the Asylum could pose a great opportunity for a visit that starts with roleplaying and ends with investigation or action, but such NPCs remain deeply under the influence of Mending the Broken.

SUPERVISION MEETING

The clickety-clack of fastidious shoes on the marble floors echoes throughout these grand halls, giving you a mild bout of anxiety. You climb a spacious marble staircase with a burgundy carpet to a landing where several hallways meet. Finally, opening a tall wooden double door, carved with decorative engravings, you interrupt a circle of distinguished, middle-aged individuals deep in conversation. They all hush at once, their eyes fixed on you. "Can we help you?"

Once a week, **Dr. Selma Perrin** and **Dr. Archibald Tennant** (or any other therapists you dub as the elders) host a Mending the Broken supervision meeting where therapists share their progress with their Rift cases and receive advice from more experienced practitioners. The meeting takes place at the Old Quarter University, in the never-ending ornate marble halls of the Department of the Psyche.

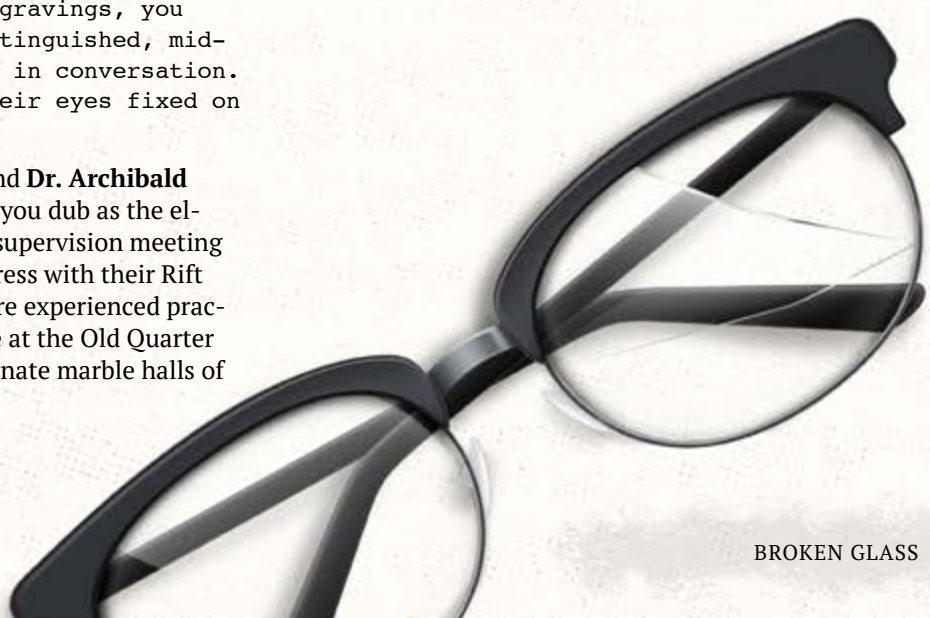
The crew may wish to come here for more answers, if they didn't get enough out of the first therapist they encountered. They may also wish to execute a raid and capture all or most of Mending the Broken's therapists.

Facing a handful (size factor 1) or a dozen (size factor 2) of Touched psychologists and psychiatrists may sound easy, but it won't be. The therapists can gang up on one or two weak crew members and tear them to pieces, analyzing their every weakness and laying bare their secret pain (or close enough), even if the PCs don't speak it. Furthermore, the supervision group, who often interview emotionally-volatile subjects here, has **a team of psychiatric nurses** on standby in the next room that can be summoned as soon as things get out of hand (if you want to reduce the challenge for the crew, **Give Them A Fair Warning** and let them try to prevent the therapists from buzzing the nurses in).

The therapist group members know the same clues described under Mending the Broken Private Clinic, which ultimately point to Dr. Monahan and the Asylum. However, if the crew manages to overcome the group or secure one of the elders, you can reward them with additional clues. If the crew are overpowered by the therapists and nurses, they wake up as patients confined to a padded room in the basement of the Asylum (see there, under Solitary Confinement).

Some of the most experienced Mending the Broken therapists know Dr. Monahan personally and actually helped formulate her theory. The others have never met this genius, who works behind closed doors at the Asylum.

Breaking and then deeply probing the mind of a senior therapist could reveal a fact that the therapist is violently trying to repress: Dr. Esther Monahan has been dead for years.



ASYLUM NURSES ★★★

Mending the Broken nurses are especially tall and muscular individuals, wearing the white uniforms of the Municipal Institute for the Criminally Insane. They don't display any bedside manners or nursing training; it almost seems like they are hired thugs who recite prescripted nurses' lines.

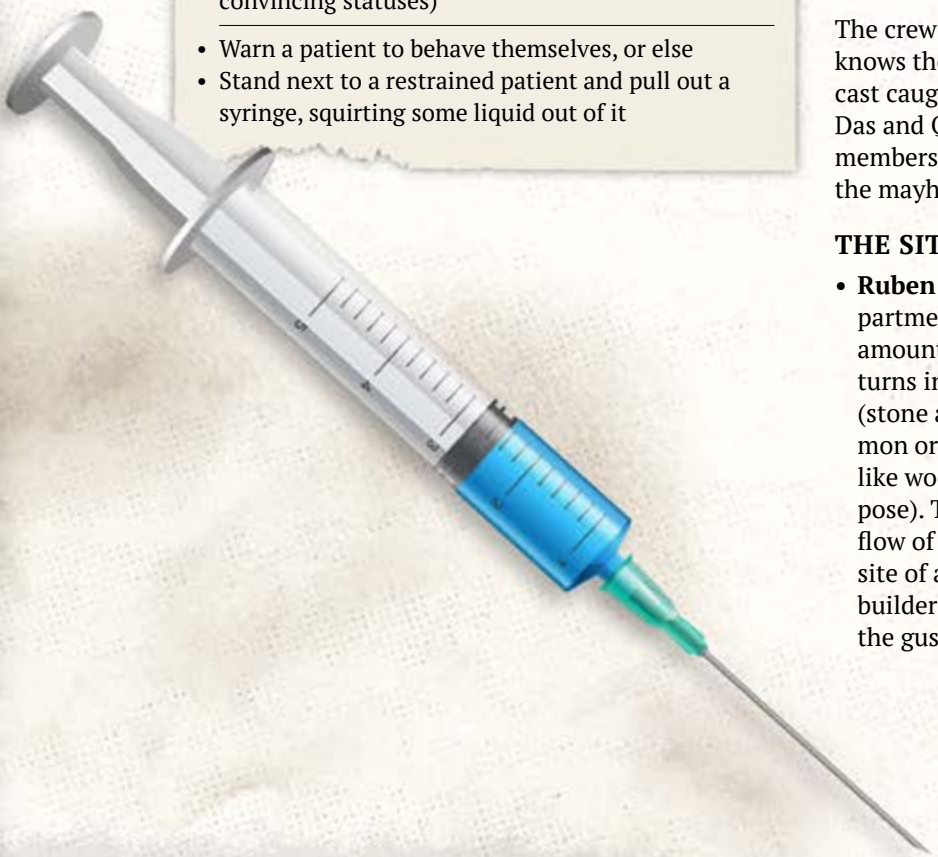
Consider increasing the size factor of this Danger to 2 if the crew has more than four members or if many of its members are strong combatants.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / CONVINCE 5

- **Collective:** This collective has a few members and a size factor of 1.
- **Mean:** When the Nurse takes a social or emotional status that doesn't make her meaner, reduce its tier by 1.
- **Abnormally Strong:** When the Nurse takes a physical harm or subdual status that can be avoided with sheer strength or stamina, reduce its tier by 1.
- **It's Nap Time:** Once per scene per size factor, as a hard move, one Nurse produces a single-shot tranquilizer gun and fires it at an unruly patient, giving them *sedated-4*.

- Restrain manually or with a straight jacket (*restrained-3*)
- Inject a restrained patient with a powerful sedative (convert a *restrained* status to *sedated*, keeping the same tier)
- Ignore a patient's pleas (remove 2 tiers from any convincing statuses)

- Warn a patient to behave themselves, or else
- Stand next to a restrained patient and pull out a syringe, squirting some liquid out of it



GOLEM GONE WRONG

A panicked flux of bodies scuttles out of the front doors of the department store, screaming. Many of them, especially those in the back, are covered with a thick layer of gray-brown mud. As they clear the entrance, you spot a crawling puddle of mud flowing down the aisles inside, knocking over mannequins and clothing racks that sink into the floor like it was quicksand. Over the commotion, you hear the building screech and moan, and notice several cracks along the gable that are slowly expanding. You wonder what could cause such devastation, when another scream is heard from inside.

Another victim of Mending the Broken, **Ruben Stone** (The Golem of Prague), was overwhelmed by depression and despair while at a department store in a mall. His emotional state triggered his powers, and now he is slowly turning the foundations of the mall into the same material he's made of: mud. Ruben is only half-aware of the impending implications of his actions, and the half that is aware is so despaired, he's willing to go with the mall.

If you're running the game as a one-shot, this scene provides the crew with a second Mending the Broken victim. Otherwise, you can use it as an action scene to up the cinematic beat when things are getting slow.

The crew can be alerted to the scene by someone who knows their reputation, a member of the supporting cast caught in the mall, the police (possibly officers Das and Quinn), or someone who knows Ruben. Crew members could also coincidentally be in the mall when the mayhem ensues.

THE SITUATION AT HAND

- **Ruben Stone** is sitting in what was once the department store's changing booths, oozing copious amounts of magical gray-brown mud that slowly turns inanimate matter to similar non-magical mud (stone and sediments turn faster, followed by common ores like iron and copper; dead organic matter, like wood and clothing, takes a long time to decompose). The non-magical mud, however, facilitates the flow of the magical stuff. Sleepers think Ruben is the site of a burst sewer or cement pipe (the kind used by builders) and only alert Sleepers notice a person in the gush, who they think is trying to fix it.

- There are **many helpless bystanders** still in the mall, whether they are unaware of what's happening, were tangled or injured during the scurry out, or are looking for someone or something.
- The mud had eaten out the floors in places, creating **pools of sticky mud** that function like quicksand. In other places, it has eaten at the foundations of the mall building, making them sink unevenly, which causes **the entire structure to crack and break**. If the mud does not remit, the mall will collapse on everyone still inside.

Ruben Stone is the mall's security guard. This can be revealed by finding a witness who saw Ruben entering the store, or by groping Ruben's clothes through the mud and finding his badge.

Ruben Stone was Dr. Tracy Wong's patient, as can be deduced from his phone calls log, the therapist's patient files, or his employee file in the security company he works for.

He is struggling with extreme depression and suicidal thoughts, which is making his powers act up, although he's too dead inside to care.

Beyond the Mist, the Golem of Prague has three glowing Hebrew letters on his forehead, **אמת** (*e'met*), meaning 'truth', but the rightmost letter is fading, ultimately leaving just **מת** (*met*), meaning 'dead'. **Within the story of the Golem,** when it died, it turned from its human form back to the mud it was made of.

Beyond the Mist, also within the story of the Golem, it was originally created by the Maharal of Prague to protect his community. This fact can be linked to Ruben's occupation and may serve as a motivation to help him emerge from his depression.

If he is saved and probed about his sessions with Dr. Tracy Wong, Ruben will recognize that she deepened his depression by highlighting everything that went wrong with his life.

MUDSLIDE MALL ★★★

COLLAPSE 4 / CLEAR 5 / HURT RUBEN 4 / HELP RUBEN 4

- **Regular Hero:** For every person you get to safety out of the Mudslide Mall, give the Mudslide Mall *cleared-1*. When *clear* maxes out, there are no more bystanders in the mall.
- **Collapse:** When the *collapse* spectrum is maxed out, the building collapses and everyone inside takes *buried-by-debris-5*.
- **Suicidal:** When you first speak to Ruben, give him *suicidal-4*.
- **Made of Mud:** When Ruben takes a physical harm or subdual status that wouldn't pulverize or contain mud, reduce its tier by 3.
- **Mud Bomb:** When *hurt-Ruben* maxes out, if he dies, he explodes and Mudslide Mall takes *collapse-3*.

- Cover someone in thick, heavy mud, or drag them down into the puddle (*stuck-in-mud-3*)
- Ruben strikes someone who is upsetting him, throwing them back (*winded-3*) or sprays them with mud (*stuck-in-mud-3*)
- Ruben gets angry, erupting and spraying mud everywhere (giving everyone around *stuck-in-mud-3* and the Mudslide Mall *collapse-1*)
- Cracks open on the supporting walls and ceiling (Mudslide Mall takes *collapse-2*)

- Reveal a new bystander who is stuck, injured, lost, panicked, stealing, curious, etc.
- Block the path with a new mudslide



SAINTS AND PSYCHICS

With so much mental and emotional energy going around, the crew may wish to enlist other Rifts or Sleeper professionals to help bear the psychic load. Here are a few options.

First, not all City therapists are evil Mending the Broken psychos. **Geraldine Granger** (Sleeper) is one of many kind-hearted mental health professionals who truly want to help their clients. Geraldine knows all about trauma and how to emerge from it, and she has taken this journey both personally and as a guide many times. If they can trust her, Rifts will feel she can relate to them even without seeing their powers because ultimately their problems are human problems.

The challenge lies in convincing Geraldine that Mending the Broken are villainous; Geraldine is more likely to want to evaluate what's wrong with the PCs lives that makes them dream up imaginary psycho-villains.

GERALDINE GRANGER

Ally

IDENTITY

I'm listening.

POWER TAGS

great listener, *trained psychologist*, *social worker*, *caring for others*, *assertive words*, *positive affirmation*, *City hospital patient database*, *private clinic*, *medical services in the City*, *motivated by love*

WEAKNESS TAGS

interrupt aggression, *client confidentiality*, *cannot see the supernatural*, *violent clients*

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Confidant:** When you spend downtime working out your issues with Geraldine, if you are preparing for your next activity, you get 5 Juice instead of 3; if you are recovering from past activity, remove all non-permanent psychological statuses.

If the crew is looking for a Rift psychic powerhouse, their best bet is with Rifts who work for the benign Avatar Ganesha and her Thousand Helping Hands (see *Shadows & Showdowns*). However, due to the nature of this story arc, explained under **Payne and Other Avatars** (page 16), Ganesha and her Rifts may be prevented from helping. That said, Ganesha and most of her Rifts are helpful renegades by nature, and refusing to give help would put them in a precarious position with their Mythos. They will most likely try to wriggle out of helping, but give in and play along if the crew is persistent.

Another alternative is the mystic-Rift-for-hire known as **the Thaumaturge** (Grigori Rasputin, personal healer and mystic of the last tsar family of Russia), easily reachable by streetwise Rifts who frequent the Industrial Zone. The Thaumaturge boasts impressive psychic powers; he manipulates minds as deftly as he does knives, and can heal, protect, deep probe, shut down, and even wipe out multiple minds around him.

The oddball mystic-in-a-trenchcoat doesn't work for free. He will ask for a hefty sum, or a peculiar Relic, for his services. Another issue is his questionable allegiance; he's not below saving his own skin and leaving the crew to die if things get too dangerous.

THE THAUMATURGE

Ally

IDENTITY

Keep the money coming, and I'll keep the bad dreams away.

POWER TAGS

a powerful psychic, *knife juggling*, *heal psychic trauma*, *always gets paid*, *crush one's mind*, *protective psychic barrier*, *read thoughts and memories*, *trench coat*, *underworld privateer*, *hypnotic gaze*

WEAKNESS TAGS

turns his powers against me, *this is above my pay-grade*, *disputable loyalties*, *displeased past clients*

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Pay Up:** Spend 2 points of Juice representing payment to the Thaumaturge to recover all burnt tags in this theme. Every time you activate this improvement, increase the cost by 1.

☐ **Psychic Powerhouse:** When you **Change the Game** with tags from this theme, your effect is automatically scaled up once.

DEPTH 2:
COOL RECEPTION

THE ASYLUM

As you ascend up the hill, the weather takes a turn for the worse. Clouds huddle together like black sheep, and it gets cold. Soon, the rain turns to slush, and then to snowflakes, softly piling on your car. Up above, between the ever-greens, you see a menacing old manor, buried under the snow. As you approach the Municipal Institute for the Criminally Insane, lightning crackles behind it, lighting it up like a fairytale ice castle.

The Municipal Institute for the Criminally Insane, also simply known as the Asylum, is a three-story red brick building set on an isolated, wooded hill on the outskirts of town, overlooking a peaceful suburb. As fitting for her 'palace', the Asylum and everyone in it serve the Snow Queen, Dr. Krystal Knight. Furthermore, those who approach the Asylum find it's snowing there, although it may not look so from afar.

The Asylum can be the setting for many different types of scenes: the crew may come here to investigate, apprehend Mending the Broken practitioners, mount a heist to extract someone or find evidence, wake up as locked-up patients, and so on.

ARRIVING AT THE ASYLUM

As a cinematic device, you can establish an atmosphere of dread by causing the crew to crash or almost crash their vehicle (or another mode of transportation) on the way to the Asylum. Describe the car skidding on *black ice* or a *slippery road* toward a tall and hardy fir tree. The driver or other PCs can **Take the Risk** to avoid an accident. If the car does crash, broken ice shards and blood on the snow make for great visual motifs. Either way, the PCs' arrival at the Asylum starts with an air of danger.

THE PERIMETER

The Asylum, designed to hold the "criminally insane", is effectively a prison. It is surrounded by a tall brick wall topped with *barbed wire* with a single wrought-iron gate at the front and a small locked door in the back by the woods. There are security cameras on the perimeter wall. Behind it stretches a barren yard of brown, wilted grass, covered in frost and snow.

All entrances have *sally ports* (double door airlocks) with cameras; anyone crossing must be buzzed in or out remotely from the guard room. Forcing the doors open raises the alarm but otherwise security systems are outdated. PCs can cross these obstacles with a series of **Investigate**, **Sneak Around**, and **Take the Risk** moves. There are no security guards patrolling out in the yard, but they do patrol inside (use the Asylum Nurse Danger on page 70 for both nurses and guards).

THE FLOORPLAN

The Asylum building is U-shaped, with a smaller main building at the center and two wings stretching inwards along the sides of the perimeter.

The main building holds the reception, administrative offices, guard barracks, and the **guard room**. The security guards monitor the perimeter of the Asylum, and only deal with the patients in case one of them tries to escape.

The South Wing holds most of the miserable patients who call this place a home, many of whom are far from criminally-minded and suffering from mental health conditions far worse than they had when they first arrived. Patients are kept in rooms that were once white, clean, and pretty, designed not to look like the prison cells they essentially are; the lock to each room's door is electrically controlled via the wing's **nurses room**. Otherwise, movement within this ward is less restricted than elsewhere, but there are *watchful-1* nurses everywhere.

The North Wing holds the hospital ward where therapeutic experimentation is conducted, and where the most problematic cases are held in solitary confinement in the basement. This is also where the session rooms are located, where Mending the Broken activity takes place. The third, middle floor of this wing is dedicated to the "Special" Ward, where the head of the facility, Dr. Esther Monahan (aka Dr. Krystal Knight), usually works.

THE PATIENTS, THE STAFF, AND DR. MONAHAN

The Asylum is manned by a receptionist, guards, nurses, and the Mending the Broken psychiatrists and psychologists. Everyone who works or is hospitalized at the Asylum knows **Dr. Esther Monahan** is the head of the institute and chief psychiatrist here and, if **Investigated**, are first revealed to be *scared-to-death-3* of her (limiting what the PCs can glean from them). When asked to identify the head of the institute, they will give conflicting reports:

- Some have never seen her.
- Some newly-hired staff or new patients who have seen Dr. Knight are sure she is Dr. Monahan. They don't know her age, but estimate she's in her late 40s.
- Others, who worked or lived there longer, but have never seen Dr. Knight, think Dr. Monahan must look like an elderly woman close to a hundred years old (as the real Dr. Monahan would look like today), who nevertheless keeps working vigorously.
- Those who know the full story (mostly Mending the Broken elders) refer to Krystal Knight as Dr. Monahan, but lie about her identity to help cover it up and cover their hinds.
- An old patient suffering from a delusion-inducing condition may be telling the truth, but embellishes the story to the point of losing credibility (*I think she's a time traveller!*).

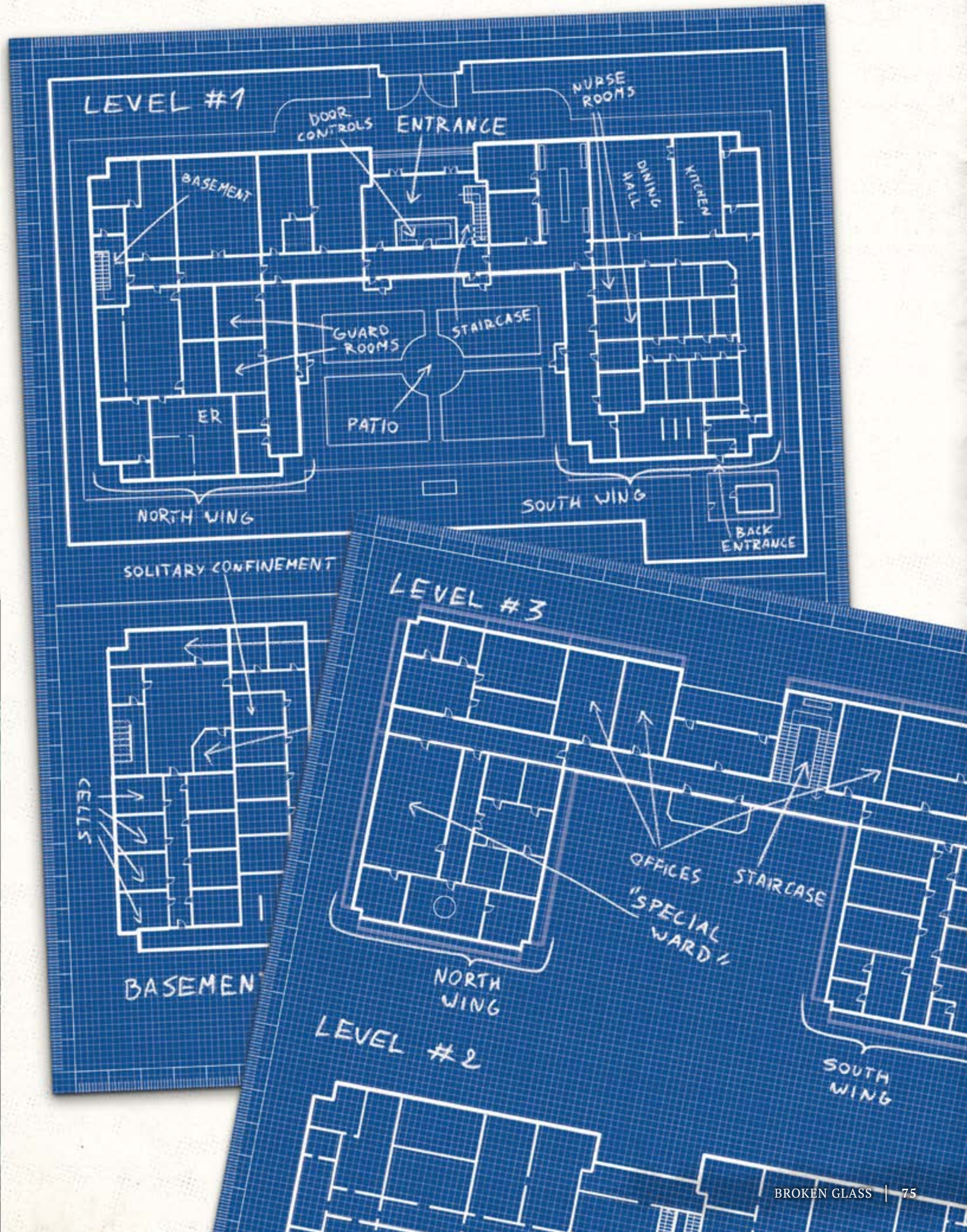
Dr. Monahan spends most of her time in the Special Ward, on the third floor of the North Wing. In fact, no one in the Asylum ever sees her coming or going.

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

Dr. Knight doesn't usually enjoy just killing her enemies; she prefers to infect them with self- or Rift-hatred and see how much damage they can do. If any PCs and/or NPCs are hospitalized, they wake up in the basement of the North Wing in separate but adjacent padded solitary confinement cells, where the temperature is slightly below freezing (giving them *freezing-1* every hour they spend there from the moment they awaken). Particularly difficult patients find themselves in a straitjacket (*restrained-3*), while those who were sedated feel *woozy-1* or have a *headache-1*. Furthermore, all patients have *no-legal-rights-5*. They cannot see or hear one another through the walls, except when the shutter on the door is open from outside the cell. The cells have *armored doors* that are covered with *strange, reflective ice* that can cause magic and energy to rebound.

The door to the last cell in the block is completely frozen, encased in a block of ice. If it can be opened, the frozen and mutilated body of the real Dr. Monahan can be found inside. Forensic analysis will show she died years ago.




LEVEL #1
DOOR CONTROLS
ENTRANCE
NURSE ROOMS
BASEMENT
DINING HALL
KITCHEN
GUARD ROOMS
STAIRCASE
ER
PATIO
NORTH WING
SOUTH WING
BACK ENTRANCE
SOLITARY CONFINEMENT
CELLS
BASEMEN
LEVEL #3
OFFICES
STAIRCASE
"SPECIAL WARD"
NORTH WING
SOUTH WING
LEVEL #2

THE OLD "PRISONER IN THE NEXT CELL" PLOY

Krystal Knight may try to deceive the crew by pretending to be an abused patient (it shouldn't be hard; she was one for many many years). She locks herself up in a solitary confinement cell next to them, leaving the shutter open so they can hear her weep. As they escape, she begs them to set her free; if they do, she pretends to be their ally or guide. She presents herself by her real name. As a part of her cover story, she may also inadvertently reveal some accurate information about her past.

Krystal Knight will try to get the crew to open up and expose their hurts, gripes, and anger to her so she can later fan them. As the crew spends more and more time with her, she insidiously penetrates their minds; for every scene or downtime in her presence, choose one PC present and activate the **Dark Thoughts** custom move against them (see Mending the Broken Therapist, page 68).

THE PATIENT FILES

Accessing the Asylum file system, whether it is a cabinet or a hard drive, reveals the patient files.

Every victim ("patient") of Mending the Broken is recorded here, including Martha Ellis (*Killing Her Softly*), Maximillian Drake (*Carnival of Machines*), Felicia Pema Jones, Ruben Stone, and any other character, PC or NPC, who came in contact with the organization. The files contain an analysis of the Rift's life, Mythos, and abilities.

Dr. Krystal Knight's file is here, but it's buried deep. It contains a picture of the woman who many know today as Dr. Esther Monahan. According to the file, Dr. Knight was admitted by Dr. Monahan almost a century ago (about 80 years) after she had a "nervous breakdown". The file is overflowing with reports of the long list of forced treatments she's been through, including experimental psychoactive drugs, shock therapy, and a failed lobotomy.

Dr. Krystal Knight's file also contains a single document indicating **she was and remains the majority shareholder of** Aurora Glassworks, a glass manufacturer.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Graham, a "fellow" in a three-piece suit and a monocle, peers at you from over his heavy, lacquered oak receptionist podium and welcomes you to the City's Historical Society. You take a quick glance around: the place looks like a labyrinthian library, all decked out in traditional dark wood furniture and red velvet upholstery. The air here reeks of old books and mothballs. The strange thing is there's really no one around but Graham.

The City's Historical Society naturally resides in a fine antique building in one of the Old Quarter's lesser-known cobbled side streets. With its many books, microfilms, newspaper archives, and more, it holds vast information about the last century in the history of the City; anything before that slides into the realm of Mythos and while this library holds texts from that era, they get fuzzier and stranger the further back they go. The crew may arrive here at different stages of the investigation, looking for clues about Dr. Monahan, Dr. Knight, or someone else.

The Historical Society is a Gatekeeper honeytrap for curious Rifts. Sleepers don't care about the factual past; they go with the version that works for them. Even Sleeper historians fiddle around with made-up accounts concocted by the Mist. Someone who truly wants to dig up the truth can only be a Rift, and a dangerous one at that. Ideally, the Gatekeepers would prefer to erase all of the information here permanently. However, their directive is to catch Rifts first, destroy information about the true past second, and to catch Rifts they need a bank of *true* knowledge to lure them with (they tried a trap with fake knowledge and it didn't work; Rifts' destinies and divinatory powers simply didn't point them there).

The person posing as Graham (not his real name), the representative and receptionist in the dress coat, is in fact the Gatekeeper sentry stationed here. His job is to gauge whether visitors are stray Sleepers or Rifts and, in the case of the latter, call in a squad to seal them. Once a PC enters the building, it's a question of who identifies who first. As soon as a crew member spends a Clue on a question too deep, it's Shrouding time.

Whether or not the crew has a fight with the Gatekeepers, if they get away with any information on this occasion, Gatekeeper Command will have quadrupled the resources guarding the Historical Society, eliminating any chance of any further information leaks, unless the crew mounts a truly epic heist.

GRAHAM, THE HELP BOT

If you're playing in the Neon Noir (80s) or Dreary Present, your crew may be accessing the Historical Society's database virtually. In this case, Graham is a bot or a virtual assistant which activates when a PC logs into the database. Any abilities he has apply online and he can also crash any masking software a hacker is using as a hard move (*exposed-3*). The Gatekeeper Seals squad he calls shows up at the hacker's physical location.

PERTINENT HISTORICAL INFORMATION

According to records, Dr. Monahan is 102 years old. There is only one other person related to the Asylum who is as old as Dr. Monahan: a patient named **Krystal Knight**. There is no death certificate for either of the ladies. There is no evidence suggestive of tampering.

Newspaper clippings from the early roaring years of the City show that, before being hospitalized, **Dr. Krystal Knight was a successful psychiatrist for the rich and famous**, who aspired to use therapy as a way to heal the City's social troubles.

Krystal Knight's career ended when she had a "nervous breakdown" and was committed to the Asylum. That's the last the world has heard of her. There's a newspaper picture of her lavish bathroom on the day she was committed, showing **a shattered mirror on the floor**.

Krystal Knight was and remains the majority shareholder of Aurora Glassworks, a glass manufacturer. Financial papers show she received her shares as "payment for services rendered" to **Corbin Payne**, the City's legendary construction tycoon.

If you are running *Percival* as an overarching case and the crew started the case, they may find information here that corresponds to the clues in whatever act they are in at the moment, especially newspaper clips about Corbin Payne.

GRAHAM (GATEKEEPER SENTRY) ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 4

- **Sentry:** Once per scene, when you first try to **Convince** or **Sneak Around** Graham, give him *alert-2*.
- **Wards of Revelation:** When you try to use illusory, deceptive, or mind-altering Mythos powers around Graham, they fizzle out. You cannot invoke such tags and all existing effects are stripped away.
- **Creepy Feeling:** Whenever you try to **Investigate** to learn more about Graham, you get a strange feeling that he is impenetrable. Graham takes *mysterious-2*. This status cannot exceed tier 4.
- **Explosive Shrouding Ward:** Once per scene, as an intrusion, everyone around Graham takes *oblivious-5*. At his option, he may flee the scene.
- **Defensive Shrouding:** Once per scene, when you attempt to influence Graham with Mythos powers, the MC first burns two power tags you used in your attack.

- Regain his alertness (giving himself *alert-2*)
- Call in a Gatekeeper Seals squad (create a new Danger)
- Shroud someone (*vague-memories-3* or burn two Mythos tags)
- Fire a standard-issue pistol (*gunshot-wound-3*) or use basic martial arts (*hold-down-2* or *bruise-2*)

- Smile wryly when someone tries to deceive him using Mythos powers and fails
- Calmly unbutton his cuffs and roll up his sleeves, revealing Gatekeeper tattoos



GATEKEEPER SEALS ★★★★

Gatekeeper Seals are near enough the scariest threat a Rift could face. Armed head to toe with anti-Mythos gear and trained by the best, this superb tactical team eats Rifts for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

The Seals' trench coats, jackets, or vests protect them from most Mythos powers. Only the most powerful Mythos attacks can overwhelm the intense Mist field this armor generates and even then only momentarily (unless a PC can somehow generate a permanent *overload* status). Instead of worrying about Shrouding individuals, each team usually carries at least one portable Shrouding beacon to continuously wipe out the memories of all around. They also carry powerful sealing wards that can keep a defeated target out of trouble in the future. At your option, a squad can also combine their forces to seal Rifts permanently, turning them to Sleepers.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / OVERLOAD 6

- **Collective:** This collective has a few members and a size factor of 1.
- **Deploy:** When Gatekeeper Seals enter the scene, give them *tactical-cover-2*.
- **Mythosproof Garment:**
  - » **Passive:** When the Gatekeeper Seal takes a status imposed by a Mythos power, replace its tag with *overload*.
  - » **Active:** As an intrusion, the Gatekeeper Seal can take an *overload* status of any tier to give someone activating Mythos powers against her a temporary *Shrouded* status of the same tier.
  - » **Recharge:** As a soft move (after a player move), the Gatekeeper Seal removes all non-permanent *overload* statuses.
  - » **Overloaded:** When *overload:6* is maxed out, the coat's **Passive** and **Active** defenses fail and can't be used momentarily. After the next player move, remove all non-permanent *overload* statuses.
- **Expert Hand-to-Hand Combatant:** When you engage in close quarters combat with a Gatekeeper Seal, she first hits you with one of her hard moves.
- **Military Discipline:** When a Gatekeeper Seal takes a social or emotional status, reduce its tier by 2.

- Fire a hail of anti-Mythos energy bolts (*sealed-4*)
- Fire standard Mist-anchored ammo, aiming to injure or kill (*gunshot-wound-3* and *sealed-3*)
- Use combat training to physically restrain or hurt a target (*broken-arm-3* or *restrained-3*) or slap an Obliviating ward on them (*vague-memories-3*)
- Slap a Mist-seal on a depowered or defeated Rift (*sealed-5*)
- Regroup (remove up to 2 tiers of negative tactical statuses from herself or allies and give her unit a tier-2 tactical advantage status)
- Activate portable Shrouding beacon (*thick-Mist-1* on the surrounding area; give all Sleepers and fully-depowered Rifts *vague-details-1*)
- Retreat into the Mist (**Deny Them Something They Want**)

- Storm their targets out of a billowing wisp of Mist
- Draw a glowing magical ward with their fingers
- Take aim with a rune-inscribed assault rifle or shotgun



DEPTH 3: THROWING STONES AT A GLASS HOUSE

AURORA GLASSWORKS

Aurora Glassworks is the missing link between the Asylum and Dr. Krystal Knight's greater plot: to use the dark magic she instilled in windows all over the City in order to cover it in an emotional winter. The company can be investigated in multiple locations: online, at the City's company registry, at their offices, employees' homes, etc.

Aurora Glassworks is the only manufacturer of construction glass in the City – it makes all the window panes in the City.

The company's official stance on its major shareholder, Dr. Krystal Knight, is that they assume she died decades ago in the Asylum. They blame the Asylum's staff's incompetency and messy paperwork, possibly even corruption, for the City not having her declared officially dead. The company has been in a long legal battle over this, but since most of its executives have a clear conflict of interest, it seems futile.

If someone investigates the company's factories beyond the Mist, they can find a dormant trace of the Devil's Mirror in every window pane they produce. Further investigation can reveal the same dormant trace in every glass pane in the City.

An elderly retired company executive can vaguely recount the day the shards of Krystal Knight's mirror were brought to the factory for melting. He recalls the air was tense, everyone was nervous, and employees started fights for no reason, breaking glass in the process (he still has a scar). The incident was followed by a wave of employees quitting, divorcing their spouses, getting involved in violence, or taking their own lives.

Based on the above, it can be deduced that **Dr. Knight has some kind of dormant magic in the glass distributed all over town and that she intends to activate it.** An engineer could theorize she could do so by means of a massive shockwave or precise sound waves.

The retired executive or old papertrail could point to the company's original factory, which today stands abandoned. If the PCs investigate the location, they notice shady dealings around it, but inside the place is empty, except for an old, out-of-use furnace. See the Old Aurora Glassworks Factory under *The Furnace*.

THE "SPECIAL" WARD

```
The deserted third floor is a bluish vi-
sion of winter everlasting. All the win-
dows here are broken, the shards of their
shattered panes piled beneath them. Snow
drifts inside, mounting in small banks
against the frozen walls of the corridors
and halls. There is a strange hush all
around, but then you hear the crackle of
glass breaking underfoot. A ghastly bare-
foot patient in nothing but a gown wanders
by, mumbling secretly, ignoring you. You
catch a glimpse of yourself on a piece of
broken glass jutting dangerously from the
window frame, and you hate what you see.
```

The "Special" Ward is Dr. Krystal Knight's villain lair and a potential location for a showdown, whether with Knight or between the PCs. It is a place of hate, especially self-hate that finds an outlet in hurting oneself or others like oneself.

The ward's main line of defense are the Snow Queen's Icicles, a host of emotionally-explosive patients scattered around the ward who function as human landmines. Icicles are patients who started out as hopeful, happy-go-lucky individuals but were betrayed by their loved ones or the circumstances to the ruination of their dreams, and ended up here (reflecting Knight's own journey). Adjust the Icicles' size factor to account for the crew's firepower as well as how many Icicles are in the scene: a hallway could have just a scattering of them (size factor 1) or be full of them (size factor 2), while taking on the entire ward could mean fighting off a blizzard of Icicles (size factor 3).

Unless the crew intentionally cuts through to avoid the effect, spending time in the ward activates the custom move **Dark Thoughts** (see Mending the Broken Therapist Danger profile, page 68). As they walk through the snowscape, PCs and their allies see themselves and those close to them reflected in ice and glass, but the images show them as despicable, pathetic, or malintending; only that which arouses hate is seen. Secret gripes, hidden rivalries, and old grudges surface in their minds. **Ask each player to describe what his character sees and how it affects her.**

As a cinematic instrument, when the crew approaches her treatment room, Dr. Krystal Knight's voice can be heard all around laughing hysterically or speaking maliciously to the PCs (even if she is with them, still pretending to be their ally).

Beyond the Mist, this place is perfusing hatred. The Devil's Mirror symbolism is all around, originating from where Krystal Knight stands, but also showing frozen shards in the hearts of those affected by her hate. Vague images from her life echo here: receiving the mirror, succumbing to self-loathing, smashing the mirror, and her tormenting treatments at the hands of Dr. Monahan.

ICICLES ★+

Icicles are Dr. Krystal Knight's human mines. They just stand there or pace like zombies, captives of their own minds and ignoring each other, but when an intruder invades their space they blow up.

RESTRAIN, KNOCK OUT, OR KILL 2 / DEFUSE 3

- **Collective:** This Danger can have a size factor ranging from 0 (one Icicle) to 3 (an entire floor swarming with Icicles). Every size factor increment increases the Icicles' Danger Rating by ★.
- **High-strung:** When a Icicle enters the scene, give her *high-strung-3*. This status cannot exceed tier 4.

- Scream (*deafened-2*), causing a chain reaction and setting off a group of Icicles one size factor larger (**Complicate Things, Bigtime**)
- Experience a fit of rage and attack someone (*knocked-back-2*, *pinned-2*), freeze someone with her gaze (*frozen-2*), or go through an emotional meltdown (*sad-2*, *guilty-2*)

- Notice an intruder, eyes widening

KRYSTAL KNIGHT'S TREATMENT ROOM

At the center of the third floor lies the room where Krystal Knight was "treated" for decades. This is where she relived her failure with Corbin Payne and her failure in life in general, as she saw it, over and over and over again, her pain developing into self-hatred the likes of which only the Devil's Mirror can engender.

Unless otherwise established, Dr. Krystal Knight is here, either curled up in a corner and mumbling or surveying the messy room authoritatively, pretending to be Dr. Monahan. The room is a converted operating theater, tiled top to bottom and containing various outdated "therapeutic" devices, such as an electric shock rig and a bed with restraining straps; however, the machinery and the bed are overturned, the tiles are cracked or missing, and the place looks like someone had a fit of rage here, many years ago. There are blood stains here and there, and icicles cover the ceiling. On one wall, a wide spectator window stands shattered, providing plenty of glass and reflective surfaces for visual motifs.

If the subject is broached wisely, Dr. Knight may reveal her entire history. Criminal profiling or Mythos abilities that reveal the past can glean most of the important details from Krystal, the treatment room, her attachment to it, etc.

If you are running *Percival* as an overarching case, Krystal will reveal information corresponding to her role as the first, second, or third Grail Knight to be encountered.

CLUES ABOUT THE DOCTOR'S SCHEME

If Dr. Knight is present, she is stalling the crew. She obviously wants to hold them up to prevent them from interfering with another, more important plan she has.

A closer look at the room shows **this isn't just the site of past trauma – it's a lab.** Dr. Krystal Knight was building something here, but whatever it is, it's gone.

The shattered wall tiles, the overturned equipment, and the broken spectator window are all evidence that **a high-power, spherical, sonic blast was emitted in the room.**

KRYSTAL KNIGHT ★★★★★

Krystal Knight looks like a woman in her late 40s. Depending on the circumstances of her meeting with the crew, she may appear as a patient in a straitjacket, dishevelled and maniacal, or she could be in the role of the therapist, in a dignified suit (although in the case of the latter, this facade may quickly crack to reveal the former). Sometimes her gaze is empty and numb, as if she had taken all the pain she could have; other times, it is a squall of arctic hate for everyone and everything.

Maximum Danger Rating: As a Grail Knight, Krystal is a formidable foe. Consider providing the players with enough warnings about her nature before they face her or, alternatively, reducing her challenge level. If they haven't done so yet, the crew may recruit psychologists and psychics to help confront her. Multiple encounters may be required to defeat this villain, some of which may end badly for the crew.

Compelling to Hate: Knight's hate statuses are compelling effects. When a PC takes such a status, ask the player what it makes his character want to do (presumably hurt herself or others). Any action to the contrary treats the hate status as a negative status. At tier-5 the character is compelled to take such actions, and at tier-6 the character is permanently consumed by hatred, transforming into a villain or taking immediate action to kill herself (player's choice).

Healing Krystal Knight: As with all the failed Grail Knights, Krystal Knight bears a deep emotional wound inflicted by the Fisher King, called **the Dolorous Stroke**, represented by a tier-6 status. Only a **Stop. Holding. Back.** move may affect this status: releasing Dr. Knight from the effects of the Dolorous Stroke for one scene requires a no-return sacrifice, while curing such a wound altogether requires the ultimate sacrifice. Optionally, you may allow a *Dynamite!* **Change the Game** move to reduce the tier-6 status for the duration of a scene.

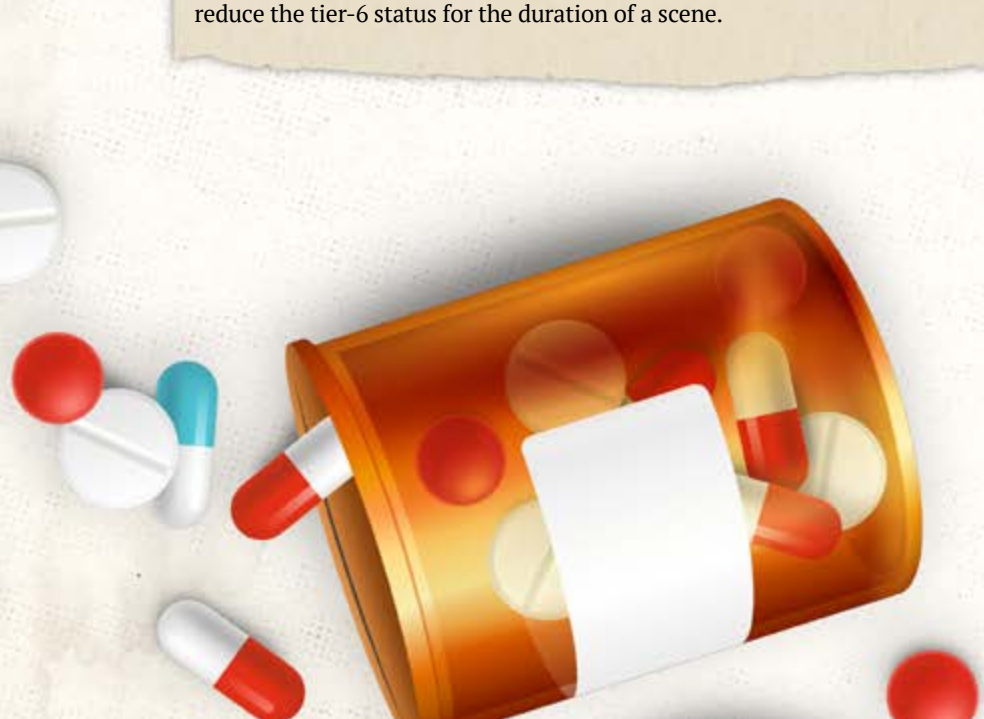
Ultimately, the solution to the Krystal Knight problem should be narrative. If you're playing the story arc, it should point to Corbin Payne – if he gave the wound, maybe he can cure it; if he is cured, maybe Krystal Knight will be cured too; etc. If the crew cannot heal her or destroy her yet, they may wish to contain her in her shattered state somehow.

SHATTER 6 / SEDATE – / HEAL –

- **The Dolorous Stroke:** When anyone tries to heal or comfort Krystal Knight for the first time in the series, give her *the-Dolorous-Stroke-6*.
- **Awaken the Demons:** When you make a move around Krystal Knight, she first makes you remember everything you loathe about yourself (*self-hatred-4*).
- **Mentally Impenetrable:** When Krystal Knight takes a social or emotional status, reduce its tier by 3.
- **Pick up the Pieces:** When Krystal Knight's *shatter:6* maxes out, she shatters into a million glass pieces. Giver her *reform:4*. She can take *reforming-1* as a soft move. When *reform:4* maxes out, remove all statuses from *reform* and *shatter*.

- Touch someone where it hurts the most with just a stare, a word, or a sound (*self-hatred-4*)
- Urge someone to hurt another (give a PC 3 Hurt points against a fellow PC or *hateful-3*)
- Make a poignant psychological observation that disarms someone of their mental defenses or overload psychic defenses until they shatter (burn up to two relevant tags or reduce the tier of a relevant status by two)
- If she's done with someone or is threatened by them, freeze their blood in their veins (*frozen-5*) or use glass manipulation to cut them up (*fatal-cut-5*)

- Switch between weeping, laughing hysterically, and delivering a furious diatribe



DEPTH 4:
SHOVELING THE HEART'S SNOW

A BLIZZARD OF HATE

The ambulance gallops down the main street, its sirens blaring to warn drivers to get out of its way. You follow in hot pursuit, watching anxiously as the vehicle in front of you makes a sharp turn on its two left wheels, back doors flapping and flailing to reveal a nurse bracing another siren-like contraption. You floor it, racing to cut the ambulance off. Whatever this thing in the back does, you need to stop it from reaching the City.

Whether they realize it during Dr. Knight's final dramatic speech or through piecing the evidence together, sooner or later the PCs learn that Knight's plans are much greater than Mending the Broken. Using the magical shards of the Devil's Mirror, the doctor has planted the seeds of hatred all over town, in the window panes manufactured by Aurora Glassworks over the years. Next, she intends to set off a sonic "bomb" that will shatter all of those windows, activating their dormant component and covering the City with a snow that freezes not just the bones, but also the heart.

THE BOMB

Recently perfected by the doctor, the sonic bomb is a device that emits a high-pitched scream loaded with so much hatred, that it can shatter all the windows in town, assuming it is set off close enough to the City center. The contraption is the size and shape of an outdated manual siren, and, by the time the crew finds out, it is already being loaded to the back of the Asylum's "mental health services" **ambulance** by a couple of nurses. The ambulance then races toward the City; if it is not stopped, the bomb will go off by itself when it arrives within earshot of a major plaza Downtown.

SCREAM BOMB AMBULANCE ★★★

DECOMMISSION 5 / CATCH 5 / GET IN POSITION 3

- **Vehicle:** When the nurses driving the Scream Bomb Ambulance disembark, create a new Danger: Asylum Nurses. This happens automatically when *decommission* is maxed out, but the Nurses take *hurt-1*.
- **Scream Bomb:** When *get-in-position* maxes out, the scream bomb goes off.

- Draw nearer and nearer to its target (*getting-closer-1*)
- Take sharp turns and drive on the sidewalk to shake off pursuers (remove 2 tiers from statuses on the *catch* spectrum)
- Clear a path for itself in traffic (remove up to three traffic related tags or tiers)
- Once per scene, fire a rocket launcher at vehicles in pursuit (*blown-up-4*, vehicles nearby take *dented-and-bent-2*)

- Accelerate, racing toward the City center

IF THE BOMB GOES OFF

When the sonic device goes off, a painful and shrill scream fills the air all over the City. Everyone in the immediate vicinity of the ambulance takes *deafened-5*. More importantly, all the glass on the street or on



A SECOND BOMB?

Depending on the tone of your campaign and the crew's success and failure so far, you may want to have Krystal Knight plant a second bomb (or dozens more bombs) elsewhere in the City. Even if the crew disables one bomb, they have to go to greater lengths if they are to save the entire City.

building exteriors in the City shatters into microscopic snowflake-shaped shards, showering the City with a blizzard of glass-made snow. Amplified by the Devil's Mirror magic, this snow quickly covers the City; this Devil snow is freezing cold, but being made of glass it doesn't melt (unless exposed to the extreme heat required to melt glass). Furthermore, coming in contact with the snow or even feeling the cold it causes distorts people's perception so that they see only what is negative and ugly around them. This affects everyone in the City, not just Rifts.

How this affects the City is up to you. Two options are:

- **Harsh Winter of the Heart:** The blizzard has an ongoing effect over the City that continues through the next cases you play. City folk become increasingly hateful, distrustful, and negative, making it hard to conduct business and have relationships. Murder and suicide rates go through the roof. The City itself takes *a-blizzard-of-hate-1* which affects actions related to human interactions and mobility in the City. At the end of every downtime, increase the tier by 1.
- **All-Out Dog-Eat-Dog Mayhem:** The blizzard is a one-shot event that threatens to destroy the City. Anyone who comes in contact with the snow instantly becomes a hate-filled maniac (*hateful-4*). Untreated extended exposure makes this hate all-consuming (tier 5) and then permanent (tier 6). Some may take to the streets to kill their fellow citizens before they are killed, while others will seek shelter only to find they have their own self-hatred to contend with. Within days, perhaps even hours, the City's social structures collapse.

The PCs can reduce or remove the status in certain areas of the City with a *Dynamite!* **Change The Game** move with the large-scale effect option, but removing it from the entire City requires a narrative solution, such as convincing Krystal Knight to end the storm, recruiting a small army of like-minded Rifts to work in tandem and melt the mirror shards, or a **Stop. Holding. Back.** move with a no-return or ultimate sacrifice (MC's call).

AFTERMATH

Here are a few questions to consider and points to revisit when you wrap up this case:

- Did the bomb go off or was the blizzard of hate planned by Krystal Knight averted? If it did go off, the City will have to cope with this traumatic event in the weeks, months, or even years to come. If the crisis was averted, does the crew gain reputation among Sleepers or in the Rift underworld? Did they discover that the Devil's Mirror magic is infused into glass all over town, and if so, how do they plan to defuse it?
- What was the end of Dr. Krystal Knight, the Grail Knight? Was she killed, imprisoned, or shattered and contained? Was she healed and now must honorably face all the destruction and pain she has caused? Did she escape or even win the battle, and now plans her next move on the City from her lair? What will be her part in the greater fight against Corbin Payne?
- How did the crew and their supporting cast come out of this intensely emotional episode (and sub-arc)? Were relationships irreversibly damaged? Was this an opportunity for crew members to work through their issues? Did some of them embrace or reject their Rifthood more than before?
- What happened to the Mending the Broken victims Felicia Pema Jones and Ruben Stone (as well as Martha Ellis and Maximillian Drake)? Did they bounce back and find their place as Rifts? Were they able to cleanse their minds of the toxic thoughts instilled in them by their hate-mongering therapists? Did some of them try to confront their abuser or even seek revenge?
- How did the organization of Mending the Broken come out of this? Is it still operating and deceiving Rifts or did the crew make a point of shutting it down? If they lost their boss, did Mending the Broken practitioners disperse and revert back to Sleepers or did they awaken independently? Did they find a new Rift to keep them awake? What is their relation to Rifts after all this?
- And the Asylum – does it continue to operate? Is it time to shut down this atrocious institute or modernize it and turn it into an actual place of healing? Or does the crew decide they need a new prison for their unhinged villains?



THE MYSTICAL VEIN

"The fire goes out only when the Work is accomplished and the whole tinctorial mass impregnates the glass, which, from decantation to decantation, remains absolutely saturated and becomes luminous like the sun."

– *Le Mystere des Cathedrales*, an old alchemical text by Fulcanelli, Master Alchemist

OVERVIEW OF THIS VEIN

The alchemist **ARMAND KAI** (Fulcanelli, a fabled master alchemist whose true identity is unknown) came to Corbin Payne seeking the Grail and everlasting life. Instead, the Fisher King revealed to him the king's own festering wound, laying bare and amplifying Armand's fear of aging and of death. The Fisher King then gave Armand a drop of the liquid that was in the Grail, containing a fraction of the Grail's miraculous powers, and sent the alchemist to find a cure for his wound.

Whether to save himself from the burden of old age or to cure Corbin Payne, Armand Kai began to frantically seek the Philosopher's Stone, or the Elixir of Life, an alchemical means to immortality. He confined himself to **CANSELIET MANOR**, his expansive walled-off estate on the edge of the Old Quarter, where he conducted strange experiments. Decades went by and he grew older, although he was able to slow the process of aging using the powers of the Grail Water. But time was pressing. Just when Armand was about to despair, he unlocked the secret of the Grail Water: it had the power to awaken Sleepers to their Mythos.

This was the key: by awakening individuals to their Mythos, Armand could create a legendary person, creature, or substance that could impart longevity, perhaps even immortality. To provide him with fresh candidates for experimentation, he founded a false cult, **MAGNUM OPUS** ("the Great Work" of the Alchemists), selling an alchemical path to enlightenment while in truth using the naive recruits as subjects for awakening.

Within Magnum Opus, the naive recruits destined for awakening are called "Lambs". The more unscrupulous and cutthroat recruits, the "Wolves", are spared the forced awakening and are allowed to climb up the ranks of the cult to become Armand's **DISCIPLES**, whom he teaches basic transmutations of alchemical elements.

Once awakened, Lambs are cast into the fires of **THE GLASSWORKS FURNACE**, which can strip a Rift from their Mythos powers (an invention of Armand with the Rift of the Gingerbread Witch). The unrefined product of the process, a thick liquid called **ICHOR**, contains the essence of the Rift's former Mythos powers, which Armand can transform into a **TINCTURE**. Anyone who holds the tincture of a Mythos can control its powers as if they were its Rift.

Armand arms his strongest allies with useful tinctures. When the Rift of the Gingerbread Witch was herself cast into the furnace by the Rift of Gretel, **RACHEL WOODS**, Armand gave Woods the tincture of her predecessor's powers and charged her with operating the furnace. A self-promoting crook, Woods started marketing a new drug called **CANDY** to lure Rifts to her furnace, add to Armand's victims, and make more Ichor for him and money for herself.

Armand is searching specifically for tinctures that can point him at the Philosopher's Stone and life everlasting. He conducts his experiments at his lab in the depths of his manor, now a complex built to take visitors (and interlopers) through a process of alchemical decomposition and reconstruction. The manor also serves as a base of operations for Magnum Opus' most advanced Disciples. Armand intends to continue to deceive more and more innocent seekers, forcefully awaken them, and then burn them in the furnace until he finds what he seeks.

THE MYSTICAL VEIN AS THE CREW'S ORIGIN STORY

You can use Armand Kai's operation, which is in the business of creating Rifts, as an origin story for some of your crew members or all of them. Crew members may have been awakened by Magnum Opus, in which case all they remember is joining a cult or being abducted, being anointed by hooded figures in a cavernous hall while tied to a stone altar, and eventually escaping. If your group wants to enhance the mystery, you may decide that they don't know what happened to them at all, and that due to the proximity to their awakening, their memories are blurred or blocked out altogether.

You can also play through the crew's awakening scene, either at the beginning of the story arc or in the middle, as a flashback, when someone recalls it. Set the scene at the Catacombs (see the case *Cult of the God-King*, page 146) and give the players a brief recap of what happened to their characters so far. Let them play as their Sleepers versions, without using tags from Mythos themes, improvements, or Moments of Evolution. Once they are anointed by the Magnum Opus cultist monks, each character can use her basic Mythos powers. (The number of Mythos themes doesn't matter here; technically, the PC may have been awakened and instantly became a Legendary. Decide which powers are at her disposal based on the narrative.) You can even decide that everyone awakening has just one nascent theme (see *Player's Guide*, Playing the Awakening, page 65, and Nascent Themes, page 265).

THEMES AND MOTIFS

- **Mystical Shenanigans:** The Mystical Vein explores the section of the Rift underworld that takes special interest in the occult and the supernatural. It combines the mystery of the magical arts with a modern setting: hooded cultists meet in abandoned candle-lit subway tunnels, ancient scripts glow bright when read aloud, and mystics in business suits vie for control over coveted artifacts. The cases in this vein are written in the spirit of the urban fantasy genre.
- **Alchemical Process:** Everything in Armand Kai's operation is built around an ancient alchemical process and its four stages: blackening (rotting), whitening (purification), yellowing (awakening), and reddening (transformation). On the surface, this alchemical process refers to the transmutation of lead into gold; in its deeper meaning, it refers to the transformation of the human soul, the possible transition from Sleeper to Rift, and the discovery of one's true nature.
- **Self-Preservation and Greed:** Armand Kai's morbid fear of dying drives him to rob and hoard other human beings' Mythoi (or souls) as if they were a resource to be consumed, and those in his service are no different. This vein features self-promoting disciples, hired-guns, and underworld hustlers who harden their hearts in the face of others' suffering so that they can survive.
- **Seeking a Higher Truth:** Conversely, many of the NPCs in this vein are in search for secret knowledge or a mystical experience that will bring about a transformation, either within them or in the world around them (some are also the aforementioned greedy servants of Armand Kai).

ARMAND KAI'S ALCHEMY

TINCTURES

Armand's alchemy is an alchemy of Mythoi. With it, he learned how to transfer Mythos powers from a human Rift to a Relic, a liquid Tincture. The process of extracting raw Ichor from Rifts and its effects are described in *The Furnace* (page 88); Armand then has to create the Tincture himself using his own alchemical Mythos powers and the Grail Water.

Any Sleeper in possession of a Tincture becomes awakened by it (in the same way a Sleeper is awakened by a Relic) and after a while learns to use its powers as her own. Armand can attune a Tincture to a person, forcing its Mythos to serve the bearer. This attunement doesn't limit others from using the Tincture – Tinctures are too volatile to be so contained – but simply makes it easier for a specific person to control the Tincture. Sleepers who have an unattuned Tincture or a Tincture attuned to someone else may still use it, but only if the Mythos chooses them as its bearers, the reasons for which are always shrouded in mystery.

When a Rift tries to activate a Tincture, her Mythos interacts with the Mythos in the Tincture. The result can be a clash, causing a painful backlash; complete denial, preventing her from using one or both power sets; or, very rarely, a synergy, allowing her to use both power sets or a new power set arising from their union. Possessing a synergetic Tincture does not allow a player to add Mythos themes. At best, it grants them a temporary extra theme (use the Relic themebook but follow the Extra theme rules, making tags crispy). To retain the Tincture as a permanent extra theme, the player must spend a Moment of Evolution, or, possibly, sacrifice an existing extra theme (MC's call). To adopt the Relic as a Mythos theme, the player must lose a Logos theme as usual or, possibly, sacrifice an existing Mythos theme (MC's call).

Transfering a Mythos from a Tincture back into its original host is a theoretical process as of yet unattempted by Armand (he never had any intention of giving back what he stole). It requires the Alchemist himself or someone of equal arcane knowledge as well as extensive ritual and alchemical preparations. Attempting this process is highly dangerous and unpredictable, and, from a cinematic perspective, requires some kind of sacrifice (most likely a no-return **Stop. Holding. Back.** roll). Forcing a Tincture Mythos into a host who isn't its original Rift is a thousand times more difficult. Restoring a Mythos to its original host without the Tincture is a feat of a lifetime, of which only the mightiest beings are capable.

If the magician in question has some of the Grail Water in their possession (following *Cult of the God King*) or all of it (following *The Alchemist*), and if they can comprehend its mysterious nature, it may help with reducing the difficulty of any of the above procedures.

TRANSMUTATIONS

Armand also turns loyal cultist Sleepers into Touched minions – his Disciples – by teaching them the alchemical arts, called Transmutations. At a basic level, each disciple is taught how to transmute a single alchemical element, such as brimstone, quicksilver, lead, fire, or earth and is able to magically move this element and change its formation.


CITY OF MIST
THE
FURNACE
AN ILL-FATED CASE OF SWEET TEMPTATIONS AND STOLEN DREAMS

A new drug has hit the streets of the City, a *special* drug for *special* people like you. It is said to make your sweetest dreams come true, but as it takes over the secret world of modern legends, new cases of missing persons crop up faster than you can solve them. Some of the missing are soon found, wretched and empty, lacking the will to live. As you set out to find what's cooking in the dark wet lanes of the City, will you take a chance on your dreams and adopt this toothsome new fad?

The Furnace is a crime drama case which explores a new trend in the secret underworld of Rifts in the City: a wish-fulfilling substance. This so-called "Candy" is readily available to the PCs, putting their personal desires and aspirations, as well as their private lives as Rifts, in the limelight. As the crew uncovers a Mythos-powered drug ring across the Rift underworld, each PC will be able to play through this case as a detective, a victim of their desires, or both.

The trail of temptations is laid by a modern-day witch who plans to harvest the Rifts' Mythos. This mystical motive behind the drug ring is only revealed at the end of the case, connecting it with the rest of the Mystical Vein.

THE ORIGINAL GINGERBREAD HOUSE

When alchemist Armand Kai perfected the process of awakening new Rifts, he turned to find a way to extract their Mythos powers from them. Sending letters and messages to his fellow mad scientists and sorcerers of the Rift underworld, he was referred to **Rosina Leckermaul** (The Gingerbread Witch from *Hansel & Gretel*), who was an expert in roasting people in her oven and sucking the essence out of them. Together, Armand and Leckermaul built **a Mythos-extracting furnace** in an old glassworks factory (the original Aurora Glassworks factory, see *Broken Glass*, page 62). Leckermaul also used her powers to create a wish-fulfilling substance called **Candy** that she used to lure poor souls to her furnace.

Once a Rift was enticed by Candy to enter the Gingerbread House Enclave in the glassworks factory, they found themselves magically caged and forced into the furnace. Rifts who were cooked in the new furnace didn't die; instead, they lost their powers and became Sleepers again, lacking any Mythos, even a dormant one. Their animating force torn out of them, they were left feeling empty and lacking a sense of purpose. The essence of their Mythos powers turned into **Ichor**, which Leckermaul shipped back to Armand's manor in return for some valuable Tinctures.

The operation was running smoothly, for the most part. Thanks to the Mist, victims forgot about their entire addiction period and the subsequent kidnapping and no one was asking questions. Every now and again the cooking process would go wrong, leaving the former Rift a mindless burnt creature, oozing neutral white Ichor. Leckermaul kept these hungry "factory rejects", nicknamed them **Gingerbread Men** for their rust and white colors, and used them as another line of defense in her factory: they would catch any snoopy or escaped Rifts running around the glassworks and feed on their essence.

ROLE REVERSAL

Unfortunately for Leckermaul, her Candy also drew the attention of a pair of young Rift go-getters, the street-rat siblings **Hans and Rachel Woods**. The inexperienced duo fell for the Candy and were captured, but when Rachel was pushed in the furnace she used her powers to switch places with Leckermaul, who burned, shutting down the furnace's powers.

When the **Magnum Opus cultists** (Armand's Disciples) came to collect the Ichor, they were ready to kill Hans and Rachel; instead, Rachel cut a deal with them: the alchemist will provide her with the Gingerbread Witch Tincture, granting her Leckermaul's powers, and she'll continue to operate the furnace for him, but this time with a much better output. Woods was going to incorporate her brother's Mythos traceback powers (the ability to find his way home) into the drugs to lead Candy users back to her, by showing them a trail of moonlit pebbles that led to the Enclave.

Armand accepted, the Gingerbread Witch Tincture was made, and the furnace was once again operational under the leadership of Rachel Woods. Rosina Leckermaul, now a Sleeper, was sent home to live a life of meaninglessness, staring out the window all day. Hans, who had other ambitions and a dollop of conscience, got hooked on Candy trying to repress it all.



RACHEL'S OPERATION

Rachel produces pure Candy in the Gingerbread House Enclave. The substance is transported to the Candy drug lab, operated by **the Underhand Naga Gang**, where it is cut with real candy and packed. Candy is then distributed using Leckermaul's previous network of dealers, run by the drug dealer Foxy Supreme (The Cadmean Vixen, an uncatchable giant fox which plagued the city of Thebes) and using Touched minions who can tell Rifts from Sleepers and sell only to them (Sleepers would think Candy is just candy, anyway, and it won't have any effect on them).

RECENT VICTIMS

Victims of the furnace usually acquire Candy in the same way they would acquire illegal recreational drugs. Candy fulfils their wishes to a certain degree but the result is always insufficient or ephemeral, driving them to seek more. When they do, Hans' traceback magic shows them the way to the furnace. They disappear for 24-48 hours, showing up listless and depowered thereafter.

In the past month, the furnace has increased its production thanks to Rachel's gung-ho mentality, the Gingerbread Witch Tincture, and Hans' traceback magic. Its latest victims are:

- **Still Using Candy: Charlie Littles**, a 7-year-old Rift of the Voodoo Doll (the pop-culture version, having little to do with the real Voodoo practice) who stole Candy from another user and used it to get more toys. He'll run out within a few days, so he's looking for adults to gain access to more.
- **Missing: Will Harris**, a single mom from the Blue-Collar Residential, was the Rift of Wilhelm Tell (the Swiss folk hero who shot an apple off his son's head). She used Candy to give her son and her a better life for a while but when it ran out she ended up in the furnace. She will show up again within 24 hours, depowered and with no memory of any of it.
- **Returned Depowered: Juan Delamar**, previously the Rift of Ningyo (a Japanese fish-human sea creature) and a gold-medalist swimmer, returned home after two days without his powers. His swimming team coach is at a loss.

There are many more ex-Rifts who have returned powerless, but their stories are not covered in this case. In addition, Leckermaul and Hans are two victims or would-be victims that are still at large in the City, but break the usual pattern:

- **Didn't Use Candy but Returned Depowered:** The elderly **Rosina Leckermaul**, until recently a cut-throat drug manufacturer and trafficker and the Rift of the Gingerbread Witch, is now housebound and spends her days staring emptily into space.
- **Returned Unchanged: Hans Woods**, a DJ whose fame skyrocketed through the continued use of Candy, is the only Candy user who returned with more Candy after his disappearance and kept his powers.

Rachel Woods now lives in the Gingerbread House Enclave.

CANDY

Candy is a designer substance created specifically to attract Rifts to the furnace. It does so by fulfilling the user's wishes for a short period of time. Candy is, in fact, chemically non-addictive, so it isn't a drug per se; it relies on the user's own desire for fulfillment to drive them to acquire more Candy. When the user ends up in the glasswork factory, Candy really kicks in: it allows the user to enter the Gingerbread House Enclave and traps them in a magical, psychedelic cage, preparing them for the furnace.

In its latest version, Candy contains some of Hans Woods' Mythos powers, showing a user in need of more Candy a path of glowing moonlit pebbles which leads to the old Aurora Glassworks factory and from there into the Gingerbread House Enclave, where the furnace awaits and the user is magically trapped.

The pure Candy substance – a glowing blue powder – is laced into real candy at the Candy drug lab and sold wrapped and branded with a storybook decorative letter "C".

USING CANDY

When the user consumes Candy, their most eminent wish is fulfilled. This could be winning the lottery, falling in love, causing ruin to another, etc. Cinematically, Candy has limited power. It can grant the greatest wishes, as long as they don't exceed the power of a single story tag. Therefore, it does not have the power to harm or alter a significant character in a single wish, although it can be used to alter reality in a way that is conducive to that (e.g., materialize a gun which can then be used to shoot someone). Be liberal with what Candy can do, e.g., you may allow a PC whose loved one died to bring them back from the dead, for real, briefly.

When Candy is used to wish for something that is beyond its power, it fizzles out and causes cosmetic reality disruptions; the user gets the clear impression that they need more Candy to realize their wish. Candy cannot be used to make more Candy; it's designed that way.

Candy always loses its effect within a short period of time, between hours and days, depending on the wish made and cinematic considerations. When it begins to expire, fulfilled wishes begin to fail or fade away, e.g., materialized items malfunction, social power wanes, etc. Here too, the user feels more Candy is needed to maintain her wish. When this happens, see Trippin'.

Use Candy as a cinematic device to trigger the crew members' Mysteries and Identities and put their deepest or most superficial desires in the spotlight.

INVESTIGATING CANDY

A PC with appropriate mundane training, a sample of Candy, and enough time in the lab can garner some information about the drug, while Rifts with knowledge of the magical arts, especially alchemy and herbalism, could learn even more.

> The product is real candy, laced with an unrecognized psycho-active compound.

> An analysis of trace narcotic residue in the wrapper indicates Candy is handled in the same environment with other drugs, probably by a local drug ring. An exceptional investigator spending multiple Clues could link the specific narcotic with a known drug cartel, the Underhand Naga Gang, narrowing down the search after the Candy drug lab.

> **Looking Beyond the Mist** or applying legendary skills could help identify that the substance contains a form of low-grade wish-fulfillment magic. A well-phrased Clue question could reveal there are some strings attached to the wish fulfillment, but discovering what they are is difficult, producing only vague images of the Gingerbread House.

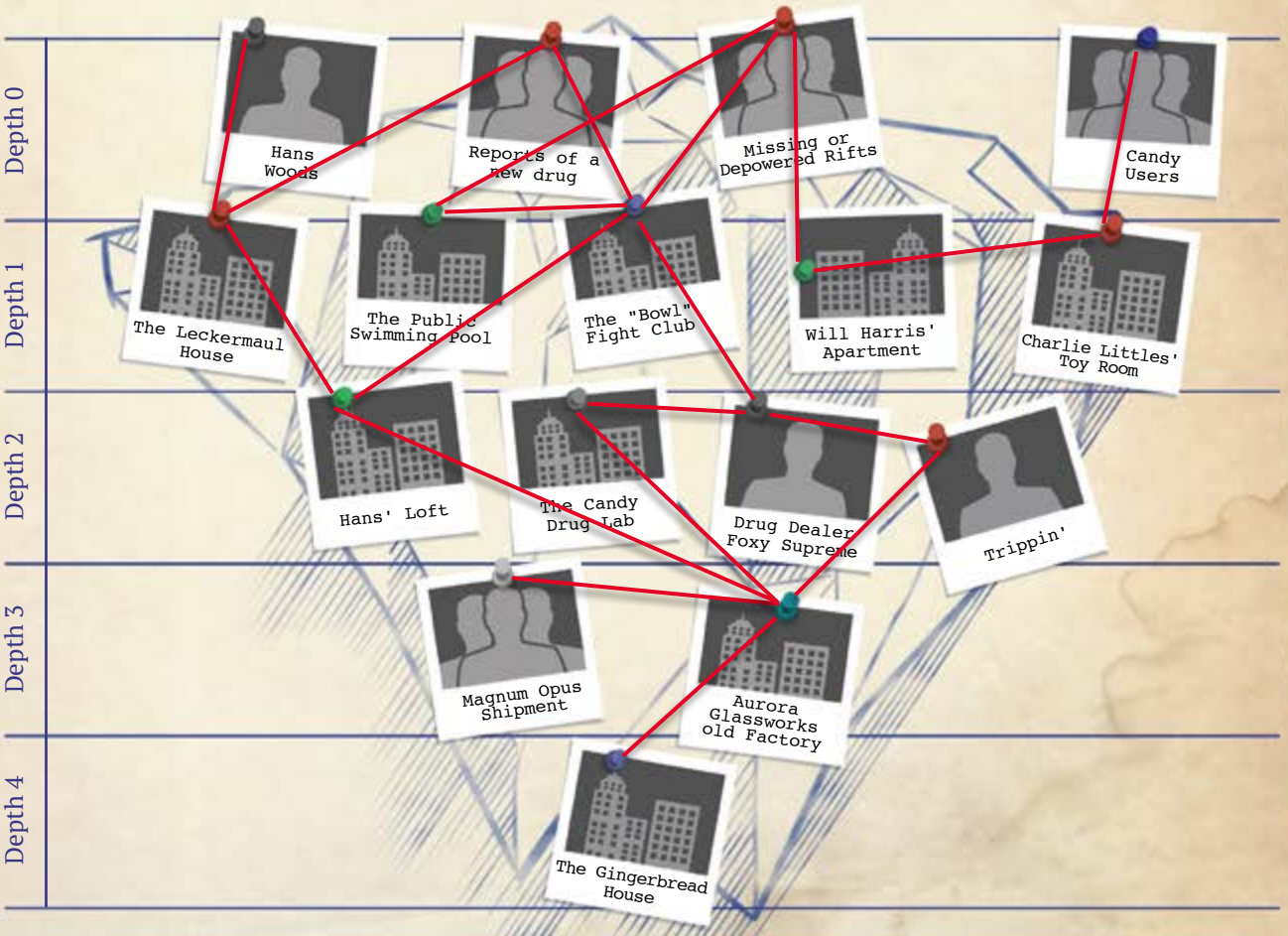
> **Looking Beyond the Mist** may also reveal a connection to Hans' Mythos (moonlit pebbles) or the Gingerbread Witch Mythos (burning oven).

To reveal the full properties of Candy, a PC must invest some time and resources. Give the Candy *unidentified substance* and *hidden magic* to make the investigation harder. If a PC spends downtime investigating the substance, adjust the information you reveal based on the appropriate abilities, skills, and/or equipment they use.

GAME EFFECTS

When Candy is consumed by a PC, give that PC an ongoing story tag describing their fulfilled wish, such as *a millionaire*. As ongoing tags, Candy-derived tags can be burned for a hit. For Dangers, choose hard MC moves to match their wish.

Keep track of the characters who use Candy. Candy users can enter the Gingerbread House Enclave through the glassworks factory, while non-users cannot. Furthermore, every character who has taken Candy becomes *caged-4* upon entering the Enclave, without **Facing Danger**. If the PCs discover this effect before entering the Enclave and try to prevent it from happening, it requires a **Change the Game** move and spending 1 Juice on a special 10+ effect improvement to allow them to remove an effect that is only there in potential. Tampering with Candy to allow access to the Enclave without the adverse effects requires a PC with appropriate abilities to **Stop. Holding. Back.** with a significant or no-return sacrifice (see Entering the Enclave, page 105).



THE ICEBERG

DEPTH 0:
THE HOOKS

The crew may become involved in the case in the following ways:

- **Reports of a new drug hitting the streets:** The crew may be informed that someone is aggressively pushing a new drug. This information could come from criminal or underworld contacts, awakened police officers (like Officer Das, see *Killing Her Softly*), or a concerned **Eddie Dreamtime**, owner of the Bowl fight club for Rifts. The informant doesn't know much about the new drug; they may even be Sleepers feeding off rumors. Word on the street is that this drug makes your wishes come true and that it's marketed under the brand name "Candy". Less likely but possible, investigating with criminal contacts may also turn up the name of Rosina Leckermaul as the trafficker involved with Candy, pointing to the Leckermaul house.
- **Missing or depowered Rifts:** As Rifts continue to disappear and show up again without their powers, someone might alert the crew. A fellow clubber from the Bowl fight club who knows Will Harris could approach the crew asking for help finding her (Will Harris' apartment). Coach Bradley Ferrell (Sleeper), Juan Delamar's swimming coach could invite the crew to come see him at the public swimming pool and ask them for help figuring out what the hell happened to his best swimmer. Supporting cast Rifts could also go missing and return depowered or the crew may seek a way to depower a villain or Nemesis, making it personal.
- **Candy users:** Rifts just starting their journey with Candy are causing some wild changes to reality around them, potentially drawing the crew's attention. Desperate suburban housewives climb to the top of the neighborhood's social ladder overnight, while business people rattle the stock exchange with surprising windfall wins. This uncanny good fortune is usually short-lived, sending the user to seek Candy again. Ideally, have a dealer offer a crew member or

one of the crew's supporting cast some Candy, starting them on the path to addiction and setting them up as Rachel Woods' next victim. The crew may also catch word of a kid who can get any toy he wants, leading them to Charlie Littles' toy room.

- **Hans Woods**, who has been feeling increasing pangs of remorse for his and his sister's involvement with the furnace operations, may try to manipulate the crew into shutting down his sister's operation. While he wants her out of the Ichor business, he's afraid to confront her himself and wants to avoid any repercussions from Magnum Opus, so he wants to use the crew to take the heat. More than anything, he wants to keep his sister safe. Hans will pretend to be Leckermaul's grandson and approach the crew saying his grandmother isn't what she used to be: she transformed from a zesty woman into a zombie overnight (pointing the crew to the Leckermaul House). He will then keep his distance, watching the crew's investigation from afar, until the investigation points back to him or leads the crew to the glassworks factory. **Note that exposing Hans to the crew early in the case requires some finesse in the dispensing of clues and a poker face to pull off.**



DEPTH 1: A SWEET TOOTH

This Depth offers several locations and cases of Candy users for the crew to investigate. To pace the investigation, you may wish to hold off on clues that lead to the second Depth and instead point the crew to other locations in this first Depth, allowing them to put together a better picture of the Candy epidemic. If the crew hits a dead end, use additional Hooks to direct them to the remaining Depth 1 locations.

THE LECKERMAUL HOUSE

Birds chirp and whistle around you as you pass the white-picket fence of the Old Quarter house into a flowering garden. Overhead, the sky is clear with a handful of wooly clouds floating serenely. When you approach, you spot Mrs. Leckermaul sitting by the window, looking at you intently, and taking a sip from a steaming mug. It's only when you move closer that you realize she isn't looking at you; she's just staring emptily into space.

The Leckermaul house is a darling little cottage surrounded by a garden and a fence in a residential part of the Old Quarter. The scene here serves to build suspense and provide foreshadowing, introducing a victim of the furnace who lost her powers. At this point in the investigation the crew is unlikely to reveal Leckermaul's greater involvement in the case, but they may return here later to follow up.

Rosina Leckermaul is an elderly woman who seemed to have lost the will to live and is in a deep state of depression. She doesn't respond when addressed, although she may mumble to herself (never providing any useful information). She goes about her daily business doing the bare minimum to survive and spends her time mostly staring out the window at the garden.

Up until a month ago, Leckermaul was the Gingerbread Witch and a nefarious drug trafficker working with Magnum Opus. She maintained this house as a facade to keep the cops off her back. Then she was fooled by a little devil called Rachel Woods. Her Mythos was taken away by the furnace she herself built and she turned into a Sleeper, forgetting it all. The last thing she remembers is walking back home, but she can't even recall where she was coming from. Leckermaul's former employees remember her only if they are Rifts (or Touched by one); Sleeper members of her drug ring, most notably the Underhand Naga Gang, have long forgotten her.

RESTORING THE VICTIMS OF THE FURNACE

Victims of the furnace are changed permanently, affected by a tier-6 status. The ways to restore their Mythos to them, usually involving the Tincture of their Mythos, are described under the Mystical Vein (page 84). If a PC has the ability to counter the effects of the Mist, they may be able to restore the victim's memories, but not her powers. This should be on par with a significant **Stop. Holding. Back.** sacrifice if the victim will recall only some useful details, or a greater sacrifice if she is to reveal critical information.

Leckermaul is just a nice old granny who is more than a little forgetful. This contradicts and puts into question any reports about her previously leading an active lifestyle (Hans) or the life of a drug trafficker (street contacts).

In the locked basement there is a strange assortment of cages, some big enough to hold a person, which may indicate that there is more to Leckermaul than meets the eye. They haven't been used in many weeks, perhaps months.

In the washing machine there are a black leather jacket, a white tank top, and a pair of black leather pants the size of Leckermaul, still smelling smoky. She doesn't recognize this outfit.

Going into Leckermaul's phone records a month back could potentially connect her with drug dealer Foxy Supreme or the Underhand Naga Gang at the Candy drug lab. However, with the Mist having had time to erode this information, records may be *corrupted-3*.

Beyond the Mist, Leckermaul is a Sleeper and the house has no Mythos. However, there is a very faint trace of the Gingerbread Witch Mythos on her. It's not *her* Mythos, per se, but something from a different source. See The Furnace Trace sidebar.

Magically tracing back Leckermaul's steps or past would show her walking back home with a younger woman dressed in a white fur coat and a sparkly mini dress. (This is drug dealer Foxy Supreme who previously worked for her and walked her back home after the furnace incident.)

If Hans is around, he will stick to his story of being Leckermaul's grandson and caring for her since the incident.

Until six weeks ago, Hans was a z-class DJ playing a set or two a month in obscure bars. He was then discovered by the scene and rose to fame overnight, playing in the hottest clubs.

Hans doesn't seem to know his way around the house, as one would expect a regular visitor. He can't find the glasses in the cupboard to offer the crew a drink and gets confused when he guides them around.

Reading Hans will reveal he is lying about some or all of his story, and that he has a different agenda here. **If he is exposed,** Hans will share information to appear trustworthy and keep his cover: he'll 'admit' to being after more Candy and say he came here because Leckermaul used to make the stuff. **If he is coerced to speak**, he will likewise disclose information about the person who sells Candy (drug dealer Foxy Supreme) to keep his own involvement hidden.

Following Hans could lead to the Bowl fight club or to Hans' loft.

THE FURNACE TRACE

While it is very faint, the furnace does leave a Mythos footprint on the Rifts it transforms into Sleepers. Beyond the Mist this manifests as visions of a burning oven. It's a small detail, but one that could potentially unlock the case and therefore should be awarded to alert players.

The first time the crew investigates such a victim and **Looks Beyond the Mist** or uses arcane investigative skills, you can give it candidly while still keeping it vague. When investigating subsequent victims, only share this clue if a PC is looking for the trace specifically.

HANS ★

Hans is a big-boned, energetic young man with a sandy mop of hair, usually seen in surfer wear and sporting a carry-all or backpack with some of his DJ gear. His vocal fry and stoner jargon make most assume that he has more than experimented with recreational drugs.

Hans' powers allow him to find his way "home" wherever he is, so he is never really lost. Currently, his emotional "home" is in two different places in the City: his loft and his sister. This allows him to magically "find his way" to and from the Gingerbread House Enclave. Since Rachel never leaves the Enclave, his two homes are anchored in space, giving him near-absolute resistance to disorientation.

HURT OR SUBDUE 1 / CATCH 3 / DISORIENT –

- **Street Rat:** When Hans starts running, give him *street rat.*
- **True Love:** When you try to get Hans to betray or endanger his sister, he takes *true-love-5.*

- Eat some candy and wish to be elsewhere (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
- Lose someone in the alleyways (reduce a status on *catch* by two tiers)
- Give someone Candy (**Complicate Things, Bigtime**)
- Talk about how Candy is the best thing ever (*tempted-2*)
- Suspect the crew means to harm him or his sister and become *uncooperative-2*

- Rummage through his carry-all, looking for Candy

THE "BOWL" FIGHT CLUB

A heavy bass beat welcomes you as you pass through the front door of the Bowl. In a wide space defined by psychedelically-lit exposed concrete walls, a crowd of clubbers surrounds some kind of a commotion, each one of them looking stranger than the other. As you push through the spectators, they reveal a broad cement fighting pit extending from the edge of your feet, the shape of a giant satellite dish facing up. In this eponymous "bowl", two supernatural individuals are fighting it off, one wreathed in infernal flames and the other beaming with light and holding a guitar. A rush of adrenaline courses through you when you realize: this is a place for people like you.

The Bowl is a Rift-only, no-holds-barred, pop-up underground fight club in the Industrial Zone. It is run by Eddie Dreamtime (Aboriginal Dreamtime), one of the most powerful Legendaries in the City and the one least interested in controlling it.

If Eddie or Hans invites the crew to the Bowl, they are led to a rusty metal door in an abandoned warehouse which glows with incandescent light when opened; any Rift walking into it ends up inside the Bowl. Finding the Bowl uninvited takes some effort:

- First, contacts in the Industrial Zone or divinatory abilities must be consulted to find out where the Bowl is *tonight*, usually an abandoned warehouse, a turned over silo, inside a trash compactor, etc.
- Second, no Sleepers are allowed to tag along and for them the door won't work.
- Third, **Estella** (Unicorn), the muscular bouncer will ask the crew some questions in the entrance room before letting them in. Anyone bold enough to defile Estella's unicorn purity with lies will find herself back in the Industrial Zone. Estella packs a mean punch and handles her unicorn's magic well, so anyone who tries anything 'smart' will end up the same, plus a befitting status.

Inside, the Bowl is a warren of industrial-style bare concrete halls clustered around the main hall. There's an assortment of Rifts of all walks of life wandering around. Some Rifts wear masks to hide their identity. In the main hall, fluorescent neon-lit bars line the floor, but most of the attention is centered on the fighting pit, where two Rifts battle it out. When a match is over, all injuries disappear as if they never happened, even lethal ones, courtesy of the host.

Eddie Dreamtime, an athletic middle-aged man of medium height, usually seen in hipster outback wear and sporting Australian Aboriginal body paint, overlooks the matches from a concrete balcony.

INVESTIGATING IN THE BOWL

Rifts in the Bowl are the kind that believe in "keeping it real": ordinary or legendary, they don't care, they just want to see who you are. If the crew members are new to the Bowl, they will have to prove themselves in the ring or they'll get the cold treatment from most Rifts here. If they want information from Eddie himself, he has to know all of them and therefore see them all fight. Anyone who didn't fight before will be invited to sign up for the fighting pit. The PCs may fight each other or other Rifts on the list (Eddie himself won't fight). A win is not required, but showing a strong spirit helps. If the PCs try to get information in other ways, Rifts here may prove more resistant than normal – give them a tag or a status appropriate to their abilities or skills.

Carter, a weasley man in a tracksuit, is pushing Candy in one of the back rooms. Carter got his batch from drug dealer Foxy Supreme.

Beyond the Mist, Carter is Touched just enough to be able to get into the Bowl and recognize Rifts. There is a very faint trace of a Greek Mythos on him (he's Touched by Foxy Supreme), but it's hard to detect which one exactly.

Asking clubbers about people who were into Candy or forcing Carter to talk will point to **DJ Hans Woods**, single-mom **Will Harris**, and/or world-class swimmer **Juan Delamar**.

The clubbers will relay rumors about Candy fulfilling one's wishes. Some have tried it and can confirm, while others are wary, citing that people get addicted, go missing, or give up their powers if they use it.

ABOUT HANS

Clubbers here think Hans Woods is a superstar, and some of them envy his sudden success. While Hans was a regular at the Bowl, he never DJed here. Then, six weeks ago, he was discovered and now he plays a set here twice a week.

Hans doesn't fight in the Bowl. His powers are not suited for fighting.

Hans lives in a loft in the Industrial Zone (Hans' loft). One clubber recently spotted the celebrity in the Old Quarter, visiting his grandma (the Leckermaul house).

Hans is one of Carter's biggest clients. He too disappeared for a while, like several other Candy users, but he came back fine. Spying on the two in the Bowl reveals **Hans isn't paying for the Candy – he gets it for free.** Carter doesn't know why this is the case; it's an order from his supplier, drug dealer Foxy Supreme.

If the crew speaks to Hans, see his clues under the Leckermaul house.

ABOUT WILL

Will Harris is a regular. Escaping her everyday struggles at home, she comes here twice a week to blow off some steam and fight in the ring. She is an uncanny combatant and markswoman, deadly with a crossbow (Wilhelm Tell).

She didn't show up to the Bowl last night, which is unusual for her.

She lives in a small apartment with her 6-year-old son (Will Harris' Apartment). She had a tough time paying the bills, but recently she came into some money unexpectedly.

ABOUT JUAN

Juan Delamar is a gold-medalist swimmer who hangs out at the Bowl on occasion. He always wears a mask, hoping no one would recognize him, but nevertheless there are constantly fans around him staring and whispering. He trains at the public swimming pool.

Juan's powers are aquatic; he would fight other water-themed Rifts in the water-filled fighting pit. He has a reputation of being very competitive and driven.

Juan has not been to the Bowl for weeks. Word is he had given up his powers to find out how good of a swimmer he really is or to have better luck with girls because he thought his legend made him ugly.

Cross referencing details about Juan could help identify his Mythos as the Ningyo, a sea creature of Japanese myth reminiscent of a chimerical, hideous mermaid. According to myth, **eating the Ningyo's flesh imparts eternal life**, a key detail in the Mystical Vein: Juan's Ichor becomes pivotal in Armand's search for the Elixir of Life.

FIGHTING IN THE BOWL

Once they witness the miraculous restoration of a defeated Bowl combatant and realize participation is safe(ish, it still hurts), crew members may want to put

their name in for a fight in the Bowl. They could face off with any random Rift from the club, a recurring Rift character, or even with one another.

The fighting pit itself is simply a bare concrete pit to fight in; it has no special properties except it can be adjusted to fit the combatants as necessary, e.g., it can be made bottomless for flying Rifts, or filled with water for aquatic Rifts.

EDDIE DREAMTIME, THE OWNER

The owner of the Bowl fight club usually watches over the fighting pit from a concrete balcony in the VIP area. He knows a great deal about what goes on in the City and about Rifts, but he keeps his distance from the powerplay of Gatekeepers and Avatars and avoids getting involved in City business. Nevertheless, he loves his fellow Rifts and is concerned about the new drug that is targeting them, especially because it seems to take away their powers, so he's willing to help out a crew who can fix that.

Eddie Dreamtime believes in the freedom to be who you are. He created this club as a place where Rifts can let go of their inhibitions and fears and use their powers without holding back. It's not just about fighting; the Bowl holds musical and magical stand offs as well, and those who explore the back rooms find empty floor space to try out any kind of power. The entire club, including the people who visit it, is a Conjuration dreamt up by Eddie. When someone kills someone in the pit, it's merely their Conjuration killing their opponent's Conjuration; the real combatants are safe in the physical world, and no one is the wiser.

Eddie is arguably the most powerful reality bender in the City (the other contender being Alice, *MC Toolkit*, pages 24 and 157, who has more punch and less control over her abilities), although famously he was beaten in the ring on two occasions. He doesn't have a Danger profile because he does not normally pose a threat to the investigation or the crew. Moreover, the crew is no match for him; if they try anything in his club, they'll find themselves back in the Industrial Zone (or worse) in a flash. Eddie is also extremely connected in the Rift underworld, and can get the crew in trouble or help them answer some questions, although he's limited by his self-imposed neutrality.

Candy only works as intended in the Bowl if Eddie allows it to work. Usually he is loathe to limit any Rift powers in his club, but if someone gets crazy with their Candy wishes, they backfire or simply have no effect.

When opponents fight for the love of the crowd, give the crowd a *win-over:5* spectrum. Both opponents give separate statuses to the crowd on this spectrum. The first one to max out the spectrum wins the crowd's love. In a musical face off, winning the crowd over means winning the match. In a deathmatch, winning the crowd over has no bearing on winning the match, although it can affect how Rifts perceive the combatant thereafter. (If the opponent is Apollo, winning the crowd over activates his **Build Me a Shrine** move).

Crescendo: When you give the crowd a status on *win-over*, they focus on you and cry for a musical high: a solo, an impossible riff, or a vocal crescendo. You may **Take the Risk** to do so. If you succeed, increase the tier of the status you gave them by 1.

APOLLO ★★★

Apollo (Apollo, the Greek sun god) is kind of perfect and annoying. He's a slender guitarist in an 80's suit – clashing colors, shoulder pads, the works – and a stylish hairdo, with an electric keyboard slung over his shoulder. When he's powered up, patches of colorful lights flash around him like disco northern lights. Apollo participates in either physical fights or musical face offs; he loves the attention, and often communicates with the crowd during a fight.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3

- **Spectacular Entrance:** When Apollo enters the scene, give him *radiating-awesomeness-2*.
- **Olympian:** When Apollo takes a status of physical harm, subdual, or suggestion, reduce its tier by 2 if its nature is legendary or by 3 if it is mundane.
- **Synthwave:** When you attack Apollo in hand-to-hand combat, you are first *dazzled-2* by blinding colorful lights. When you give Apollo a status caused by an energy blast, he meets your blast with an optic-sonic wave from his guitar, reducing its tier by 3.
- **Build Me a Shrine:** When Apollo maxes out a crowd's *win-over* spectrum, he takes *supercharged-3*.

- Blast an opponent with an optic-sonic wave from his guitar, knocking them back across the arena (*disoriented-3*)
- Wow a crowd with synthesizer music (*wow-4*)
- Make a comeback (remove up to two tiers of social or musical statuses, on himself, his opponent, or the crowd)

- Play a complicated and exhilarating electronic riff while his hair is tousling about
- Wave to the audience and smile his perfect smile

NELLIE ★★★

Nellie (Nisse, Nordic household gnome) is a small-figured young woman, dressed like a country bumpkin: jeans, boots, and a pointy bright red hoodie. She hails from the village outside town and has moved to the City to work as a housekeeper and nanny. A neatness freak and staunch believer in old-fashioned farmstead values, she finds her employers and their children rude, undisciplined, and highly aggravating so she comes to the Bowl to blow off some steam by beating people up. Nellie's Mythos grants her immense strength, the ability to turn invisible, and a penchant for pulling pranks on her adversaries.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4

- **Find Me If You Can:** When Nellie first turns invisible in a scene, give everyone around *can't-see-Nellie-5* (PCs may **Face Danger**). When you search for Nellie in a fight, **Investigate**; you may trade Clues to reduce this status by one tier per clue. On a 7-9, if you're exposed to Danger, she thumps you (see hard moves below).
- **Angry Gnome:** When Nellie enters the scene, give her *hard-headed* and *temperamental*.

- Thump someone with incredible force, while preaching proper behavior and respect (*broken-bones-4* or *almost-passed-out-4*; if she's invisible, reduce the tier of the *can't-see-Nellie* status by 1 for the target and anyone watching carefully)
- Steal an object someone is holding or wearing (burn a tag if relevant, and reduce the *can't-see-Nellie* status as above)
- Shrink someone down to the size of a little gnome (*shrunken-3*)
- Speak from different locations, confusing her enemy (renew *can't-see-Nellie-5*)

- Berate and scold an opponent's rudeness, apparently speaking about someone else
- Vanish into thin air



WILL HARRIS' APARTMENT

It's just another day in the neighborhood when you arrive at the address you have for Will Harris. Two rows of apartment buildings with local businesses on the ground level line both sides of the street; the place is abuzz with people running errands and going about their daily activities. You pass a group of hoodlums on the stoop and make your way up the faintly-lit stairwell. A nosy lady, maybe the landlady, peeks at you through a cracked door. You make a note to yourself: nothing here seems out of the ordinary.

The scene at Will Harris' modest one-bedroom apartment can play out in two ways:

- Will Harris may still be missing, in which case her 20-something-year-old sister, **Beth** (Sleeper), is there watching Will's son, **Albert** (Sleeper). Both of them are quite distraught by the situation and seem to be lost without Will's leadership.
- Alternatively, Will could have returned home in the last few hours, having gone through the furnace and lost her powers. She is a tall and lithe woman in her 30s, sporting a funky crew cut and casual jeans and T-shirt. She seems washed out and distant.

This is mostly an investigative location; NPCs here are non-violent Sleepers and are unlikely to cause a fuss unless the PCs push them into a corner, in which case the police might be called.

INVESTIGATING THE DISAPPEARANCE

Will Harris has been (or was) missing for the last day or so. She was last seen yesterday morning dropping off Albert at kindergarten, but she didn't show up to pick him up, which never happened before. The kindergarten called Beth as backup. Later, Beth found out Will didn't show up to work that day (she works as a graphic designer for a non-profit a few blocks away).

Will was struggling to pay the bills and then recently had a windfall that allowed her to pay off all her bills. This can be revealed by chatting to Beth, tracking Will's bank account history, rummaging in the dustbin, or gossiping with the landlady downstairs.

The windfall money seems to have come out of nowhere, e.g., she deposited a large sum of cash or it just appeared in her account without a sender.

Both Beth and Albert, each in their own way, know that **Will was leading a secret life**: she wasn't always frank about her nightly outings twice a week. Beth once followed her to a rave in the Industrial Zone, but wasn't allowed in (the Bowl fight club). They worry that this has something to do with her windfall and subsequent disappearance.

Behind the wardrobe, someone punched a hole in the wall and stashed some items: three badass crossbows, both antique and modern, and half a dozen empty Candy wrappers.

Albert is afraid that he had a part in his mom's disappearance. He says a kid from school, **Charlie, made him steal some candy from his mom**'s jacket pocket a few days before she disappeared. He also says Charlie has a gigantic toy room, bigger than this whole building (Charlie Littles' Toy Room).

Will got her Candy from Carter (the Bowl fight club).

INVESTIGATING THE RETURN

Will behaves normally, although she seems tired and somewhat detached. However both Beth and Albert are alarmed at Will's behavior. According to them, **Will was always upbeat and witty**.

Will is a Sleeper; that much is evident in a conversation and can be confirmed beyond the Mist. She has no memory of being a Rift and only vaguely remembers going to raves in the Industrial Zone and doing drugs, a troubled period that she's now adamant to leave behind her.

Further beyond the Mist, Will has the furnace trace (see The Furnace Trace sidebar, page 93).



THE PUBLIC SWIMMING POOL

The light reflecting in the water casts strange blue silhouettes on the ceiling of the City's public pool. In the fluid forms, you see sirens, sea monsters, and mermaids. A loud, wet crowd of visitors clears the olympic-sized pool in preparation for the swimming team's practice hours, leaving the place almost dead in its wake. That's when you spot the muscular middle-aged man in the red cap, the team's coach. Your eyes meet, exchanging grim looks of concern.

The public swimming pool is a backdrop location where the crew can investigate the case of Juan Delamar, the City-renowned gold medalist swimmer who lost his talent overnight.

The person to talk to is **Coach Bradley Ferrell** (Sleeper), Juan's swimming coach, who is concerned about his failing performance in the last week. The coach would like to get professional help for Juan but he's *wary-of-bad-publicity-1*; if the crew approaches him without an invitation or some credentials (as police, a PI, a counselor, etc.), increase this status to tier 3.

Another option is hitting the locker room after practice and chatting to **Juan's teammates**. They know more about Juan's personal (and secret) life, but are *protecting-their-champ-2*, although a more talkative kid, perhaps someone jealous of Juan's success or someone deeply concerned for him, could be picked out with a social **Investigate** move, circumventing the status.

Juan has been a prodigious swimmer throughout his teens (ruling out a connection between his swimming and Candy).

Since he went on "that wild weekend" when he didn't come home, his performance crashed: he seemed to have lost every ounce of swimming talent he once had. Where once he would gracefully cut through the water, he now seemed comparatively clumsy, swimming with good technique but lacking his former extraordinary strength and competence.

The Coach worked hard to keep this indiscretion from the team's administrative staff, fearing Juan would be expelled from the team. He is very eager to get Juan back in his game.

Juan used Candy to find love. Being of homely appearance and suffering from insecurities, Juan had trouble initiating romantic relationships with girls. A few weeks ago he started dating a girl from his college, but she left him after that fateful weekend.

One of his teammates knows Juan has been going out to the Industrial Zone (the Bowl fight club) since he was seventeen. He also picked up an empty Candy wrapper that Juan once dropped.

Juan got his Candy from Carter (the Bowl fight club).

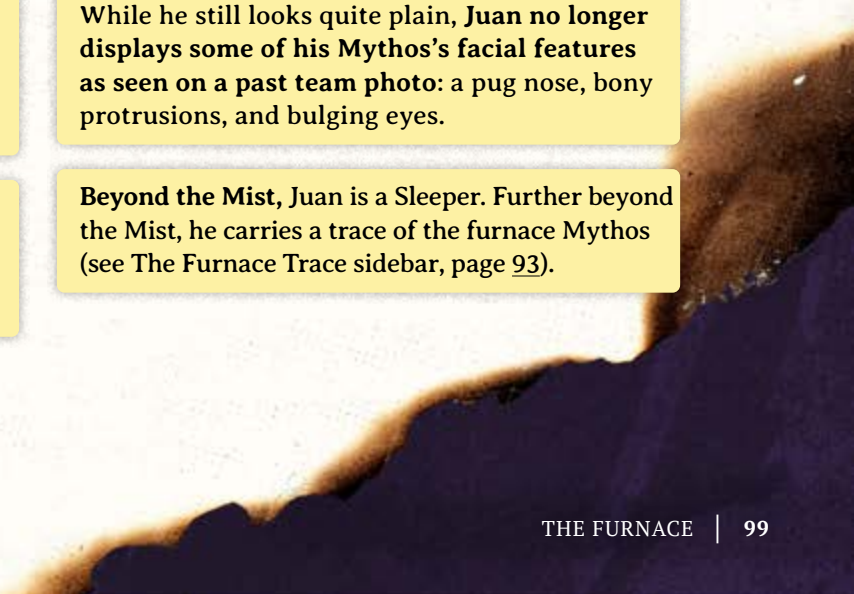
At some point, Juan himself may show up for practice (or the crew may find him at his family home). He is a lean, dark-haired young man of below-average height, about twenty years of age, carrying a duffle bag with swim gear. He is quiet, calm, and keeps to himself.

During practice, Juan seems to go through the motions mechanically. Other swimmers as well as Coach Farrell stare at him and whisper, but this does not elicit any reaction from Juan, not even a shrug or a clenched jaw as one would expect. **He simply seems numb.**

Juan doesn't remember the details of his Candy addiction and weekend bender. All he was told when he woke up is that he dabbled with the wrong drugs and had a bad trip, and that it could cost him his swimming career. People around him berate him for squandering his talent, but he doesn't really care. **He is seriously considering quitting swimming.**

While he still looks quite plain, **Juan no longer displays some of his Mythos's facial features as seen on a past team photo:** a pug nose, bony protrusions, and bulging eyes.

Beyond the Mist, Juan is a Sleeper. Further beyond the Mist, he carries a trace of the furnace Mythos (see The Furnace Trace sidebar, page 93).



CHARLIE LITTLES' TOY ROOM

Something bends and twists when you approach the corner of Charlie's room; you're not sure if it's the walls, space itself, or your mind. On the other side of that gut-wrenching feeling, red brick walls tower dozens of feet overhead and stretch as far as that into the dark. Several gigantic piles of toys — action figures, models of vehicles, toy bricks of all kinds — create a topographical terrain that rolls onto an expansive wall-to-wall carpet. In between them, there sits a young boy, playing, until he notices you and shouts: "Do you have more candy? I want more CANDY!"

Charlie Littles is a mean bully and a boy Rift who, thanks to his "voodoo" doll Mythos, can manipulate people and objects by moving any small model that resembles them. Charlie stole Candy from Will Harris using her son Albert (who attends the same school as Charlie) and discovered it can grant his wishes, so he wished for toys, lots of toys, and a toy room big enough to hold them. He has spent hours of fun in his magical toy room in the past week but now, as his toys are beginning to fade away and the toy room is starting to shrink back to its original form (a corner in his small bedroom), Charlie is desperately craving more Candy.

The crew may arrive here if they heard rumors that indicate wish-fulfillment is involved, if they chemically or magically traced the Candy here, or if they follow the lead from Albert, Will Harris' son. The action elements in this scene can provide a change of pace from the investigation, while rewarding the crew with plot-propelling information.

The Littles are a family of four who live in a modest 3-bedroom apartment not far from Will and Albert Harris. All other family members are Sleepers and have no idea that Charlie's toy corner has turned into a giant toy room: they simply don't remember this corner being so roomy, or when they bought all these toys. For Rifts, the toy room is the size of a large hotel lobby, accessed through Charlie's room corner. At its center, amid piles of toys, sits Charlie, a freckled plump boy with a mop of brown hair.

CHARLIE'S PLAN

When he began desiring more Candy, Charlie came to see the psychedelic moonlit pebbles and followed them to the factory. However, he was too afraid to enter. Charlie is now shopping for appropriate Rift bodyguards to accompany him to the furnace. When he notices Rifts entering his Conjured room, Charlie will seek the strongest ones among them and immediately try to take control over them. Charlie is cruel as only kids can be; he will even threaten to hurt one PC if another doesn't do as he says, or use one PC to hurt another. He will later lead controlled Rifts to the old Aurora Glassworks factory to serve as his bodyguards and buyers to get more Candy. **Note that this way, Charlie can potentially allow the crew to skip the second Depth.**

CHARLIE ★★★

SUBDUE 1 / BEFRIEND 4 / THREATEN 4

- **Bodyguards:** When Charlie takes a status from which his bodyguards can protect him, the bodyguards take the status instead (use Giant "Voodoo" Toys).
- **Bully:** When you give Charlie a friendship status, unless you're doing something cool or act mean to someone else, reduce its tier by 2. When Charlie takes a threatening status, reduce its tier by 1.
- **Fit of Rage:** When you defeat one of Charlie's toys, remove any statuses on his *befriend* or *threaten* spectrums.

- Pick up a small toy and start manipulating it, animating a giant version of the same toy that's in the toy pile (Create a new Danger: Giant "Voodoo" Toys; Charlie can only control one toy in each hand and must set a toy down to manipulate something else. A Giant "Voodoo" Toy whose smaller counterpart was set down cannot make any Danger moves.)
- If he has a toy that looks like someone or something, manipulate them (*controlled-3*) or hurt them (*stabbing-pain-3*)

- Search the pile or his pockets for a toy that looks like someone
- Stuff his mouth with some Candy and wish for toys that look like the crew (allowing him to control them)
- Cackle cruelly when his toys pummel someone

GIANT "VOODOO" TOYS ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 5

- **Monstrous:** When a Giant "Voodoo" Toy takes a status that is countered by its large size, reduce its tier by 1. When the MC makes a hard move with a Giant "Voodoo" Toy, she can hit two targets or hit a single target for +1 tier.

- Give someone a bear hug (*restrained-3*) or a powerful thump (*disoriented-3*)
- Activate a special feature of the toy such as firing laser beams, flying above the battlefield, throwing a flash grenade, etc. (make an appropriate hard move)

- Awkwardly move toward their target, arms flailing

DEPTH 2:
SEARCHING FOR BREADCRUMBS

DRUG DEALER FOXY SUPREME

Shimmering blue in the hard neon light, Foxy Supreme's poised figure is snuggled in a lavish white fur coat and a sparkling, diamond-like mini dress. From the way she moves, placing every high-heeled step softly in front of the other, you're guessing her moniker is well-deserved. Her eyes, framed in loose blonde curls, hunt down yours; you get the feeling if anyone survives the night, it's going to be her.

Foxy Supreme is a dangerous, nihilist, drop-dead-gorgeous drug dealer and a veteran Rift. She worked for the original Gingerbread Witch, Rosina Leckermaul, and then switched allegiances to Rachel Woods (Gretel) when the latter pushed her old boss into the furnace. For the past month, she has been distributing more Candy than ever for her new boss, earning herself a small fortune. She knows such greed is bound to backfire but she doesn't care because thanks to her Mythos and her resourcefulness, no one can ever catch her — or at least, so she believes.

Locating this high-caliber criminal is a challenge. PCs will need their street smarts and underworld connections to arrange a meeting with her. If they come across as potential Candy buyers rather than a threat, they will get more cooperation from Foxy's associates (such as Carter in the Bowl fight club).

- If a meeting is set up, it will take place at a City location away from prying eyes: under a highway bridge, on a rooftop, in an empty parking lot overlooking the bay, or in a smokey alley.
- If the crew catches Foxy off guard, she may be at a luxurious hotel room or down at **the Elixir**, a suave lounge bar, both of which could be located in the *Tourist Trap* district.

Foxy Supreme is a cunning and adaptive crook. An interaction with her is just as likely to end with her escaping or with one of the PCs taking Candy (leading to Trippin') as with the crew obtaining useful information. Foxy will use her hard move to read the PCs and offer them their heart's desire, triggering Mysteries and Identities like there's no tomorrow. If the crew somehow gets her to talk, she knows a good deal about the Candy operation.



FOXY SUPREME ★ ★ ★

In Greek Mythology, the Cadmean Vixen was sent by the gods to harrow the city of Thebes by eating their children. She was impossible to catch, so when she came to be chased by the hound from which nothing escapes, Zeus was forced to prevent the paradox by turning both fox and dog to stone, and then to constellations in the sky.

As the Rift of the same story, Foxy Supreme can transform into a mythic-sized silver vixen. More incredibly, she cannot be caught in any way. In both her forms, she can evade any trap or restraint with tricks that range from mere sleight of hand to passing right through barriers or disappearing altogether and appearing elsewhere. She can be hurt, but not killed, because that would mean she was caught. She cannot control this destiny; whenever someone is about to land a killing blow on her, she is forced to flee.

If you want to limit Foxy's powers, give her a *paradox:4* spectrum and a *law-defying-1* status every time her *restrain-or-catch* immunity or her **Uncatchable** move triggers. When *paradox* maxes out, both her and her would-be captor turn to stone, as per **Zeus's Paradox**.

Note that Foxy's powers render her immune to the *caged* status Rifts get when they enter the Gingerbread House Enclave, but since she's steered clear of there so far, she isn't aware of this.

HURT (FORCE TO FLEE) 2 / RESTRAIN OR CATCH –

- **As Cunning as a Fox:** When Foxy Supreme enters the scene, give her *ahead-of-the-game-2*.
- **Uncatchable:** When Foxy Supreme takes a status that would limit her freedom or leave her at the mercy of others, she escapes instead (**Deny Them Something They Want**).
- **Confident:** You cannot **Convince** Foxy with threats that she thinks she can avoid with her Mythos.
- **Zeus' Paradox:** If someone still somehow succeeds in catching Foxy Supreme, they both *turn-to-stone-5* just before her capture catches her, until the end of the next downtime.
- **(As the Cadmean Vixen) Monstrous:** When Foxy Supreme takes a status that is countered by her size, reduce its tier by 2. When the MC makes a hard move with Foxy Supreme, she can hit two targets or hit a single target for +1 tier.

- Read someone, sussing out what they wish for the most, and then offer them Candy to obtain it (**Complicate Things, Bigtime**)
- Become irritated, shed her clothes, and transform into a giant fox (**Complicate Things, Bigtime**), biting and clawing (*slashed-3*)
- Make a run for it (as a woman or a vixen) and disappear into the night (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
- Swallow a child whole (*swallowed-5* or **Make Something Horrible Happen**)
- Seduce someone with her charm (*seduced-2*)
- Call on her underworld contacts for help (Create a new Danger: Underhand Naga Gangsters, page 104, or any appropriate criminal Danger from the *MC Toolkit*, starting on page 145)

- Seductively look someone up and down as they approach her
- Deftly avoid simple attempts to restrain her

Foxy gets Candy delivered by the Underhand Naga Gang. She made it her business to know where the Candy drug lab is located, although she never speaks about it or visits it.

Foxy doesn't use Candy. She knows that people who use it somehow get everything they want for a short while but then lose their powers. She's got better ways of getting what she wants.

Foxy keeps track of her dealers, but not their clients, for deniability. She knows nothing of Will, Juan, or Charlie, where they got their Candy, or where they've been afterwards.

Before Leckermaul was replaced, things worked differently. She was instructed to send high-volume customers directly to the "Factory" at the old Aurora Glassworks factory. She never saw them again. Since the new version of Candy arrived they've been driving more of it, but people don't use it for long. It's not ideal for her business, but she's rolling with it for now.

Foxy and Leckermaul were friends, as much as people in this business can be. She suspected Leckermaul was behind Candy. A few weeks ago the Underhand Naga Gang brought the zoned-out old lady to Foxy; someone took Leckermaul out of the game.

THE CANDY DRUG LAB

Asian dance music is blaring through the converted basement. You make your way around a hanging tarp, construction debris, and discarded plastic vats that reek of saccharine chemicals, until you make it to the main room. Under rows and rows of fluorescent lights, a small army of workers sitting at a dozen makeshift tables work a chain, preparing, processing, dividing, and then packing the merchandise. Armed guards watch over the floor. In the corner there are crates of Candy ready to ship, labelled with the recognizable storybook "C".

The Candy drug lab is situated in a converted basement space of a textile factory in the Industrial Zone. It is operated by **the Underhand Naga Gang**, an Asian ethnic street gang of mixed Cambodian, Vietnamese, Thai, and Chinese origins. Despite its mythic name, the gang members are all Sleepers, although a handful of the lab workers who have had long exposure to Candy have become Touched by it.

This is a good location for a suspenseful scene, if the crew is sneaking in, or an action scene, if they charge in or if things go south. Investigating this location allows the crew to complete the picture about Candy manufacturing, pointing them at the source of the drug.

The gang picks up a vat of pure Candy once a week at the loading dock of the old Aurora Glassworks factory. There is no one else there during pickup. There is no evidence of the gang paying for the drug.

The gang processes the drug here and sells it via the network of drug dealer Foxy Supreme.

The operation was set up with Leckermaul while she was still around. A month ago the gang members found an oblivious Leckermaul cuffed to the railing next to the vat of Candy with a note saying "business as usual". They took her to her friend, Foxy Supreme.

Obtaining pure Candy makes it easier to study its properties (see under Candy, page 90).

AWAKENED CANDY LAB WORKER ★★

Life in the drug business isn't usually as glamorous as Foxy Supreme's lifestyle. Candy lab workers, some of them young teenagers and others elderly, work 18 hour shifts, and in the process get exposed to dangerous chemicals. Those who have handled Candy for extended periods of time sometimes become awakened by it. The most eminent effect of this awakening is that, if they dare to taste Candy, it can fulfill wishes for them.

There are currently three workers in the lab who have tried this, and they will defend the lab with the ferocity of those who defend their dreams: it's their only source of Candy.

HURT OR SUBDUE 1 / TURN 5 / RESTOCK 2

- **Eat Candy:** When you make a move against an Awakened Candy Lab Worker, if *restock* isn't maxed out, she takes a bite of Candy and makes a wish (see hard moves). For every wish she makes, with any Danger move, she takes *running-out-1*.

- Wish an attacker's weapon out of existence (burn any appropriate tags)
- Wish to be stronger or invincible (increase *hurt-or-subdue* maximum)
- Wish a subway car would come crashing through the wall and hit her enemy (*run-over-by-a-bus-4*)
- Materialize an oversized gun she aims poorly (*flesh-wound-2*) or an elaborate katana she wields sluggishly (*nasty-cut-2*)
- Materialize a large object, such as a fridge or a vault door, and use it as cover (temporary *behind-cover-3*)
- Wish an enemy would dance with her (*compelled-to-dance-3*)
- Wish an interloper would be bound in steel chains or bubblegum (*restrained-3*) or have them comically face the wrong way (temporary *vulnerable-2*)
- Wish the Candy table or vat closer so she can grab lots of Candy (remove all statuses from *restock* and increase its maximum)
- Reach for more Candy (remove all statuses from *restock*)

- Laugh hysterically as she sets her Candy power loose
- Wish for a badass outfit

UNDERHAND NAGA GANGSTERS ★ ★ ★

Underhand Naga Gang members wear cargo or camo pants, work boots, and light navy jackets over beige shirts. They often wrap their hands with rope, and wield signature jerry-rigged SMG-tonfa hybrids that allow them to fight both hand-to-hand and at range without needing to draw another weapon. All gang members are trained in Khmer or Thai martial arts, mostly Bokator.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / THREATEN 3

- **Collective:** This collective has a few members and a size factor of 1.
- **Guard:** When an Underhand Naga Gangster is on the lookout, give her *alert-1*.
- **Tonfa Parry:** When an Underhand Naga Gangster takes a hurt or subdue status that she can block with a tonfa or avoid with martial arts moves, reduce its tier by 1.

- Sprayfire with submachine gun (give the attack *hard-to-dodge* and then give the target a *gunshot-wound-3*)
- Set up an opponent with a knee strike (temporary *vulnerable-2*) and then land a knockout blow with the tonfa (*broken-teeth-2* or *disoriented-3*)
- Call for backup (increase size factor by 1)

- Adopt the Bokator naga stance, brandishing her jerry-rigged SMG-tonfa

HANS' LOFT

Hans' loft boasts a panoramic view of a grim industrial landscape. Instead of overlooking skyscrapers, the top-floor open-space pad is beset by cooling towers and rusted silos dotted with slow-pulsing red warning lights. Inside, the renovated loft would seem fancy, except for the random piles of turned-out pocket content and laundry covering everything, from the new sofa to the expansive modern kitchen island. This guy is a serious slob, so how the hell can he afford all this?

Hans Woods is the brother of the new Gingerbread Witch, Rachel Woods, and the biggest chink in her armor. Beneath the chilled-out, groovy DJ facade, he is haunted by guilt over his part in his sister's operation. He's been using Candy to distract himself by living out the life he always wanted when he was just a street rat, but in doing so, he draws attention to himself as the only Candy user who had gone missing (when Leckermaul got him and his sister) yet did not lose his powers.

Whether the crew learns of Hans from rumors in the Rift underworld or Hans turns to the crew for help himself, they may end up here trying to get more information from him or even catch him.

INVESTIGATING THE LOFT

The place seems to have undergone extensive renovations recently. Before the renovation, it was nothing but an abandoned dump, more suitable for broke squatters than a superstar DJ. **Beyond the Mist, it is laced with Candy wish-fulfillment magic.**

There's an extra room reserved for a young woman, to judge by the clothes in the wardrobe. It does not seem to be lived in. Seeing as it is a separate room, it is most likely not intended for a lover but for a friend or a family member. Psychometry and divinatory powers can reveal some of the siblings' past and point to the old Aurora Glassworks factory, where the trail ends abruptly.

There's Candy and Candy wrappers everywhere, as if Hans has a lifetime supply. This may contradict his previous claims that he has come to Leckermaul's house for more Candy.

INVESTIGATING HANS

Between repressing his own guilt and protecting his sister, Hans will try to avoid any direct questions by the crew; give him *hiding-something-2* or *avoiding-the-subject-1* if the crew hasn't given him a good reason to open up. The following clues represent what Hans knows, not necessarily what he is willing to reveal.

Hans's sister, Rachel, took over the Candy business from Leckermaul, after Leckermaul tried to get her in a furnace. Hans doesn't know what the furnace does, only that Leckermaul came out "alive and braindead". Rachel approached the people Leckermaul was working with when they came to collect and got to run the show, but Hans doesn't know who they are.

When Hans and Rachel got hooked on Candy, their dealer at the time, Foxy Supreme, pointed them to the old Aurora Glassworks factory, **where "a magical door" took them to "another world".** That was when Leckermaul forced them into cages.

Hans feels guilty. Instead of standing up to his sister as he should have, he let her use witchcraft to borrow some of his ability and put it into her Candy, leading her victims straight to her.

Hans thinks Rachel isn't a bad person. She is just a go-getter, a survivor who is trying to make the best of her situation and who is haunted by the years she spent hungry on the streets with nothing to eat. **He is worried, however, that she's done some very bad things.**

Hans is always able to find his way back "home", no matter how lost he is. "Home" is a feeling which he currently feels toward his loft and his sister, so he is able to travel to and from the Gingerbread House Enclave, although he hasn't been there since he helped improve the Candy recipe. **He is able to bring along one more person.**

TRIPPIN'

When a PC or a supporting cast character who has consumed Candy starts craving more, they begin to hallucinate a trail of glowing blue pebbles that leads them into the night (even if it's daytime). Following the trail leads the Candy user through an urban forest (back alleys, subway tunnels, rooftops, canals, etc.) to the old Aurora Glassworks factory. During this time, the Candy user is moonstruck (at your option, *moonstruck-3*) and only half aware of what is happening around her.

As the character is making her journey to the Candy factory, you can set the scene by narrating or ask the player to narrate what the character is feeling and thinking about her wishes and what was it like for her to see them fulfilled and then fade away.

DEPTH 3: LOST IN THE CONCRETE JUNGLE

THE OLD AURORA GLASSWORKS FACTORY

```
The trail leads you through alleys and
across roads, under highway bridges, and
past cooling towers. It ends abruptly at
the foot of a red brick wall on the side
of an old abandoned factory, probably
here since the roaring days of the City.
There's a perturbing silence all around.
Not far from there, you spot the rotting
wooden double gate, locked with a chain,
where a fading "KEEP OUT" sign dangles.
Peeking inside, you see the scant light
filtering through the skylights and faint-
ly illuminating a bare and dusty hall
lined with concrete posts, utterly empty.
The only object there is an old, shut down
industrial furnace, its mouth gaping in a
mean ole smile.
```

The old Aurora Glassworks factory is a *thin place*, a transition point between the City and the Gingerbread House Enclave. The factory is the only entrance to the Enclave; however, this particular thin place only allows in those who have consumed Candy, the Gingerbread Witch's victims-to-be (although she can allow others in at her discretion). The factory is also used as a collection point for both pure Candy made by the Gingerbread Witch (collected by her distributors, the Underhand Naga Gang) and the Ichor extracted by the furnace (collected by her employers, the alchemist cult Magnum Opus).

ENTERING THE ENCLAVE

Rifts who have consumed Candy may immediately enter the Enclave. If they are outside the factory, any entrance to the factory leads into the Enclave: the main gate, a back door, the landing dock doors, etc. A magical passageway may even appear on the exterior walls. If someone consumes Candy inside the abandoned factory, they may find their way into the Enclave at the middle of the main hall, behind a post, in a stairwell, or even inside the old furnace. **Candy users crossing over may not even realize they travelled to the Enclave.** The passage may appear in different places for different people. To those who cannot access the Enclave, they seem to simply vanish.

All other characters cannot normally enter the Enclave. When they enter the factory, they enter the abandoned, empty version of it that exists in the City. Characters with the power to travel between dimensions and realms must **Stop. Holding. Back.** and make a significant sacrifice to cross over alone, or a no-return sacrifice to bring others with them (the same restriction may also apply on the journey back, as fitting the situation). Alternatively, characters with the Mobility theme improvement **Ain't No Mountain High Enough** can travel into the Enclave once per session, but may not be able to travel back out in the same session, nor bring anyone else with them, unless the MC approves it.

If present, Hans can help bring over PCs one-by-one, but he will need real, concrete assurances that Rachel won't be harmed. If anyone tries to influence his mind around this point, they trigger his **True Love** move. To secure his sister's safety, he may ask or trick the PCs into taking Candy. Similarly, if Charlie is present and discovers one of the PCs under his control can't cross over to the Enclave, he may force feed them Candy.

LEAVING THE ENCLAVE

In the other direction, **characters burned in the furnace are expelled from the Enclave thereafter** and appear in the empty factory, having lost or rapidly losing all memory of their life as a Rift, including what happened in the Enclave (thanks to the Mist). Others may only leave the Enclave with Rachel's conscious consent or if they take possession of the Gingerbread Witch Tincture and use it to open the passage.

INVESTIGATING THE FACTORY

Snooping around the factory may yield some interesting clues but not without some risk. Rachel can easily peer from the Enclave into the factory and spot the interlopers. However, she isn't always watching and she prefers to remain hidden and let snoopy individuals come up empty handed over acting and exposing her base. Later, she can instruct the Underhand Naga Gang to follow them and teach them a lesson. If something happens in the factory that requires intervention, or if a lone Rift wanders in and she spots an opportunity, Rachel may send out one of her Gingerbread Men (see page 110) to tackle the problem.

WHY SO IMPREGNABLE?

The difficulty of penetrating the Enclave serves multiple purposes in this case:

- Set up the Enclave as Rachel's drug fortress
- Drive more PCs to use Candy before they enter
- Serve as a barrier for crews arriving from other cases so that they must investigate this case first before continuing into the Enclave.

Depending on the cinematic effect you wish to achieve this could be a barrier the crew scales quickly or a dead end that forces them to stake out the factory for weeks.

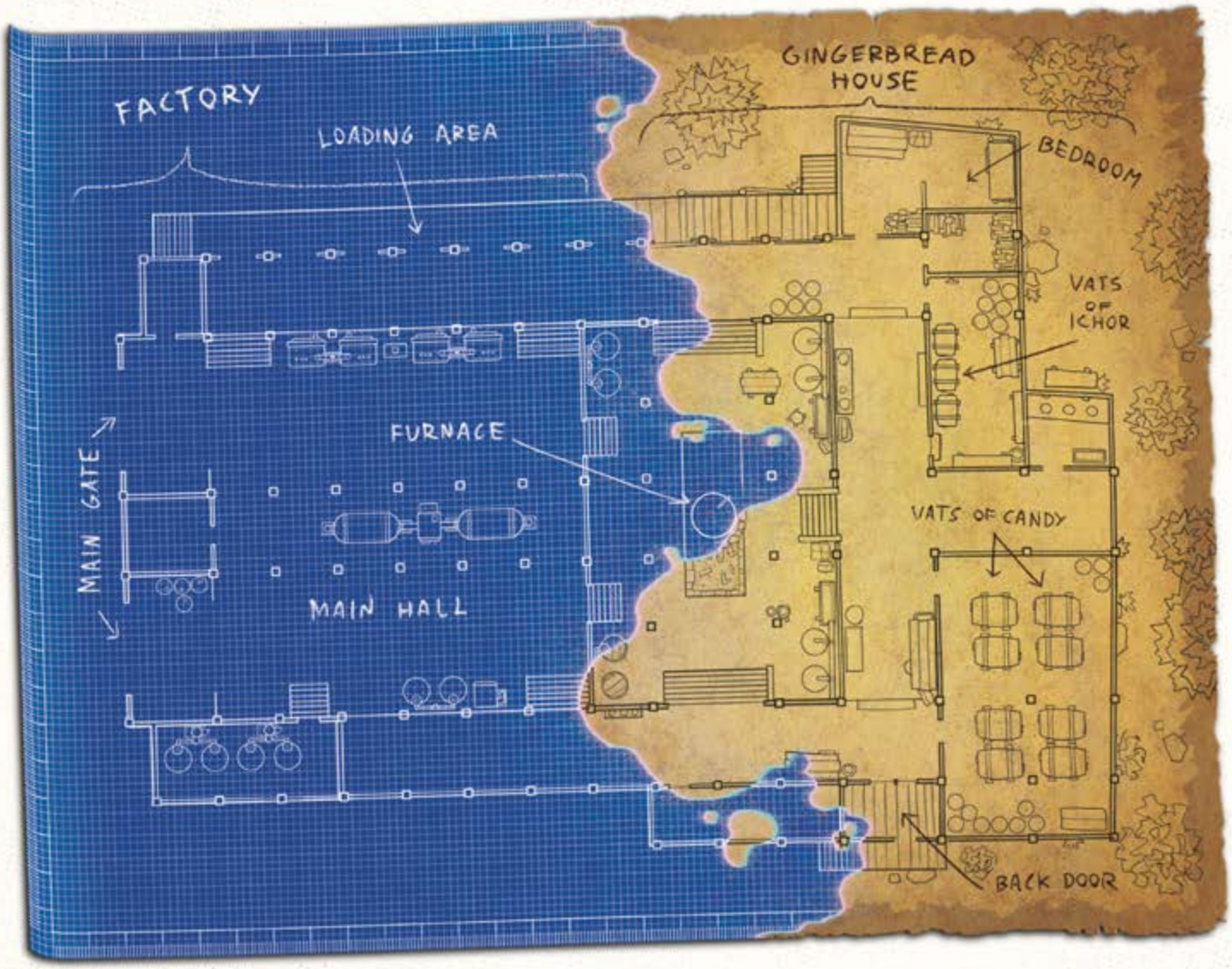
This is where people disappear. Will Harris, Juan Delamar, Hans Woods, and any other victims of the furnace vanished here a day or two before they showed up again (if they did). Rosina Leckermaul appeared here about a month ago. This can be detected with an uncanny sense of smell, retrocognition, finding a torn piece of fabric from their clothes or a personal belonging, or reviewing CCTV recordings outside the factory.

The Underhand Naga Gang picks up pure Candy on the loading dock at the back of the factory once a week. They scope out the location for a while until the vat simply appears.

A group of Magnum Opus Disciples picks up vats of an iridescent viscous substance (Ichor) and possibly unloads blindfolded people (Rifts) into the factory. They arrive late at night in a truck that they reverse up against the loading dock, hiding their activity as best they can. See Magnum Opus Shipment below.

Beyond the Mist there lies the Enclave. Rifts aware enough or lucky enough can get a glimpse of what is happening inside, although it will likely be brief and vague. Rifts **Investigating** with the magical arts (instead of using their Mythos to **Look Beyond the Mist**) may bump into the Gingerbread Witch's Defense Against Magic.

Further beyond the Mist there is a faint, almost forgotten hint of a powerful dark magic that was unleashed in this furnace many years ago: the shards of Dr. Krystal Knight's Devil's Mirror. Pulling on this thread may lead to investigating the Aurora Glasswork company (see *Broken Glass*, page 62), connecting to the Personal Vein.



MAGNUM OPUS SHIPMENT

The following scene connects directly to the subsequent cases in the Mystical Vein, *Cult of the God-King* and *The Alchemist*. Use it only when you're ready to have the crew start investigating these cases. If you are playing case-by-case, it should be played at the end of this case.

The factory is a nexus of the Mystical Vein where all three cases meet. Magnum Opus, Armand's cult, needs the furnace to extract Ichor from Rifts, with which they feed their master's alchemical search after the Elixir of Life. Roughly once a month, they arrive to collect the Ichor and drive it to the Canseliet Manor, where Armand's lab is located (described in *The Alchemist)*. On that occasion, if they have newly-awakened Rifts from the Catacombs (the "Lambs", described in *Cult of the God-King*), they bring them shackled and blindfolded to the factory to be burned in the furnace. The forced-Rifts are later released to live their lives, minus their Mythos soul, and Magnum Opus picks up their Ichor the following month.

Each such shipment is therefore a high-stakes, maximum-security operation for the cult. At the very least, a group of **Armand's Disciples** (see *The Alchemist*, page 157) is operating the truck and securing the exchange. If the cult is on high alert and expecting problems, or if you simply want to increase the difficulty of disrupting its operations, the **Yakuza Yōkai**, assassins who pledged themselves to Armand in exchange for demonic powers (see *Cult of the God-King*, page 122), will be watching over the truck in close proximity.

Following the truck or sabotaging the exchange could lead to either of the other two cases in the vein. This scene can also be played after a showdown in the Gingerbread House Enclave, whereby the Magnum Opus cultists arrive to find Rachel overthrown, collect the PCs' Ichor, or both.



DEPTH 4:
THE GINGERBREAD CONSPIRACY

THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE ENCLAVE

Strangely, the first thing you hear inside the factory is the crackle of firewood burning. The factory is dark and quiet, but it no longer seems abandoned: a ruddy, warm glow flickers on the walls. You pass by a dark timber post, smoothed by years of wear; it leaves brown, sticky, bitter-sweet stains on your hand. Above you, you notice for the first time the corrugated steel ceiling is supported by rough wooden logs. There is a syrupy smell in the air, and somewhere nearby you hear something bubbling. Eventually, you step into the firelight that comes from an enormous furnace, although now you wonder if it's just an oversized stove. Against the blazing fire of the open door, there's a shadowy silhouette of a slender girl gazing into the flames.

The Gingerbread House Enclave is the heart of the Candy operation and the abode of the new Gingerbread Witch, Rachel Woods. This is both where Candy is manufactured and where Candy leads: the furnace, and the end of one's Mythos.

The Enclave is a mirror image of the factory it resides in, but it is superimposed with the Mythos of the Gingerbread House (a house made of sweets). The walls, posts, beams, doors, and windows of the Enclave are a strange mixture of industrial and cabin construction; upon closer inspection, they are revealed to be made of cookies, chocolate, and glazed sugar – and suffused with Candy. Cabin furniture and the flickering firelight also hint at the Mythos of this place. As with the factory, the furnace is set at the center of the Enclave, although here it is active and shaped more like a fairytale stove. There are vats of pure Candy stored in the back of the Enclave, close to a large cauldron, where Rachel concocts the drug. Anyone foolish enough to try to consume Candy within the Enclave gets *caged-4* instantly (without **Facing Danger**), but no wish is fulfilled.

THE CAGES

Candy users who enter the Enclave are soon engulfed by psychedelic iridescent lights which form a cage around them (*caged-4*, without **Facing Danger**). Only they and other caged individuals can see its luminous frame. The cage limits the mobility of the person inside it like a material cage and its scintillating energy counters the use of Mythos powers. Any action to break out of the cage or affect anything outside it from inside is affected by this status. Attempts to reduce this status from the outside are not affected by the status (assuming the rescuer isn't caged herself) but require arcane know-how to undo its magic as the cage has no lock and its "bars" are made of shifting energy. It is possible to reduce the status partially, but the status must be fully removed to free a character from the cage.

The bearer of the Gingerbread Witch Tincture – currently Rachel Woods – knows intuitively when a cage was triggered. She also controls the cages and can manipulate them around the factory space (as if she is telekinetically moving her captives), though it requires gesturing or snapping her fingers. Captives can resist being moved by holding onto something through the "bars" of the cage, but such actions are hindered by the *caged* status.

Rachel uses the cages to force her captives into the furnace. Once she has made the soft move to direct a cage into the furnace, the PCs may make one or two moves before the cage and the captive enter the burning furnace, and optionally another move before the furnace door shuts. Forcing a cage or someone inside to move against the instruction of the Gingerbread Witch incurs the *caged* status.

INSIDE THE FURNACE

The shared invention of Armand Kai and the original Gingerbread Witch, the furnace "cooks" Rifts so their Mythos essence can be "sucked out" of them. The furnace container is made of industrial-grade materials and is difficult to break (*break:5* and reduce all physical harm statuses by 2). The flames of the furnace are cool and do not harm Sleepers or non-Relic inanimate objects. As with the cages, the furnace responds to gesture commands from the bearer of the Gingerbread Witch Tincture.

When a Rift is inside the burning furnace, they take a *Mythos-burning-4* status periodically. During this painful process, they feel their essence leaving them while sparks, smoke, and other effects related to their Mythos explode all around them. Depending on your cinematic considerations and the challenge level you want your crew to face, this status can be given either as a hard move (slower cook, allowing more opportunities to escape) or as a soft move (rapid cook, creating extreme pressure and possibly dire consequences). At tier-6, the Rift becomes a *Mythos-drained-Sleeper-6*.

Soon thereafter, Ichor starts dripping heavily out of a pipe at the back of the furnace, glimmering with the Mythos' colors and radiating feelings, ideas, and psychic images of the story of the Mythos. At this point, Ichor is stable and dormant and its Mythos energy cannot be easily activated; however, it is an extremely corrosive substance.

If an attempt to interrupt the process fails, especially if this occurs while the Rift tries to **Stop. Holding. Back.**, and the *Mythos-burning* reaches tier 6, she may transform into a Gingerbread Man instead of a Sleeper. The Ichor from Gingerbread Men is contaminated and unusable, its Mythos dissipated; no one studied yet where these poor souls' Mythos transfers in such a case.

THE GINGERBREAD MEN

Scattered around the dark recesses of the Enclave are some twenty or so of Rachel's victims whose "cooking" went wrong, the Gingerbread Men: burnt, gnarled, rust-colored wights, oozing neutral white Ichor. Their intellect damaged and their body infused with the furnace Mythos, the Gingerbread Men respond only to simple commands from the Gingerbread Witch. Rachel uses them as a second line of defense in case unwanted guests invade the Enclave or a Rift somehow breaks loose. When she calls them, these zombie-like creatures emerge from the shadows and do her bidding. Anyone **Sneaking Around** the Enclave may also bump into them inadvertently.



THE GINGERBREAD MEN ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / BURN – / AFFECT MIND –

- **Collective:** This collective has a size factor of 1 or 2.
- **Damaged Intellect:** When you try to fool the Gingerbread Men, give them *dull-witted*.
- **Ichor Splatter:** After you strike the Gingerbread Men in hand-to-hand combat, take *corrosive-burn-2*.

- Grip someone with great strength and drag them along (*restrained-3* and *corrosive-burn-2*)
- If unchecked, try to eat someone, drooling corrosive Ichor on them (*corrosive-bite-3*) or sucking their Mythos into the neutral Ichor (burn one Mythos tag)

- Skulk in the dark recesses of the Enclave, dragging their burnt feet
- Croak horridly, their open maws overflowing with Ichor



FACING RACHEL WOODS

When the PCs reach the furnace, Rachel Woods is there, working. She could be concocting more Candy, but ideally, she is about to cook one of the PCs, a regular member of the supporting cast, or a beloved NPC.

Rachel is a petite woman, rocking a goth leather and black lace outfit (a taste in fashion she picked up from the Gingerbread Witch Tincture). Feeling herself all-powerful and in control, she walks around the furnace swinging a baseball bat and chomping on (regular) candy. She is confident and sassy, as befitting her go-getter personality.

There's a story behind Rachel's ambition. Not unlike her alchemist boss, whom she never met, Rachel Woods is running from something, in this case her past as an orphan living in poverty. The drive to survive that helped her through a rough childhood on the streets still guides her and she is convinced that she does what she does for her survival and the survival of her last remaining family member, Hans. She is determined to make enough money from the Ichor business to never again have to live in poverty, and to do so, she had to not only seize the opportunity that fell in her lap but also harden her heart to the suffering of her victims. She tells herself that turning Rifts into Sleepers may even be better for them and that "that's what they get for the fun they had" fulfilling their wishes. Little by little, she has turned as dark and as twisted as the Gingerbread Witch herself.

Rachel is here to make Ichor. It makes little difference to her whether the crew tries to save themselves and other Rifts, sabotage the furnace, bring her down, or change her mind; anyone who gets in her way will end up cooked or dead. The one exception to this is Hans, whom she will not hurt (as per **True Love**), but not hurting Hans doesn't necessarily mean doing what he wants. If Hans gets in the way, Rachel may restrain or subdue him to get the job done.

Streetwise, savvy, or sensitive PCs could figure out Rachel's ambition and past trauma. Mind readers may be hindered by her move Defense Against Magic.

In the gallery, under Rachel's bed, there are six duffle bags full of money, her reward for the Ichor she harvested for Magnum Opus.

Rachel doesn't know the people who collect the Ichor or their "Master", but it is obvious that their main concern was collecting more and more Mythoi. Trying to ambush the Ichor collecting truck leads to the Magnum Opus Shipment.

THE GINGERBREAD WITCH TINCTURE

Hanging on a chain from Rachel's neck is a tiny cylindrical vial no larger than a finger, containing a syrupy caramel-colored liquid: the Gingerbread Witch Tincture. This is the source of all her Gingerbread Witch powers. Rachel also retains her own Rift powers thanks to the connection between the two Mythoi and Armand attuning the Tincture to her specifically.

The following effects are created and sustained by the Gingerbread Witch Tincture. Even if Rachel loses the Tincture in a struggle:

- **Candy** still causes Rifts entering the Enclave to be caged;
- **the cages** operate normally and continue moving to the destination they were last instructed;
- **the furnace** fire continues to burn or remains dead;
- **the Gingerbread Men** follow their last orders; and
- **the Enclave** remains accessible only to Candy users.

To stop or change these effects, a PC or NPC must seize the Tincture vial and successfully control its power. For a Rift PC, taking momentary control of the Tincture requires a **Stop. Holding. Back.** move with a significant sacrifice and allows the PC to issue a handful of commands to the Gingerbread Witch creations in the above list before the connection breaks. PCs with arcane knowledge may use it to **Go Toe to Toe** with the Gingerbread Mythos in the Tincture for the same effect.

Attempting to take permanent control of the Tincture can have a negative, neutral, or positive outcome depending on how her own Mythos interacts with the Gingerbread Witch Mythos. Read more about activating Tinctures on page 86.

Studying the Gingerbread Witch Tincture shows it was made of refined Ichor, extracted from Rosina Leckermaul.

The Gingerbread Witch Tincture can be studied to learn more about Tinctures in general. It may also point to Armand's manor (see *The Alchemist*, page 155) but will more likely draw an interception attempt by Magnum Opus Disciples or the Yakuza Yōkai (see *Cult of the God-King*, page 120).

RACHEL ★★★★

HURT 2 / SUBDUE 5 / CONVINCE HER TO STOP 6

- **Go-Getter:** When Rachel enters the scene, give her *ambitious-3*. The MC can renew this status as a hard move.
- **Switch Fates:** When you give Rachel a negative status that poses a danger to her body or mind, she switches places with you or turns it around so that you get the status instead.
- **Smarter Than That:** When you **Sneak Around** against Rachel or around her, you first take *exposed-3*.
- **Tricked:** Each scene, the MC can make three hard moves as soft moves to reflect Rachel's trickery.
- **Defense Against Magic (Tincture):** When Rachel takes a status caused by magic, reduce its tier by 2. When you try to **Investigate** her or her domain with magic, she first takes *obscure-2*.
- **True Love:** When you try to get Rachel to betray or endanger her brother, she takes *true-love-5*.

- Use the Tincture to hurl a magical spell at someone, locking them up in one of her cages (*caged-3*, may **Face Danger**)
- Use the Tincture to free herself from spells or curses (remove 3 tiers)
- Cut or break loose from restraints (remove 2 tiers)
- Put some distance between herself and her pursuers by climbing the furnace, swinging from chains, and jumping off catwalks around the Enclave (give herself *out-of-reach-2* or *out-of-sight-2*)
- Swing at someone with her baseball bat (*winded-2*) or slash at them with a jackknife (*nasty-cut-2*)

- Use the Tincture to command the cages, the Gingerbread Men, the furnace, or the Enclave
- Take pride in her "accomplishments" so far



THE GINGERBREAD WITCH TINCTURE +

Relic

MYSTERY

I wonder, what do you taste like?

POWER TAGS

***the furnace**, trick someone into the furnace, tempt the unwary, make objects taste sweet, magical cages, sniff out those who are lost, the Gingerbread House Enclave, fairytale witchcraft & alchemy, the Gingerbread Men, limited wish-fulfillment*

WEAKNESS TAGS

only works with the vial, increased Mist susceptibility, volatile Tincture, impulsive when angry

THEME IMPROVEMENTS

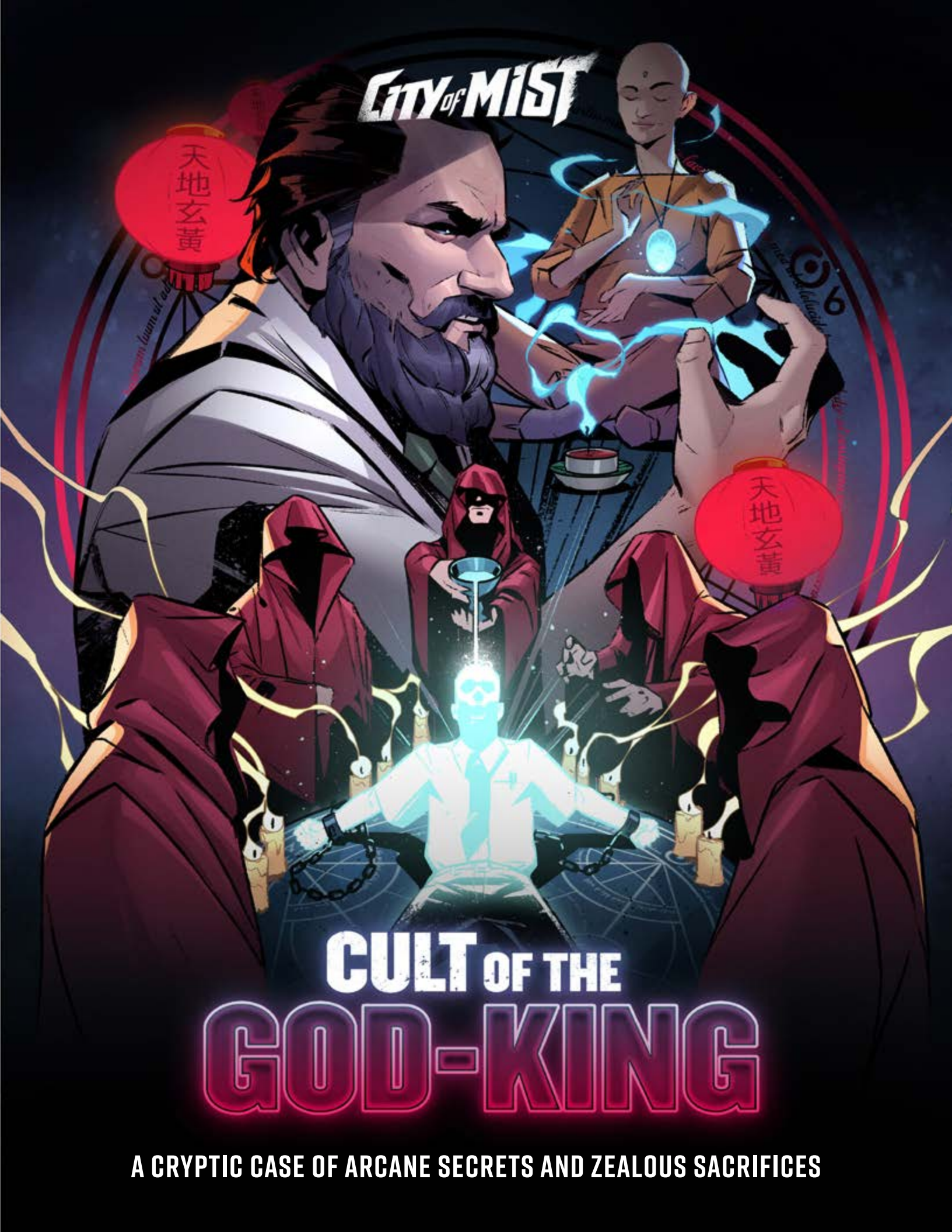
☐ **Cage Mistress**: Once per scene, when you **Sneak Around** to lure someone into a trap using tags from this theme, on a hit, you get them to stand where you want. On a 10+, you can also give them an appropriate restraint status with tier=Power.

☐ **Witches' Brew**: When you use your downtime to prepare for your next activity using this theme, you gain 4 Juice instead of 3.

AFTERMATH

Here are a few questions to consider and points to revisit when you wrap up this case:

- How did the crew members and their supporting cast emerge from the licking flames of the furnace? Did anyone lose their powers? If so, is the crew content to let them live as Sleepers or do they intend to find out how to restore their Rift comrades? Until they do, perhaps a player of a depowered character can play a secondary character that joins this cause.
- What happened to the furnace? Was it destroyed or decommissioned? Was it simply left there in the Enclave? If so, what happened to the Gingerbread Witch Tincture? If it's back on the market, many dangerous Rifts could be interested in reactivating the furnace and ending someone's Rifthood, or their own, or stealing someone's powers. Perhaps Armand Kai reinstates Rachel as the Gingerbread Witch or finds a new one, continuing his nefarious business. The Gatekeepers would kill for such a device and may quarantine the factory, setting up a strange government facility there.
- Speaking of Rachel, what was her fate? Did she pay a dear price for her unbridled self-promotion or did she get away with it? Did she repent, and if so, is Magnum Opus now after her and possibly her Tincture? And what of Hans? Did he get sucked into his sister's greedy machinations or did he stand up for himself? What will he do now if he can't get more Candy?
- What happened to the rest of the Candy? Did it retain its power or did it go away with the Gingerbread Witch? If it's risk-free now, what is stopping Rifts from getting addicted to it? If still manufactured, it could become a hot commodity in the Rift underworld, rattling the City's economy.
- What about the victims of the furnace, like Will and Juan? Or Leckermaul? Will the crew find a way to give them back their powers? Perhaps they don't want them back? Would it be ethical to reawaken someone without their consent? What if they are unable to give consent, exactly because of the part of them that's missing?
- If they are out of product now, what's the next move for the Underhand Naga Gang and Foxy Supreme? Are they going to find someone to make them a new drug?
- Finally, now that the crew was exposed to the Bowl and the Rift underworld in all its glory, do some go back to the fight club to seek release or socialize with others like them?


CITY OF MIST
天地玄黃
天地玄黃
CULT OF THE
GOD-KING
A CRYPTIC CASE OF ARCANE SECRETS AND ZEALOUS SACRIFICES

You can hear it whispered on the cobbled streets of the Old Quarter, in the murmur of the ocean by the docks, echoing down abandoned, candle-lit subway tunnels. It's like an ancient spell or a mumbled recipe, a spark that lights the melting fire. They are gathering, they have awakened, and now they must serve their forgotten master. Do you, like them, seek enlightenment or power untold? What are *you* willing to sacrifice to the God-King?

Cult of the God-King is a psychological thriller following a mystical journey for self-transformation, guided by a mysterious and shady cult. Lead characters can attempt the journey themselves as spiritual seekers or they can play the cynics and iconoclasts and attempt to decipher the cult's true motives before it's too late. As the culmination of the cult's Great Work approaches and the stakes become higher and higher, lead characters will break, switch sides, attain a deeper understanding of the City, and reveal their true nature.

This case takes a headlong dive into the occult circles of the City, exploring the rich lore of medieval alchemy as a path to spiritual evolution and combining it with the mystery of the City and the Mist. **It plays best when at least one PC joins the cult and is willing to go all the way to find answers.**

A PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

The Great Work of the medieval alchemists, or **Magnum Opus**, revolved around the creation of the Philosopher's Stone, which could transform base metals into gold and grant life everlasting. The secret behind this highly sought-after recipe is that it is an allegory; while it discusses the transformation of metals, its true use is to **transform the soul**, from a lost and blind state, caught in the trapping of this world (Sleeper) to an awakened state (Rift) and finally a complete state of unity with all of existence, thereby achieving an individual's ultimate potential: reuniting with the Source.

According to the Magnum Opus, the four stages necessary to achieve this transformation are:

- **Rotting, or Blackening:** Confronting and ruminating on one's darkness and nothingness
- **Purification, or Whitening:** Purifying oneself from worldly pursuits
- **Awakening, or Yellowing:** Awakening to one's true nature
- **Transformation, or Reddening:** Transforming into the ultimate state of being, uniting with the Source

In the City, "the Source" refers to what exists beyond the Mist, perhaps even beyond the realm of the Mythoi. The ultimate goal of this process is to break the chains of the Mist and to attain the ultimate level of awareness.

THE SACRED IS EXPLOITED

While this recipe may be a true path to enlightenment, the cult that calls itself "Magnum Opus" has defiled it, using it for its own dark agenda: **the ritual awakening and harvesting of Rifts**. Masking itself as a promising path to enlightenment, the cult does indeed lead individuals through the first three stages of the process, **turning them into Rifts** while brainwashing them to worship their false idol, **the God-King** (a figurehead that substitutes the ever-elusive "Source").

In the fourth stage, however, the subservient Rifts are **drained of their powers** and then discarded, and their Mythos powers are harnessed to increase the influence of the greedy cult leaders, the council of **the Cabal** (and ultimately, if you are playing the story arc, to fuel Armand Kai's fear of death and search after a literal Elixir of Life).

FROM SEEKERS TO DISCIPLES

The servants of the God-King are divided into ranks based on the stage they managed to achieve in the Magnum Opus process (see table). To attain each rank, cult members must complete the stage and undergo a graduation ritual, which initiates them into the next stage.

Based on their nature and desires, the cultists are further divided into two groups:

- **Lambs**, candidates who seek enlightenment, and are destined to be awakened as Rifts and to have their Mythos harvested.
- **Wolves**, candidates who seek power over others, and are destined to become the leaders of the cult and eventually control the power harvested from Lambs.

	I	II	III	IV
Stage	Blackening	Whitening	Yellowing	Reddening
Alchemical meaning	Rotting	Purification	Awakening	Transformation
Mystical meaning	Confronting one's dark side	Relinquishing worldly pursuits	Discovering one's true self	Attaining enlightenment and ultimate power
Rank	Seeker	Follower	Initiate	Disciple
Teacher	Prof. Clay	Whirler (in Whirler's Commune)	Disciples	For Wolves: the Cabal or Armand Kai
Graduation ritual	The Silo Trial	The Feast of the Fools	Anointing in the Catacombs	The Furnace / Canseliet Manor
Wolves	Prove their ruthlessness	Shed their past lives	Receive Transmutations	Gain new Transmutations and Tinctures
Lambs	Prove their innocence	Shed their past lives	Awaken as Rifts	Harvested

THE BLACKENING

The cult recruits **Seekers** from all across the City, individuals who have shown interest in the occult or in spiritual liberation. The chief recruiter is one of the cult's highest-ranking Disciples, the charismatic Prof. Clay, who doubles as a philosophy professor in the Old Quarter University. Prof. Clay is responsible for the first step of the candidates' journey: confronting newcomers with their flaws and challenging them to strive to be worthy of the secret knowledge he possesses. He also profiles them, assigning them as Lambs or Wolves. At the end of the Blackening, both Lambs and Wolves undergo the Silo Trial to prove their worth to Prof. Clay.

THE WHITENING

Now dubbed **Followers**, aspirants move to a second teacher, **Whirler** (Tincture of Krishna), and live with her for a while on the streets until they learn to abandon their former lives and social norms. Whirler then initiates the Followers in a mass celebration, the Feast of Fools, during which the Followers are whisked away and begin their life as cultists in the service of the God-King.

THE YELLOWING

New **Initiates** become cult operatives and are taken into the Catacombs, the cult's base of operations, hidden deep underground in a chain of abandoned subway tunnels and managed by its most devout Disciples. There, they ready themselves for their **Anointing**, the cult's awakening ritual. While Lambs await their awakening in prayer and meditation, Wolf Initiates take part in the clandestine activities of the cult to serve the will of the God-King: intimidating and harming those who pose a threat to the cult, stealing Relics, guarding cult meetings, etc. This phase culminates with a ritual to awaken Lambs into **Rifts** and to brand Wolves with alchemical symbols, giving them the power of **Transmutations** which finally makes them into fully-fledged **Disciples**.

RIFT HARVEST

In the fourth and final stage, **the Reddening**, Lambs who were awakened into Rifts do not remain Rifts for very long; instead, they are drained of their Mythos powers. Having been brainwashed throughout their time in the cult, most Lambs comply without protest.

Once the Lambs' Mythos powers are extracted and given to "the God-King", the Wolves who perform this so-called sacred duty are granted access to greater alchemical Transmutations and may become candidates for the council of the Cabal. In some of the cases, the God-King allegedly boons the Cabal with a new Tincture, made from the Ichor of the harvested Rift. The soulless husk that was once the Lamb returns to the City as a Mythosless Sleeper, with no hope of ever awakening again.



ALCHEMICAL POWERS

As explained in the introduction to this vein (page 86), followers and allies of Armand's so-called Cult of the God-King wield two forms of alchemical magic: **Tinctures** and **Transmutations**.

Tinctures are Relics created by the leader of the cult (Armand) from the Mythos essence harvested from Lambs. They are vials which hold the liquid essence of a Mythos. Unlike most Relics, they do not choose their bearer, but instead grant the power of a Mythos to whoever possesses them.

Transmutations are alchemical formulas that allow the cult's Disciples to control the alchemical elements and manipulate them in various ways. Only Wolves who reach the rank of Disciple are taught Transmutations, becoming fully Touched by Armand's Mythos.

If you are playing through the story arc, harvesting takes place at the old Aurora Glassworks furnace (see *The Furnace*, page 105), or, if the cult no longer controls the furnace, at **Canseliet Manor** by Armand Kai himself (see *The Alchemist*, page 155). If you are playing this case as a one shot, the Cabal are the ones performing the harvesting ritual in a section of the Catacombs.

THE CABAL

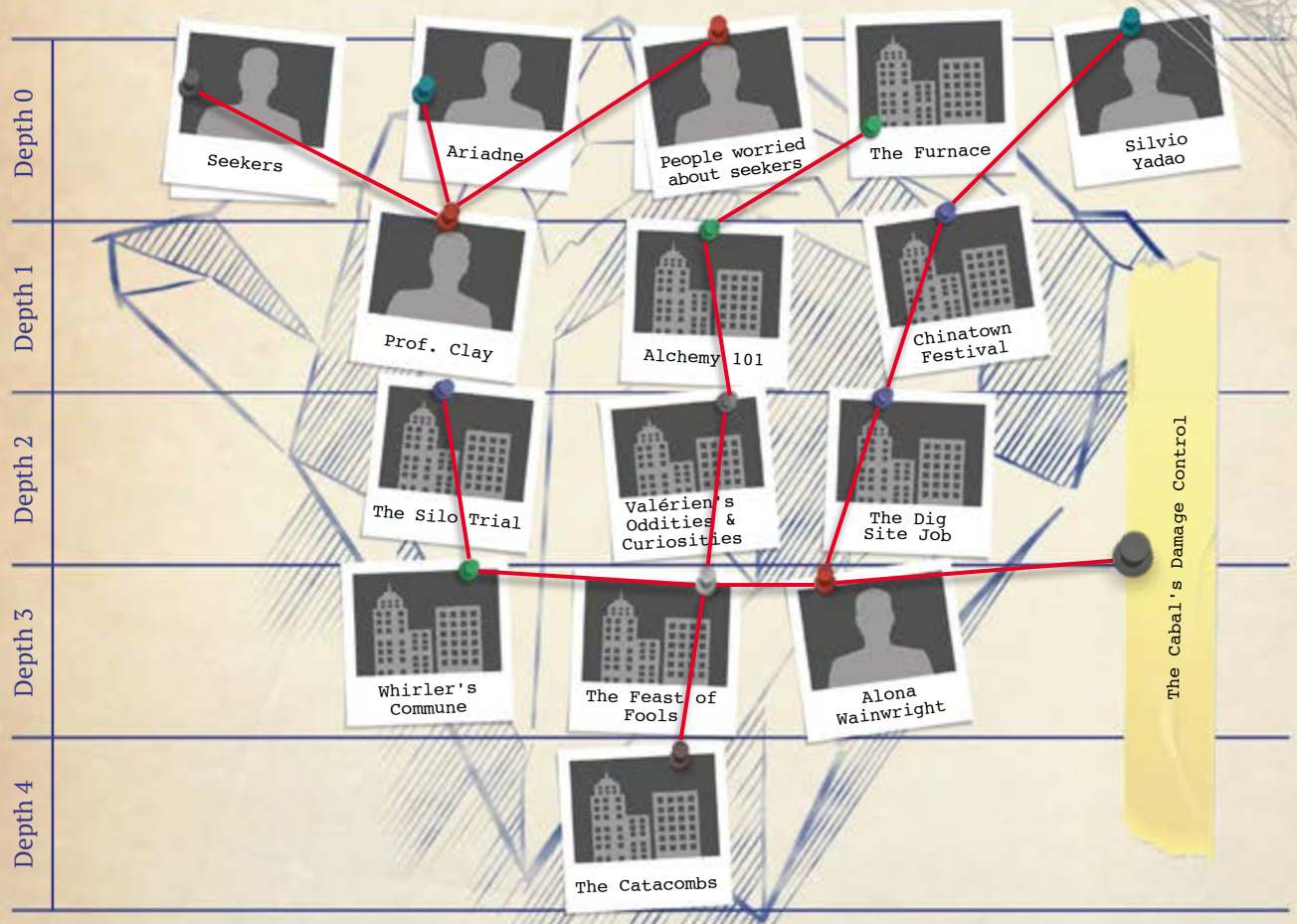
The most loyal and veteran Disciples are chosen by the existing Cabal members to join the Cabal. The Cabal commands a great deal of power, both magically, thanks to the Mythos Tinctures harvested, and politically, in their professional and private lives. Most notably, all Cabal members bear a portion of the Tincture of the biblical Magi (the Three Wise Men who observed the Star of baby Jesus' birth), which grants them powers of **astrological divination** to foresee any possible interferences in the cult's activities.

Alona Wainwright is the most prominent Cabal member, a businesswoman and art collector who finances the cult's activities and uses her legal team to rid the cult of any unwanted attention. She has also hired mercenaries and equipped them with Mythos Tinctures to provide additional protection for the cult. As a side business, Wainwright is using her art collector connections to **obtain Relics for harvesting**, gaining additional Mythos Tinctures.

A TRUE CULT CLASSIC

Here are a few cinematic tropes about cults that you should consider when depicting Magnum Opus in your game:

- **The cult is cryptic.** Only those initiated into the secrets of the cult understand its inner working and motivations.
- **The cult is ever present.** Anyone could be a cult member in disguise.
- **The cult is always one step ahead of the crew.** Between the Disciples' thoughtful calculations and the Cabal's astrological foresight, Magnum Opus always seems to already have a solution to any interferences from the crew, to the point of mocking them.
- **The cult is ruthless like only fanatics can be.** Lambs or Wolves, those seeking absolute truth and power unimaginable care not about the lives of Sleepers or Rifts blinded by earthbound morality. The cultists are willing to obliterate anyone standing on their path to the sublime, some with regret while others with zeal.
- **The cult is all-powerful.** At least from the crew's viewpoint, the cult seems to have unlimited mundane influence as well as never-before-seen forms of magic that can rob one's power (Armand's alchemy), characterizing it as a force too strong to contend with.
- **Don't call it "a cult":** When you portray NPCs remember that the followers of Magnum Opus don't consider it a cult or call themselves cultists and that the other NPCs don't know enough to do so. Avoid blowing the lid by using the world "cult" until the PCs figure it out and introduce this word themselves.



THE ICEBERG

THE CABAL'S DAMAGE CONTROL

The Magnum Opus Cabal commands top-quality intel. Members of the council wear vials with the Tincture of the Magi, granting them **astrological foresight**, and their mundane connections span government, criminal underworld, and esoteric circles.

Cinematically, you should make regular **Deny Them Something They Want** and **Complicate Things, Big-time** moves throughout the case to make the crew feel as if they are one step behind the cult and that their plans are thwarted at every turn, such as:

- Treat a lead they have as obsolete (e.g., the cult already knows they are coming and moved its operations elsewhere)
- Have the cult send the crew a threat
- Have a cultist they captured kill herself or assassinated
- Have the cult ambush them
- Have the cult attack their loved ones or favorite hang-outs

You can justify such hard moves by giving them **a fair warning** in the form of an eerie feeling that they are being watched or tracked. Make sure not to overdo these setbacks; balance them with successes to keep the players engaged.

INVESTIGATING THE LEAK

Whenever you choose to have the cult thwart the plans of the crew, drop hints to let the players wonder how it was possible or ask them directly what their characters think about it. If the crew **Investigates**, they may discover the following:

The cult is not technologically spying on the crew nor are they shadowing the crew. There doesn't seem to be an informer from within the crew's circle leaking information directly to the cult.

There are clerks and secretaries collecting information about the crew, running background checks, accessing personal data, etc. Once the crew has reached Depth 2, these individuals can be traced back to Alona Wainwright in Depth 3.

Looking Beyond the Mist, using abilities that can detect divination, or consulting Ariadne or another expert (e.g. a psychic reader) can reveal **the crew members' threads of fate are being charted using astrology.**

Aridane or another expert may suggest Rifts have a stronger fate signature than Sleepers. **Withholding the use of Mythos powers for a while may serve as a form of astrological camouflage** and allow the crew to get the drop on the cult.

Looking Beyond the Mist can also reveal the Mythos of the Magi at work: three wise men under a bright star. However, having been harvested years ago, the three original Rifts of the Magi can only be found through other Rifts who knew them and their former powers back then (presumably Ariadne). Now Mythosless Sleepers, this trio of former rich and wise salesmen (King of Used Cars, King of Mattresses, and King of Hotdogs) have now been reduced to listless, hollow husks.

DISRUPTING THE CABAL'S ASTROLOGICAL CHARTS

Based on their research, the crew may try to disrupt the astrological divination that is betraying their every move to their enemies. This can be done on a temporary basis by:

- Refraining from using Mythos powers to reduce the characters' fate signature
- A successful **Sneak Around** move with powers that can hide one's destiny or dispel divination
- A *Dynamite!* **Change the Game** move used to create a Mist-hidden effect
- Obtaining Gatekeeper gear that can mask one from divination powers
- Obtaining Silvio Yadao's Tincture of *Tarnkappe* (Cloak of Concealment) which hides one from divination
- Obtaining one vial of the Tincture of the Magi and using it in a ritual to disrupt the others (this requires adequate knowledge of the occult)

ATTACK OF THE CULTISTS

Whenever the crew is about to meddle in the affairs of the cult, or as vengeful retribution for trouble they have caused, the Cabal dispatches its agents to intimidate the crew or make short work of them.

Choose the agent(s) dispatched based on the Depth of the case, what the crew is about to expose, the challenge level you desire, and any cinematic considerations.

- A circle of Seekers (Professor Clay's students) ★★
- A circle of Initiates ★★★
- A Corporate Lawyer hired by Alona Wainwright to harass the crew ★★★
- Talia Al-Bahar, a deadly mercenary with the Tincture of Wilhelm Tell ★★★★
- The Yakuza Yōkai, a violent pack of thugs tattooed with Tinctures of Yōkai (Japanese ghosts and demons) ★★★★
- A circle of Disciples who control elements tailored to the crew's powers ★★★★
- A Nemesis armed with a Tincture tailored to a specific PC's powers

The cult can find the crew anywhere (unless steps are taken to prevent this), and is likely to attack in places such as:

- Wherever the crew is conducting the investigation
- A sewer or subway tunnel to which the crew was lured by a cultist
- A cult ritual the crew plans to infiltrate and/or storm (e.g., the Silo Trial, the Feast of Fools, or the Anointing ritual in the Catacombs)
- Locations related to the PCs' private lives

INVESTIGATING THE AGENTS OF THE CULT

Once defeated, each agent can point to a different part of the case:

Cultists in general ooze alchemical symbolism (chants, recipes, sigils) and powers (Transmutations, Tinctures) that can be researched (Alchemy 101).

Seekers are usually members of Prof. Clay's Philosophy Club and can be followed to a club meeting or to the professor's office.

Initiates and Disciples are harder to crack or track (see sidebar) but they serve as the foot soldiers and couriers of the cult and can be followed to almost any location with cult activity (as long as it is no more than one Depth below the current). Most importantly, starting at Depth 3, they can lead the crew to the Catacombs, especially if the crew missed their chance to sneak in during the Feast of Fools.

The Corporate Lawyer, Talia, or the Yakuza Yōkai are handled by Cabal member Alona Wainwright and can be traced back to her company, Wainwright Auctioneers.

Disciples are entrusted with the cult's most valuable operations such as harvesting Rifts and collecting Ichor from the furnace. If the crew can circumvent the Cabal's astrology and the Disciples' unwavering loyalty, they may lead them to the old Aurora Glassworks factory (page 105, *The Furnace*) or even to Canseliet Manor (page 155, *The Alchemist*).

UNDER-LAMP INTERROGATION

Captured cultists at the rank of Initiate or higher possess the potential knowledge to blow the lid on the cult's operation all the way down to the Catacombs. Fortunately for the cult, the cultists' zeal (see Magnum Opus Dangers, below) could make interrogating a cultist a long and tortuous process for both sides, as it should be, cinematically. The interrogation can stretch out over several scenes and downtimes, parallel to the main investigation.

- Interrogating a cultist is a great cinematic opportunity to build up suspense and creepiness, and to dive into the brainwashed mind of a power-hungry or spiritually-driven fanatic. Drop some alchemical cryptic lines from the **Initiate's Chant** (page 150).
- Even when a player generates Clues, the cultist still speaks in riddles; give leads and hints that point at locations on the same Depth or one Depth lower, never further.
- When you get a hard move, a cultist prisoner could attempt to recruit her interrogators, especially if they spend a lot of time together. They may regress, regaining their *zealous* status. Or, the Cabal can astrologically predict the weak point and send **Talia Al-Bahar** (page 124) to assassinate the cultist from afar with a carefully placed sniper shot.



MAGNUM OPUS DANGERS

Magnum Opus cultists operate in small groups. Unless otherwise stated, a group of cultists usually has a handful of members and a size factor of 1. The cultists' Size Factor helps them resist and dish out not only greater physical statuses but also greater emotional and social statuses as they support one another in their faith.

The cultists' earnest faith in the Magnum Opus makes them virtually immune to mental influence. As they advance in ranks, they increase both their *turn-away-from-cult* maximums and their *zealous* statuses provided by the **Drinking The Kool-Aid** custom move. Removing a cultist's *zealous* status puts her in a vulnerable position, where her defenses are down and she may question her commitment to the cult; however, only maxing out *turn-away-from-cult* will make her betray or leave the cult.

The following Danger profiles describe Seekers, Followers, Initiates, and Disciples; individual Danger profiles are given for advanced Disciples, such as Prof. Clay, Whirler, or Alona Wainwright, in their relevant locations.

MAGNUM OPUS SEEKER ★

Seekers are candidates who are being considered as potential cult members by Prof. Clay or any other cult recruiter. They are a hodge-podge of individuals of various ages, backgrounds, and walks of life, who share a yearning for *something* more in their lives. At the start of their mystical journey, they are merely cultist wannabes; they don't possess any magical powers. Instead, they rely on home-made chemical compounds based on basic alchemical recipes.

HURT OR SUBDUE 1 / TURN AWAY FROM CULT 3

- **Not Sure About This:** When a Magnum Opus Seeker enters the scene, give her *hesitant-1*.
- **Hide in Plain Sight:** When you try to find the Magnum Opus Seeker, she first gets *inconspicuous*.

- Commit herself to the God-King's will (remove *hesitant-1* or 1 tier of emotional statuses)
- Hit someone (*ouch-1*) or use a common tool as a weapon (*bruised-2* or *stabbed-2*)
- Use a home-made chemical compound, such as:
  - » Corrosive: burn one armor tag
  - » Lubricant: make an area *slippery*
  - » Flammable: everyone nearby takes *charred-1*
  - » Flash bomb: everyone nearby takes a temporary *dazzled-2*
  - » Smoke bomb: one or two Magnum Opus Seekers escape (**Deny Them Something They Want**)

- Awkwardly announce their intentions
- Hesitate before moving to strike
- Steel her resolve with words in broken Latin: "O, pater animans!" ("Oh, life-giving father!")

MAGNUM OPUS FOLLOWER ★★

Followers are cultists who endured the Silo Trial and are on the path to initiation. During their sojourn at Whirler's Commune, they are guided by their guru (who possesses the Tincture of Krishna) to refrain from all mortal attachments and practice compassion, tenderness, and love. Mildly Touched by their guru's powers, they exude a calm air and avoid violence. They still retain their everyday appearance but may be wearing white or cream-colored linen robes when in Magnum Opus functions.

HURT OR SUBDUE 1 / TURN AWAY FROM CULT 4

- **Drinking the Kool-Aid:** When a Magnum Opus Follower enters the scene, give her *zealous-2*, renewable as a hard move.
- **Violence is not the Answer:** When you attack a Magnum Opus Follower, you first take *peaceful-2*.

- Ask someone to lay down their arms (*peaceful-2* or burn one tag)
- Inspire someone to lose inhibitions (*uninhibited-2* or burn one tag)
- Talk enthusiastically about her guru (*listening-2* or burn one tag)
- Share a profound perspective that makes aspects of someone's life seem empty and futile (*self-doubt-2*, burn one tag, or narratively give the player cause to mark Crack)

- Bow to someone with eyes shut and hands clasped together
- Praise her guru, Whirler
- Say a prayer to compose herself: "Spiritus meus mercurio lavatur" ("My spirit is washed by Quicksilver.")

MAGNUM OPUS INITIATE ★★

Initiates are the classic cult minions: they follow commands unequivocally but know nothing of the shocking truth at the core of the cult. At this point in their journey, they are too far deep and too close to their goal to turn on the cult. When out on the field, Initiates dress in everyday wear but identify themselves by wearing a light yellow-brown tunic under their clothing.

Thanks to the Cabal's astrological powers, Initiates are often uncannily well-prepared for their tasks, carrying alchemical compositions that are designed to handle a specific threat, such as the PCs and their unique powers and weaknesses.

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / TURN AWAY FROM CULT 5

- **Drinking the Kool-Aid:** When a Magnum Opus Initiate enters the scene, give her *zealous-3*, renewable as a hard move.

- Intimidate or recruit someone with profound-sounding babble (*apprehensive-2* or *listening-2*)
- Throw vials of advanced alchemical compounds especially designed to counter the PCs powers or for a specific task, such as:
  - » Salts against liquid (*dry-2* or *crystalized-2*)
  - » Adherent against strong hand-to-hand fighters (*rooted-2* or *stuck-2*)
  - » Quicksilver against electricity (the environment becomes *conductive*)
  - » Explosives against speedsters (everyone nearby is *knocked-back-2* and *bruised-2*)
  - » Poison against plants or animals (*withered-2* or *poisoned-2*)
  - » Sulfur against acute senses or mentalists (*overwhelmed-senses-2*)
  - » Stink bomb: all Magnum Opus members escape (**Deny Them Something They Want**) and everyone else takes *coughing-2*

- Face the enemies of the cult with burning eyes
- Cry out a battle cry in Latin: "Ut sol elucidatur!" ("Luminous as the sun!")

MAGNUM OPUS DISCIPLE ★★★

Only Wolves become Magnum Opus Disciples – the Lambs who attain this level are awakened as Rifts instead. Disciples are fully-fledged members of the cult. Upon their initiation, they are taught their first Transmutation and branded with an alchemical symbol representing an element, becoming Touched by Armand's Mythos. They then gain magical control over that element. A Disciple often carries a supply of her element if it is not ubiquitous. Disciples wear burgundy red robes or red tunics under their clothing.

As with Initiates, the Cabal deploys Disciples who control elements needed for the task and any foreseen challenges based on their astrological predictions. Therefore, Disciples sent to counter the PCs usually command Transmutations befitting the PC's powers and weaknesses, unless the PCs have circumvented the Cabal's divination.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / TURN AWAY FROM CULT 6

- **Drinking the Kool-Aid:** When a Magnum Opus Disciple enters the scene, give her *zealous-4*, renewable as a hard move.
- **Trained Practitioner:** Once per scene, a Magnum Opus Disciple can make a Transmutation hard move as an intrusion.

- Manipulate her Transmutation element to her advantage:
  - » **Earth:** Create a barrier that protects the cultists (*smash:4*) or blocks a path (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
  - » **Fire:** Make a fire lash out at someone (*burnt-3* or *blinded-3*)
  - » **Water:** Cause dehydration (*dehydrated-3*) or drive a surge of water (everyone affected takes a temporary *knocked-down-3*)
  - » **Air:** Make the cultists *hidden-by-fog-2* or cause someone to stop breathing (*choking-3*)
  - » **Lead (or Silver):** Shield the cultists from lead bullets (counter the next 3 tiers of gunfire) or propel nearby lead bullets (*gunshot-wound-3*)
  - » **Iron:** levitate and propel heavy objects made of steel (*crushed-3*) or bend them to create a cage (*caged-3*)
  - » **Salt:** Spray an area with salt, shredding it to pieces (*shredded-3* or *salt-cuts-3*) or crystallizing liquids (*crystallized-3*)
  - » **Arsenic:** Infect someone with a deadly arsenic poisoning (*poisoned-3* and again *poisoned-3* every downtime) and force them to yield in return for removing the arsenic from their body
  - » **Phosphorous:** Create a white smoke screen (*cover-3* for her group or **Deny Them Something They Want**) or cause *chemical-burns-3*
- Fervently attest that Magnum Opus can grant someone the power to fulfill their wishes (*tempted-3*)

- Express complete calm in the face of danger
- Invoke her Transmutation, making its sigil glow, while whispering "Deus in orbe terrarum." ("God on Earth.")
- Respond to a command with a composed "Cum pyra tua sacra." ("With your sacred fire.")

YAKUZA YŌKAI ★★★

This pack of former Yakuza mobsters had their tattoos embellished with ink mixed with the Tinctures of Yōkai Mythoi (Japanese evil spirits, ghosts, and demons). When they activate their powers, smoke swirls around their tattoos, which seem to come to life and transform the mobster's body or materialize objects and substances around him. In exchange for these demonic powers, the Yakuza crew swore an oath to serve the Cabal for seven years. The five crew members' Yōkai are:

- **Akaname (Filth-licker)**, a bathroom goblin that enjoys licking, as well as producing, slime and filth
- **Aobōzu (Blue Monk),** a one-eyed buddhist Monk of uncanny perception and might
- **Chōchin-obake (Paper Lantern Ghost)**, a floating demonic paper lantern that wreaks fiery havoc
- **Enenra (Smoke Shroud)**, a demon of darkness and smoke visible only to the pure of heart
- **Jubokko (Tree Child)**, a vampire tree, capable of growing branch- and root-like tentacles that suck out blood

This Danger profile represents a single Yakuza Yōkai.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / TURN AGAINST THE CULT 6

- **Tinctures of Yōkai:** Each of the Yakuza Yōkai possesses a different ability:
  - » **Akaname:** When you attack Akaname, he first sprays you with a jet of disgusting slime (*slipping-2*).
  - » **Aobōzu:** When Aobōzu enters the scene, give him *sees-the-unseen-2*, renewable as a hard move. For Aobōzu, **Tough as Nails** reduces 2 tiers instead of 1.
  - » **Chōchin-obake:** When Chōchin-obake enters the scene, give him *floating-evasively-2*, renewable as a hard move.
  - » **Enenra:** Enenra can dematerialize into smoke as a soft move and materialize as an intrusion. While in smoke cloud form, Enenra's *hurt-or-subdue* spectrum maximum is (–) and he becomes *invisible-5* (except to the eyes of the pure of heart). This status may affect **Facing Danger** against attacks he makes immediately after materializing.
  - » **Jubokko:** When Jubokko inflicts a *drained* status, he gains a *revitalized* status with the same tier. He can use tiers of *revitalized*, one-for-one, to remove tiers from a negative status he has.
- **Tough as Nails:** When the Yakuza Yōkai take a status of physical harm, subdual, or mental harm, reduce its tier by 1.

- Attack, employing unarmed martial arts (*broken-arm-3*, *pinned-3*, or *winded-3*) or high-caliber pistols and submachine guns (*gunshot-wound-3*)
- **Akaname:** Spray an area with *slippery-2* slime
- **Chōchin-obake:** Create a new *lantern*
- **Chōchin-obake:** have each lantern spew a jet of hellish fire (*hellfire-burns-3*)
- **Jubokko:** Attach his branches to someone and drain their blood (*drained-3*)

- Face off with the crew, striking a pose and weighing their opponents
- Charge!




やくさ妖術!
やくさ妖術!

TALIA AL-BAHAR ★★★★

Talia Al-Bahar is an ex-commando hired gun who accepted the Cabal's offer to up her game with some "top-secret tech". She bears a pendant of reinforced titanium on her neck (reminiscent of army tags) that contains the Tincture of Wilhelm Tell, augmenting her accuracy, combat prowess, and valor (and making her aware of the legendary). On the job, she wears typical mercenary garb: combat boots, camo cargo pants, tank top, army jacket, and shades, and carries an impressive assortment of weapons. While she's not a person of strong morals, the same cannot be said of the Mythos of Wilhelm Tell; the Tincture pushes against the cult's tyrannical agenda, and Talia can only use it for a short amount of time before having to let it "cool off".

Talia's moves reflect her abilities as enhanced by the Tincture. If she loses it, reduce her hard move effects by 1, limit **Seize the Initiative** to melee attacks only, and remove **Heroic Fortitude**.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / BRIBE 6 / TINCTURE CONFLICT 5

- **Sniper:** When Talia enters the scene, if she's in a sniping position, give her *hidden-2*.
- **Seize the Initiative:** When you attack Talia, she hits you first with one of her hard moves.
- **Heroic Fortitude:** When Talia takes a mental or emotional status, reduce its tier by 2.
- **Mythos Backlash:** When Talia takes action to secure or support an oppressor, the freedom-fighting Mythos of Wilhelm Tell backlashes; give her *Tincture-conflict* with an appropriate tier. When *Tincture-conflict:5* maxes out, she must cease all such actions or drop the Tincture (MC's call).

- Take her aim (give someone *in-her-sight-2*, applied to all **Face Danger** moves against her gunfire)
- Shoot a single, deadly, accurate shot (*severe-gunshot-wound-4*)
- Provide suppressive or cover fire (**Force Them To Choose**: stay in cover or take *gunshot-wound-3*)
- Accurately shoot an object out of someone's hand, hit a switch, etc. (**Complicate Things, Bigtime** or **Deny Them Something they Want**)
- Bounce a bullet off a hard surface or curve it around a corner (*gunshot-wound-3*)
- Draw out a combat knife when fighting hand-to-hand (*vicious-stab-wound-4*)

- A glint of light flickers up above
- Expertly change a magazine while scoping her next target

DEPTH 0: THE HOOKS

Cult of the God-King plays best as a psychological thriller when at least one PC who is serious about getting answers goes through the process of the Magnum Opus. While the cult's ultimate goal is corrupt, the journey the PC undertakes with the guidance of Prof. Clay, Whirler, and others, can still be a meaningful one (and in the context of the Grail story arc, a preparation for things to come). For her, it could be the first steps on her path to the ultimate truth.

On the other hand, PCs who mistrust the cult's teachers or are uninterested in what the cult has to offer can investigate the cult from the outside, through research or through uncovering and sabotaging its operations. This inevitably leads to a direct and ruthless confrontation with the cult.

The crew may become involved in the case in the following ways:

- **Seeking answers or power:** PCs who are seeking answers about the City, the Mist, and beyond are perfect candidates for joining the cult. Characters who are interested in the occult as a vocation, as a means to answer their Mysteries, or as a path to more power may also become cult recruits. They may come across Prof. Clay's calling card in the back of a dusty library book or hear him speak in the Speaker's Corner. If they are advised by **Ariadne** (see sidebar) she may point them to Prof. Clay as "a man who guards the path to many answers".
- **Commissioned to investigate the cult:** Relatives or friends of cult followers could approach the crew and hire them to save their loved ones (see sidebar for potential NPCs). **Ariadne** may send the crew into the cult undercover to reveal its secrets. One of the supporting cast members could get involved with the cult, leading the crew to trace her steps. Investigating the cult begins with Prof. Clay and his Philosophy Club.
- **Following up on *The Furnace*:** If the crew already came upon the cult's artifacts during *The Furnace* (page 87), such as the Tincture of the Gingerbread Witch or the Rift-harvesting furnace itself, or if they had a run-in with the cult's Disciples, they may already be looking for answers about the cult's strange magic. Researching the secret art of the cultists can lead to answers (Alchemy 101). Seeking out the cult's operation will initially lead to a dead end or to an ambush (The Cabal's Damage Control).

- **Crossing paths with the cult's Relic hunt:** Contacts in the art or antiques dealing world, including smugglers, fences, and forgers have all caught wind of a heavyweight collector that is buying up artifacts, creating a market hype and a rush for antique heists (one such contact is Michel Ahmagi of Ananda Gallery, see the free case *Demons in Cross End*).

  The person to talk to is **Silvio Yadao**, a cat burglar who has been working for that anonymous collector (Alona Wainwright) but is now eager to go legit and is being threatened by the cult. Silvio would suggest meeting at the Chinatown Festival, a crowded place ideal for furtive meetings with ample escape routes.

  Crew members may also happen to be present at the Chinatown Festival when the cult's attack on Silvio takes place, prompting them to act and later investigate. Supporting cast caught in the mayhem may call the PCs for help.

CULTISTS ARE PEOPLE, TOO

If neither the PCs nor their supporting cast are drinking the Kool-Aid, use the following NPCs as victims of the cult in order to keep the crew emotionally invested.

Peter Hill, a tall and broad-shouldered jock, is an angry young man and a bully. His sense of entitlement and ambition to tower over his peers do little to hide his insecurities. Peter is not interested in unpacking his rough childhood and lack of a role model. Instead, he wants to possess power that will help him shut up anyone who tries to talk about these things.

Sloane Martinez (Nymph) is a petite and mousy bespectacled bookworm who has grand questions about the mysteries of the universe. A gentle soul, Sloane nonetheless is willing to sacrifice anything for the truth and for magic. Initially, she is able to hide the fact that she is a Rift, but if the cult finds out, they'll watch her extra carefully.

Jiahao "Jaja" Zhang is a podgy, ever-smiling follower of the other two. He joins the cult because his friends are there and will go to great lengths to follow them, even though he maintains a lukewarm attitude toward the cult's teachings. Jiahao seeks to belong more than anything else; once he experiences the cult as a group, he may become the most zealous cultist of the three.



ARIADNE

In the spiritual and occult circles of the Rift underworld, **Ariadne** (Ariadne, wife of Dionysus, who gave Theseus the ball of thread to lead him out of the Minotaur's labyrinth) is a well-known figure and highly sought-after mystical guide. A powerful Rift who keeps to herself, she nonetheless is driven by her Mythos to guide those who are worthy out of proverbial labyrinths, perhaps even out of the illusion of the Mist itself.

Ariadne knows a great deal about all that is going on in the underworld of Rifts and particularly in its esoteric and magical subcultures; you can use her to dispense wisdom and information to characters who seek mystical answers. However, she usually shares her knowledge sparingly, giving the PCs just enough to make the next move, not unlike a string that hooks around a corner in a labyrinth. During a scene, she acts all *cryptic-3*, making it hard to glean information she doesn't want to share.

No one truly knows who or what Ariadne is. She may be a powerful (Legendary) Rift on the brink of Avatarhood, ready to take on the guardians of the Mist, or she could be a Gatekeeper herself. More likely than not she is both, playing the Gatekeepers and fellow Rifts to further her Mythos' agenda: to help those who wish to awaken transcend the labyrinthian prison that is the City.

ARIDANE AND MAGNUM OPUS

Aridane can sense in her heart of hearts that the Magnum Opus cult is a sham, that it is more likely a labyrinth hiding a devouring "minotaur" than a ball of thread leading to true liberation. This tingles her Mythos' sensitivities and makes her want to help those who have fallen prey to the cult's scheme find their way back out to the light.

At the same time, she can sense that there is a core of truth behind the lies, though she does not know what it is exactly (she could be sensing the Grail Water used to awaken new Rifts, see the Catacombs). While this piques her curiosity, it's a mystery that remains outside of her reach: Armand's alchemy is strong enough to interfere with her divinatory powers and the Cabal's astrology will mark her as a target if she intervenes directly.

Ariadne is not one for direct confrontation – she is much more inclined to recruit "Athenian" heroes and send them into the maze to do her dirty work. The crew (or at least some of its members) fits that profile perfectly. Ariadne won't reveal all she knows and feels about the cult, just enough to spur the crew to investigate.

INTRODUCING ARIADNE

Contact with Ariadne begins with a thread one must pull on: a physical red thread hanging conspicuously on a doorknob, a hinted opportunity in a conversation, or a mystical trail a magician Rift can trace back to her. She often meets her protégés in secrecy, down a dead-ended smoky alley, up on a random rooftop, in a shady warehouse off a bustling market, or in a quiet church or temple alcove. There, she will loom silently out of the shadows, a gray-haired and hooded middle-aged woman in silver robes woven of spider silk. To Rifts, she almost appears to be an apparition; to Sleepers, she's just a creepy old chain-smoking lady in an ashen trench coat.

Ariadne will offer to guide the crew out of the labyrinth of lies and deceit that is the City. As a first step, she will point the crew to Prof. Clay, either to investigate him or to learn what he has to teach. She may gift a PC that is likely to get lost with a woolen garment, which will reveal itself as one of her balls of thread in a time of need (the PC gains a temporary Extra Theme).

ARIADNE'S BALL OF THREAD +

Relic

MYSTERY

How can I stop the devouring of that which is pure?

POWER TAGS

find the best path, *dispel confusion*, *lead the lost to safety*, *weave itself into a woolen garment*, *warn against monsters*, *discern a dead end*, *more powerful in the hands of a hero/ine*, *decipher cryptic message*, *see the threads of fate*, *demystify the Mist*

WEAKNESS TAGS

attracts monsters, *fear leads to doubt*, *easily burns*, *blind follower*

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Demystifier:** When you **Change the Game** with tags from this theme to remove tags and statuses that describe confusion or misguidance, you generate +1 Juice.

DEPTH 1:
A CANDLE IN THE DARK

PROFESSOR CLAY

You sneak in and take a seat at the back of the lecture hall. Across the crowd of listeners, the burly, bearded man on the podium is captivating his audience with his profound, poignant questions. Behind him on the board, there are symbols and diagrams, and the word TRANSFORMATION? encircled many times. You slowly begin to heed his words: "So, is it possible for us, then, to go through the same process, let go of all the noise and contaminants, and become what we are in essence? The ancients thought so, and they left us with specific instructions..."

Officially a respectable (albeit unorthodox) professor of philosophy and antiquity in the Old Quarter University, **Prof. Gregory Clay** is in fact a Disciple of Magnum Opus and their main recruiter. He is the frontliner of the cult in this case, recruiting both pliable individuals for Mythos awakening and harvesting (Lambs) and ambitious go-getters to grow the ranks of the cult's Disciples (Wolves).

Professor Clay possesses a magnetic personality and years of experience in bringing seekers through the first stages of awakening. Fancying himself a free thinker, he believes wholeheartedly in the Magnum Opus path to illumination, and preaches to his followers not out of malintent, but out of deep, burning, horribly misguided, fatherly love. More than he aspires for the political power of membership in the Cabal, he yearns to unite with the source of life as he understands it: the God-King.

The professor is middle-aged, thickset, with a barrel chest, arms like logs, and an impressive, voluminous, salt-and-pepper beard. His voice is harsh and raspy, and his eyes are almost black, but they seem to smolder like embers. He dresses formally as fitting his academic position; when passionately sharing his ideas, he is often seen perspiring in his dress shirt and suspenders, with his sleeves rolled up and his tie loosened.

The professor operates in four locations, all in the Old Quarter:

- **The university lecture hall**, where he lectures on religion, spirituality, and ancient paths to transformation to attract candidates. Use this location to establish him as an authority on these matters.
- **The professor's university office**, where he holds his private meetings with candidates. This is a dark, musky room, decked in wood, lined with bookcases, and draped in velvet curtains. It's notably spacious and plush for a philosophy professor, overlooking the campus grounds. The office is decorated with several pieces of medieval art including a tapestry, a bust, and a laboratory set. There are numerous texts on spirituality and alchemy (Alchemy 101).
- **The Philosophy Club**, where he teaches his Seekers. Prof. Clay uses a university-run study group, officially open to the public, to run his recruitment environment for Seekers and guide them through the first steps of their spiritual path. The Philosophy Club meetings take place regularly three nights a week at the campus house of the preppy and learned ***Mu Omicron* fraternity**, many of whose members are in attendance. During a meeting, the house is guarded by *alert-1* club members. Meeting nights are *foggy*, providing additional cover. Inside, Prof. Clay is as *mindful-3* as ever and may spot an intruder. The secretive meetings take place by candle light, for effect, as Prof. Clay teaches his students the basics of alchemy and the Magnum Opus, often using **"The Alchemy of the Soul" book** as reference (see Alchemy 101). When a newcomer is present, Prof. Clay first studies her reaction to the group before breaking out the burners and mortars.
- **A private log cabin** in the forested hills just out of town, where he takes small groups of promising students on spiritual retreats complete with late-night fireside talks and outdoor challenges.

PROFESSOR CLAY'S ABILITIES

Beyond his remarkable esoteric knowledge and mentoring techniques, the professor also secretly commands two elemental Transmutations, one for Water and one for Earth, having earned them through years of loyal service to the cult. The sigil brands for these Transmutations are burned into his flesh in two concentric circles covering most of his back. While they glow neon-bright when activated, they are usually well-hidden under his thick shirt.

The Transmutations of Water and Earth allow Prof. Clay to shape these elements freely with a motion of his fingers or arms. Most usefully, he can manipulate the water in a person's body, causing paralysis or even crudely controlling their movements. While undercover, the professor never uses his alchemical gifts, unless he is in grave danger.

See Clay's Danger profile as a Disciple on page 136.

When the PCs first arrive on the scene, the professor will try to pick out a PC to recruit. If some PCs show distrust, he won't push but will enlist his Seekers to ensure inquisitive PCs stay out of his business. Once the crew gets into an altercation with cult Seekers or the professor himself, they will start showing up on the Cabal's astrological charts, leading to a retaliation (The Cabal's Damage Control).

Note that when you use hard moves to reflect Gregory Clay's convincing a PC (e.g., giving her *convinced-3*), you automatically expose him as a Danger and a villain. Instead, when a PC genuinely takes interest in what Clay has to say, consider foregoing the hard moves in order to leave his motivations shrouded in mystery. Continue to play through the story and try to present a convincing Prof. Clay. If the PC decides to follow him for the value he offers and not because the player is compelled by a status, the cinematic effect will be much more powerful.

INVESTIGATING THE PROFESSOR

The professor's background check is impeccable. He seems to be a valued member of the faculty, other than a comment about taking his class on an unapproved field trip long ago. **A forger** could detect the comment was left there to avoid making this **doctored file** look too perfect. Pulling on this thread leads to Silvio Yadao (see The Hooks, page 124, leading to the Chinatown Festival), who swapped the previous file at the request of financier Alona Wainwright. The previous file is full of entries casting doubt on the professor's far-reaching ideas and strict educational methodology.

Prof. Clay leads the Philosophy Club, an extra-curricular society meeting at the Mu Omicron fraternity house on the university campus.

The professor is a man of many faces. When lecturing he is impassioned, in a conversation he is pleasant and charming, and among his students he is stern (even abusive when they disappoint him), though he tries to hide the latter behavior in public.

INVESTIGATING THE PHILOSOPHY CLUB

The Philosophy Club members aren't there to study theoretical philosophy – **their clique seeks to obtain real power through occult knowledge.** To join this group, one must approach the professor personally.

While it is composed of both men and women, the philosophy club has taken on a "good old boys" mentality, fostered by Clay's demand to bravely contend with their faults and dark urges.

Some members of the club aren't as sure as the others that this is the right path for them. They may talk if separated from the group.

Prof. Clay is teaching his students basic chemical recipes to give them a taste of the power that may become available to them in the future.

Most of the teachings come from "The Alchemy of the Soul", a medieval book by Mathilda DeAquino. Researching the book leads to Alchemy 101.

The candidates are eagerly awaiting their "final trial" (the Silo Trial), after which they will be initiated into the "Mystery of the God-King".

THE BLACKENING: CONFRONTING ONE'S NOTHINGNESS

As the first line of recruitment, it is the professor's job to separate the serious Seekers, who can go all the way, from the lightweight, fake, or snoopy candidates. This is done by **offering answers** on the one hand, and on the other hand forcing the candidate to **look at her own faults over and over again**, a most unpleasant experience which only the most earnest seekers endure.

RIFT RECRUITS

Magnum Opus accepts Rift recruits but they must go through the same process as Sleepers do to prove themselves. A Rift is considered valuable to the cult only after she fully accepts the Magnum Opus teachings and is willing to sacrifice herself to the God-King.

Rift candidates are expected to set their powers aside until they witness the power of the God-King, in the Anointing ritual. Failure to do so results in expulsion from Magnum Opus.

When recruiting a new Seeker, PC or NPC, the professor uses the following outline:

1. **Read the Seeker** (if applicable, using the custom move **Dark Mentor**) trying to establish if she is a Lamb or a Wolf, what interests her, and how to approach her (kindly, authoritatively, charmingly, etc.)
2. Based on that, **build rapport**, and talk about the subjects that interest the Seeker
3. **Invite her to undergo the Magnum Opus**: Promise answers to her questions or the power to change her position if she is willing to walk the path of transformation
4. **Demand that the Seeker first prove her earnestness by confronting her weaknesses;** Choose a task that would be difficult for the Seeker to do, such as a situation that triggers a PC's weakness tags (see custom move **Dark Mirror**) or challenge her to do something that would be difficult without her Mythos powers.
5. **Reward efforts with some answers:** A free Clue about alchemy or *a copy of "The Alchemy of the Soul"* which the Seeker can study (see clues in Alchemy 101)
6. **Repeat steps 4 and 5,** appointing increasingly hard tasks and granting greater rewards
7. **The final trial:** Once the candidate has shown enough commitment and the professor thinks she can withstand the trial, she is invited to the Silo Trial

QUOTES FROM THE PROFESSOR

- **"You are blind.** That is why you cannot find what you seek. The first step on the path is to awaken to what you cannot see – your own darkness, your own nothingness."
- **"Alchemy is the path to the transformation of the soul.** Me, and this book, we are just guides. You are the one who must walk the path."
- **"Your powers are what we call *Fool's Gold*.** Do you know where they come from? What they are? Are they truly *your* powers? No. To know the truth, you must abandon this lie. To become the Philosopher's Stone, you must first melt yourself and clean all these impurities and contaminants."
- "If you are not ready to sacrifice for the truth, you are not ready for the truth. **Only the initiated can grasp the ultimate reality."**
- **"I am not asking you to succeed in your task, I'm asking you to try,** so that you will witness your own failings and learn to know them."
- "Beyond the confines of this City, of this twisted world, there lies **the God-King**, the source of all existence. To reunite with him means to become absolute, omniscient, and omnipotent. This is the possibility hidden in your soul."

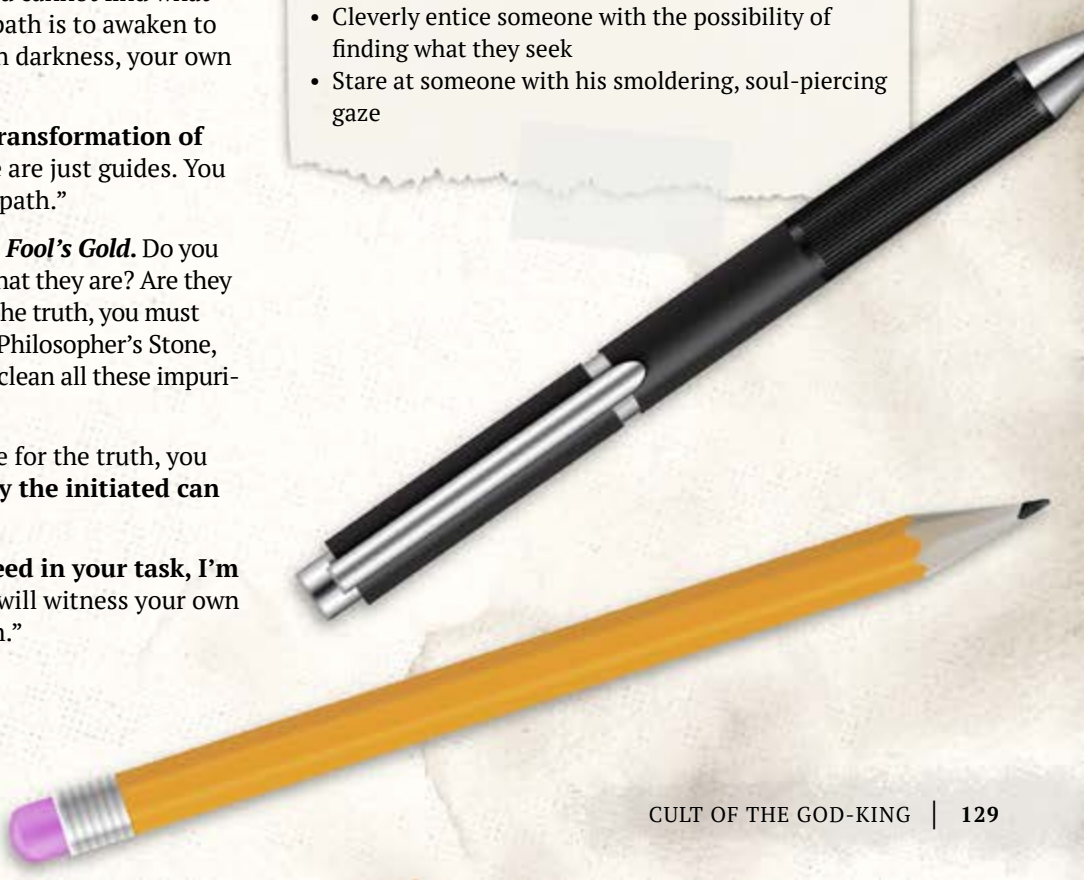
UNDERCOVER PROF. CLAY ★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / THREATEN, FOR NOW 3

- **Disciplined Mind:** When Prof. Clay enters the scene, give him *mindful-3*; he is both mindful of what he says and mindful of his surroundings.
- **Dark Mentor:** Whenever you ask Prof. Clay for answers (whether you **Investigate** or not), the MC asks you "What do you seek?" Prof. Clay knows the answer. You also take a relevant tier-1 status, e.g. *seeking-to-belong-1*, *seeking-arcane-knowledge-1*, etc. Multiple statuses stack normally.
- **Dark Mirror:** Whenever you invoke a weakness tag while performing a task given to you by Prof. Clay, it reduces your Power by 3 instead of 1.
- **Roll Up The Sleeves:** If Prof. Clay is in mortal danger or if he is about to reveal secret cult information, he blows his cover before it happens. Use the **Disciple Gregory Clay** Danger profile (page 136).

- Speak a universal truth that makes someone *contemplative-2* or *hesitant-2*
- Help someone cope with fear or confusion (remove up to two tiers of appropriate negative statuses)
- Identify what someone seeks (giving them a status as in **Dark Mentor**)

- Cleverly entice someone with the possibility of finding what they seek
- Stare at someone with his smoldering, soul-piercing gaze



ALCHEMY 101

"Here it is," says the austere librarian as she softly slides the worn-out book across the counter." 'The Alchemy of the Soul', 1233, by Mathilda DeAquino. It's a modern printing of the original medieval manuscript, but still quite hard to come by." You pick up the leather-bound book and flick through its pages, skimming over cryptic words, sacred verses, forgotten formulas, and strange sigils. It looks like you have your work cut out for you.

Sooner or later, the crew will have to delve into the mystic arts that lie at the base of the cult's power. This can be spurred by witnessing signs that the cultists study or wield alchemical power, such as:

- A cultist calling out phrases in medieval Latin
- The alchemical powders and concoctions used by Seekers and Initiates
- The glowing alchemical sigils of a Transmutation activated by a Disciple
- A Mythos Tincture
- From *The Furnace* case: the furnace itself, or Ichor (the raw product of the Mythos harvesting process)

Academic crew members or those versed in the occult should **Investigate** in order to obtain the following clues about Magnum Opus; other characters may reach out to knowledgable contacts. The more the crew learns about the cult and its form of alchemy, the more they draw the attention of the Cabal, eventually triggering an attack when it is most dramatically appropriate (The Cabal's Damage Control).

INVESTIGATING THE CULTISTS

Adherents of Magnum Opus speak catchphrases and battle cries in medieval Latin. These refer to a "life-giving father", being "washed by Quicksilver", something "as luminous as the sun", and a "sacred fire". These are all lines from the **Initiate's Chant,** a prayer which appears in the book **The Alchemy of the Soul**.

The chemical formulas used by Magnum Opus date back to the ancient science of alchemy. **The glowing sigils** from which the Disciples draw their power are alchemical sigils representing different elements; **their power to manipulate elements** may be alchemical in nature. The source of this specific symbolism originates in **an esoteric medieval book titled "The Alchemy of the Soul"** by Mathilda DeAquino, found in the back of the library or in an old book store.

INVESTIGATING THE ARTIFACTS

A (Mythos) Tincture contains the essence of a legend inside it (**Ichor** is its raw form). The only possible source of such potent Mythos power is the Rift of that Mythos.

The furnace was built by a master of the occult arts, someone who knows how to extract spiritual essence out of matter – most likely an alchemist. It is impossible to decipher who engineered it or how it works without vast alchemical knowledge.

Alternatively, if you wish to connect the cases, studying a Tincture with divinatory powers could lead to:

- The furnace where it was harvested in its raw form (the old Aurora Glassworks factory in *The Furnace*, page 105);
- The co-creator of the furnace, Rosina Leckermaul (the Leckermaul house in *The Furnace*, page 92); or
- The creator of the Tincture(s), Armand Kai at Canseliet Manor (in *The Alchemist*, page 155).

READING IN "THE ALCHEMY OF THE SOUL"

On the inner side of the back cover, someone scribbled: **"Still seeking answers? Call Prof. Gregory Clay"** along with Prof. Clay's phone number.

According to the book, alchemy is not concerned with turning base metals to gold. The process of creating the Philosopher's Stone, called **the Great Work, or Magnum Opus, is an allegory for the transformation of the soul**, from a coarse sleeping state to an awakened state that can merge back with the source of all life.

The source of all life is referred to as "the godhead" or "the God-King". While revered as a god, this being is not described as a moral foundation or a personified deity, but as a source of unlimited knowledge and power to be sought, with whom alchemists and gnostics seek to unite.

As the crew has witnessed, in this City, people's souls contain a specific type of magic inside them (their Mythos). **Theoretically, this form of alchemy can be used to manipulate mythic powers, maybe even awaken them.**

The alchemical Magnum Opus consists of four stages: blackening or rotting, whitening or purification, yellowing or awakening, and reddening or transforming.

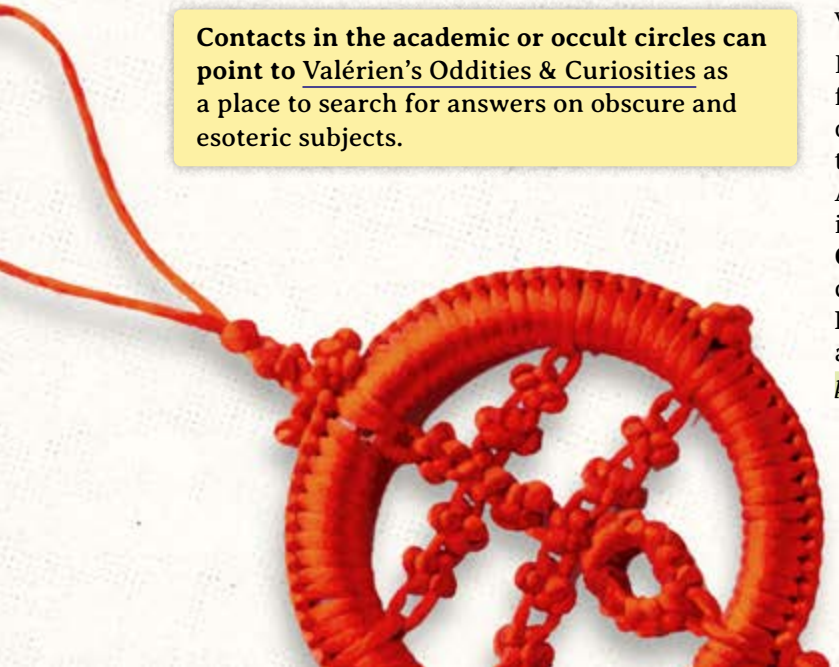
The book contains the Initiate's Chant, which may be a prayer to the God-King or a meditative chant. There are some inaccuracies in both the original and the translation (see next clue).

Further investigation into the book cannot connect it with any other literature; it seems very obscure. An especially scrutinizing researcher may discover **the text is actually a fake, written in modern times.** (The true author is Armand Kai.)

There is a recipe in the book for creating and revealing invisible ink. Using it successfully on the book reveals additional hidden annotations, removing its *obscure* status (see below) and unlocking advanced clues (see Valérien's Oddities & Curiosities). Failing the process destroys the copy.

Investigating PCs can discover the basic clues above; when they attempt to delve deeper, however, they hit a wall: the alchemical symbolism and lore become *obscure-3* or *esoteric-3*, unless the PC is an expert in this type of alchemy.

Contacts in the academic or occult circles can point to Valérien's Oddities & Curiosities as a place to search for answers on obscure and esoteric subjects.



CHINATOWN FESTIVAL

The constant whistling and crackle of firecrackers and the jingle of bells and cymbals almost drown out the sound of the crowd swarming around you. Lanterns hang from every house and over the streets, where thousands of visitors and locals stroll in a meandering flow, sampling the street food and stopping to watch the colorful and fantastic performances. In the center, a procession of floats and a giant dance figure of a dragon flare occasionally with pyrotechnics. Your contact picked this place for a reason: one could easily disappear in the crowd here. But something's wrong. The hairs on the back of your neck bristle when you look down the dark Chinatown alleys all around. Then you hear a scream over the festive music. When you turn back, the flames are everywhere and within them the dragon, coiling in the air as its operators flee in panic.

When cat burglar and Relic thief **Silvio Yadao** (Tincture of *Tarnkappe*, the cloak of concealment of *The Song of the Nibelungs*) decided to go legit and avoid his mysterious employer (Alona Wainwright of the Cabal), they sent him an unequivocal threat. While Silvio and his daughter Helena (Sleeper) are waiting to meet the crew at Chinatown's Mid-Autumn Festival, one of the vendors, who was paid off by the cult, pretended to kindly gift Helena with a rattle drum.

The rattle drum is a Mythos-powered "bomb": it contains the accident-prone Tincture of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, the Mythos of magic going out of control. Every time Helena shakes the drum, she enchants an object and brings it to life. Because of the Mythos, any haphazard attempt to stop the animated object causes it to duplicate, breeding more mayhem. Unfortunately, one of the first things Helena enchanted was the festival's huge fire-breathing dragon figure.

In addition, the rattle drum is especially dangerous for magic-wielding Rifts who are prone to lose control over their powers. Sorcerers and witches who touch the drum must **Take the Risk** to control their powers. A 7-9 means keeping control over their powers takes its toll or demands some concession (**Force Them to Choose**), while a miss causes them to momentarily lose control over their powers (similarly to a missed **Stop. Holding. Back.**), with mild or severe repercussions, as appropriate. Optionally, give such a PC *uncontrolled-powers-2*.



This dramatic incident at the festival serves as an action-packed sizzler which can open the case or pick up a slow investigation. At the very least, the crew must locate and save their informant, Silvio Yadao, who will beg them to find and save his daughter. The crew members may also be involved with protecting innocent bystanders. Investigating the incident can take place as it unfolds or after the drama is over.

Helena's rattle drum is causing all the trouble. Studying the drum shows it contains a highly-volatile magical liquid (a Tincture). **Beyond the Mist**, the Mythos of the Sorcerer's Apprentice is revealed, a vision of a helpless young man in a magician's robes who has lost control over a host of animated brooms.

According to Silvio, this is all the doing of an antiques collector he has been working for. He doesn't know her name, but he knows she has been gathering ancient artifacts to add to her collection. Silvio used to steal items of great value for this employer, but now that he's trying to go legit, she wouldn't have it.

The threat worked: Silvio is shaken and resigns to attempt the Dig Site Job **to avoid endangering his little girl.** He was taken aback by his employer's ruthlessness; he didn't think she would dare to hurt his daughter. If provoked, Silvio warns the crew not to try and stop him.

Silvio is hiding his feelings and would say nothing about the Dig Site Job, *fearing-for-his-daughter-3*. He knows that the Dig Site Job involves stealing **an ancient tablet**. If the crew exposes his plan, he begs them not to interfere.

Silvio neglects to mention that he carries the Tincture of Tarnkappe – which was given to him by his employer. The vial allows him to turn invisible and conceals him from surveillance and divination, which he has been using to make his life as a cat burglar much easier.

His employer's henchmen – Magnum Opus Initiates – are watching over the unfolding of the trap from a safe position on the rooftops of Chinatown.

For information garnered from studying the Tincture, see Alchemy 101.

FLAMING ANIMATED DRAGON FIGURE ★★★

TEAR 2 / DISENCHANT 4 / EXTINGUISH 4

- **Monstrous:** When the Dragon Figure takes a status that is countered by its large size, reduce the tier of that status by 1. When the MC makes a hard move with the Dragon Figure, she can hit two targets or hit a single target for +1 tier.
- **Misfortunate Enchantment:** When *tear:2* maxes out, the Dragon Figure splits into two separate dragons (create two new Dragon Figure Dangers instead of this Danger).

- Someone is burned by the flames (*burns-2*)
- The Dragon Figure drops someone it is carrying (*broken-rib-3* or *concussion-3*)

- Set a section of the street ablaze with a shower of fireworks from its mouth, endangering Helena, Silvio, a PC, or a bystander
- Carry Helena, Silvio, a PC, or a bystander up in the air as they hang on by a thread
- Coil and dance in the air, partially on fire

MOONWRAITH

To complicate things, also observing the chaos from the rooftops is **Tracy Chang** (Chang'e, Chinese goddess of the moon), more commonly known in the criminal scene as the vigilante **Moonwraith**. An athlete trained in a wide range of aerial gymnastics and martial arts, Moonwraith has recently awakened to her ability to fly in the moonlight and has been fighting crime ever since. Unbeknownst to her, her Mythos also makes her immortal, a fact that will remain hidden until she is killed for the first time.

Moonwraith is attracted to the scene because her Mythos goddess is popularly associated with the Mid-Autumn Festival and because she's a crime-fighter. To add fuel to the fire, her Mythos also pulls her there because Silvio Yadao is going to steal the recipe for the Elixir of Life (Chang'e became the moon goddess by consuming such an elixir). All this makes her involvement with Silvio, the crew, and the cult nothing short of inexorable.

Moonwraith may team up with the crew to stop the mayhem at the festival or get in an altercation with them if they wrongly associate her with Silvio's employer or if she discovers they are after the tablet. Ultimately, however, she will do what it takes to protect the tablet during the Dig Site job.

MOONWRAITH ★★(+★)

Moonwraith is a curvy young woman dressed in sporty streetwear: a hoodie over a sports tee, sweatpants or tights, and sneakers. Agile and strong, she can easily cling onto fire escapes, drain pipes, and other building wall fixtures to quickly scale urban terrain. In the moonlight, she can simply fly over any obstacle.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / CATCH 4

- **Immortal:** When Moonwraith dies, unless her Mythos powers are hindered, the MC may reset her *hurt-or-subdue* spectrum as a hard move.
- **Ethereal:** Moonwraith can choose to become ethereal. In this form she can only be seen; her presence cannot be detected by devices or senses that detect weight, motion, heat, or sound.
- **Moonlighting:** When Moonwraith is in the moonlight, she can fly. In addition, increase the tier of all of her hard moves by 1.
- **Reawakening +★:** When Moonwraith dies for the first time, she transforms from a Touched Rift to a Borderliner. She becomes her own source of moonlight; consider her **Moonlighting** move as always applicable. In addition, she gains **Celestial Moonlight Radiance** and a new hard move.
- **Celestial Moonlight Radiance**: When Moonwraith takes a status of physical harm, subdual, or restraint, or a status emanating from a dark or evil source, reduce its tier by 2.

- Fly through the air, performing superhuman acrobatic feats (giving herself *evasive-1*)
- Swoop down or fly by with a martial arts strike move (*dizzy-2*, *bruised-2*, or *prone-2*)
- Show up to interrupt any shady activity taking place in the moonlight (**Complicate Things, Bigtime**)
- The moon looms out of cover or reflects on a reflective surface (**Complicate Things, Bigtime** or remove one tag obstructing the moonlight)
- (After **Reawakening** activates) Blast brilliant moonbeams out of her fingertips (*zapped-2* three times; the effects of **Moonlighting** are already factored in)

- A dark silhouette flutters across the moon

MOONWRAITH

Ally

MYSTERY

What is the price of life everlasting?

POWER TAGS

Expert martial artist, *immortal*, *fly by the moonlight*, *crime-fighting*, *blasts of moonbeam*, *moonlight radiance*, *informants in the criminal underworld*, *training room*, *Queen Mother of the West*, *incorruptible*

WEAKNESS TAGS

impulsive, *weaker when the moon has set*, *ignores the law*, *weakness for archers*

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Immortal:** When this Ally takes a tier-6 status of physical harm, remove it after the next downtime.

DEPTH 2: DANGEROUS EXCAVATIONS

VALÉRIEN'S ODDITIES & CURIOSITIES

Valérien's Oddities & Curiosities shop is nestled under layers and layers of Old Quarter construction with nothing but painted lettering on a quaint door to hint at its entrance. Inside, however, it is surprisingly voluminous, but not spacious; the store is packed floor to ceiling with books, trinkets, archaeological artifacts, jars full of strange ingredients, and crumbling scrolls. "One could get lost down there," warns the owner, Valérien, an aging bespectacled man in a tweed vest as he points to the pathways in the vast repository of esoteric knowledge he curates. "Better take a light," he adds.

Valérien's Oddities & Curiosities (The Rabbit Hole of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*) is the go-to shop for anyone dabbling in the occult. PCs who actively practice the magical arts may already know it or of it, or they would be delighted to discover it. Its only visible entrance is a door in an Old Quarter alley, but inside it seems to extend deep into the building. Those who explore the store always find another passageway, another small room, or another spiral staircase; in the deep recesses of the store it seems to overflow into a cellar carved in the earth, and unwary visitors may even fall into a lower level, only to land safely on an old armchair covered in leaves.

Valérien's Oddities & Curiosities offers an opportunity for academic and occult crew members to research the Magnum Opus lore. As the Enclave of the Rabbit Hole, it presumably holds any imaginable book or object that a researcher or an occultist might need and its mysterious ways can even contrive to help PCs who aren't great researchers find answers. While the front of the store seems to hold books about interesting but ultimately trivial or common topics, its deep interior contains ancient manuscripts and objects with magical properties that can unlock the most esoteric mysteries.

VENTURING INTO THE ODDITIES

Venturing into the shop is a **Change the Game** move that can only be attempted once per scene. A PC who is exploring the shop chooses how deep she goes and receives a status to reflect this – *curious-1*, *exploring-2*, *venturing-deep-3*, or *lost-in-books-4* – which enhances her **Change the Game** move. PCs who explore together must choose the same tier of status and only one of them can take the action, with the other PCs assisting. If the move was successful, the Juice that is generated by the move can be spent on generating tags of useful objects or on obtaining relevant Clues, one-per-one.

Once the move is resolved, all the characters in the exploring party take a *lost* status with a tier greater by one than the tier of their exploration status. If the **Change the Game** move was successful, they may **Face Danger**; if it missed, the MC can impose the *lost* status without allowing a **Face Danger** move. The condition of being *lost* in the shop can be a practical one (actually lost or stuck in some part of the store) or a mystical one (opening books and not seeing any writing, falling endlessly in a psychedelic space, etc.). A PC can recover from this status normally over time or by using other means; to end her state of bedlam immediately and remove the status, the player may also burn a tag representing order, structure, or logic or mark one Crack on a Logos theme that keeps her grounded.

Magnum Opus isn't training alchemists to do the Great Work of the Alchemists. **The adherents are the base material** and the Great Work is the process of making them into something else.

Blackening stands for rotting. At the beginning of the process, the base materials must rot and decompose. Psychologically, it represents facing one's nothingness and corrupted nature. Only by wallowing in one's festering failings and meaninglessness can one be free of it (Prof. Clay's impossible tasks and the Silo Trial).

Whitening stands for purification. After breaking up the base material's resistance, it can be purified, leaving the gross matter behind. In this stage, one must let go of all attachments and worldly desires, becoming "refined". Thus inner peace is achieved and all sins are absolved.

Experts or local guides can link this denial of mainstream life with some communities that live underground (Whirler's Commune) or with a medieval celebration called the the Feast of Fools which is reenacted occasionally in a big avant-garde rave.

Yellowing stands for awakening. A purified substance (or soul) can begin to contain the light. Exposing it to divine light (or knowledge) illuminates it from within and awakens it. The soul becomes infinitely aware (and a Rift in the Mist is formed).

If the crew reached the Catacombs, the Anointing ritual can be linked with this stage. Otherwise, they can speculate that the cult has a third location where this awakening stage takes place.

Reddening stands for transformation. The awakened matter can now be transformed into another matter, of a higher order. Likewise, an awakened soul can transcend humanity and reunite with its source, the God-King.

Even if the crew saw the furnace, it's difficult to link it with this stage. This is where the cult's lies finally unravel: at the end of the road there is no union with the God-King, only greedy Wolves feasting on the Lambs. However, this only clicks once the crew understands the entire process.

Reddening can be linked with the furnace at the old Aurora Glassworks factory (page 105, *The Furnace*) or Canseliet Manor (page 155, *The Alchemist*).

THE SILO TRIAL

It's hard to breathe or see in the dank, dark silo. Echoing in the cylindrical chamber is an eerie, murmured Latin chant. Somewhere at the ground level, you hear stifled weeping and clanking teeth along with a constant drip. As your eyes adjust, you see human shapes chained to the pipework. Above them, on the catwalk, cloaked figures begin turning creaky valves. The drip grows to a trickle, then to a flow, then to a gush. The chanting increases along with the rising water, choking out the gasps of the victims below until a single blood-curdling scream penetrates your shock — and spurs you into action.

The Silo Trial is the first true test of the Magnum Opus, testing the candidates' suitability to become Lambs or Wolves and attain the rank of Follower. More than anything, it shows candidates their dark side: either complete vulnerability and helplessness for Lambs, or cruelty and ruthlessness for Wolves. Once they accept their failures, they pass the test.

The test is simple: Lambs must agree to be sacrificed by Wolves, Wolves must agree to kill Lambs. For this purpose, the Seekers are brought to an abandoned and retrofitted agricultural silo at the edge of town. The bottom of the silo is sealed and can be filled with water through multiple pipe mouths at ground level. While chanting the Initiate's Chant (page 150), the Wolves shackle the Lambs to steel rings adjacent to the pipe mouths, climb a ladder to a circular catwalk 20 feet overhead, and draw up the ladder. The Lambs' test is to not resist. The water flow is controlled by multiple valves that are fixed around the Wolves' catwalk. The Wolves' test is to turn on the water and watch their fellow Seekers drown. Amid gushing water, tragedy and drama ensues, with Lambs screaming for their lives and Wolves shaking as they push past their morals. Lambs who "drown" pass the test, as do Wolves who did not break.

Before the trial, both groups are promised by Prof. Clay that no one will be harmed and that this is just a test to reveal to them the glory of the God-King and their own darkness and insignificance. Indeed, once everyone's true colors are revealed, Prof. Clay, who watches from another catwalk at the top of the silo, uses his Transmutation of Water to push water away from the submerged Lambs' lungs and keep them alive underwater.

At the end of the test, the Seekers are physically safe, even if mentally *broken-3*. The professor bids farewell to those who would not shackle themselves or watch their friends drown, warning them never to speak of this again (they know what would happen if they do not comply). Those who completed the test also become *zealous-3* and are sent to cool down for a few days before moving to live in Whirler's Commune as Followers.

With the necessary alchemical knowledge, this ritual can be connected with the Blackening stage of the alchemical Magnum Opus.

Inspecting the Lambs' miraculous survival points to Prof. Clay, who is using a Transmutation to control the water. Investigating this power leads to Alchemy 101.

After the trial, the Seekers who were initiated as Followers gradually abandon their everyday lives and move to live on the streets, in the sewers, and in abandoned subway tunnels. Following them for a while could eventually lead to Whirler's Commune.

THE GUARDS OUTSIDE

Like all initiation rituals, the Silo Trial is a high-stakes event for Magnum Opus, a part of its Mythos harvest supply chain. Unbeknownst to the Seekers, the trial is guarded by the cult's agents.

After all candidates enter the silo and its pressure-resistant blast door is sealed, guards deploy around the silo to prevent unwanted interference. Normally, these are a handful of **Magnum Opus Initiates** (page 121) but if the crew bested them before, they may show up in greater numbers this time (for powerful crews, replace them with the **Yakuza Yōkai**). However, be aware that inside the silo, the crew must still contend with Prof. Clay and his Wolves (Magnum Opus Seekers, page 120); adjust the challenge level accordingly.

DURING THE TRIAL

Lead characters who follow or pretended to follow the Magnum Opus teachings may wish to complete the trial or at least allow it to unfold. This could turn the scene into a moral dilemma which may lead some PCs to mark Fade/Crack or render them *upset-2* or *shaken-3*.

PCs who are not Seekers may still have to circumvent the guards and Prof. Clay if they want to watch the trial. Watching remotely, e.g., with a drone or with scrying, may trigger the Cabal's astrological sense and have them send cultists to eliminate the spy.

PCs who wish to interrupt the trial must handle or trick the guards, reach the silo, battle it out with Gregory Clay and his Wolves, and save the drowning Lambs even as they resist. Unfortunately, the PCs' intervention turns out to be unnecessary or even tragic: they can cause someone to drown if they distract Prof. Clay.

THE SILO TRIAL ★★

LAMBS SUBMERGED 5 / BREAK THE SILO 6

- **Reinforced:** When the silo takes a status of physical damage, reduce its tier by 2.
- **Shackled:** Each Lamb is *chained-3*. This status can be reduced or removed tier-for-tier with an opposite status (e.g., give the chains *broken*).
- **Drowning Ritual:** As a soft move, give the silo *water-level-rising-2* on the *lambs-submerged* spectrum. When the spectrum maxes out, everyone underwater who cannot swim to the surface starts taking *drowning-3* as a soft move. When a Lamb gains *drowning-5*, if Prof. Clay is not preoccupied, remove the drowning status from the Lamb.

- One of the Lambs pleads a crew member NOT to rescue them and "witness the miracle of the God-King" (*hesitant-2*)
- The crew's interruption prevents Prof. Clay from saving a Lamb and she drowns (**Make Something Horrible Happen**)

- A Lamb's scream for help is muffled by the gushing water
- A Lamb is gasping for air
- Silence takes over the silo as the last Lamb is submerged

DISCIPLE GREGORY CLAY ★★★

The Silo Trial is the consummation of the professor's hard work for Magnum Opus and a crucial turning point for his followers so he isn't about to let anyone spoil it. During the trial, the gloves are off; he'll use his Transmutations to rid himself of interlopers and saboteurs, manipulating their bodies like little clay figurines. The silo contains ample supply of water and dirt (earth) for him to work with. If his dress shirt gets sweaty, wet, or torn, the neon-bright glow of the sigil brands on his back can be seen.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / EXHAUST 6 / TURN AWAY FROM CULT 6

- **Drinking the Kool-Aid:** When Gregory Clay enters the scene, give him *zealous-5*, renewable as a hard move.
- **Protective Barrier:** When Gregory Clay or someone he is protecting within range takes a status of physical harm, he first encases himself or the target with a massive barrier of earth, water, or clay, reducing the status by 3. The barrier then melts away. For each target he protects, he takes *exerted-1*.

- Force someone to shut their mouth (*zip-it-3*), freeze in place (*held-back-3*), or walk out of the silo (*controlled-3*), exerting himself (*exerted-1*)
- Preach to a student or two (remove up to 3 tags or status tiers representing doubt)
- Create a spectacle of water, telling his students to behold the power of the God-King (remove up to 2 tags or status tiers representing doubt from each student, giving himself *exerted-2*)
- Create a tidal wave of water that slams someone against the silo wall (*crushed-3*) or a surge that pushes them through a hatch out of the silo, exerting himself (*exerted-1* for each target)
- Punch or wrestle an intruder (*bruised-2* or *restrained-2*), sometimes augmenting his attack with his Transmutations (burn one tag of strength or combat prowess before the status applies, giving himself *exerted-1*)
- Enter a seething fanatic rage (reduce *exerted* by 1 tier; note that this is more effective at higher tiers)

- Roll up his sleeves and glare down furiously from the top catwalk

LEAD CHARACTERS IN MAGNUM OPUS

A lead character's commitment to the Magnum Opus path can be purely narrative (as explained under Prof. Clay, page 128, in some cases, it is better to keep it this way to avoid portraying the cult as an antagonist). Alternatively, it may be reflected in a *zealous* status, which compels her to obey her teachers and impedes any actions against the cult.

PCs who are following the path of Magnum Opus may also be required to make sacrifices on their journey and may replace a theme as a result. No matter the type of theme the character loses, the player may choose to replace it with a Logos theme based on the following Theme Kit. The MC may also give it to the PC as a temporary Extra Theme.

FOLLOWER OF THE GOD-KING

Mission

IDENTITY

I seek to unite with the God-King.

POWER TAGS

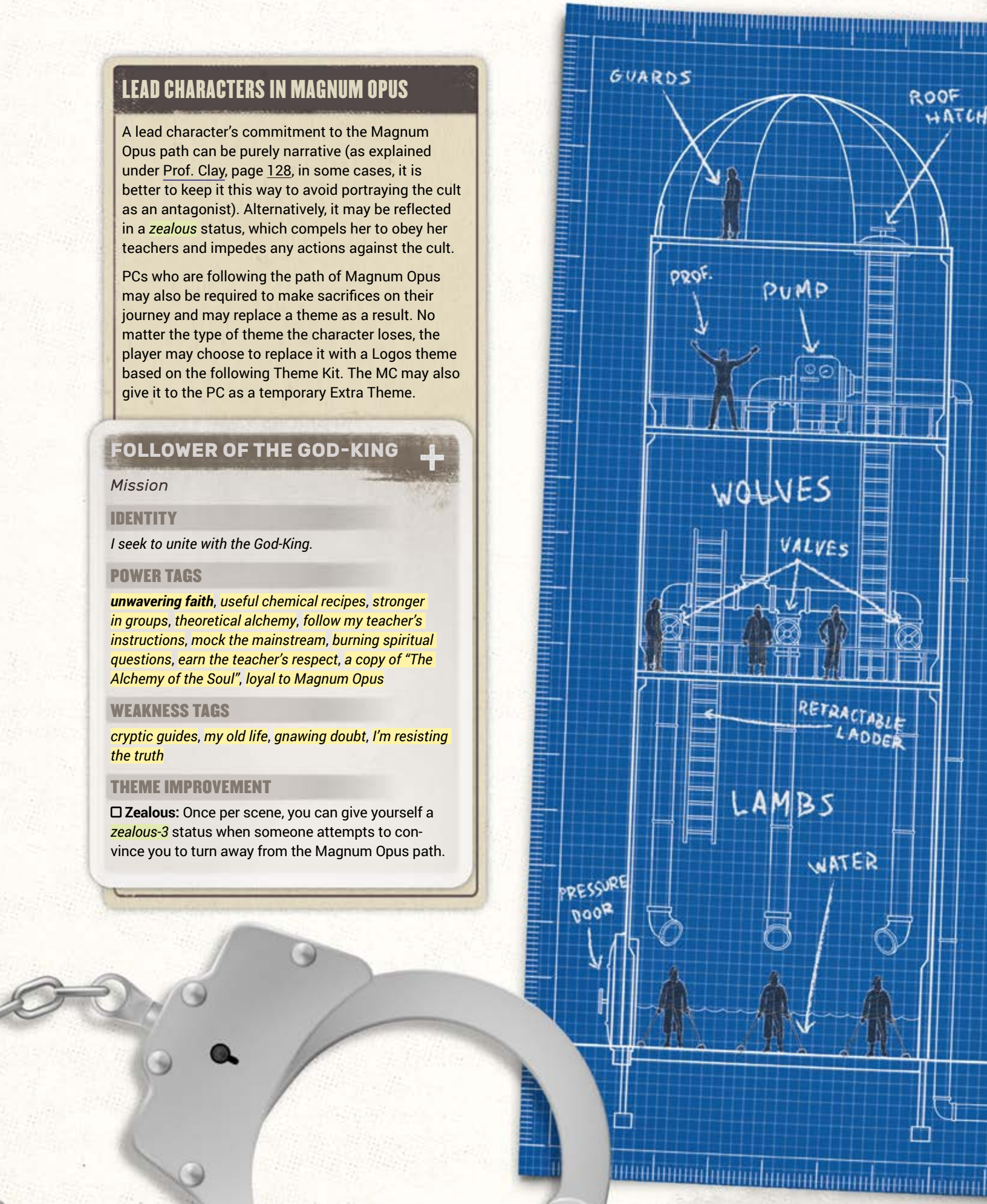
unwavering faith, *useful chemical recipes*, *stronger in groups*, *theoretical alchemy*, *follow my teacher's instructions*, *mock the mainstream*, *burning spiritual questions*, *earn the teacher's respect*, *a copy of "The Alchemy of the Soul"*, *loyal to Magnum Opus*

WEAKNESS TAGS

cryptic guides, *my old life*, *gnawing doubt*, *I'm resisting the truth*

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Zealous:** Once per scene, you can give yourself a *zealous-3* status when someone attempts to convince you to turn away from the Magnum Opus path.



THE DIG SITE JOB

This unlikely dig site, at the heart of the City, lays silently in the moonlight, walled off from the public by glass barriers that allow passersby to peer into the dusty archaeological pit. You, on the other hand, aren't fooled by the neighborhood-friendly facade. CCTV monitoring and counter-intrusion sensors line the walls, ominously labeled as property of "Helix Labs". Whoever is running the show here knows they hit the jackpot and they're ready for any unexpected guests.

Legend has it that the Chinese Emperor Wu received **the secret recipe to immortality** from Xiwangmu, Queen Mother of the West, cultivator of the Peaches of Immortality (she's the one who made the Elixir of Life consumed by Chang'e, see page 133). While Wu was never able to achieve immortality, he kept this sacred text in the form of **a tablet** which he hid in the Cedar Beam Terrace palace. His predecessor, Qin Shi Huang, also sought immortality and failed; his earthly legacy included both the inception of the **Great Wall of China** and the creation of the **Terracotta Army** (an army of lifesize terracotta soldiers) as his guard in the afterlife.

Somewhere below the Old Quarter, all these myths and stories brewed and melded, creating a thin place: an impregnable mausoleum guarded by the Mythoi of the Great Wall of China and the Terracotta Army, and holding the tablet with the secret to immortality. Quickly after the site's discovery, **Helix Labs** took over the dig under the guise of academic research but, as of yet, they have not been able to breach the wall and reach the tablet. Working for art collector Alona Wainwright of the Cabal, expert burglar **Silvio Yadao** (Tincture of *Tarnkappe*, the cloak of concealment of *The Song of the Nibelungs*) was tasked with obtaining the tablet so it can be harvested for its Mythos essence.

HEIST RULES

If you're using heist rules given in *Fortune Row*, the three cards of the dig site job are:

- **Silvio Yadao:** A master-thief/trickster Rift is tasked with stealing the prize back from anyone who steals it (9♠).
- **The Great Wall of China:** Access to the prize is guarded by a Relic of a legendary security measure (4♦).
- **The Terracotta Army:** The mark is guarded by an innumerable horde of monsters, beasts, or foot soldiers (3♣).

Depending on the involvement of the crew and your cinematic considerations, the dig site job can be a single scene or an entire heist. In addition to the crew, multiple parties of interest have a stake here:

- **Silvio Yadao** wants to steal the tablet for the Cabal, after receiving threats to his daughter's life from Magnum Opus (see Chinatown Festival).
- **Helix Labs** Black Ops leader **Jakub Krask** was ordered to safeguard the tablet from theft, but resident archaeologist **Macey Reynolds** can't access the mausoleum and needs supernatural help so she might seek to enlist Rifts for the job. Both are Touched by Helix Labs and can perceive the legendary.
- **The Cabal** want the tablet and Silvio's skillset and Tincture are their best shot at getting it; unless somehow thwarted by the crew, they have kidnapped his daughter Helena and plan to trade her for the tablet. At least one Disciple and a group of Initiates are lurking nearby, waiting to make the trade.
- **Moonwraith**, if she is involved, is driven by her Mythos to protect the site and the secrets of immortality.

THE DIG SITE

The dig site is an excavated area locked between alleys where a large house once stood. It contains mostly dirt, rocks, some half-buried stone walls, and perhaps worthless century-old coins. At the center of the dig, the Helix Lab team excavated a buried stone complex that seemed out of place. As they dug closer to the stone complex, from any direction, the archaeologists found themselves facing a rising Great Wall of rock, packed earth, and bricks. They soon established that this *thin place* defies the laws of space or gravity; even if one rappels onto the exposed complex, one will find oneself standing before the Great Wall (see Danger profile below). Therefore, jumping or flying over the Mythos wall isn't possible; gravity simply shifts again and the interloper finds themselves facing the wall once more.

If someone scales or breaches the wall, they find themselves in a dark space reminiscent of Emperor Qin Shi Huang's mausoleum. The cavernous room is laid with thousands and thousands of terracotta soldiers, ready to annihilate anyone who attempts to reach the center, where the tablet with the recipe for life everlasting rests, illuminated by a beam of moonlight.

AFTER THE HEIST

If the cult obtained the tablet, it can be traced to art collector Alona Wainwright. This can be done using divination, e.g., by following its magical trail; using detective skills, by finding and following the cultists; with technology, by planting a homing device, and so on.

If the cult failed, Alona Wainwright **will try to buy the tablet from whoever has it,** offering a stupendous sum of money (Helix Labs would decline). The financial paper trail and rumors among dealers, smugglers, and fences, would be enough to lead the crew to her company, **Wainwright Auctioneers.**

Ignoring cultural differences, the tablet text describes a path to immortality remarkably consistent with the teachings of Magnum Opus (see clues in Alchemy 101 and Valérien's Oddities & Curiosities).

SILVIO YADAO ★★

With his Tincture of *Tarnkappe* and knowledge of security systems, Silvio Yadao is a man almost impossible to catch. The crew may try to convince him to turn himself in or help them against the Cabal, but his daughter's life is still on the line. Note, however, that Silvio can't go through solid matter or magical barriers, hold his breath indefinitely, or resist mental influence very well, so a clever crew could still manage to catch him.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / CATCH 4 / CONVINCE TO SURRENDER 4

- **Tincture of *Tarnkappe*:** Once per scene, while he is wearing his Tincture, Silvio Yadao can turn completely *imperceptible-5* except through touch, as a soft move. No other sense, surveillance, or divination ability can detect him and **Investigate** moves using these methods cannot be initiated against him. **Looking Beyond the Mist** is also ineffective. He may activate this move again in the same scene as a hard move.
- **Threatened:** When you try to change Silvio's mind for the first time, he takes *fearing-for-his-daughter-4*.

- Easily slip through security systems while the crew is left behind (**Complicate Things, Bigtime**)
- Steal something valuable or important from someone (burn up to two appropriate tags)
- Use Brazilian jiu jitsu and contortion techniques to escape holds and restraints (remove up to three tiers of restraint statuses) or to restrain others (*tangled-2* if he then leaves the target, *restrained-3* if he maintains the hold)
- Disappear altogether and flee the scene (**Deny Them Something They Want**)

- Pick up the object he's after, hide it in his windbreaker, and vanish
- Make a run for it

Beyond the Mist, the celestial deity Queen Mother of the West can be seen hovering above the tablet. She can bestow immortality upon the bearer of the Relic, but has not found a worthy one yet.

If the crew knows about Tinctures, they can speculate that the cult intends to harvest the Relic for its Mythos essence.

THE COMPLEX WALL ★★★

Imbued with the three legends of the Great Wall of China, the complex wall is mythically-empowered to stop invaders. While it can be chipped and dented, no amount of physical punishment – legendary or mundane – can punch through it. However, the same legends impart unusual weaknesses on the wall: it can be broken down by tears; its power stems from one supernatural brick; and its signaling tower, when misused, causes its guards to become complacent. The wall can also be scaled and it is susceptible to erosion.

SMASH – / ERODE 5 / SCALE 4

- **Tears of Meng Jiang:** When the Complex Wall is washed with tears of great sorrow, add the resulting emotional status to the *erode* spectrum.
- **Jiayuguan Wall-Stabilizing Brick:** Incorporeal beings and teleporters cannot pass through the wall due to an inconspicuous yet magical brick that was purposefully left out of the wall and placed on its inner side. This property as well as the wall's physical immunity (*smash:–*) end when the brick is moved from its place (change the spectrum to *smash:6*).
- **Bao Si's Amusing Signaling Tower:** When an intruder approaches the Complex Wall, the signaling tower lights up. Create a Danger: **Terracotta Soldiers** (size factor 1). The intruder may **Sneak Around**. If the Terracotta Soldiers cannot locate the intruder, the intruder gains *laughing-1*. When the alarm is raised a third time after two false alarms, the Terracotta Soldiers cease to respond to the signaling tower.

- Bricks crack underfoot, making a climber slip (remove two tiers from *scale* and climber takes *sprained-ankle-2*)
- The Signaling Tower lights up (trigger **Bao Si's Amusing Signaling Tower**)

- Tower overhead, monolithic and foreboding

TERRACOTTA SOLDIER ★★

There are thousands of Terracotta Soldiers within the complex (size factor 4) and dozens of them (size factor 2) can gang up on each interloper at a time. Made to protect their Emperor from evil spirits in the afterlife, these clay statues are immune to Mythos powers and must be smashed with ordinary means or with Mythos powers that hurt them indirectly, e.g. by manipulating nearby rocks.

SMASH 2 / DRY OUT 1 / AFFECT MIND –

- **Guardians Against The Beyond:** Mythos powers cannot directly affect the Terracotta Soldier.

- Attack, slashing and stabbing with their metal weapons (*slashed-2*)
- Tighten their ranks and listen carefully (give themselves *alert* with a tier equal to their size factor; this status cannot exceed their size factor)

- Stand silently, dusty and yet lifelike

HELIX LABS BLACK OPS ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / DRAIN THEIR GEAR 4

- **Collective:** This collective has several members and a size factor of 2.
- **Advanced Technology:** When you make a move against Helix Labs Black Ops gear and weapons, you cannot invoke tags from your Logos themes.
- **Automatic Ignition:** When Helix Labs Black Ops enter the scene, unless their gear is disabled, the MC can make two of their hard Danger gear moves as an intrusion.
- **Gamechanger:** As a hard move, Helix Labs Black Ops reveal a specialized piece of tech that changes the battlefield (**Complicate Things, Bigtime**), following which they can make a hard move with a tier-6 effect.

- Activate a piece of equipment:
  - » Force-field generator (give themselves *shielded-3*)
  - » Multi-spectral scanner (give themselves *alert-2* or gain specific knowledge of nearby threats, especially Rifts)
  - » Bio-matter patch (remove up to 2 tiers of medical statuses)
  - » Ion-9 assault rifle (*perforated-3* or *pinned-down-3*)
  - » Web-shooting spiders (*bound-3*)
  - » Laser pointers (*cornered-3*)

- Deploy silently and quickly around a target, guns ready

DEPTH 3: WHAT LIES BENEATH

WHIRLER'S COMMUNE

Around the corner of the tunnel, unexpectedly, you find a decommissioned subway station. The tiles that once lined its walls are now cracked and grimy, but the place is far from abandoned. The platform and train tracks are built over with planks, pallets, rugs, and sheets to form a warren of hovels. Colorful strings of prayer flags stretch from side to side, faintly illuminated by trash fires in barrels and tall candles scattered around the station. Dirty, unkempt shadows creep around amid tents and graffiti of strange sigils: concentric circles, triangles, and squares in black, white, yellow, and red. At the center of it all, hovering over an improvised altar and wreathed in otherworldly flames, is a mural of the God-King, a shadowy crowned figure offering life everlasting in the form of a shining chalice.

The Seekers who complete the Silo Trial become Followers of the cult and move to the next step: a life of poverty and asceticism with the serene guru **Whirler**, aimed at releasing them from their mortal attachments. They pack a few essential belongings and find their way to the mystic's commune, somewhere in the underground tunnels below the Old Quarter.

If this happens to NPCs such as Peter Hill, Sloane Martinez, or Jiahao "Jaja" Zhang (page 125), or the crew's supporting cast who became embroiled with the cult, it creates an opportunity for interpersonal drama (if they are intercepted) or sad revelations (if the PCs simply discover they are gone). If a PC attempts to dissuade a Follower, she finds the Follower much harder to influence than they were as Seekers; use the Magnum Opus Follower Danger profile.

THE COMMUNE

The commune is a shanty village set up in an abandoned subway station. The way is marked for Followers using the cult symbols and Initiates in disguise who both guide Followers onwards and watch for intruders. Finding the way there without guidance requires divination, shadowing or tracking skills, or contacts in the Undertrash (the underground territories below the City, full of outcasts and monstrosi-

ties, see *The Undertrash* district). If the cult foresees a danger to the commune, they tackle it with full force (The Cabal's Damage Control); it is, after all, their Rift incubator.

WHIRLER

Upon arriving, Whirler welcomes everyone, Follower or not (she believes the cult will foresee the arrival of any dangerous interlopers and deal with them before they arrive at her doorstep). This petite monkish lady – formerly an insurance agent and later a self-help guru – meanders around the encampment in orange robes, bare feet, and a clean shaven head. She speaks softly, smiles heartily, and sympathizes sincerely with the suffering of the Followers who had to leave their lives behind, but stresses the need for complete purification in order to open up to the power of the God-King. Whirler is a Disciple in possession of the **Tincture of Krishna** (Hindu deity of compassion, tenderness, and love), which she uses to placate and sedate the Followers as they go through this "purification", filling them with inner peace and tranquility.

Behind the guru facade, Whirler is more interested in playing the savior than she is in pursuing the spiritual journey to its end or actually guiding others in a helpful and meaningful way. She guides the Followers through a real transformation, but she does so mostly because this is crucial for the cult which supports her. She is comfortable where she is and wants to protect the commune above all else.

With the necessary alchemical knowledge, life in the commune can be connected with the Whitening stage of the alchemical Magnum Opus. Knowing the Magnum Opus way, one can deduce another initiation ritual will take place at the end of this period (the Feast of Fools).

Whirler says the next initiation ritual (the Feast of Fools**) will be "the end of life in the City as it is now"** for the Followers. Undercover PCs feel they must keep a close watch on the Followers during the ritual.

Beyond cooking and studying "The Alchemy of the Soul" (see Alchemy 101), everyday activity in the commune involves preparation for a celebration of some sort: **Followers sew together costumes, especially animal costumes**, as well as banners, streamers, and prayer flags, etc.

Once or twice a week, a hooded Initiate in streetwear shows up to convey messages from the Cabal to Whirler and receive her report. They can be followed to Alona Wainwright or the Catacombs. **Whirler tells him which costume each Follower will wear in** the Feast of Fools.

Behind the brick wall with the mural of the God-King there is another abandoned subway tunnel. It leads to a large underground cave, the future location of the Feast of Fools. At the base of the wall there's a brick-and-mortar patch job that shows it was used as an entrance before multiple times and then resealed.

THE WHITENING: PURIFYING OF ALL ATTACHMENTS

Life in the commune serves as the second stage of the Magnum Opus, **the Whitening**, and strips away a Follower's life, preparing them for Mythos awakening.

PCs who wish to follow the Magnum Opus path and join the commune must abandon, at least temporarily, their Defining Relationships, Routines, Turfs, and possibly Missions and Possessions; this may potentially force them to **Make Hard Choices**. Don't make it easier on them; instead, **Complicate Things** and have their Logos themes generate problems: someone slips them a note with news about their old life (true or false) or their old life somehow finds them down there (perhaps with the help of other PCs).

While in the commune, PCs may not choose to *Give Attention* during **Montage (Downtime)**. Sneaking out is possible, but any *zealous* statuses left over from the Silo Trial impede such an action. If discovered, the offending Follower may be punished with a demand to renounce her attachment entirely or be ousted from the commune and the Magnum Opus path (**Force Them to Choose**).

Followers may spend weeks at the commune until their old lives seem like a distant dream. Only when Whirler deems enough of the Followers ready to move on does she signal the cult to begin preparations for the Feast of Fools.

On the fateful day, Whirler instructs the followers to dismantle the mural-covered brick wall that hides the opening to a subway tunnel that will lead them to the ritual. She warns them that **during** the Feast of Fools**, a guide will approach them to take them to the God-King. This will be their only chance and to do so they must leave the City forever.** Then they put on their costumes and march into the dark tunnel.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FROM WHIRLER

- "Your eyes have opened, but you are still yearning to go back to sleep. Don't let this undo all the work that you have done."
- "Everything that you have left behind was not enough to make you happy, to answer your questions, or to change your fate. The only way to reveal the truth is to let it all go."
- "You were taught to fear emptiness, but emptiness is the foundation for illumination. If you cannot become an empty vessel, you cannot admit the light."
- "I cannot describe to you what will be revealed to you when you unite with the God-King. But know that it is beyond your wildest dreams. Everything that you desire now will be yours, without struggle or conflict. But for now, desire is an obstacle."

WHIRLER ★★★

Despite and perhaps because of her tranquil nature, Whirler is just as dangerous as her fellow cult Disciples. While she poses no risk to the crew's safety, she may very well be a threat to their personal lives.

Whirler's supernatural air of tranquility and mental resilience emanate from the Tincture of Krishna, which she carries in a glass vial tied in a necklace around her neck. Without it, she is just another guru wannabe; the trick lies in removing the Tincture before it fills you with good intentions.

HURT OR SUBDUE 1 / EMOTIONALLY OVERWHELM 4 / TURN AWAY FROM CULT 6

- **Drinking the Kool-Aid:** When Whirler enters the scene, give her *zealous-5*, renewable as a hard move.
- **Peace & Love:** Whenever you take a malicious action against Whirler, you first take *peaceful-and-benign-5*.
- **The Diamond Mantra:** When Whirler takes a status of emotional or mental influence, reduce its tier by 2.
- **Bodyguards:** When Whirler takes a status from which her bodyguards can protect her, the bodyguards take the status instead (use **Magnum Opus Followers**, page 120).

- Encourage someone to abandon their worldly attachments in order to progress in the Magnum Opus (*tempted-3* or *zealous-3*, or **Complicate Things, Bigtime** in a way that invites the player to mark Crack on a specific theme)
- FIll someone with well-wishing and good-intentions (*peaceful-and-benign-5*)
- Call her Followers for help (create a new Danger: **Magnum Opus Followers**, page 120)

- Take someone's hand in hers and smile at them compassionately

THE FEAST OF FOOLS

```
Strange twisted music, a rabid mongrel of
modern beats and medieval tunes, echoes
from the deeps long before you arrive.
There, under the vault of an enormous nat-
ural cave, you are struck by the sight of
thousands of ravers dancing, frolicking,
and fooling around wearing animal heads
and everyday suits, uniforms, and work
clothes. Somewhere in all this revelry
hides the one who could show you the way
deeper, where all mysteries are unlocked.
But you wonder if you can find them, and
if so, whether you will be ready to take
the final step into the abyss.
```

The Feast of Fools is Magnum Opus' second initiation ritual, one that represents the Followers' liberation from their old lives, mainstream society, and traditional concepts of morality and sin. It is the culmination of the second phase of the Magnum Opus: **the Whitening** or purification.

As in the Silo Trial, the test is simple: Followers must choose to follow their Guide, foregoing their lives in the City completely, knowing that they may never return (at least not as they are now).

This rite of passage takes place during a massive and chaotic underground rave organized by the cult, where thousands of intoxicated people dance and drink in an enormous cave, completely unaware that they are a part of the ritual. All participants are wearing masks and heads of animals – donkeys, foxes, crows, fish, and tortoises – while wearing caricature costumes of various everyday City dwellers – cops, judges, bank clerks, cooks, etc. – making a mockery of life in the City, social roles, and normality.

The Magnum Opus Followers (PCs and NPCs) participate in the rave but abstain from intoxication until, amidst all this chaos, someone in the crowd stares at them intently (while still wearing an animal head) and beckons them to come along. This is **the Guide**, whose appearance spells the moment of truth for the Follower.

The Guide is a Disciple who mastered the Transmutation of Earth. If the Follower follows the Guide, he secretly admits her into a narrow mining tunnel by shifting the earth aside and then sealing it behind her. The tunnel is dark, and the Follower must feel her way in the dark for a long time, until the tunnel suddenly ends in a stone door engraved with the secrets of Magnum Opus: triangles and squares inscribed in circles, formulas, and alchemical symbols. The earth shifts again to seal the tunnel behind the Follower.

She is then expected to sit for hours and ruminate on her transition. During her stay in this sealed chamber, the earth beneath her seems to shake – unbeknownst to the Follower, the Disciples are relocating her chamber to the Catacombs, far on the other side of town and deeper underground.

This ritual both serves to impress and frighten the Follower and as a security precaution, preventing anyone who isn't authorized from finding the Catacombs. When all Followers have been whisked away, the rave ends abruptly, clearing the cave in minutes. Any Followers who did not follow their Guide into the tunnels are left behind and never hear from the cult again.

CRASHING THE PARTY

PCs who are not Followers can locate the rave by following the procession of Followers from Whirler's Commune or by crossing rumors with the clues in Valérien's Oddities & Curiosities.

Attacking the ritual is impractical, what with swathes of cultists everywhere, **Whirler**'s tranquilizing presence, and optionally **Talia Al-Bahar** in a sniping position and the **Yakuza Yōkai** mixed into the crowd. Even collapsing the cavern is unlikely with so many Disciples around versed in the Transmutation of Earth, nevermind thousands of more-or-less innocent ravers.

Instead, this scene is a great opportunity to infiltrate the gathering (with costumes!), learn more about the cult, and try to save Followers with whom the crew is invested – all against the backdrop of unhinged festivities.

- Locating the Followers is difficult amidst the *chaos* of *costumes* and *inebriated crowd* but these exact conditions make **Sneaking Around** easier.
- The Guides (Disciples) assigned to each Follower will not open the tunnel for anyone else, unless they mistake them for their Follower, in which case the interloper gets an express ticket to the Catacombs.

With the necessary alchemical knowledge, this ritual can be connected with the Whitening stage of the alchemical Magnum Opus.

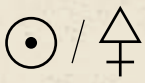
A smuggler could infer the festivity provides cover for whisking away the Followers to some safehouse or haven. **Tailing a Follower** will reveal that they are being led into a tunnel by a Guide. **Identifying a Guide** and following them will show they are looking for someone in a specific costume.

Connecting the dots with the Magnum Opus teachings, **one can infer the next step is the Yellowing** or awakening the candidates to their true selves. The final step, Reddening or transformation, will be their complete union with the God-King.

THE INITIATE'S RIDDLE

Before the chamber reaches its final position at the Catacombs and as a final security measure, the Follower (or interloper) is presented with the Initiate's Riddle: she must complete a sequence of four alchemical symbols that correspond to the verses of the **Initiate's Chant** from "The Alchemy of the Soul" book (page 150). Some of the alchemical symbols appear on the stone door as glowing sigils. **The Follower must complete the remaining symbols by drawing them on the door.**

The complete sequence represents the words "Body", "Quicksilver", "Sun", and "Fire" that appear in the verses that correspond to Blackening, Whitening, Yellowing, and Reddening; it is represented by the symbols in the table below. In the easiest version of the riddle, the sequence is missing only the last symbol (fire). You can make the riddle more challenging by removing additional symbols or raise the stakes by giving the PC just one attempt.

BLACKENING	WHITENING	YELLOWING	REDDENING
*When my **body** rots, I will be absolved*	*My spirit is washed by **Quicksilver***	*My **soul** becomes luminous as the **sun***	*I burn to unite with your sacred **fire***
Salt or **Body**	**Mercury** (Quicksilver)	**Sun** / **Sulfur** or **Soul**	**Fire**
			

You can assume that a PC that has been a serious follower of Magnum Opus knows by heart the four stages, the Initiate's Chant, and the alchemical element symbols. This should be enough for her to infer the answer.

PCs who do not know the answer can **Investigate**, if they have the required knowledge or some way of accessing it. *A copy of "The Alchemy of the Soul"* is especially useful in this situation and may provide some free clues, at your discretion.

While the Follower is solving the riddle, they can faintly hear the Initiate's Chant mumbled behind the door.

The riddle is literal, not symbolic; the signs stand for words.

The alchemical element which represents the body is salt.

If the person in the chamber solves the riddle, the chamber moves to its final position. A Disciple holding a candle opens the door and ushers the Follower into the Catacombs, giving her yellow-brown robes to don as she becomes an **Initiate** (taking *zealous-4*).

If she fails, the Disciples consider her an invader and either collapse the chamber or simply leave her there to starve to death, stuck under dozens or hundreds of feet of earth (*buried-alive-5*). To make things worse, *sigils on the door* inhibit powers of magical transportation or incorporeality.

ALONA WAINWRIGHT

The rain falls incessantly as you stop in front of the impressive, immaculately restored house, next to a gold-tinted sign spelling WAINWRIGHT AUCTIONEERS. Somehow, you're not surprised it all boils down to an auction house. This covetousness, this desire to possess, hangs about the place like foul breath. This is where the ancient and the priceless get labelled with a dollar sign and sold to the highest bidder. You doubt that these people, who crave to privately own collections of museum-worthy treasures, stop there; surely they must feel the urge to deal in far more sacred commodities.

Like her fellow members in the Cabal, **Alona Wainwright** is a Magnum Opus Wolf through and through: for her, the worship of the God-King is only a path to unmatched power. One of the City's most prominent art collectors and dealers, she came in contact with the cult several years ago after stumbling upon a manuscript of "The Alchemy of the Soul" and identifying it as a fake. Threatening to blow the lid on Prof. Clay's operation unless he lets her in on his secrets, she got herself an instant seat in one of the first Silo Trials, which she aced. A year later, she was accepted into the Cabal and started to greedily collect Tinctures of Mythoi as she grew the cult's operations further and further.

An attractive, accomplished, and assertive woman in her 40s, Wainwright is the cult's financier and legal advisor. She funds the battery of lawyers that protect cultists and harass the enemies of the cult and she uses her influence and connections to draw attention away from the cult's activity in the high rungs of law enforcement and the media.

As a bearer of the **Tincture of the Magi**, Wainwright possesses vast magical and astrological knowledge, although her magic is ritualistic and is not suitable for conflict. She keeps the Tincture in a small receptacle cut from ruby that is fixed into her belt buckle. She often wears expensive jewelry to lure thieves away from the Tincture.

The crew can trace cult activity back to Ms. Wainwright. Mercenaries working for the cult like **Silvio Yadao** (the Dig Site Job) or the **Yakuza Yōkai** and **Talia Al-Bahar** (The Cabal's Damage Control) report directly to her, as do the cult's lawyers.

INVESTIGATING ALONA WAINWRIGHT

Wainwright conducts her business from her offices at **Wainwright Auctioneers**, based in a regal historic building on the border of the Old Quarter and Downtown. The difficulty in pinning her down lies with her **daily horoscope**, which predicts any interferences or threats to herself or the cult's work (see The Cabal's Damage Control, page 117, on how to counter this power). Just when the crew finally thinks they have her cornered, she is simply not there, and a nasty surprise could be waiting instead. If the crew does find a way to circumvent her horoscopes, they may discover the following.

Together with the other members of the Cabal, Wainwright's main job is to keep the cult's operation running smoothly like a well-oiled factory line. She follows closely the number of graduates from the Silo Trial, Whirler's Commune, and the Feast of Fools, as if there is some quota or demand she is trying to meet.

As with all members of the Cabal, **Ms. Wainwright's arrangement with the cult is no longer spiritual but transactional: generate more power, and you'll be rewarded with a share of the power.** The currency of power is Tinctures.

The final two phases of the Magnum Opus process take place in the Catacombs. Ms. Wainwright seems to receive her payment for graduations in Tinctures, but only after the fourth and final phase is complete.

Once or twice a week, a suited Initiate shows up to convey reports from Whirler's Commune or the cult's Anointing rituals in the Catacombs. They can be followed to either location.

Wainwright collects Relics, such as the tablet from the Dig Site Job, as a side business for the cult. The Relics are sent to the furnace / Canseliet Manor (to be harvested). She keeps an *encrypted-2* ledger listing which Relics were sold to the cult (it does not contain information about human Rifts).

Wainwright keeps about half a dozen Tinctures in an ornate *locked-3* and boobytrapped (*poisoned-4* and *starcrossed-4* if triggered) jewelry box. The box is kept in her auction house vault among many other objects of refined craftsmanship and great value, including a few Relics (awaiting harvest).

Wainwright uses the Tincture of the Magi to magically communicate with the other Cabal members: they can see and hear each other through a basin of water, in the flames of a fireplace, or in a cloud of smoke and mist.

In the same way, Wainwright communicates with someone she calls **"Great Teacher"**. This can lead to Canseliet Manor and Armand Kai, in *The Alchemist* (page 155).

If the furnace is still operational, Rachel Woods reports to Wainwright by phone or through a Disciple courier. This could connect this case to *The Furnace* (page 87).

ALONA WAINWRIGHT ★★★★

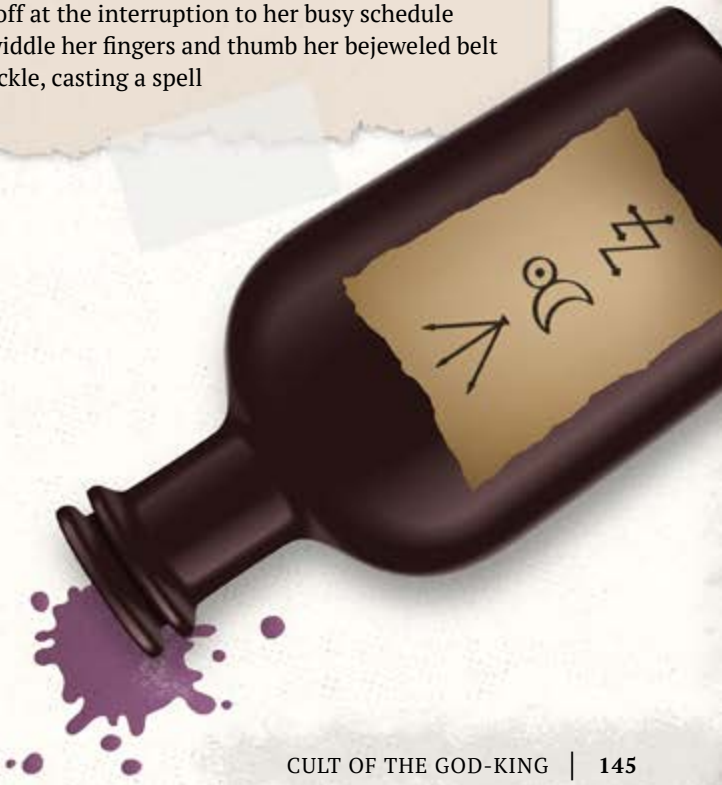
Alona Wainwright has mastered the Transmutation of Metals and the Transmutation of Precious Stones, both branded on the back of her neck under her flowing hair. She also holds the Tincture of the Magi, granting her mastery of the magical and astrological arts.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / TURN AWAY FROM CULT 6

- **Drinking the Kool-Aid:** When Alona Wainwright enters the scene, give her *zealous-5*, renewable as a hard move.
- **Master of the Arcane Arts:** When Alona sees or detects the presence of a Relic or magical effect, she immediately knows its nature and how to counter it. When you use a Relic or magic against Alona Wainwright, she first gives herself a temporary *counterspell-3*, impeding your move.
- **Bodyguards:** When Alona Wainwright takes a status from which her bodyguards can protect her, the bodyguards take the status instead (use **Magnum Opus Initiates**, page 121, or **Corporate Lawyer**, *MC Toolkit*, page 142).
- **Transmutation of Metals and Precious Stones:** When Alona Wainwright takes a status involving metals or precious stones, she can redirect up to 3 tiers of it to another target.

- Order the cult's agents to attack (Create any of the Dangers under The Cabal's Damage Control, page 117)
- Counter a magical ability or Relic (burn two relevant tags)
- Cause guns to misfire and metallic weapons to slash, stab, and smite (*gunshot-3* or *wounded-3*, one target per loaded gun or metal weapon at the scene)

- Scoff at the interruption to her busy schedule
- Twiddle her fingers and thumb her bejeweled belt buckle, casting a spell



DEPTH 4:
THE SACRED FIRE

THE CATACOMBS

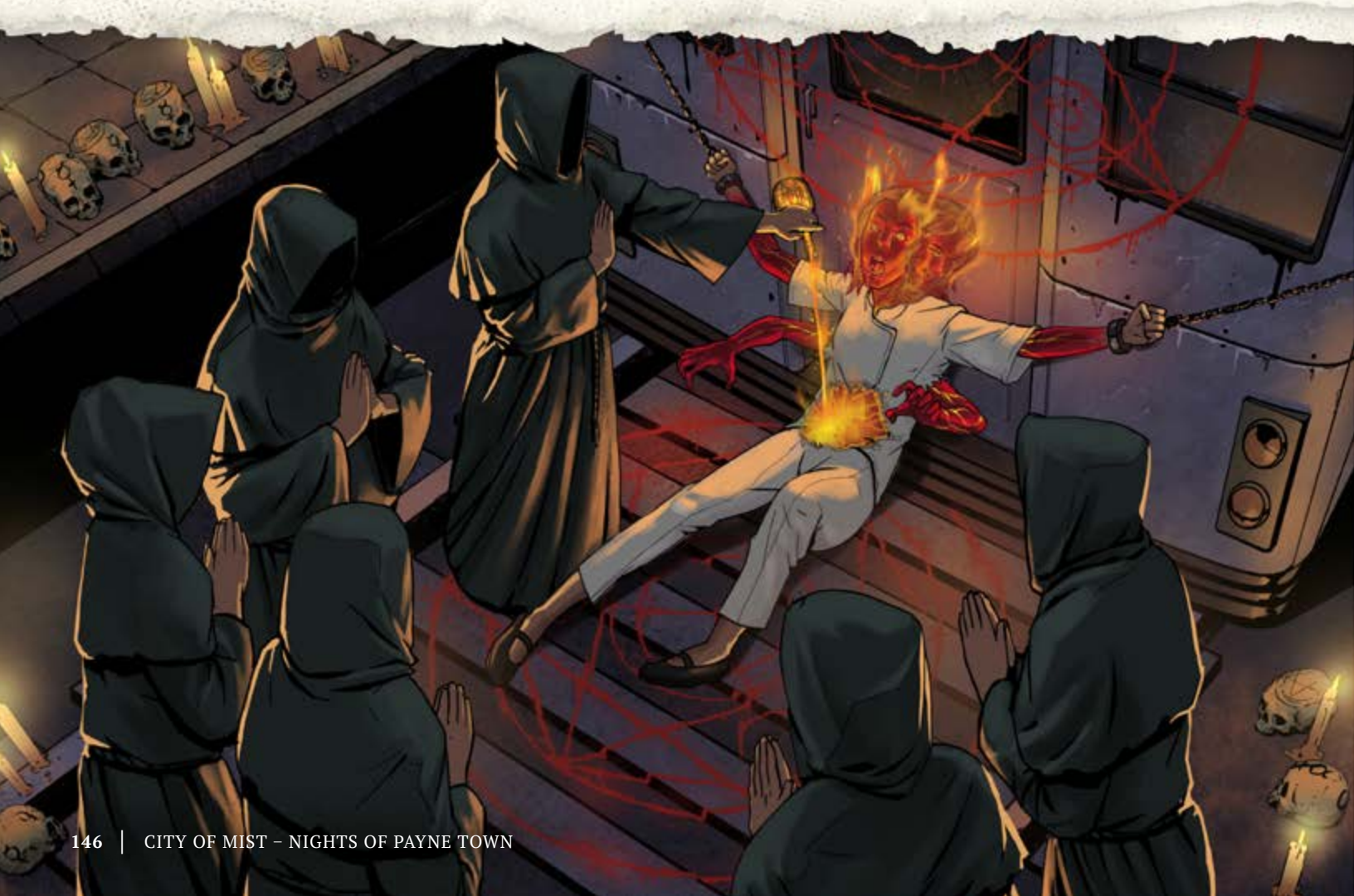
To the sounds of a repetitive Latin chant and an occasional stifled whimper, you make your way through the underground tunnels. The empty eye sockets of a thousand human skulls embedded in walls follow you mockingly. You pass by torchlit alcoves and see in each the shuddering body of one of the initiates, shackled to a heavy altar, a boulder, or a subway car. Passing solemnly from one sacrificial lamb to the next is a procession of robed and hooded cultists carrying a golden basin. As they stop next to a stupified victim, they chant, and an unearthly crackle roars as the walls are lit by eldritch flashes of green glow, showing their long shadows. A moment later, the procession continues its path, a little worse for wear, yet with greater zeal.

The Catacombs are the secret headquarters of the God-King's cult. Originally a complex of burial chambers underneath the Old Quarter, where the alchemists of old reputedly gathered in secrecy to conduct their forbidden experiments, today the Catacombs is a barracks the size of an army base buried much deeper under the City. Thanks to the power of Earth Transmutation possessed by the cult's Disciples, the entire complex can be transported to a new location as necessary, while accessways in the form of abandoned subway tunnels can be put together and disassembled like toy bricks.

The candle-lit tunnels, corridors, and chambers of the catacombs are lined with the original skulls and bones of those buried here, a constant reminder for the cultists of the mortal fate that awaits them if they fail to fulfill their mystical calling (or if they betray the God-King). The complex is built in three sections, each enclosing the next: the Initiates' Court, the Disciples' Court, and the Sanctum Sanctorum.

THE INITIATES' COURT

When Initiates first arrive in the Catacombs, they don the gold-hued robes – marking the beginning of **the Yellowing** stage – and join the life of servitude of the other Initiates and Disciples. They are shown



to their meager living quarters. The atmosphere is severe and austere. There is no room for socializing or time-wasting; everyone understands they have a role to perform and the ultimate goal of the Magnum Opus is ever-present. They are forbidden from entering the Disciples' Court and beyond without an accompanying Disciple.

Lamb Initiates are confined to their chambers. They are expected to study the texts and secrets of alchemy to prepare for their awakening. In fact, the cult merely holds them there temporarily until the preparation for the Anointing ritual is complete.

Wolf Initiates are assigned to a Disciple who commands them, and partake in cult activities in the City, like the Chinatown Festival attack or the Dig Site Job. They prepare for their missions in a series of labs within their Court, concocting their chemical formulas. Wolf Initiates work under the assumption that the cult has enemies and that in order for the cult to complete the Magnum Opus, they must do what it takes to ensure its survival.

PCs who are in this stage may begin to feel that something is amiss. After the life-shattering sacrifices they made in **the Blackening** and **the Whitening**, studying scriptures and running errands may not seem a very mystical experience. The Disciples promise them that the next ritual will be worth it all.

THE DISCIPLES' COURT

While Disciples are stationed in key roles all over the City (most notably Canseliet Manor in *The Alchemist*, page 155), the Catacombs is their central barracks. Versed in elemental Transmutations, Disciples seek to grow their alchemical powers through service to the God-King in hopes of learning from the Great Teacher (Armand, or the Cabal if you are playing the case as a one-shot) and gaining the ultimate power promised to them. They train tirelessly in special facilities in the complex and prepare for the moment they receive orders from the Cabal, communicated via **an eternal flame** that burns in one of their halls or through a messenger sent from Cabal members such as Alona Wainwright.

THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM

At the center of the Catacombs, there is a system of tunnels and chambers that is used for **the Anointing ritual**, the Rift awakening ritual. At its heart is a golden basin with the Magnum Opus' most important Relic and ingredient: the twice-diluted water from the Grail, purified water in which one drop of Armand Kai's Grail Water was dissolved. Access to the Sanctum Sanctorum is blocked by solid earth and guarded by Disciples at all times; it is only ever made accessible during the Anointing ritual.

SECURITY IN THE CATACOMBS

The cult has put in place multiple defense systems to protect its underground stronghold from snoopy Rifts:

- **Access by Earth Transmutation:** Positioned deep underground and movable at the whim of the Cabal, the Catacombs can only be physically accessed by those who (a) know where they are at the moment, and (b) can travel through solid earth. Disciples with Earth Transmutation serve as gatekeepers and ushers, dismantling and reconstructing old subway and service tunnels to connect and disconnect their base.
- **Astrological divination:** The cult monitors the astrological chart of the Catacombs a hundred times more intensively than it does any other aspect of its operations. If you haven't used The Cabal's Damage Control to bring the PCs to a dead-end or ambush, this would be a good time to do so.
- **Magical Wards:** The Cabal are powerful ritual sorcerers, especially when they work together. They have placed magical wards on the Catacombs that counter divination powers or magical infiltration attempts (teleportation, shapeshifting, etc.) and alert the Cabal. The Initiate's Court is *warded-1*, the Disciples Court is *warded-2*, and the Sanctum Sanctorum is *warded-3*.
- **The Initiate's Riddle:** The mystic's version of a keypad, this riddle serves as another barrier for interlopers (page 143).
- **Cultist patrols:** Initiates and Disciples on guard duty (*alert-1*) patrol the corridors of all three sections of the Catacombs at all times.
- **Other cult agents:** If the Cabal are concerned of an imminent attack on the Catacombs, they may post Talia Al-Bahar or the Yakuza Yōkai in the Sanctum Sanctorum with clear instructions to either engage the interlopers or secure the Twice-Diluted Grail Water.

THE ANOINTING RITUAL

The Anointing ritual completes the Yellowing stage. Each Initiate is carried to a different chamber in the Sanctum Sanctorum and chained to an altar or another heavy object.

- **Whether Lambs or Wolves, Initiates who the cult identified as Rifts** are still chained, but are subjected to neither treatment. At the end of the ritual, they are treated as anointed Lambs (any resistance is impeded by their *zealous* statuses, if any).

- **Wolves are given a Transmutation** by branding the alchemical symbol of their element in their flesh. This *hurts-like-hell-3* and permanently transforms them into individuals Touched by Armand's alchemist Mythos. They each gain control over their element and become **Disciples**, but initially they *can't-control-their-powers-2* and must train to remove this status. **At the end of the ritual, they are carried to the Disciples' Court for recovery, never to see their fellow Initiates, the Lambs, again.**
- **Lambs are Anointed with the Twice-Diluted Grail Water and become Rifts**. They erupt with the legendary power of their Mythos, sometimes leveling their chamber or harming the Disciples who perform the ritual. While still *overwhelmed-3*, they gradually regain their bearings; their *zealous* status helps them control their power and compels them to obey the Disciples' commands. **At the end of the ritual, Lambs and previously-awoken Rifts are gathered and promised that they are a step from uniting with the God-King and achieving total illumination and omniscience. They are then sent to be harvested.**

With the necessary alchemical knowledge, this ritual can be connected with the Yellowing or Awakening stage of the alchemical Magnum Opus. The next step is the final step, Reddening or transformation, which will unite the aspirant with the God-King, the source of all life.

The water in the golden basin has the power to awaken Sleepers into Rifts.

The branding of alchemical symbols grants Disciples their alchemical powers.

THE HARVEST RITUAL

The cult does not wait long to harvest the newly-awakened and veteran Rifts, leading them soon thereafter into the "Sacred Fire": a Mythos-melting flame which can strip the legendary from a Rift, collecting it as a volatile and corrosive substance called Ichor, which is later refined into a Tincture. See the exact rules for the effects of this process in *The Furnace* (page 109).

If you are playing through the story arc, the harvesting site can be at the furnace (*The Furnace*, page 109) or the Ichor distillery in Canseliet Manor (*The Alchemist*, page 163). If you are playing this case as a one shot or if it better fits your cinematic considerations, the Cabal has another inner room at the center of the Sanctum Sanctorum, where the "Sacred Fire" is burning and where they personally conduct the harvesting.

Whatever the location of the harvest, the Disciples herd the Rifts together and usher them into the flames one by one, praising their coming transformation and union with the God-King while the *zealous* Rifts can do nothing but comply, believing they will attain their long-awaited answers or ultimate powers. Instead, the Lambs emerge from the "Sacred Fire" as soulless Sleepers, devoid of their unique animating force – their Mythos – and of any hope to ever awaken again.

With the necessary alchemical knowledge, this final ritual can be connected with the Reddening stage of the alchemical Magnum Opus: the coveted union with the God-King. **However, something is amiss here: it doesn't *feel* like anyone here is any nearer to the truth.**

The Disciples who usher the Lambs into the "Sacred Flame" have seen this ritual before; they don't believe a word they say to the Lambs about their upcoming union with the God-King.

Walking into the "Sacred Fire" is not the gate to ultimate illumination but to permanent Sleep. The "Sacred Fire" melts down one's Mythos into a glowing, corrosive goo. Rifts come out of the "Sacred Fire" virtually brain-dead, remembering nothing at all. At first this may seem like a state of enlightenment, but very soon it becomes evident: they are completely ordinary people with no power nor connection to the Source. In fact, any glint they had in their eyes seems entirely snuffed out.

This shines a light on the true motives of the cult of the God-King: **"Magnum Opus" is a manufacturing operation driven by power lust, harvesting people of their innate mystical powers.**

OPERATION CLEAN UP

Once the cat is out of the bag about the cult (or once there is enough evidence to prove it), the crew may wish to take any of the following courses of action:

- **Rescue Initiates from awakening or harvesting**: The crew can try to sabotage the Anointing or "Sacred Fire" rituals. They may also attempt to convince the Initiates of the truth: seeing a fellow Initiate emerge numb and empty-eyed from the "Sacred Fire" or seeing the Ichor harvested from them has a sobering effect. Give the PCs story tags for every piece of hard evidence they show the cultists to help them break through their *zealous* statuses and *turn-away-from-cult* spectrums (see Magnum Opus Dangers, page 120).

- **Bring down the Catacombs:** This could entail defeating the villainous Disciples and any remaining cult agents at the scene, and physically demolishing or collapsing the compound. The crew may wish to somehow save the Twice-Diluted Grail Water.
- **Shut down the entire cult operation:** The crew could set out to apprehend key figures like Prof. Clay, Whirler, and Alona Wainwright and the remaining Cabal members, or at least sabotage their operations. There may also be a battle of political influence as the Cabal try to pull strings to get rid of the crew once and for all.

If you are playing the story arc, **the trail leads to the man behind the cult: the Great Teacher, the alchemist Armand Kai, who resides in his Old Quarter Canseliet Manor** (described in the final case of the Mystical Vein, *The Alchemist*). The crew can find the manor by following a delivery of harvested Ichor, tapping a communication from the last Cabal members, chasing escaped Disciples, or investigating the source of the Twice-Diluted Grail Water.

Furthermore, the Twice-Diluted Grail Water is a link to the Mythos of the Fisher King (Corbin Payne). **Investigating** it should yield clues based on the current act in the overarching case, *Percival* (page 259).

THE TWICE-DILUTED GRAIL WATER

The substance used by Magnum Opus to awaken Rifts is a diluted solution of purified water and a drop of water previously contained in the Grail. Water from the Grail was given to Armand by Corbin Payne, perhaps in the hope that the alchemist could find a cure to the king's legendary ailment. While Armand still keeps the original Grail Water in his lab (see *The Alchemist*, page 170), he gives the cult a diluted version of it, thus diluting the raw power of the Grail a second time.

In this story arc, the Grail represents the ultimate power of the truth, of transformation, and of healing. Armand and his cult use it to awaken individuals to their true nature, their Mythos, before cruelly ripping its essence out of them, turning them into hopeless shades.

Treat this substance as a wild card. If a Rift is Anointed with it, she may awaken further, replacing another Logos theme with a Mythos theme, or she may **See Through the Mist**, at least temporarily (as in the Moment of Evolution, *Player's Guide*, page 269). The power in the diluted version could be tapped to power a miracle equivalent to a significant sacrifice on a **Stop. Holding. Back.** move. Narratively, it could make someone see a truth they've been ignoring or heal grave physical or emotional wounds.

AFTERMATH

Here are a few questions to consider and points to revisit when you wrap up this case:

- How did the crew emerge from their interaction with Magnum Opus? Did any of them follow the path offered by the cult and if so, how far did they go? Whose life was altered forever, whether by the cult's intervention or their own willing sacrifices?
- What is the state of the Magnum Opus operation at the end of the case? Was it completely decommissioned or can the cultists rebuild? Where are key figures such as the Cabal, Alona Wainwright, Professor Clay, and Whirler? If the truth came to light, does Prof. Clay continue recruiting for the cult or seek a new way to realize the alchemical Magnum Opus?
- What was the fate of the cult members in the end? Seekers, Followers, Initiates, and Disciples – did they sacrifice everything for ultimate knowledge and power? Were some of them able to break free from the cult and rebuild their lives? If Armand's power still holds, did they retreat to Canseliet Manor? Or do some of them continue the quest on their own? What of the cult followers the crew was sent to rescue from the cult? Did they return to their families?
- What of all the Tinctures the cult left behind, and the Twice-Diluted Grail Water? If the cult or Armand fall, do they lose their power? These powerful artifacts can wreak havoc in the wrong hands. How does the crew intend to dispose of them? Can the crew find a way to return the Mythos essences to the people they were stolen from, and if so, should they?
- Did the mysteries of the Magnum Opus and the possibilities it offers make a lasting impression on the crew members, supporting cast, or the NPCs in the case? Will they continue the quest to discover what lies beyond this world? Perhaps Ariadne would be willing to guide one of them.
- What ever happened to those embroiled in the dig site job: Silvio Yadao and his daughter, Helena; Moonwraith; and the Helix Labs archaeological team? Who ended up with the tablet with the recipe for the Elixir of Life, and how do they use it?

THE INITIATE'S CHANT

O, pater animans,
Life-giving father

Sequor aranei filum mysticum
I follow the thread of the mystic spider

per labyrinthum mendaciorum tuum
Through your labyrinth of lies

ut adiungam tibi in sancto sanctorum.
To join you in the holy of holies

Corpore meo putrefacto absolutus ero.
When my body rots, I will be absolved

Spiritus meus mercurio lavatur,
My spirit is washed by Quicksilver

Anima mea ut sol elucidatur,
My soul becomes luminous as the sun

Ardeo ut coniugem cum pyra tua sacra,
I burn to unite with your sacred fire

Factus sum Deus in orbe terrarum.
I have become God on Earth.

LATIN CHANT	ENGLISH MEANING	USAGE OF PHRASE IN EVERYDAY
O, pater animans,	Life-giving father	Exclamation or swear word
Sequor aranei filum mysticum	I follow the thread of the mystic spider	Facing the unknown or the terrifying, such as torture or leap of faith
per labyrinthum mendaciorum tuum	Through your labyrinth of lies	Revealing deception or treachery
ut adiungam tibi in sancto sanctorum.	To join you in the holy of holies.	In the presence of the sublime or transcendent
Corpore meo putrefacto absolutus ero.	When my body rots, I will be absolved (**Blackening**)	Battle cry, especially the first three words and the last two words separately
Spiritus meus mercurio lavatur,	My spirit is washed by Quicksilver (**Whitening**)	Composing oneself to avoid violence or aggression
Anima mea ut sol elucidatur,	My soul becomes luminous as the sun (**Yellowing**)	Rejoicing or committing to a cause
Ardeo ut coniugem cum pyra tua sacra,	I burn to unite with your sacred fire (**Reddening**)	Response to commands from a higher-ranking cultist, also the last four words
Factus sum	I have become	
Deus in orbe terrarum.	God on Earth.	Activating transmutations


CITY OF MIST
THE
ALCHEMIST
A HEIST OF ALCHEMICAL TRANSMUTATIONS IN THE MANSION OF A MAD RECLUSE

At the edge of the Old Quarter, there's an aged, deserted mansion where no one lives and no one goes. Rumor has it that it once belonged to an aging alchemist, one who has sought the secret of life everlasting and dabbled with the alchemy of souls. His students and followers, remnants of his dark cult, still guard the estate to this day, hoping to retrace their master's achievements. But even they fear to venture deep below, lest they become mere ingredients in the alchemist's final experiment. You have no such luxury; you must find the Alchemist's "Great Work", even if in the process, you become something else...

The Alchemist is a case centered on a single location that can be played as either a heist or a dungeon crawl. It describes the danger-ridden lair of Armand Kai, a master alchemist haunted by his fear of dying, who desired most of all to retreat from the noisy City and complete his Great Work: finding the means to live forever. The entire structure of his manor is engineered as a "chemistry set" where the crew is the base material going through transformation as they move deeper and deeper, closer and closer to the ultimate reward: the Elixir of Life.

THE HISTORY OF ARMAND KAI

Back in the early years of the City, **Armand Kai** (Fulcanelli, a fabled master alchemist) was a young academic with a passion for spiritualism and mysticism. He spent his days translating and interpreting obscure texts and his nights attending séances, psychic readings, and secret society meetings, all in the attempt to unlock the mysteries of the soul, the universe, and human existence. His search led him to the secret science of alchemy, which presented a path not only to the transformation of matter but also to the transformation of the soul. The ardent seeker became entranced by the possibilities offered through this ancient science and particularly the promise of cultivating one's being beyond its humble, mortal beginnings, thereby attaining spiritual illumination and vast mystical powers. Soon after he began to decipher old alchemical teachings he had his first spiritual experience, awakening as the Rift of Fulcanelli.

FULCANELLI: MYTH OR REAL?

In modern history, Fulcanelli was the name of a mysterious French alchemist, active in the 1920s, whose published works discussed transformation and esotericism. It is unclear who Fulcanelli was or if he even existed; he allegedly disappeared after World War II, with only his student Eugène Canseliet left to recount his incredible experiments and eventual transformation. His legend was popularized in the paranormal collection book *The Morning of the Magicians*.

The years went by and Armand's understanding of alchemy and of the occult grew deeper and wider. His profound study of the Mist revealed, to his amazement, how powerful and all-encompassing the spell put on humanity was. Despite Armand's growing powers, there was always this force, this barrier, that kept him and his fellow City residents from fulfilling their utmost potential and from accessing a reality beyond that of mundane existence in the City (for further reading, see No Beginning and The Age of Wonder, *Shadows & Showdowns*, page 296). Brave and unrelenting in his search, Armand embarked on a quest to find the holy grail of spiritual seekers: the reason for it all. Little did he know it would eventually lead him to the literal Grail Castle.

ENCOUNTER WITH PAYNE

When he finally found the Grail Castle – Corbin Tower – Armand was a middle-aged man, weary of his lifelong search for the ultimate truth but still as passionate as ever. In the derelict skyscraper, he found an agonizing Corbin Payne, already deeply consumed by his festering wound. Armand discovered that the old reclusive "king" was feeding off of the subconscious pain of the City and perpetuating it in return, and that the Mist avails itself of this pain, using it to keep the City residents under its thumb. If only he could use his alchemy to concoct a cure for the King, the pain will be healed and the City would take its first step toward freedom.

Corbin Payne had different plans, or perhaps he could not help himself from inflicting his own mythic suffering on others. Sensing the fears that the alchemist sequestered deep in his psyche, the Fisher King revealed himself to the alchemist as an old, decrepit man and bared his bleeding wound before him. This appalling vision of man's ultimate demise, of misery, decay, and imminent death etched itself in Armand's mind,

striking him with the Dolorous Stroke (see page 18). It exposed Armand's hidden motive for his spiritual journey: a morbid fear of old age and death, a desperate last stand against the laws of time, and a scramble to find a way to hold on to his life – no matter the cost.

Rising darkly over the curled up and whimpering alchemist, the Fisher King derided him, saying that such a self-serving seeker could never be worthy of the Grail. To ridicule him, or perhaps to aid him in his search, Corbin Payne gave Armand a single drop of water that was held in the Grail. "Go, find your Philosopher's Stone," his mocking voice echoed as the alchemist ran in terror through the windswept empty office floors of the unfinished skyscraper, "you're almost out of time…"

THE SEARCH FOR A CURE

Following his encounter with Corbin Payne, Armand Kai became utterly obsessed with the search for life everlasting, leaving no stone unturned in the City. Small discoveries, few and far between, helped him unnaturally prolong his life, but he remained achingly aware that he was still aging, only slower. The years went by faster now, and he amassed arcane knowledge and power to match any in the City. Yet he never completed the true Magnum Opus, the true Philosopher's Stone or Elixir of Life that would rid him of the fear of death, despite giving his all to his work.

The older he became, the more he began to worry the world around him would consume him. Every little interruption took away time he needed for his Great Work, wasting precious moments. The dynamic and frantic City was full of threats to his life, accidental or intentional, and everywhere he saw the long spindly fingers of Death reaching for him. He wanted to keep it all to himself: his time, his knowledge, his resources, his life. People became a nuisance and then a danger. More and more, he became a recluse (not unlike Corbin Payne) and dedicated himself to the urgent, gnawing need to find a solution to his approaching doom. He shut himself in the basement of his Canseliet Manor and retreated deeper and deeper into hiding, deeper and deeper into the ground, surrounding himself in every manner of protection.

A TURNING POINT

Several years ago, just as he realized time was almost up for him, Armand made a remarkable discovery: with the right alchemical treatment, the Grail Water could be used to wash away the Mist and awaken new Rifts. It opened up the possibility of discovering a Rift who could bestow life everlasting and launched a new branch of research for Armand: the alchemy of Mythoi. But in its very essence, awakening was unpredictable. He could not foresee what Mythoi he would awaken in each experiment. The only way forward was trial and error on a massive scale, for which Armand devised a furnace that could refine the essence of a Mythos out of a Rift (see *The Furnace*, page 87) and a false cult that would mass-awaken Rifts in a controlled manner, to provide the furnace with a constant flow of raw material (see *Cult of the God-King*, page 113).

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MANOR

Before he created either, however, Armand first had to perfect the Rift refinement process in his underground laboratory. Pleased with the results, he constructed an entire subterranean complex based on the four stages of the process of the alchemical Magnum Opus – Rotting, Purifying, Awakening, and Transformation. When this building-sized chemistry set was completed, he locked himself up in its deepest chamber and dedicated himself to his research, leaving the care of his manor to his disciples.

Now, if anyone wanted to reach Armand and disturb his work, they would have to survive the alchemical process themselves: only the purest of substances can make it through to him. As the cult and the furnace continued their operation, the old alchemist continued his work, securely hidden in his secret lab, greedily consuming the essence of hundreds of Mythoi in his research, growing more callous and self-absorbed with every passing day.

CINEMATIC DUNGEONEERING

Exploring a complex in *City of Mist* is different from dungeons crawls in traditional role-playing games. Taking the cinematic approach, a *City of Mist* game focuses on key locations in the building and key scenes that take place there, rather than inch-by-inch progress on the map. Much like in a movie or other work of fiction, airtime is given to interesting events that befall the lead characters during their time in the "dungeon".

ONE-SHOT VARIANT

If you are running this case as a one-shot, Canseliet Manor is not just a refinery of Ichor, but also a honey trap for Rifts whose powers Armand wants to harvest. Tempted by rumors of the Philosopher's Stone, the Grail, the alchemist's gold cache, or his arcane knowledge, Rifts venture deep below the manor to find their prize. However, in the process, they become refined by the complex, ready for harvesting in the hands of the alchemist.

CANSELIET MANOR

Armand bought Canseliet Manor a few decades after his awakening, with a fortune he amassed through his ability to turn metals into gold, knowing well that the manor sits upon a gold mine. What started out as a seemingly mundane mansion he soon turned into a school and laboratory for the alchemical arts, haunted by his quest for truth and immortality.

The mansion underwent its greatest transformation after Armand became a Grail Knight. In his madness, the alchemist dug deep under the manor, determined to turn the entire complex into an alchemical refinery based on the secrets of the Great Work. Later, the same complex was used to refine the Ichor that he and his servants stole from Rifts.

Each layer of the structure represents a different stage of the refining process:

The Manor House (Depth 1) represents the first stage, Rotting. In this level, the Ichor is boiled in the Ichor Distillery to force its impurities out. An individual passing through this level must first confront her weakness and faults.

The Aqua Fortis Cistern (Depth 2) represents the second stage, Purification. It is a grand cave full of a liquid that melts away impurities, painstakingly manufactured by Armand over decades. When the Ichor goes through this pool it is cleansed of all former influences of its original Rift's life and personality. Individuals who come in contact with the water lose their mortal attachments.

The Gold Mine (Depth 3) represents the third stage, Awakening. Here the Ichor has become refined into pure Mythos substance. A handful of Armand's most devout followers, the Golden Ones, live here and handle the volatile essences, preparing them for their master. Those passing here must be as noble as gold, or risk reacting with the essences therein.

At the deepest level of the complex, in a rough-hewn cave, lies **Armand's Lab (Depth 4), representing the fourth and final stage, Transformation.** Here Armand conducts his research, transforming the volatile Mythos essences into Tinctures and experimenting on them, seeking the secret of life everlasting. It is here that he keeps his most precious treasure: the Grail Water.



DEPTH	AREA	ALCHEMICAL STAGE
0	Perimeter and grounds	-
1	The Manor House	Rotting
2	The Aqua Fortis Cistern	Purification
3	The Gold Mine	Awakening
4	Armand's Lab	Transformation

THE ICEBERG

DEPTH 0:
THE HOOKS

The crew may become involved in the case in the following ways:

- **The crew may continue the investigation from previous cases** *The Furnace* and *Cult of the God-King*. Following the Ichor shipments from the old Aurora Glassworks Factory (page 105) or from the Catacombs (page 146) leads to Canseliet Manor's rear docking platform. If the Catacombs complex was shut down, Magnum Opus Disciples could retreat to the Manor, or they could simply be sent there to be trained by the "Great Teacher" (as they refer to Armand). If the crew is trying to restore one of their own Mythos essences or the Mythos essence of the victims of the harvesting, such as Juan Delamar or awakened cultists, all the necessary ingredients are kept in Armand's lab.
- **Seeking to obtain Armand's treasures:** The crew may be going after one or all of Armand's treasures: the Grail Water, the Aqua Regia or Aqua Fortis, the Mythos Tinctures (either a specific one or all of them), his enormous cache of gold, his secret knowledge, etc. The motivations for such a heist could be just as varied. A sick or dying supporting cast member may drive the crew to search for a cure; they may need Armand himself to concoct it. A criminal mastermind of ill-repute could hire the crew as his team for the job (such as Alex Duval of *Fortune Row*). Or, the crew can be sent to obtain something of Armand's by a powerful mover-and-shaker in the Rift underworld, perhaps as a trade for something they need.

HEIST RULES

If you're using the heist rules given in *Fortune Row*, the entire case can be treated as a heist with the following cards:

- **Eurynomos (Depth 1):** Canseliet Manor is guarded by a strange creature that cannot be harmed but brings misfortune to everything around it, exacerbating one's weaknesses (4♣).
- **Aqua Fortis (Depth 2):** To reach Armand's lab, one must pass through a liquid that makes one care about nothing, sometimes even eliminating the very motivation for the heist (9♦).
- **Aqua Regia (Depth 4):** Armand's personal guard is another one of his creations, a construct which can absorb and dissolve legendary powers (K♣).

- **Ariadne:** This mysterious and cryptic guide (described on page 126) may point spiritual seekers, arcane practitioners, or occult researchers in the direction of Canseliet Manor as a "labyrinth" that holds many answers, including answers to their personal Mysteries or their grand questions about the City. To complicate things, Ariadne knows Armand is on the verge – if he hasn't already succeeded – of attaining life everlasting or transforming beyond mundane existence in the City, and she either wants this knowledge for herself or wants to wrest it out of Armand's selfish claws and make it available to others. Also, she just loves sending heroes into mazes.
- **Armand's Invitation:** The alchemist himself may have heard of the crew and their powers and could be interested in the Mythos essence of one or more crew members. He may invite the crew to his mansion, offering something in return, and then either allow them to be 'refined' on their way down to his lab or try to manipulate, deceive, or separate them so he can obtain their precious Ichor and make it into a Tincture. Armand is especially interested in Rifts of Mythoi related to immortality or longevity, although any power that will help him in his research would do.

Whatever their motivation is for venturing into the mansion, the crew begins the case in the perimeter & grounds of Canseliet Manor (see below). They know nothing of Armand beyond perhaps that he is an old alchemist and the Great Teacher of the Cult of the God-King; they may not even know if he is still alive. If you're playing this case as a one-shot, there may even be no mention of Armand, just a mysterious mansion full of mystical treasures ripe for the taking.



CANSELIET MANOR: PERIMETER & GROUNDS

```
Canseliet Manor seems abandoned but per-
haps this is by design. Ivy covers the rusty
wrought iron gate, which may have once been
gilded, coiling around its lock as if it
does not want to let you in. A private road
that has seen better days snakes into the
thicket and between the trees which, in
turn, huddle tightly over it, protecting the
privacy of the grounds beyond. It's like the
mansion is keeping something to itself, a
secret it will not willingly share.
```

Canseliet Manor is one of the biggest mansions in the City. Despite its location on the edge of the Old Quarter, it boasts expansive grounds that stretch over many acres, covered for the most part with overgrown gardens, pastures, and woodland. The manor house and the gatehouse are the only buildings on the grounds.

City records show the mansion is owned by one Armand Kai, but the original date of purchase was lost or redacted (perhaps by the Mist).

The perimeter of the mansion is guarded by multiple layers of security:

- **A stone wall**, 12 feet high and 6 feet wide, encircles the mansion (*break:4*). The rusting, overgrown main gate on the Old Quarter side is always closed, while two back service gates on the residential and/or industrial sides are used by Armand's Disciples.
- **The police** patrol the perimeter wall regularly, as part of their service for the richer residents of this neighborhood. Any suspicious activity is reported both to the precinct and to the private security of the mansion.
- **Mundane high-end security measures**, such as CCTV cameras, motion detectors, and laser tripwires are installed on the perimeter wall, in key locations on the grounds, and around the main building.
- Multiple layers of **alchemical wards** prevent legendary interlopers of all kinds: ghosts and disembodied spirits cannot cross the perimeter, shapeshifters are forced back into their true form, magical transportation and divination is blocked. This is represented as a *warded-1* status on the entire perimeter; increase its tier by the Depth of the location (*warded-2* for Depth 1, the manor house; *warded-3* for Depth 2, the Aqua Fortis Cistern, and so on). Increase the status by an additional 1 tier for someone trying to teleport directly into a location (e.g., teleporting into Armand's Lab is impeded by *warded-6*). Successfully penetrating a layer of warding does not grant any benefit in penetrating the next layer, but you can assume the PC penetrated all the layers before it.
- **A Sleeping Briar**, a shrub infused with the Tincture of the thorny thicket of Sleeping Beauty, is planted ubiquitously at the inner foot of the wall. When disturbed, it grows incredibly fast to impede movement and its poisonous thorns induce sleep.
- **A private armed security force** patrols the perimeter wall, the gates, the grounds, and around the main building. These are in fact **Armand's Disciples** dressed in black suits or chauffeur's coats, driving armored SUVs.
- **Ichor byproduct dumping pits** are scattered throughout the grounds. While not intended as a security measure, these pits may surprise the unwary thief. They contain a pitchy pollutant oozing with other people's thoughts, feelings, and body sensations. Contamination inflicts an appropriate status such as *inexplicably-happy* or *back-pains* with a tier befitting the degree of exposure, e.g., 2 for touching and 4 for falling in.

City records can divulge the layout of the mansion and the main building, and the presence of police patrols and a private security force. **Rumors from local kids or burglars** can report about the Sleeping Briar and mundane security measures. **Former heist survivors or magical practitioners** (such as Ariadne) can tell the crew about the wards and/or pits.

Magical practitioners can infer from the Sleeping Briar Tincture and the alchemical wards that Armand's alchemy can refine certain legendary powers or even prevent their manifestation.

The pitchy substance in the pits can only be described as the fermented leftovers of a soul. Crew members who have analyzed Ichor before will recognize it as a component of Ichor. Crew members who have also analyzed a Tincture can surmise it's a byproduct of the refining process of Ichor into a Tincture.

Scouting the manor house shows around-the-clock activity in the rear docking bay, but no movement activity at the front side of the house (the Foyer), which seems to be abandoned.

ARMAND'S SPIRIT IS WATCHING

Once the alchemical wards are engaged or the Disciples are alerted to the presence of an intruder, Armand is made aware of the intrusion attempt. He projects his spirit to the location of the intruders on the grounds to survey them and suss out who they are and what their essences may be. He may become interested in the Mythos essence of one of the crew members or their allies (for example, Moonwraith's immortality, see page 133) and then devise a way to separate them from the group. Otherwise, he tracks the break-in attempt with growing concern and prepares countermeasures in advance, as needed.

Only abilities that can counter divination can prevent him from remote sensing an intrusion in this way (for example, Silvio Yadao's Tincture of *Tarnkappe*, *Cult of the God-King*, page 131). Rifts that can see spirits or simply Rifts **Looking Beyond the Mist** may notice the spirit of a middle-aged man in a stylish but somewhat outlandish designer suit ogling them furiously as one would look at an annoying nuisance. Tracing the spirit projection back to its source requires penetrating the wards between the PC and Armand (normally *warded-5*).

SLEEPING BRIAR ★★★

The Sleeping Briar has grown profusely at the foot of the perimeter wall of the mansion and in the woods across the grounds. The *cut-through:3* spectrum maximum represents the cutting needed to get one person through the thicket; getting multiple people across or cutting a path for something bigger requires more effort (increase the maximum by the size factor of whatever is trying to pass) or have players scale up their effects (as in **Change the Game**).

CUT THROUGH 3

- **Do Not Disturb:** When the Sleeping Briar is first disturbed, it makes one hard move as an intrusion.
- **Not Prince Charming Again:** When applied to Kings, Princes, or Knights, reduce the tiers of statuses inflicted by Sleeping Briar by 1.

- Tangle and wrap itself around its victim's limbs (*tangled-3*)
- Scratch and pierce its victim's skin with its poisonous thorns (*drowsy-2*)
- Grow uncontrollably, further blocking the path (increase *cut-through* maximum by 1)

- The breeze blows through its leaves

ARMAND'S DISCIPLE ★★★

If you're playing the case as part of the Mystical Vein, Armand's Disciples may be Magnum Opus graduates – some may even be people the crew was unable to save from joining the cult. Otherwise, they are simply aspiring alchemists who follow him. Either way, the Disciples live in the mansion and assist the alchemist in his work in hopes of learning more from the Great Teacher. In return for their services, they are taught Transmutations that allow them to control one or more elements. A Disciple often carries a supply of her element if it is not ubiquitous.

Unlike Magnum Opus Disciples (page 121), Armand's Disciples aren't drinking the Kool-Aid and have no illusions about what Armand is doing here. They are here because Armand offers them arcane power and life everlasting, but they may also be disgruntled by how long it is taking to achieve. If someone offers them to take a shorter path by turning on their master, they might take it. To reflect this, they do not have a *turn* spectrum and can be swayed with a successful **Convince** move, if one can challenge their loyalty.

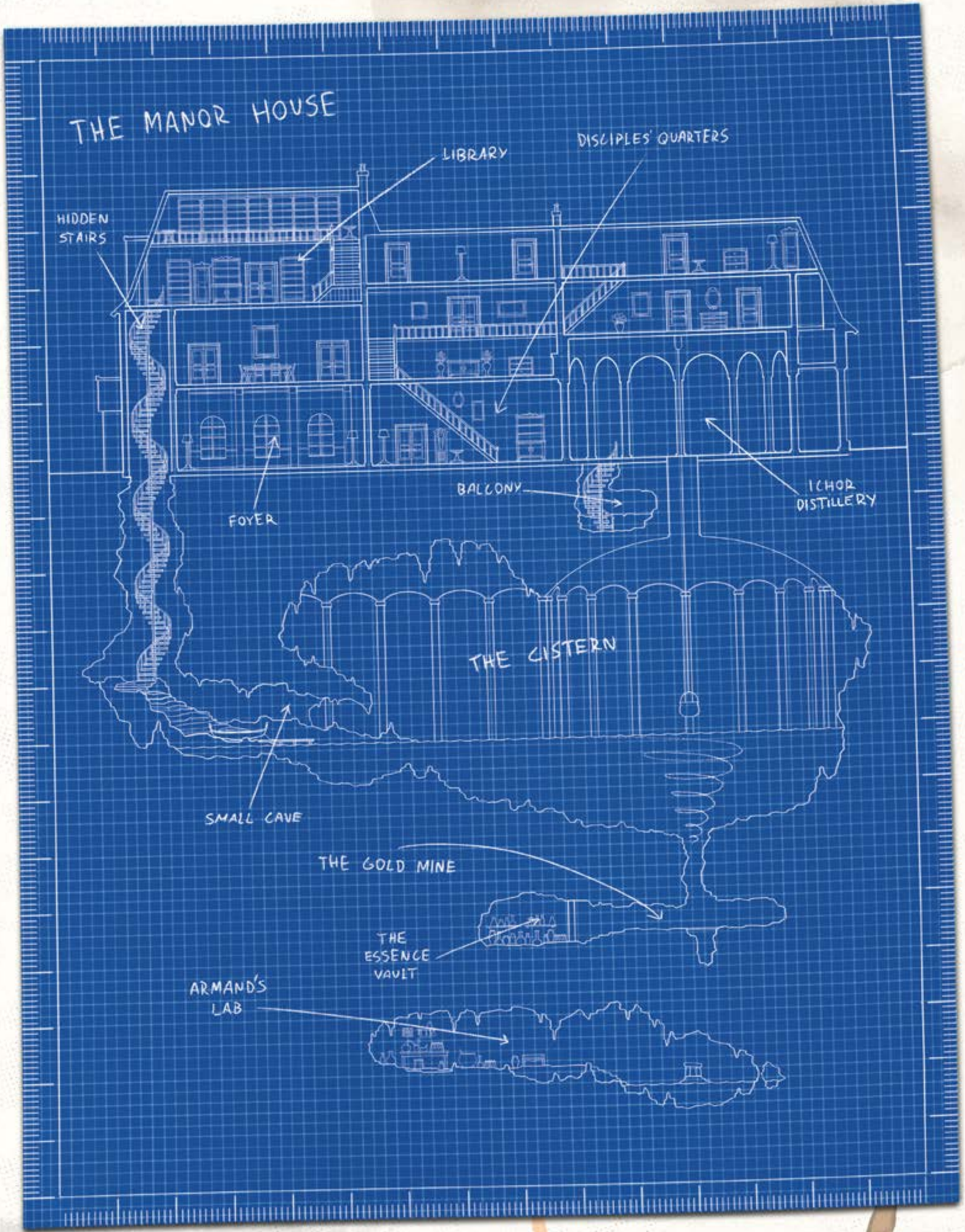
Armand's Disciples dress in hazmat suits and lab coats when conducting experiments or at the Ichor Distillery; in black designer suits when acting as the mansion's private security force; and casually when taking a break at their quarters.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3

- **Promise of Eternal Life:** When Armand's Disciple enters the scene, give her *loyal-4*, renewable as a hard move.
- **Trained Practitioner:** Once per scene, Armand's Disciple can make a Transmutation hard move as an intrusion.

- When on guard duty outside the manor house, fire a submachine gun (*gunshot-wound-3*)
- Raise the alarm and call more Disciples (increase the size factor by 1)
- Manipulate her Transmutation element to her advantage:
  - **Earth:** Create a barrier that protects the Disciples (*smash:4*) or blocks a path (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
  - **Fire:** Make a fire lash out at someone (*burnt-3* or *blinded-3*)
  - **Water:** Cause dehydration (*dehydrated-3*) or drive a surge of water (everyone affected takes a temporary *knocked-down-3*)
  - **Air:** Make the Disciples *hidden-by-fog-2* or cause someone to stop breathing (*choking-3*)
  - **Lead (or Silver):** Shield the Disciples from lead bullets (counter the next 3 tiers of gunfire) or propel nearby lead bullets (*gunshot-wound-3*)
  - **Iron:** levitate and propel heavy objects made of steel (*crushed-3*) or bend them to create a cage (*caged-3*)
  - **Salt:** Spray an area with salt, shredding it to pieces (*shredded-3* or *salt-cuts-3*) or crystallizing liquids (*crystallized-3*)
  - **Arsenic:** Infect someone with a deadly arsenic poisoning (*poisoned-3* and *poisoned-3* again every downtime until healed) and demand they yield in return for removing the arsenic from their body
  - **Phosphorous:** Create a white smoke screen (*cover-3* for her group or **Deny Them Something They Want**) or cause *chemical-burns-3*

- Walk around doing her daily tasks, getting in the way of the heist
- Draw glowing sigils in the air, pulling her chosen element to her
- Mock those who underestimate the power of the Great Teacher


THE MANOR HOUSE
LIBRARY
DISCIPLES' QUARTERS
HIDDEN STAIRS
FOYER
BALCONY
ICHOR DISTILLERY
THE CISTERN
SMALL CAVE
THE GOLD MINE
THE ESSENCE VAULT
ARMAND'S LAB

DEPTH 1:
THE MANOR HOUSE

The main building on the grounds is a historic three-story manor house that sits atop a pastoral hill amid overgrown gardens. It is largely hidden from the outside world by the woods around.

Inside, the air is foul with the stench of decomposing and fermenting substances, some coming from Ichor impurities festering in the Ichor Distillery and some from the malodorous filth of the Eurynomos, the rotting creature that guards the Foyer.

THE FOYER

```
The foyer, once grand and impressive,
stands in shambles. Worse yet, it is cov-
ered in piles of pitchy filth that reeks
of rotten flesh, mold, feces, and ev-
ery other noxious odor imaginable. It is
all you can do not to hurl when the dark
sludge begins to move, slowly slithering
to the center of the room, where it co-
alesces into a hulking, tubby creature
which stares at you with the shimmering
red eyes of a fly. Keeping your lunch down
becomes a true challenge.
```

The main entrance to the building goes through a tall double door into the foyer. This entrance hall features a double-staircase leading up to a gallery on the first floor, which connects to the rest of the Abandoned House, as do the doors to the sides on the ground floor. A service door at the back leads to the old servants' quarters, now used as the Disciples' Quarters.

The cracked marble floors, the molding carpeted steps, and the peeling walls are all covered with rotting filth, the byproduct of the guardian of this place. The **Eurynomos** (Greek netherworld daemon or spirit of rotting) is a Conjuration created by Armand to help him in his alchemy for its useful ability to induce rot, literally and figuratively, causing impurities to ferment, swell, and burst forth with stink. The spirit serves its master by accelerating the decomposition process in the Ichor Distillery but otherwise resides in the Foyer as a security measure and with the intent of beginning **the alchemical process of rotting** of any Rift who dares venture into the house: to force them to spew out all their negative aspects and confront them.

To affect Rifts, the daemon must materialize, revealing itself as a massive, man-shaped pile of black decomposing matter about 12 feet tall, with red, many-faceted fly eyes and purple skin that sometimes can be briefly seen through the rotting layers. As expressed in the custom move **Putrefaction**, the presence of the Eurynomous forces out all weaknesses, failings, emotional baggage, and darkness in an individual, engendering explosive confessions such as:

- "I was going to betray you all and take the Elixir of Life for myself."
- "I enjoy killing. There is no thrill that can match it. I am an animal."
- "I'm only nice to everyone because I'm afraid you won't like me. I lie to you about what I really think all the time."

The acknowledgement of one's darkness can be to oneself or to others around, but others around always hear it or see it. It must express **genuine remorse and humility;** admitting to faults flippantly or indignantly counts as resisting the **Puterification** move. It is also accompanied by expulsion of vomit, pus, ooze, or bile from the PC's body.

Vanquished Rifts are cast into the Aqua Fortis Cistern, thrown out of the mansion by Disciples, or killed – whichever Armand commands.

The Eurynomos is the essence of putrefaction, a construct made by Armand to serve him in his alchemical process, akin to a homunculus.

The filth in the room does not come from the Eurynomos but from people he interacted with. It is charged with emotions and sometimes items and mementos related to the confessions can be found inside, covered in grime.

Anyone versed in alchemical lore (see *Cult of the God-King*, page 130) can connect the Eurynomos with **the Blackening or Rotting** stage of the alchemical Great Work.

To pass the Eurynomos, one must admit their worst failing (see the **Already Rotten** move) or feed the Eurynomos enough personal failings so that it will be appeased.

EURYNOMOS ★★★★

TEAR TO PIECES 6 / BANISH 6 / APPEASE 3

- **The Only Way Out Is Through:** As an intrusion, the Eurynomos can seal the doors of the foyer (give them *smash:5* and *warded-2*).
- **Monstrous:** When the Eurynomos takes a status that is countered by its large size, reduce its tier by 1. When the MC makes a hard move with the Eurynomos, it can hit two targets or hit a single target with +1 tier.
- **Recompose:** When *tear-to-pieces:6* maxes out, the Eurynomos begins to rebuild itself from rotting matter. Remove one tier as a soft move until there are no statuses on this spectrum; the Eurynomos can then act again.
- **Puterficiation:** As a soft move, the MC may ask one player: "What is your character's greatest failing, darkness, or transgression?" The player must answer genuinely. The Eurynomos' presence then compels the PC to confess or confront this. If she resists, she takes *emotional-struggle-3*. If she acknowledges her fault, she takes *humbled-5*, the Eurynomos takes *appeased-1*, and the MC may make a hard move to reflect the consequences.
- **Already Rotten:** The Eurynomos doesn't target those who have already been through the first stage of the alchemical process Rotting, such as a PC who acknowledged her fault during a putrefaction, as well as Disciples or graduates of the Silo Trial (*Cult of the God-King*, page 135).
- **Let It Go:** The Eurynomos' statuses can be washed off by the Aqua Fortis in the Aqua Fortis Cistern; remove one tier from all statuses the Eurynomos inflicted on a PC for every tier of *wet* the PC takes.

- Cause matter to rot, destroying objects (burn up to 2 tags) or collapsing a part of the gallery (*buried-in-debris-3*)
- Slam someone with an overgrown paw, knocking them across the foyer or up to the gallery (*winded-4*)
- Infect someone's flesh with gangrene (*rotting-limb-2*)
- Give off an unbearable stench, filling the entire room (*nauseous-2*)
- Dematerialize and flee to another part of the house, especially if it is about to be banished (**Deny Them Something They Want**)

- Materialize, with clumps of rotting matter joining together
- Point a shambling limb at someone, inducing putrefaction

THE ABANDONED HOUSE

```
You walk into another room in the expan-
sive mansion only to find it in the same
state as the others. Once-lavish furniture
stands buried solemnly under a thick film
of dust. Bone-white sheets and curtains
flutter in the wind blowing through the
floor cracks, like they were ghosts of the
past. Whatever life was lived here is long
dead, its memory abandoned to oblivion.
Now, only a decaying memory remains.
```

Most of the rooms facing the front of the house and almost all rooms above the ground floor have been abandoned for years. This location serves as an exposition to the history of Armand Kai and as a creepy setting for stealthily avoiding the Disciples on guard. It may also be a good location for a recon mission into the mansion prior to the heist as the crew's allies would suggest; as such, it can be explored in a flashback.

Roaming the house, the crew can find corridors and stairs that connect to the Foyer, the Disciples' Quarters, and the Ichor Distillery on the ground floor (and even to the Aqua Fortis Cistern, via a hidden door).

Security around the house is lax compared to the rest of the complex:

- **The house is *warded-2* against magical intrusions** from the outside, but once someone is inside the building, they can walk around and use their powers unhindered with one exception: attempting to activate deceptive magic still meets the resistance of the wards.
- **Motion detectors and laser tripwires** are scattered throughout the house.
- **The Disciple security team** which guards the perimeter and grounds is responsible for this area as well, but they don't come here unless the alarm or wards are triggered.

The purpose of these security measures is to maintain an air of suspense as the crew gathers evidence here; omit them if they would create an unnecessary challenge.

Everything around the house is covered in sheets, dust, or mold. Based on the decor, the dust buildup, or legendary divination it can be inferred that most of the house has been out of use for decades.

The owner was interested in the occult and paranormal, as evidenced by the books in the reading room and library. The books are introductory; any valuable mystical texts have been whisked away long ago, leaving gaps on the shelves.

Behind a hidden door in the library, there's a spiral stone staircase that leads all the way down to the shore of the Aqua Fortis Cistern.

In the office, behind a painting, inside an old safe, there's the deed to the mansion. **The document shows Armand Kai bought the mansion almost a century ago** (the exact date is smudged, but the decade is clearly visible). Crossing this with city records that show Armand is still the owner indicates **Armand is either dead or well over 100 years old.**

There are pictures of Armand as a young man and as a middle-aged man, left here as if Armand simply lost interest in his early life. He is a long-faced man, with long dark hair, a Roman nose, and a moustache or a goatee.

A comparison of the pictures across the decades, especially if done by a historical expert, can reveal that at some point in his 50s **Armand's rate of aging slowed down or stopped altogether**. There aren't many pictures after that.

Psychometry or retrocognition may reveal fragments of Armand's history: his merry days in the university, his interest in the paranormal, and then a frantic obsession with alchemy (other forms of divination may give the same results).

In one of the pictures from Armand's university days, he is seen with other academics involved in the early research of the mind and the paranormal. One of the other faces in the picture is Krystal Knight (although the crew may know her as Dr. Esther Monahan, see *Broken Glass*, page 73).

TAKING A BREAK?

While upstairs in one of the farthest rooms, the crew may stumble upon Anabelle, a Disciple who has snuck up to this remote part of the house to indulge in some comfort: she is taking a nap in the old but still very comfy king-size bed in the master bedroom. This presents an opportunity for the crew to get the drop on her or leverage her indiscretion to get some answers, or push her to do a task for them. Anabelle can divulge to the crew any clue known by Disciples in this Depth.

THE DISCIPLES' QUARTERS

```
The corridor stretches deep into the an-
tique house, with nothing but flickering
yellow electric lights to show the way.
Further down, you hear the noise of chit-
chat and laughter echo against the old
stone walls. You come to a wooden doorway
and carefully glimpse around the corner.
In what used to be the main kitchen of the
grand house, a handful of men and women
sit around a plain wooden table and dine,
some dressed as security guards and oth-
ers as laborants, their hands scarred with
strange chemical burns.
```

The Disciples who operate the Ichor Distillery and guard the grounds reside in the old servants' quarters at the center of the mansion, between the empty lordly rooms (the Abandoned House) and the Ichor Distillery at the back. This section of the house includes:

- a series of austere **sleeping chambers**, each with a simple bed or two and a nightstand with a lamp;
- **a small mess hall** that can seat up to twenty Disciples;
- **laboratories** for experimentation, where Disciples spend their time off-duty honing their alchemical arts;
- **a guard room**, with a monitor array of camera and security feeds;
- a basement divided into **holding cells** for anyone caught snooping around.

Disciples are constantly moving to and fro in this part of the house on their daily routines. As such, modern security measures are minimal. Instead, the doors leading to this complex, as well as inner doors to the labs, guard room, and holding cells are equipped with **alchemical locks**; unlocking the locks involves delicate manipulation of one, two, or even three different alchemical elements (the locks re-engage upon shutting the door). These locks can only easily be opened by someone versed in all required Transmutations, or



several Disciples each commanding one of the required Transmutations. Anyone else needs specific tools to manipulate the required element; for example, a blow straw for air, flammable gas for fire, a magnet for metal, etc. or a powerful telekinetic ability. The doors are *locked* with one tier for each element required and are made of banded wood (*break:4*). Furthermore, the holding cells are *warded-5*.

Disciples work as security or in the Ichor Distillery. Some of the Disciples have strange chemical burns on their hands from Ichor spatter. They know intimately how the perimeter security (Depth 0) and the Ichor Distillery work (see clues enclosed there).

The Disciples never communicate directly with the owner except in an emergency. They carry out their duties and in return receive a new recipe or experiment from their master.

About once a month, a recipe is sent up from the levels below the Aqua Fortis Cistern in the suspended cauldron. It is always etched on a sheet of gold leaf; the Disciples then keep the recipes in the laboratory.

Searching the recipes in the labs or wringing it out of a Disciple reveals **Armand never teaches the Disciples the Transmutation of gold** (because gold can be used to cross the Aqua Fortis Cistern).

Some of the Disciples are getting impatient and would like to speed up their training. Some may even be considering venturing down to meet the Great Teacher in person and beseech him to share knowledge and may be willing to aid the crew.

A handful of Disciples are aware of the hidden staircase that connects the library in the Abandoned House with the secret inlet of the Aqua Fortis Cistern. They don't regard this information as important, though, because they think there's no way to get safely past the cistern.

The source of the Disciples' powers is Armand. If Armand dies, they will lose their powers as well. This is the reasoning behind their staunch loyalty.

PELICAN

Either already in a holding cell or disguised among the Disciples is smuggler extraordinaire **Benjamin Pelican** (Sleeper, about to awaken as the Egyptian Henet, the pelican who safeguards souls in the afterlife), here for the fabled treasures of the mansion. A dashing, rugged fellow in his late twenties, he is most often seen wearing a padded vest over an oil-stained flannel shirt, cargo pants, and hiking boots.

While he's an experienced bootlegger, Pelican is the act-first-think-later, devil-may-care breed of criminal and rarely has a plan. Sometime in the last few days, he noticed the Ichor shipment entering the mansion through the back gate, rolled under it, and snuck in hanging on the axle of the truck. He stole a Disciple's outfit and snooped around their quarters for a while, but got stuck when it came to opening the alchemical locks. At your option, he may still be winging it, or he was caught and put in a holding cell.

At first look, Pelican is just an amusing Sleeper, caught in something much bigger than he can fathom. The crew may help him or leave him, but every choice has its consequences. The more he sees, and especially if he comes in contact with the substance of the Aqua Fortis Cistern, the more he awakens and the more instrumental he may become in Armand's path to the Elixir of Life. After all, if he can smuggle souls safely through the underworld, who's to say he can't smuggle them out?

PELICAN +

Ally

IDENTITY

I work for a cut.

POWER TAGS

smuggler extraordinaire, *expert pilot and driver*, *(legendary) protection in the afterlife*, *always thinking of profit*, *street boxing*, *quickly hide*, *(legendary) peer into the afterlife*, *an unexpected vehicle*, *black market connections*, *heart of gold*

WEAKNESS TAGS

clueless Sleeper, *never sticks to the plan*, *full of himself*, *caught red-handed*

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Come Back, It's Not Yet Your Time (legendary):** One time only, when someone else takes a tier-6 status that leads to death, Pelican may reduce it to tier-5. Replace this theme (remove if a temporary extra theme).

THE ICHOR DISTILLERY

The caustic odor of something festering grows stronger and stronger as you approach the vaulted hall, perhaps once an attached stables or automobile bay, now turned into a distillery. Rows after rows of vats stand on metal grates, boiling and bubbling over black and purple otherworldly fires. Among them, workers in neon green hazmat suits and respirator masks walk back and forth, monitoring the process carefully. In the fumes rising above each vat, you think you can see images of heroes, monsters, and sorcerers. Maybe you shouldn't breathe in too much of this stuff.

Ichor, the product of Armand's Mythos harvesting process, begins its refinement process here at the distillery. Whether it comes from the old Aurora Glassworks factory (*The Furnace*, page 105), the Catacombs (*Cult of the God-King*, page 146), or victims of Aqua Regia (in Depth 4), it must be distilled before Armand can turn it into a Tincture. **This is the first step of the alchemical Great Work: rotting, forcing the impurities out.**

The distillery has three large cargo bays facing the rear of the house and a door leading to the Disciples' Quarters. Ichor received from outside is offloaded on the docking bay and forklifted or trolleyed to its allocated flame in the distillery. The dark flames induce a magical rotting process; they exist courtesy of the Eurynomos, a rotting daemon summoned by Armand for this purpose (see the Foyer). While the Eurynomos is present in the house, it can reignite the flames as a soft move, even without materializing, unless something is actively quenching the fires.

The Disciples in the distillery serve as either guards (*alert-1*) or laborants (*preoccupied-1*); if faced with an intrusion, they call upon the **Eurynomos** for help.

THE ICHOR

Ichor is the unrefined essence of a Mythos. Once harvested, it is stable and dormant albeit highly corrosive (*chemical-burns*, with tier depending on exposure; however, there is no Mythos reaction as described on page 86). When the Ichor is heated by the Eurynomos' fire, the Mythos within it begins to separate from all the leftover mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual associations of its former Rift. The byproduct is collected in lead-lined vats and dumped somewhere on the grounds or fed to the Eurynomos, while the distilled substance is collected in a wrought-iron cauldron. The distilled Ichor is not entirely pure but is much more reactive. If touched by a Rift it could create a Mythos reaction (see page 86); a Sleeper contaminated by this substance becomes temporarily Touched by this Mythos.

The stuff in the vats is the stuff of legend, literally: staring at it too long causes Rifts to see visions of the Mythos inside it (as if they were **Looking Beyond the Mist**; however, to get Clues they must make the move).

THE MINE SHAFT

At the center of the distillery stands a sturdy structure: a low stone wall surrounding a dug out shaft supported by beams. Above the shaft, a headstock with a crank mechanism connects to a spool of iron chain that can be lowered into the well. The distilled Ichor is sent down to Armand's lab by hooking the cauldron to the chain and lowering it into the well (where it goes through the Aqua Fortis Cistern and is received in the Gold Mine).

The headstock, cauldron, crank mechanism, chain, and supporting beams in the mine shaft are all made of an alloy that normally exists only in lab conditions, combining gold and iron. This practical application was achieved using legendary alchemical powers.

The chain spool is enormous: there must be at least 200 feet of chain there.

THE STONE BALCONY

At the back of the room there is an opening in the floor with a deep spiral stairwell leading down to an empty root cellar. The back wall of the cellar was dug out into a rough tunnel, ending in a small natural cave that overlooks the Aqua Fortis Cistern: a vast underground cistern full of glowing white liquid. When the cauldron is lowered, Disciples in this room can monitor its descent toward the whirlpool at the center of the cistern.





DEPTH 2:
THE CISTERN

THE AQUA FORTIS CISTERN

You emerge into a vast darkness, a wide underground cavity, and the first thing that hits you is the cacophony of gushing water all around. Roaring waterfalls and dripping streams empty into this endless cistern, as big as the mansion house itself. But the liquid is not water; it seems to faintly glow, drawing brush strokes of dim light across the many columns and vaulted arches that support the foundations of the mansion, pooling in a wide-brimmed white pond at the bottom. Then you see it, at the heart of the cistern: a maelstrom. There must be something below it.

The cistern below the mansion is where **the second phase of the alchemical Great Work, Purification**, takes place. The cistern is filled with glowing silvery-white liquid called **Aqua Fortis**, capable of melting anything except for gold and its allegorical equivalent, the Mythos. This pond of Aqua Fortis is used to wash away the final "impurities" from everything that passes through it: both the distilled Ichor and anyone trying to find Armand. Upon coming in contact with people, **Aqua Fortis erases their identity, eventually leaving pure Mythos**.

The cistern cave is massive: 150 feet tall at its highest and about 500 feet wide at its widest. It is constantly filled by waterfalls of Aqua Fortis coming down from the ceiling. The Aqua Fortis is drained at the center of the cistern by the Gold Mine shaft, and from there it is recycled by Armand's magic, which siphons it back up the walls of the cistern, completing the circle. Disrupting the recycling magic is difficult but doable (*dispel:4*) but it has little effect: everything in the Gold Mine below this level is golden and therefore resistant to Aqua Fortis (and the Golden Ones do not breathe, so they cannot drown), while the fourth level is a completely sealed and separate cave. Flooding the Gold Mine with Aqua Fortis is more likely to hinder the PCs than Armand.

If you're playing this case as a heist, the information below can be gathered in advance or retroactively with a flashback.

SURVEYING THE CISTERN

The cistern is designed so that almost nothing can pass through to the Gold Mine below without being washed by the liquid.

There is nowhere to stand below. The pond has no shores; its craggy walls climb almost straight up from the surface and merge with the foundations of the mansion, curving at the top into high vaulted ceilings.

The liquid falls down in waterfalls from a few pointy protrusions in the vaulted ceiling of the cistern, and it goes back up from the pool along the walls, obviously by magic. **Those who can fly or climb might still get wet if they go through these waterfalls.**

The walls are riddled with gold veins (making them resistant to Aqua Fortis).

The whirlpool at the center of the pond drains into another mine shaft, the lower continuation of the mine shaft in the Ichor Distillery. **This is the only physical opening to the Gold Mine below.** Anyone descending through the whirlpool without protection will be soaked.

Arcane practitioners can detect the Gold Mine below is *warded-5* against magical transportation, **making any kind of magical shortcut unlikely.**

ANALYZING THE LIQUID

The liquid is a magical acid, **Aqua Fortis, which can melt anything except gold.**

In the mystical meaning of the alchemical language, "melt anything except gold" means **this acid will melt anything that isn't one's Mythos.**

Anyone versed in alchemical lore (see *Cult of the God-King*, page 130) can connect this cistern with the Whitening or **Purification stage of the alchemical Great Work.**

As a magical substance, Aqua Fortis also affects dematerialized, gaseous, or liquid beings in its space. **Anything that touches the liquid or goes through it is affected.**

LOOKING FOR WAYS TO ENTER THE CISTERN

The obvious way into the cistern is **down the mine shaft in** the Ichor Distillery, either by jumping or falling down, or by being lowered down in a cauldron. **This is the way most exposed to the liquid.**

When descending from the spiral stairwell at the back of the Ichor Distillery, one arrives at a stone balcony that overlooks the cistern. **It can be used to enter the cistern without getting wet,** but this doesn't solve the problem of where to stand once inside or how to get through the whirlpool.

When examining the cistern from the balcony, **a smaller natural cave can be seen, one that extends into the cistern** (a cave within a cave) and provides cover from the waterfalls along the wall of the cistern. **If it has another entrance, it can be used to enter the cistern without getting wet,** but this doesn't solve the problem of where to stand once inside or how to get through the whirlpool.

The hidden spiral staircase in the library in the Abandoned House **leads into the smaller cave.** Inside, there is a gravelly shore, where **a golden gondola** is marooned. The smaller cave is also flooded with Aqua Fortis, but the mouth of the cave is tall enough for the boat to pass through and emerge into the cistern, circumventing the waterfalls.

A vessel made of gold would sink in the Aqua Fortis instantly, unless it is suspended by other means or steered by someone who mastered the Transmutation of Gold (such as the Golden Ones from the Gold Mine below).

Attempting to **tunnel through the earth** could set off the alchemical wards here, and might flood the tunnel with the liquid if the access point is below the surface.

FOLLOWING THE DISCIPLES' WORK

Distilled Ichor is lowered from the mine shaft in the Ichor Distillery using a chain and a cauldron crafted of a magical gold-iron alloy (resistant to Aqua Fortis). When the cauldron enters the whirlpool, **the cauldron is filled with Aqua Fortis, which dissolves the final impurities in the Ichor**. Presumably, it arrives as 100% pure Mythos essence in the chamber below (the Gold Mine). **Someone down there collects it**, before tugging the chain to signal the Disciples to pull the cauldron back up.

COMING IN CONTACT WITH AQUA FORTIS

The cistern offers plenty of opportunities to come in contact with Aqua Fortis. The whirlpool is the hardest part to navigate: unless a PC is encased in gold or can somehow force the Aqua Fortis away, they would get wet going through it.

For human beings, contact with Aqua Fortis causes a dissolvement of their identity. Emotional bonds, beliefs, convictions – all that comprises a character's Logos – begins to melt away in contact with this mystical acid.

As soon as someone comes in contact with the liquid, they begin to feel their mind and heart emptying and becoming more lucid. This is not experienced as good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant – it just happens. However, the person exposed can intuitively grasp that if they don't stop this contact immediately, they will lose themselves and all that matters to them.

Unwilling individuals who come in contact with Aqua Fortis receive a *splashed* or *soaked* status with a tier based on their exposure: 1 for a few drops, 2 for a splash, and so on. Going through the whirlpool without protection inflicts a *soaked-5* status, while submerging in Aqua Fortis without protection deals a non-lethal *soaked-6* status. PCs can **Face Danger** with tags that represent protection (alchemical, magical, golden, etc.) or with tags that represent sheer determination and willpower. Even if someone creates a solution, have them **Face Danger**, as it is likely not entirely waterproof. See also the side bar **Defending with Juice**. Then apply the following custom move:

> **Wash Away the Self:** After **Facing Danger** and applying any other defenses, for each tier of the Aqua Fortis status the PC has taken, the PC marks one Crack on any Logos theme (player's choice).

DEFENDING WITH JUICE

Face Danger provides an almost all-or-nothing defense because its outcomes are to receive the status, reduce it by one tier, or avoid it completely. It is also rolled only when the status is given.

Remind the players that they can use **Change the Game** to generate Juice in advance, bank it, and then spend that Juice to reduce incoming status tiers by 1 per point of Juice. This is a more reliable form of protection which allows the players to know in advance how much their defenses can take. On a 10+, players can even spend 1 Juice to extend this protection to others, removing 1 tier from all statuses taken by the group per point of Juice.

Juice does have its limitations. It can be used in addition to **Face Danger**, but tags used in generating the Juice cannot be reused when **Facing Danger** against the same status. Also, remember that PCs can't bank multiple batches of Juice with the same purpose; instead, they may forego an existing batch and replace it with a new one.

Once the nature of Aqua Fortis is understood, willingly choosing to touch it goes directly against all of the PC's Identities; the player can mark Crack as he pleases. This could create a scene where a PC chooses to wash away a Logos theme, partly or wholly.

Use the encounter with this diabolical acid for cinematic purposes:

- Ask the players how their characters feel, now that they realize the quest for life everlasting is not for the faint-hearted and takes its toll in extreme sacrifices.
- Play out the replacement of any Logos themes, as the Aqua Fortis washes away the things dearest to the PCs.
- Describe the clarity of mind that follows this ultimate cleansing and within it, the shining sun of the character's Mythos, now unhindered by her personal life. If the player has already chosen a new nascent Mythos theme, let the PC's new powers emerge. And of course, if anyone was pushed past the threshold to Avatarhood, let them make a grand entrance as they illuminate the entire cave with their unadulterated power.



DEPTH 3:
FOOL'S GOLD

The Gold Mine is where the pure Mythos essence is received, after going through the first two stages of the Magnum Opus: Rotting and Purification. Individuals who made it this far have in most cases been at least partially cleansed of their personal identity by the Aqua Fortis above, and when they reach this level, they awaken. This level of Armand's complex is therefore built to support **the third stage, Awakening**, and all that relates to the handling and storage of Mythos essences.

THE GOLD MINE

Going through the whirlpool, the downpour of silvery-white liquid carries you down with it into a shaft until, unexpectedly, the liquid siphons away from you and into the walls. Dried out, you descend further into the darkness below only to land upon a gilded grate. You find yourself in a strange tunnel: its ceiling and walls resemble a mine, but its floor is pure gold etched with endless alchemical symbols. Three hooded figures stand in a triangle around the grate, staring emptily at you. In the dim lantern light, the reflections on their skin make it plain to see that they too are golden.

KA-CHING!

This level of Armand's complex is literally strewn with gold and with Transmutations and Tinctures that can suck that gold straight out of the veins of the earth. Combine the two, and the crew could be leaving here with a fortune. If that is the ultimate goal of the heist and the crew pulls it off, consider giving them a new Possessions extra theme to reflect their newly-found wealth.

The Gold Mine is a vertical shaft connected to a horizontal tunnel directly below the Ichor Distillery and the whirlpool of the Aqua Fortis Cistern. The Aqua Fortis from the cistern drains down the mine shaft until, at the middle of the shaft, the walls magically siphon the Aqua Fortis into channels and propel it back up to the cistern. The shaft continues down to the tunnel, where it opens above a golden grate, upon which the cauldrons of refined Ichor land when they are lowered from the distillery. The mine tunnel extends from this room to the Essence Vault.

The mine is inhabited by the **Golden Ones**, three of Armand's disciples whose bodies he infused with gold, transforming them into magical automatons. The Golden Ones are androgenous beings, clothed in simple yellow wool robes. They command the Transmutation of Gold; they use it not only to manipulate gold effortlessly and perfectly but also to transport Mythos essences (the allegorical equivalent of "gold"). They are the custodians of Armand's vault of Mythos essences and Tinctures and have served him for decades. All of them were once Disciples who dared venture through the Aqua Fortis and completely lost their sense of self; they serve as a harsh demonstration of Armand's avarice and refusal to truly share his power.

This tunnel is where the path seems to end: no openings or hidden doors lead further. If there is anyone or anything even further below, they must be sealed under tons of rock.

Anyone versed in alchemical lore (see *Cult of the God-King*, page 130) can connect the mine with the Yellowing or **Awakening stage of the alchemical Great Work**. At this point, it becomes clear that the entire complex is designed as an alchemical experiment and therefore, **in the level below, there is something corresponding to the fourth stage, Transformation, which probably acts upon one's Mythos.**

OBSERVING THE GOLDEN ONES

The Golden Ones are people mummified in gold. They give off no sense of "self". Most likely, they were once Disciples who braved the Aqua Fortis and lost their identity. **Unlike any of the other Disciples, they know the Transmutation of Gold.**

The Golden Ones are nothing more than glorified remote control forklifts: their function is to take the refined Ichor from the cauldron and store it in the Essence Vault until someone calls for it (Armand, for his research). They then fetch the essence and send it down through the earth, **melting the gold veins and using them as if they were a system of pneumatic tubes.**

The Golden Ones and their master communicate directly by manipulating the same gold veins: causing them to vibrate to make sound or making etched words and symbols appear on their surface. **Their master is somewhere below.**

The Golden Ones only respond to commands written or sounded by gold, but they treat all golden commands equally, regardless of who issues them. When in conflict, they will respond to the last command given.

SEARCHING FOR A WAY TO THE LEVEL BELOW

The obvious way below is to tunnel through the earth, but this part of the complex is protected by the strongest counter-legendary wards (*warded-5*, *warded-6* against teleportation), so presumably only ordinary means can achieve that.

Through deduction or magical detection, it can be revealed that **the gold veins are not warded against legendary powers** (they cannot be, as they are used to transport Mythos essence). **Anyone who can fit inside an essence flask could potentially be sent down via the veins** by the Golden Ones or by someone with power over gold.

GOLDEN ONES ★

HURT OR SUBDUE I / AFFECT MIND –

- Remember their old command to guard the mine, and use the gold veins to alert Armand to the crew's presence (**Complicate Things, Bigtime**)
- Upon Armand's command, turn the gold floor into liquid under someone's feet and then solidify it (*can't-walk-3*)
- Telekinetically manipulate an essence that someone is trying to steal, sending it down to Armand's Lab (**Deny Them Something They Want**)

- Stand there, gathering dust, until a command stirs them to life

THE ESSENCE VAULT

Your jaw drops at the sight of all this gold. The walls of this rough-hewn chamber are covered top to bottom with cast-gold cabinets, rows upon rows of small compartments with crystal panes, and in each one – a round crystal flask flashing with visions of wonder and crackling with power: a bottled legend. How many people did the alchemist have to rob of their spark to fill up this room? Does he even know how many he has hoarded? And how many will be enough?

Refined and purified Ichor – that, is pure Mythos essence – is stored here until Armand needs it for his research. This beautiful golden chamber was built by Armand to contain many Mythos essences side by side; recalling that each of these was harvested from an individual who was left without a soul is another testimony of Armand's unbridled greed. The room is lined with golden cabinets with hundreds of compartments, each containing a different essence. The essences are stored in round, almost orb-like flasks, each resting in a recess at the bottom of its compartment. At this level of refinement, anyone can see and hear the legendary scenes stored inside the flask – even Sleepers (though they may not remember it later).



OPTIONAL CHALLENGE: THE VAULT DOOR

At your option, a vault door blocks the end of the tunnel which leads to the vault. The door is extremely sturdy (*drill:5* and *smash:6*) and cracking its alchemical locks requires a truly gifted safecracker or magician (*crack:4*, *crack:3* if it was drilled). The Golden Ones can unlock the safe with the Transmutation of Gold but they ignore direct commands to unlock the vault; they only unlock it when commanded to bring an essence. Smashing through or rolling a miss on this challenge may alert Armand to the crew's presence. Rolling a miss may also get someone locked up in the vault with all the essences or trigger a *locked-down-5* on the vault.

This room embodies the dangers of the Awakening stage of the Magnum Opus: **Fool's Gold**. Until the essence or awakened individual is stabilized in the fourth phase (as a functional Tincture), it is worthless because it can easily interact with other substances and be contaminated, diluted, or lost.

The danger in the Essence Vault lies in the extremely volatile Mythos essences therein, which readily interact with anything they touch. While they are in the golden cabinets, they are contained, but opening a compartment without the power to contain the essence may result in a Mythos explosion. The Golden Ones contain the essences by using the Transmutation of Gold and other magic practitioners can do so with appropriate magic.

WHICH MYTHOS ESSENCES ARE HERE?

The choice of Mythoi to introduce as bottled essences is largely up to you. Here are a few suggestions for useful sources:

- For quick reference, use the **Mythoi in this Book** lists in the appendices to the *MC Toolkit* (page 215) or *Shadows & Showdowns* (page 301).
- Ask your players to suggest Mythoi, and then fine-tune their suggestions to your needs.
- Browse Wikipedia articles **List of Deities**, **List of Legendary Creatures by Type**, **List of Fairy Tales**, or **List of Urban Legends**.

When choosing Mythoi for this scene remember to:

- Include the harvested Mythoi of victims of Armand's operation whose Tincture was never found, such as victims of the Magnum Opus cult in *Cult of the God-King*.
- Exclude essences that were used by Armand, such as Will Harris whose Mythos was made into a Tincture, or Juan Delamar whose essence is used for the Elixir of Life in Depth 4 (both from *The Furnace*).
- Exclude Mythoi of established NPCs in your campaign who are known not to be among Armand's Victims, especially from this story arc: the Fisher King (Corbin Payne), the Snow Queen (Krystal Knight), King Arthur (Vince Beaumont), and Percival (Rio Beaumont).

SEARCHING THE VAULT

PCs may generate Clues for searching the vault by **Looking Beyond the Mist** or **Investigating** with appropriate tags (arcane or legendary knowledge). Identifying the Mythos in a specific compartment costs 1 Clue. Locating a specific Mythos in the vault also costs 1 Clue, but may take longer.

INTERACTING WITH ESSENCES

If a Rift comes in close proximity with a pure Mythos essence, their Mythoi interact. This can result in anything: extreme pain, an explosion of energy, uncontrolled bloom, sudden empowerment, etc.

To understand the nature of the interaction:

1. **Boil down each Mythoi to one word** (this abstraction does not need to be accurate). For example, Snow White's Evil Queen = JEALOUSY, Sleeping Beauty = BEAUTY.
2. **Determine how these words interact.** *Jealousy* will want to consume *Beauty*.
3. **Make a hard move (as an intrusion) that represents this interaction.** For example, if the PC is the Rift of the Sleeping Beauty holding the essence of Snow White's Evil Queen, she takes *devoured-4* as the Evil Queen's Mythos essence ravages her flesh.

The only safe way to manipulate the essences is to give them a *stable* tag by using the appropriate magic (**Change the Game**) or by using the Transmutation of Gold (either by controlling the Golden Ones or finding another way to move gold, see below).

ARMAND'S OVERSIGHT

Engrossed in the search for life everlasting, Armand lost track of which Mythos essences he obtained. One such essence, obtained when he first developed his Mythos alchemy, could be his undoing: the Mythos essence of **El Dorado**, the mythical golden king who later evolved into a lost golden city. El Dorado has power over gold (and over cities) so anyone who can control his essence can manipulate gold and Mythos essences as deftly as the Golden Ones do.



NEW HARD MOVE: GIVE THEM A NEW THEME

In cases of extreme concordance between a Mythos and the Rift of another Mythos, the foreign Mythos essence can use the Rift as a temporary host. For PCs, this is especially true if the interacting PC has any missing themes (after replacing a theme but before choosing a new theme), if she has nascent themes, or if she is a Sleeper. Depending on your game, this may replace or add to the character's own Mythos; in the published *City of Mist* setting, every individual *is* their Mythos, so another Mythos essence can only tag along temporarily and in rare cases.

Give the PC a new Mythos theme based on the narrative, replacing an existing nascent theme if needed. Allow the player to choose the tags (within the scope of the theme); build the theme normally with a themebook from the *Player's Guide* or using a theme kit or themebook from *Shadows & Showdowns.* The player can later take narrative actions or **Stop. Holding. Back.** to remove the foreign Mythos, replacing the theme.

ESSENCE OF EL DORADO

Relic

MYSTERY

What links a king and his city?

POWER TAGS

***control over gold**, encase in gold, materialize untold riches, cover myself in gold, influence trends in the City, peer into any place in the City, tempt the greedy to their doom, detect precious ore, turn someone into gold, I am the City*

WEAKNESS TAGS

gold is soft, attracts greed, foreign invaders, see myself as a god

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Molder:** Once per scene, when using your powers to fashion something out of gold or shape the City, you gain 1 free Juice or gain +1 Juice if you **Change the Game**.

DEPTH 4: ARMAND'S LAB

ARMAND'S LAB

An old record is playing a snazzy tune in the background when you enter this cozy cave turned lab. Behind a complicated structure of glass beakers, burners, and spiral tubing, you catch the distorted face of an old and wrinkled man; but when he steps out, you see a middle-aged man before you, dressed in a dapper suit. "I've been expecting you," he says calmly while tossing powder into a vial, never stopping to look at you, "you are the last ingredient."

Deep beneath his old estate, Armand Kai still breathes, dedicating his every waking hour to find the ultimate antidote to death. Here in his alchemist's lab, amid beakers, mortars, pestles, and smoking bubbling liquids, he conducts his research into the essence of Mythoi, seeking the one that would bestow upon him the immortality he so desperately longs for, blatantly overlooking the fact that his base material was extracted from people's souls. It is here also that he concocts Tinctures out of other Mythoi essences, so useful for his depraved operation.

The final confrontation with Armand is reminiscent of the Wizard of Oz: once the crew passes all the obstacles, they find Armand – for all his mystical aspirations and power – is a small-minded, selfish, and fear-driven man who was willing to sacrifice the lives of others, many others, to save his own, all under the guise of some esoteric Great Work.

Armand, however, is not a charlatan; his magic is very real and very dangerous. To aid him with processing Mythos essences, he Conjured several alchemical constructs (such as the Eurynomos), the greatest of which is **Aqua Regia**, an elemental of the strongest acid, one capable of melting gold – and Mythos. Knowing well that only Rifts would look for him down here, he made this elemental not only his assistant but also his bodyguard.

CONFRONTING ARMAND KAI

Thanks to Corbin Payne, Armand Kai is emotionally wounded on a legendary scale (the Dolorous Stroke, page 18). He is so overcome by his fear of death that he would do anything to escape it, hurting everyone else in the process, just as Corbin Payne wanted it. As with all Grail Knights, Armand can infect others with his pain, his morbid fear of death. This anxiety and the resulting avarice trickled down his false cult (*Cult of the God-King*, page

113) and those who worked with him (Rachel Woods in *The Furnace*, page 87). Now, the crew comes face-to-face with the full force of his twisted, greedy soul – and their own greed and desire to have and possess.

Upon discovering that he's being attacked in his bastion, Armand will retreat to **the Grail Water cave**, a side room adjacent to his lab where the Grail Water vial is hovering over a stone altar, surrounded by a shallow moat. This moat is filled with the liquid of the elemental Aqua Regia (who can also materialize as a human body) and is thus more defensible: Rifts and Mythos powers cannot cross the moat without being sucked into the legendary Mythos-melting acid.

Cinematically, Armand is just about to complete the Elixir of Life when the crew arrives. His *concoct* spectrum represents the alchemical process; when it maxes out, the Elixir is ready and it only takes a single hard move to consume it. To rationalize this timing, Armand is only now able to create the Elixir because:

- **It is based on a Mythos essence he obtained in one of the previous cases**, e.g., from Juan Delamar's Mythos essence of the Ningyo, the Japanese mermaid whose flesh grants life everlasting (*The Furnace*) or Moonwraith / Tracy Chang's Mythos essence of Chang'e, immortal Chinese goddess of the moon (*Cult of the God-King*); or
- **It uses the Mythos essence of one of the PCs or their Rift allies as the last ingredient.** If so, Armand will have Aqua Regia target that Rift to obtain their Tincture and complete the Elixir.

DRINKING POTIONS

If the crew prevents Armand from creating the Elixir, they may instead obtain **the Grail Water**, an extremely powerful and unpredictable substance that requires some cosmic magic or noble sacrifice to activate. If its power is tapped while a PC **Stops. Holding. Back.**, the sacrifice needed for the feat is one level lower than the MC names it (e.g., an ultimate effect with a no-return sacrifice, or no sacrifice at all for a significant effect). This consumes the Grail Water.

If Armand completes **the Elixir of Life**, it draws its power from the Grail Water which is thus consumed or contaminated beyond use. The Elixir grants one PC or NPC immunity to death and also restores their youth and health if they are sick, aged, or dying. This could be the cure for Corbin Payne, if you are playing this vein as the third vein of the story arc (see sidebar). Note that Armand and his alchemist Mythos are the source of magic that creates the Elixir of Life. If Armand is killed or deprived of his Mythos, it may be impossible to complete the Elixir, or it may even reverse its effects.

ILLUMINATION OR NECROMANCY?

If you're playing the complete story arc, the nature of Armand's Elixir should be determined by the PCs' actions.

In and of itself, the Elixir isn't the real deal. As a Grail Knight all-consumed by pain, Armand cannot use his powers to produce something truly benign, only another age-prolonging solution that will set him again and again on his perpetual vicious cycle of consuming others, much like a necromancer.

In contrast to Armand's pain, the drop of the Grail Water in the Elixir symbolizes the potential it has to truly heal and to attain the coveted fourth stage of the Magnum Opus. However, this power must be activated by a truly *Healed* PC or it will remain dormant (see Healing the Secret Pain, page 262). If the PCs heal Armand from the Dolorous Stroke or perform some great deed of selflessness, he could point them to the Secret Pain. Only then the Elixir may become a true potion of life everlasting.

If confronted with his actions, Armand will recount his encounter with Corbin Payne that set him on this path. Psychometry, retrocognition, or sifting through his maddened memoirs could reveal similar details.

While the Grail Water and the theoretical knowledge required to create the Philosopher's Stone have both been in his hands for many years, **Armand could not complete the alchemical Great Work because he could never disengage from his pain (therefore, he never completed even the Blackening).** The Dolorous Stroke perpetuated this blocking fear and attachment, sentencing him to an extended lifetime of misery.

In his heart of hearts, Armand cares about more than just himself. He has a true passion for seeking the truth that goes beyond selfishness but it was overshadowed by his survival instinct, an instinct that was put into overdrive by the Dolorous Stroke. These two forces, his earnest search and his will to live are still both inside him.

If you are running *Percival* as an overarching case, Armand will reveal information corresponding to his role as the first, second, or third Grail Knight to be encountered.



MYSTICAL CLUES

According to Armand's theoretical knowledge, **Avatarhood is the Fool's Gold**, an ultimately ephemeral power without true transformation. Every Avatar is still attached to the City and bears some mortal pain, whether they admit it or not.

According to Armand's theoretical knowledge, **there is a state of completion where Mythos and Mist become one unbreakable unity.** The Rift then transcends their state of being and becomes something beyond, something eternal. This is the true fourth stage of the Magnum Opus, the true meaning of union with "the source of all life" and life everlasting.

ARMAND KAI ★★★★

Surprisingly for some, although he is over 100 years old, Armand Kai is not a stereotypical decrepit old alchemist. Instead, he seems to be a dynamic middle-aged man, dressed in a fine yet somewhat outdated designer suit in clashing colors, and sporting long dark hair and a goatee. His demeanor is cold and unfazed, as someone fixed on a single unadulterated goal.

As an alchemist, Armand's strongest Mythos powers are invested in his alchemical constructs (Conjurations) like Aqua Regia and a vast array of Mythos Tinctures. He can, however, use Transmutations to defend himself.

Maximum Danger Rating: Together with Aqua Regia, Armand is an opponent to reckon with, capable of stealing all of the crew's Mythos powers, frightening them into serving him, and decimating them with his alchemical powers. **Aqua Regia can only be defeated by Logos**, so Rifts venturing here need to be prepared and avoid the Aqua Fortis in the cistern to survive. Consider providing the players with enough warnings about this challenge in advance or, alternatively, reducing Armand and Aqua Regia's challenge level. If you are running this as a heist, the crew may use flashbacks to retroactively prepare for this conflict.

Healing Armand Kai: As with all the failed Grail Knights, Armand Kai bears a deep emotional wound inflicted by the Fisher King, called **the Dolorous Stroke**, represented by a tier-6 status. Only a **Stop. Holding. Back.** move may affect this status: releasing Armand from the effects of the Dolorous Stroke for one scene requires a no-return sacrifice, while curing such a wound altogether requires the ultimate sacrifice. Optionally, you may allow a *Dynamite!* **Change the Game** move to reduce the tier-6 status for the duration of a scene.

Ultimately, the solution to the problem of Armand Kai should be narrative. If you're playing the story arc, it should point to Corbin Payne – if he gave the wound, maybe he can cure it; if he is cured, maybe Armand Kai will be cured too; etc. If the crew cannot heal or defeat Armand yet, they may wish to leave him in his lab.

HURT OR SUBDUE 1 OR - / HEAL - / CONCOCT 5

- **Mastermind:** When Armand Kai enters the scene, give him *sharp-3*.
- **Bodyguards:** When Armand takes a status from which his bodyguards can protect him, they take the status instead.
- **Alchemical Shielding:** When Armand takes a status caused by a material, a substance, or by fire, reduce its tier by 5.
- **Whimpering Old Fool:** As a soft move, Armand may sow the fear of death in one person, making them *apprehensive-2*.
- **Master Alchemist:** Three times per scene, Armand can make a Transmutation hard move as an intrusion.
- **Promise of Eternal Life:** As an intrusion, Armand may convince someone he has the power to save them or their loved ones from death. The target may choose to replace the tag of any fear status with *loyal-to-Armand*, keeping the same tier.

- Throw another ingredient into the bubbling potion (*bubbling-4* on *concoct*)
- Describe death to someone so vividly they become *paralyzed-by-fear-of-death-5*
- Activate any alchemical Transmutation he taught his Disciples with far greater skill (pick a Transmutation hard move from the list under **Armand's Disciple**, page 157, and increase its effect by 1)
- Smash a Tincture on the ground, summoning a Conjuration of its Mythos (Create a new Danger)
- Transmute the earth to create a path for his Disciples to come to his aid (Create a new Danger: **Armand's Disciple**)

- Fumble around his lab or pockets, searching for an ingredient
- Cackle greedily when Aqua Regia dissolves a Mythos
- Beg for someone's help, saying "I can save you!"





ership Deed

CITY REGISTRAR
1000-DOLLARS

FOR
Canseliet Manor
59 Cathedral Street

FROM
Ms. Mary Anne Atwood

TO
Mr. Armand Kai

DATED
November 11, 19

ATTESTED BY
Eugene Valois

FICE OF
Registrar

AQUA REGIA ★★★★

When embodied, the Aqua Regia elemental appears as a woman made of red liquid. As Armand's Conjuration, the elemental does Armand's bidding unequivocally and vanishes in a cloud of fumes if Armand dies or decides to banish it.

If for any reason Armand falls into the Aqua Regia, the Aqua Regia becomes the Tincture of the Master Alchemist Fulcanelli (Armand's Mythos) and Armand becomes a Sleeper. The malign essence of the Dolorous Stroke (a legendary effect but not a Mythos in and of itself) is released as a byproduct and may sink into the earth or infect someone else, at your option.

Recovering One's Mythos: As long as it is not fully dissolved, a Rift's Mythos can still be recovered from the Aqua Regia by banishing it. Once the Aqua Regia forms a Tincture, the process is much harder to reverse (see Tinctures, page 86). However, a Rift may retain their powers by carrying their own Mythos' Tincture on their person.

HURT OR SUBDUE – / NEUTRALIZE – / CONTAIN 6 / VAPORIZE 5 / BANISH 3

- **Mythos Dissolver:** Any Mythos power activated at or near Aqua Regia while she is not contained is immediately dissolved. Before it is activated, burn all (or 2, to reduce the challenge level) power tags used in the action. For a Danger, remove its Danger move.
- **The King's Acid:** Mythos power tags burnt by Aqua Regia cannot be recovered while she exists, including by an Avatar's instant power tag recovery, although Avatars may recover them with a **Montage (Downtime)** move.
- **Bottled Legend:** If all of a PC's Mythos power tags are burnt by Aqua Regia, they become a Sleeper and she produces a Tincture of their Mythos.

- Condensate after being vaporized (remove all tiers from *vaporize*)
- Splash someone and dissolve their Mythos (burn 3 Mythos power tags) or cause *chemical-burns-4*
- Corrode a container or object (*corroded-3* or remove 3 containment status tiers; adjust the tier based on the material being corroded)

- Stream, pour, and swish around her victim as she corrodes everything around, fuming

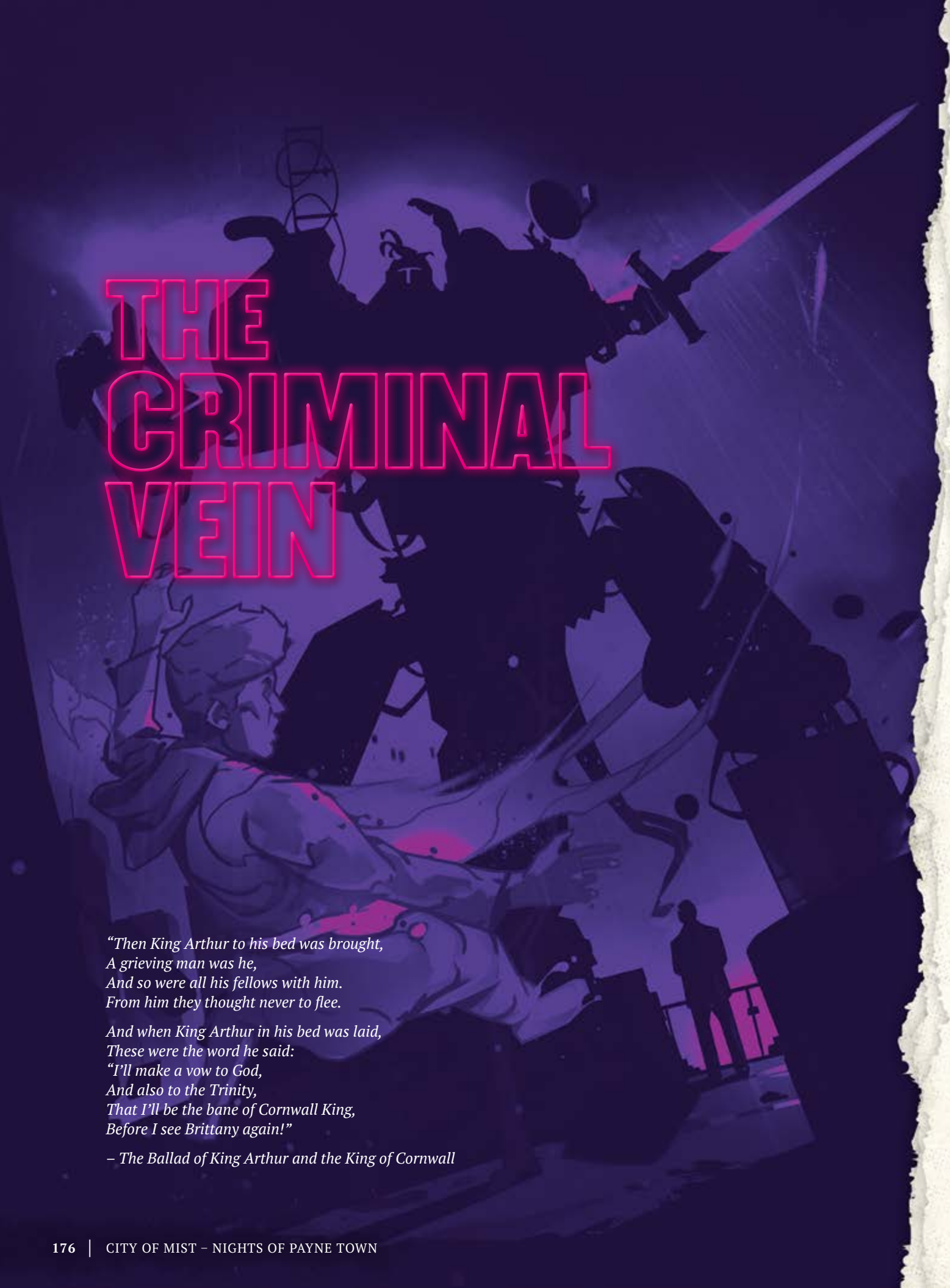


AFTERMATH

Here are a few questions to consider and points to revisit when you wrap up this case:

- How did the crew emerge from Armand's building-sized chemistry set? Whose failings were exposed by the Eurynomos, who lost their identity to the Aqua Fortis, who merged with another Mythos in the vault, and whose Mythos was dissolved in the Aqua Regia?
- Did the crew achieve the goal for which they ventured into Canseliet Manor? Did they obtain the riches or find the specific Mythos essence they needed? Did they get the Elixir of Life and cure whoever needed curing? What did they lose in the process? If someone sent them in, such as Ariadne, how did they respond to the outcome of the heist? Did the crew get a reward?
- What happened to Armand? Was he able to complete the Elixir of Life and attain life everlasting? Did he complete the true Great Work or just another temporary substitute? Was he apprehended, healed, killed, or depowered?
- What will be the future of Canseliet Manor? Did the crew shut down the Mythos harvesting and refining operation permanently? If so, what did they do with all the Tinctures? Will the mansion become an attraction for treasure hunters? Who might settle in the mansion next and take up the mantle from the Great Teacher?
- What of Armand's servants and creations? If Armand lives and has his powers, do they still keep theirs? What would the Disciples do now that their hopes of life everlasting are shattered? And what of the alchemical constructs like the Eurynomos, the Golden Ones, and Aqua Regia who now remain without a master?
- What happened to Pelican, the snoopy smuggler? Was he able to escape with something of value? Did he awaken, and if so, what path will he take as a Rift? If he was harvested, would he still be a smuggler without his soul intact?





THE CRIMINAL VEIN

"Then King Arthur to his bed was brought,
A grieving man was he,
And so were all his fellows with him.
From him they thought never to flee.

And when King Arthur in his bed was laid,
These were the word he said:
"I'll make a vow to God,
And also to the Trinity,
That I'll be the bane of Cornwall King,
Before I see Brittany again!"

– The Ballad of King Arthur and the King of Cornwall

OVERVIEW OF THIS VEIN

VINCE BEAUMONT (King Arthur) became infected with Corbin Payne's suffering without ever meeting the Fisher King. Beaumont's daughter, a naive activist and the Rift of Percival (see *Percival*, page 260), made a daring attempt to heal the wounded Payne by activating the Grail; she failed, and was never seen again. When Vince Beaumont finally found the note she left for him, he learned she had valiantly sacrificed herself to stop a malign power, an insidious force that crawled under the veins of the City. This realization, that the City needed someone to protect it from an invasive force, made Beaumont awaken as the Rift of King Arthur.

Despite finding a new purpose, Beaumont never let go of the grief over losing his daughter. With every day that passed, the Mist further erased her memory until he could no longer remember her name; and with every fragment of her gone, his grief festered into rage, and fuelled his war against the Fisher King. His sole mission had become to eliminate Payne. As this violent but ultimately human urge for revenge took him over, he became an unknowing vessel for Payne's contagious suffering: the more he fought Payne, the more Beaumont spread misery all around him.

From a middle-aged laborer Beaumont transformed into a mobster, at first working alone and then gradually growing his crime organization from a crew, to a gang, and then to a mafia. Eventually, he found the Fisher King and killed him – but the Grail revived its bearer. Beaumont was later killed in a gang feud, but a unique synergy between his Arthur Mythos and his legendary rage made him reincarnate over and over again. And so, this endless war of the two kings dragged on for decades.

By now, Beaumont is used to reincarnating and can rebuild his organization or reassert his power over it within shorter and shorter periods. Knowing that simply killing the Fisher King won't do, he seeks a source of magical power strong enough to overcome the Grail or at least tamper with it. First and foremost, he is adamant to push back the Mist and create an Enclave kingdom, **ALBION**, that will allow him to tap into greater magical power than is currently available in the City. Second, he is hanging his hopes on the prophecy of the **QUESTING BEAST**, hunting for a creature so reviled and abominable that its slaying could be considered an epic deed, a deed which can unleash immense magical energy. Third, he is searching for the **RIFT OF MERLIN**, someone powerful enough to alter the rules of creation.

When the vein begins, Beaumont resurfaces in a new host, **CALVIN CYRUS**, in the neighborhood of **WHITECLIFF**, which he intends to turn into Albion by undermining the current mayor and taking control over the town. He leads a new biker gang, **THE ERRANTS**, who share his ideals about pushing back the malicious servants of **THE CRIMSON KING** – the name they gave Corbin Payne (since , as an Avatar, his true name is protected by the Mist). At the same time, Beaumont is cultivating **EVA RICE**, a real-estate agent and the Rift of the Wendigo, both for her mundane skill at expanding the boundaries of his Albion and for her potential as a Questing Beast, due to all the lives she has consumed. Throughout this quest, he is aided by **CÉLINE ROWLAND**, Rift of the Lady of the Lake, a mysterious woman who may just be using him to achieve her own goals.

Beaumont won't stop until he destroys Corbin Payne. He is willing to take the entire City to war over what he claims to be a battle for freedom and justice, but in fact is his own personal vendetta.

THEMES AND MOTIFS

- **A Crime War:** The Criminal Vein revolves around a bloody war between two "crime lords", Vince Beaumont with his growing street gang, and Corbin Payne, who holds sway over the corrupt police (and to some extent, the Gatekeepers). Beaumont's organization engages in vandalism, intimidation, turf wars, real-estate schemes, abduction, and brutal violence against law enforcement and rival gangs. Worst of all, they take innocent lives to ensure their superiority against their enemies. The cases in this vein are therefore written in the genre of a crime drama.
- **Violence against "The Other":** Beaumont's own psychosis, as well as his power over his followers, stems from projecting their pain onto someone else. Just as Beaumont holds Payne responsible for all his misery (disregarding, for example, his daughter's part in the matter), his Errants blame cops and Gatekeepers for the current state of affairs in the City – and vice versa. This allows everyone involved to condemn the other side and justify even the most unspeakable acts in the name of their holy war, simply by portraying "the other" as a reviled creature. This is epitomized in the concept of the Questing Beast, a person treated as an abomination worthy only of death.
- **Loss that leads to anger:** Beaumont, Rice, and other NPCs in this vein have lost or were denied something dear to them and subsequently fell prey to their own rage. This vein features a pervasive atmosphere of grief too hard to process, which overflows and erupts in violent ways.

- **Power as a futile antidote to pain:** The same NPCs who suffer from loss and rage solve their problems by accumulating the power needed to destroy their enemies. The only currency in Beaumont's mind is power, because eliminating Payne is all that matters: the power of Albion, the power of the Questing Beast prophecy, the power of Merlin, and the power that the Errants and the PCs can offer him . Anyone who cannot offer him power is a weakling, a traitor, or simply pathetic.
- **Arthurian and Medieval Fantasy:** This vein is rich with Arthurian Rifts who can bring to life elements of medieval romances with their motifs of chivalry and heroic quests, knights, dragons and griffons, castles, murky forests, etc.

A WAR AGAINST THE TRUTH

If you are using the setting expansions of *Don't Believe The Truth* and *Suits Unveiled* (published in *Shadows & Showdowns*), Beaumont is effectively waging war against the Avatar Council of The Truth and the status quo they represent, since behind the scenes stands Corbin Payne, the secret council member who has them all wrapped around his finger (see page 16).

Some council members are more likely to get pulled into the conflict with Beaumont than others. DA King, responsible for law enforcement in the City, will likely empower cops to fight against the uprising in Albion. When the crime war escalates, Monte Wolfe has his alarmist media report on it incessantly. Most importantly, the Gatekeepers, who have a seat at the council, are there to ensure the Enclave of Albion is permanently sealed.

In this vein, whenever the Gatekeepers or an Avatar's minions become involved, it is always at the behest of Corbin Payne. He doesn't want anyone to win; in order to prolong everyone's suffering, he forces the Gatekeepers and the Avatars to hold back and provide just enough resistance to drive Beaumont mad, eventually prodding him to unleash his doomsday weapon and bring the City to utter chaos and ruin.



NIGHTCRAWLER REIKO

Throughout this vein, the Whitecliff crisis is covered intensively by the media. One nightcrawler, a freelance photojournalist taking telltale shots of nighttime crime scenes and illicit activities, is cashing in on the events of the Criminal Vein thanks to her edge over the others: she can see through the Mist. **Reiko Ikeda**, Rift of the Jorōgumo (Japanese spider-demon disguised as a woman), uses her Rifthood to track the activity of other Rifts – namely the crew – crawl on walls to get to camera positions no other nightcrawler can dream of, and shapeshift to walk away looking like an innocuous passerby or a tiny spider. Even though her photos are 'edited' by the Mist, they are evocative enough to rattle readers, which gets her paid. She could be selling them to the City Herald, to Kwaku's Webflo (*MC Toolkit*, page 205), or to Monte Wolfe Media (*Shadows & Showdowns*, page 189).

Reiko is not a bad person. She's driven to work as a nightcrawler because there are bills to pay, because her Yōkai Mythos has a strange attraction to morbidity, and because of her personal beef with the Mist: she wants to expose what's really going on in the City. In extreme situations, she will put saving innocent people from trouble before snagging a great shot (there are a few accounts of the Jorōgumo saving people from drowning), but for the most part she takes care of number one. When in her natural form, she's a snarky, casually-dressed woman in her 30s, with long dark hair pinned in a bun and a high-tech camera dangling from her neck.

NIGHTCRAWLER REIKO

Ally

MYSTERY

What dark dealings are happening in town tonight?

POWER TAGS

nighttime informant, *photojournalist*, *shapeshifting skulker*, *hates the Mist with a passion*, *shoot sticky webs*, *demonic arachnid reflexes*, *leads from the Rift underworld*, *high-end camera*, *summon fire-breathing spiders*, *"I'm paying you well"*

WEAKNESS TAGS

sells to the highest bidder, *sarcastic and jaded*, *appetite for flesh*, *caught in the act*

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Badass**: Once per session, you can burn one of Nightcrawler Reiko's tags for a hit.

The crew may find Reiko to be a real nuisance when she thrusts their nighttime activities into the media limelight. Thanks to her sneakiness, she can even cover events within the seiged Albion Enclave during the events of *The Streets Bleed Neon*. At the same time, Reiko can be a source of information on what is happening on the City streets at night, completing any details the crew missed. She takes her payment in cash, fresh leads, or fresh corpses (don't ask). She'd kill for a Mist-penetrating camera like the one Maximillian Drake made for P.I. Holliday (see *Carnival of Machines*, sidebar on page 46).

NIGHTCRAWLER REIKO ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / INTIMIDATE 4

- **Shapeshifting Spider:** When you look for Nightcrawler Reiko while she is sneaking, shapeshifting, or impersonating someone else, she first takes *hidden-4*, renewable as a hard move. This status cannot exceed tier 4.
- **Unwanted Exposure:** At the end of the first downtime after Reiko has acquired compromising photos of you, you take *unwanted-media-attention-2*. If you were recorded committing an illegal act, the MC may choose to also give you *wanted-for-questioning-2* or *wanted-3*.
- **Demonic Arachnid Reflexes:** When you attack Nightcrawler Reiko in close-quarters combat, she first hits you with a hard move. When Nightcrawler Reiko takes a status from a ranged attack she can dodge, reduce its tier by 2.

- Take a compromising photo of someone (**Complicate Things, Bigtime**)
- Vanish into a crowd, sewer manhole, or building (**Deny Them Something They Want**) or, if she's exposed, try to escape in her car (Create a new Danger: Getaway Vehicle, *MC Toolkit*, page 146)
- Shoot a sticky web (*webbed-3* at up to three targets) or stab at someone with her many pointy legs (*bleeding-2* three times)
- Summon a swarm of fire-breathing spiders (size factor 3, *hurt:1*, *poisoned-1* or *scorched-1*)

- An innocuous spider dangles from a silvery web
- Show up at the scene, making snarky remarks and taking countless photos

PACING BEAUMONT THROUGH THE STORY ARC

Unlike the archvillains of the other two veins, who are revealed only at the end of their respective veins, Vince Beaumont is present throughout the Criminal Vein, starting at the very beginning. Therefore, you will need to adapt some details of the vein in order to seamlessly integrate his character with the rest of the story arc, as explained below.

BEAUMONT AS A HEROIC VILLAIN

As the crew works through the cases of this vein, their view and understanding of Beaumont changes, as does their relationship with him. **The vein plays best when the crew identifies at least partially with Beaumont** and must deliberate, individually or as a group, on whether they want to help him on his quest to overthrow the Crimson King. On the one hand, he is a violent criminal; on the other hand, he is a heroic freedom-fighter, sworn to release the City from Corbin Payne. Whenever the opinions of the crew swing in one way, introduce evidence and behaviors to swing them in the other way. Each case in the vein includes advice on how to achieve this.

BEAUMONT AS A PLOT DEVICE

The role Vince Beaumont plays in the story arc varies greatly depending on whether he is the first, second, or third Grail Knight the crew encounters.

If he is the first, then the crew may learn about Corbin Payne as early as in the middle of their first case, *Albion Awakens*, when Beaumont lays down the cards and shares his ultimate goal with them. The name of Corbin Payne is the first clue in the overarching case *Percival* (page 259), so at your option, Beaumont could reveal the name Corbin Payne from the get-go, or he may continue to use the moniker "the Crimson King" in referring to Payne until you're ready to start the overarching case.

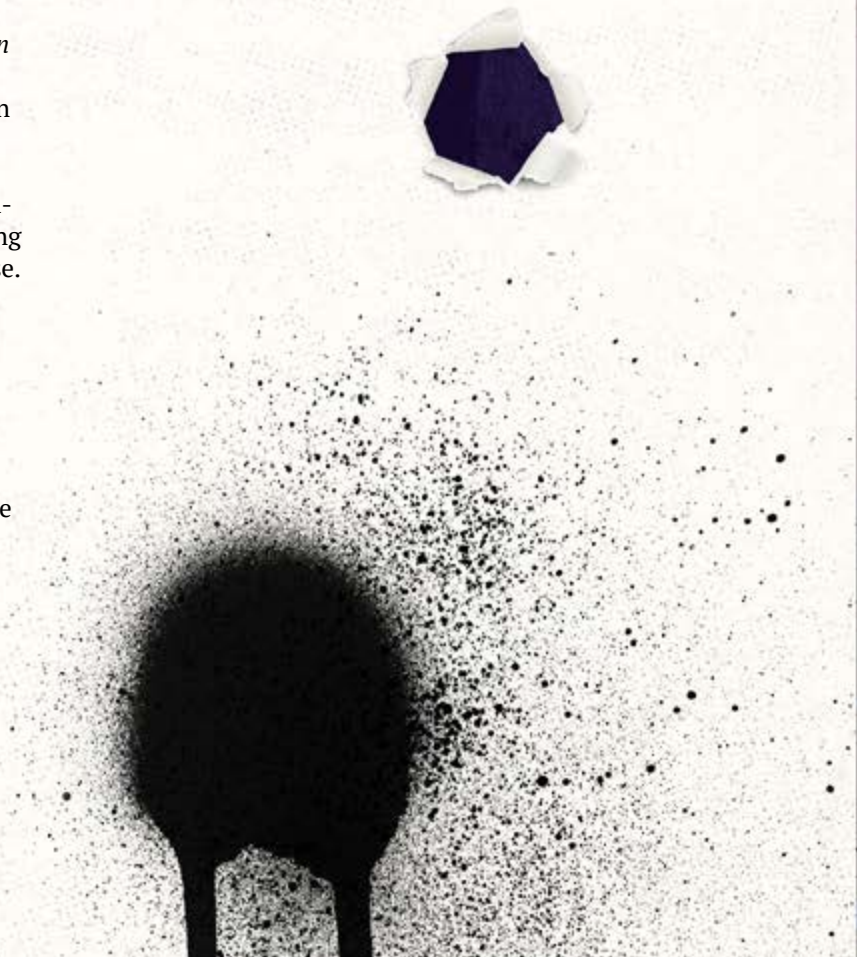
As the one who tells the crew about Corbin Payne, Beaumont may go on to become their mentor in their fight against Payne, perhaps only to be revealed as a Grail Knight at the very end of the arc. You may even wish to delay the events of the final case in this vein, *The Streets Bleed Neon*, until you're ready to reveal Corbin Payne's influence over Vince Beaumont, maybe even until the end of the entire story arc.

Even if Beaumont is the second or third Grail Knight the crew meets, you should hold off the revelation that he is a Grail Knight until the last case in this vein (*The Streets Bleed Neon*). At least until the end of the second case, let the PCs and the players believe that Beaumont is an honorable, even if vindictive man, fighting the evil Citywide manipulation of Corbin Payne out of his own volition. This will increase the impact of the truth that even in fighting Corbin Payne, Beaumont is in fact acting in his service, spreading war and misery in the City.

REMEMBERING RIO

Just as the name of Corbin Payne is the first clue in the story arc's overarching case, *Percival* (page 259), the name of Vince Beaumont's long lost child, **Rio**, is the final clue.

Rio's name is so deeply hidden by the Mist that only the last Grail Knight the crew meets recalls it. If Vince Beaumont is the first or second Grail Knight, he won't remember his daughter's name, not even if he is healed. If he is the third, he will recall it only at the end of this vein, when he is presumably healed or defeated. For more information, see *Percival*.




CITY OF MIST
KING
ALBION
AWAKENS
A PUBLIC CASE OF LOCAL KINGPINS AND BUDDING KINGDOMS

Something is going down in Whitecliff. Amid rising crime rates and vandalized businesses, a new gang of bikers is tightening its grip on the neighborhood. Strangely, they are backed by the little man on the street, folks who are eager to transform their concrete jungle home into a bucolic, idyllic community. Is this a wholesome new grassroot movement or a dangerous and violent uprising? Behind it all looms a mysterious ruler, a king among kings, adamant to protect his realm against those who would subjugate it. Now you must choose whether to help him rise to the throne or slay him upon the steps...

More than it is a classic case, *Albion Awakens* is an unfolding event: the rise to power of the Rift of King Arthur, valiant yet deeply wounded. The PCs partake in this event as investigators at first but soon they must evaluate the new king and his two-wheeled knights and make the hard choice of whether to join them or stand against them. As the crew grows more involved with the dealings in Whitecliff, you, the MC, sow doubt in either direction they lean to, enhancing the dilemma.

This case features greater mobility between locations than usual; PCs can go back to talk to an NPC in a previously investigated location and unlock new clues based on the crew's actions and affiliation.

A PERSISTENT ADVERSARY

Unlike the Grail Knights of the other veins, who remain hidden (and therefore, protected from the PCs) until the very end, Vince Beaumont waits for no one, instead putting himself in the front lines of his operation.

Despite this, Beaumont remains as unstoppable as the other Grail Knights thanks to his tenacity, planning, and legendary powers. Even if exposed early on thanks to excellent detective work by the players, he will remain a threat throughout the case: if he's arrested, he will be held at Precinct 63 and a trusted lieutenant will represent him at the town hall meeting; if he is killed, he will be reborn, maybe even in one of the Errants, or in Lancelot, etc.

THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING

In the early days of the City, Vince Beaumont (King Arthur) lost his daughter to Corbin Payne. Not only did his daughter vanish off the face of the earth (killed by Payne, he assumed) but **the very memory of her name was also erased from his mind**, because of the Mist. Still, his love for her remained, but now as an unending longing toward a child he could only remember as a distant memory, tormenting him endlessly. In this way, the Fisher King (Payne) amplified Beaumont's secret pain – his grief and urge for revenge – and transformed him into his unwilling Grail Knight. Beaumont's legendary grief-fuelled rage drove him to acts of violence as he strove to amass power, seeking to avenge his daughter and kill the Fisher King, with whom he became obsessed, naming him **the Crimson King**.

Within just a few years, Beaumont became one of the City's most nefarious crime lords and eventually succeeded in finding and killing Payne. However, thanks to the Grail, Payne was revived, forcing Beaumont into the realization that it was simply beyond his power to mete out justice. He fell victim to despair and eventually was killed by a rival mobster, his cousin.

But that was not the end. Beaumont's Mythos of King Arthur, upon whose grave the words "Once And Future King" were written ("Rex quondam, Rexque Futurus"), had a curious effect on his death. **When the next City resident awakened as the Rift of King Arthur, they immediately regained all of Beaumont's memories**, as if awakening to a past life, and with those memories came his obsession with power and with the Crimson King (via the Dolorous Stroke). This would happen in times of great crisis, when the City most needed a savior.

Whenever Beaumont's new host died, he ceased to exist; but as he was reborn again and again, he was becoming accustomed to changing bodies and overpowering the host's personality, turning them almost instantly into Legendaries and rebuilding his criminal empire within shorter and shorter periods of time. This gave him newfound hope that with more time on this earth, he could find a way to defeat his enemy. In his fury, he defiled the hopefulness of the "Once And Future King" Mythos, and turned it into a vessel for his vengeful crusade against Corbin Payne.

THE TARGET: WHITECLIFF

In his latest reincarnation, Vince Beaumont's psyche was reformed in **Calvin Cyrus**, a citizen of Whitecliff, a lower-middle-class neighborhood in the City. Before his awakening, Calvin was a champion of the Concerned Citizens Committee**, or CCC**, a volunteer body of local residents working to reduce crime in Whitecliff. After his awakening, Vince Beaumont used Calvin's influence in the CCC to recruit young idealists and enlist them in the war against the Crimson King, dubbing this new gang **the Errants** (Knights of the Round Table). His plan: to take over the neighborhood and turn it into his base of operations from which he would take over the entire City.

This time, however, Vince Beaumont has another goal. He knows that Corbin Payne cannot be killed by ordinary means and therefore he is seeking legendary means to do so. Having been a powerful figure in the Rift underworld for many years, he is aware of the work of the Gatekeepers and how they suppress all that is magical and powerful. To obtain his legendary weapon against his Crimson King, **he intends to turn all of Whitecliff into an Enclave, *Albion***, where magic would be real. Only this way, he believes, could he ever hope to find a magical power – a hero, a weapon, or an artifact – great enough to match the reviving power of the Grail, and finally avenge his daughter, whose name he cannot recall.

AT THE BRINK OF A FLASHPOINT

In the past several weeks since his re-awakening, Beaumont has enlisted several dozen Errants and used them to undermine the stability of everyday life in Whitecliff, eroding the public support for the current Whitecliff mayor, **Eleonora Ricci** (Sleeper), who seems unable to contain the surge. Just in the last few days, the Errants attacked local businesses associated with the mayor, such as the Double Dragon chinese restaurant, and intimidated the owners. Beaumont is also sending them to clear the district of all other gangs, leading to clashes with local street gangs like **the Skoonies**, in the basketball court. Next, Beaumont will send his Errants to build barricades at the highway exits that lead to Whitecliff, harassing traffic and charging ludicrous tolls but secretly preparing to secede from the City.

All of this he does with the purpose of laying the groundwork for his current persona of "Calvin Cyrus" to take the reins in the next town meeting, vote Ricci out, and become the next mayor.

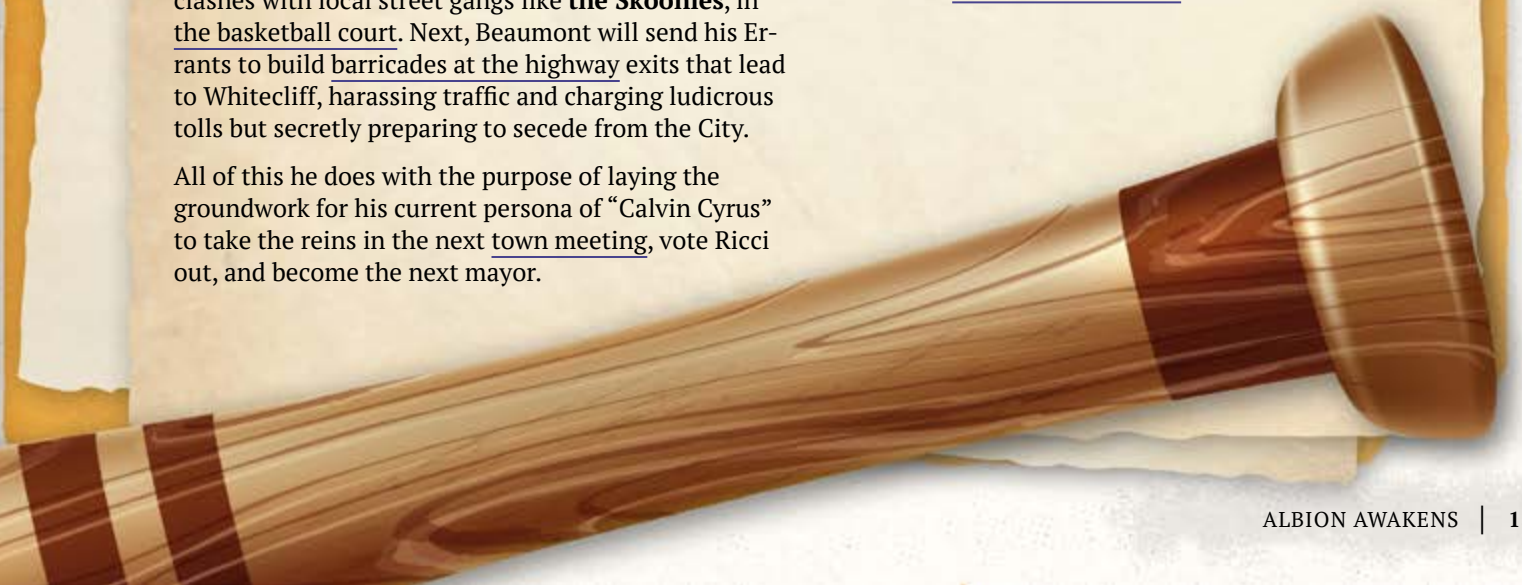
There's a single reason for all of this: the more influential Cyrus/Beaumont becomes and the more he is recognized as the rightful leader of Whitecliff, the stronger the Enclave of Albion will become. Already the community garden in Whitecliff is transforming into vast medieval fields, providing the neighborhood with a supply of locally-grown food. Cutting the neighborhood off from the rest of the City with the barricades will help establish it as its own kingdom and push away the Mist, and if necessary, fight off the Gatekeepers until Beaumont is able to complete his quest against the Crimson King.

SEARCHING FOR A CHAMPION

While all this is happening, the experienced Beaumont is expecting and even hoping for interference from local heroes and vigilantes. He is seeking more knights to add to the ranks of the Errants, or even better, foster as champions in the fight against the Crimson King. He is watching the unfolding of his takeover patiently and painstakingly, awaiting the first signs of a valiant heroine or hero. Once they show up, he will test them, sending them on one of two quests: help his Errants build a battle golem at the junkyard or slay a dragon that has emerged from the Albion Enclave and settled in an overgrown ruin. If they prove themselves, they will gain an audience with him at his hideout, his benefactor's lake house, where he will try to recruit them to his cause.

CONQUEST OF CAMELOT

Beauomnt's final move would be to march on the most fortified building in the neighborhood – Precinct 63 – and transform it into the beating heart of the Albion Enclave, **Camelot**, where he will establish his new seat of power. While this would be significantly easier if he is the newly-elected mayor following the town meeting, Beaumont is prepared to take the building by force, combining the power of his Touched Errants, his battle golem, and any local champions he can rally to his cause (Battle of Precinct 63).



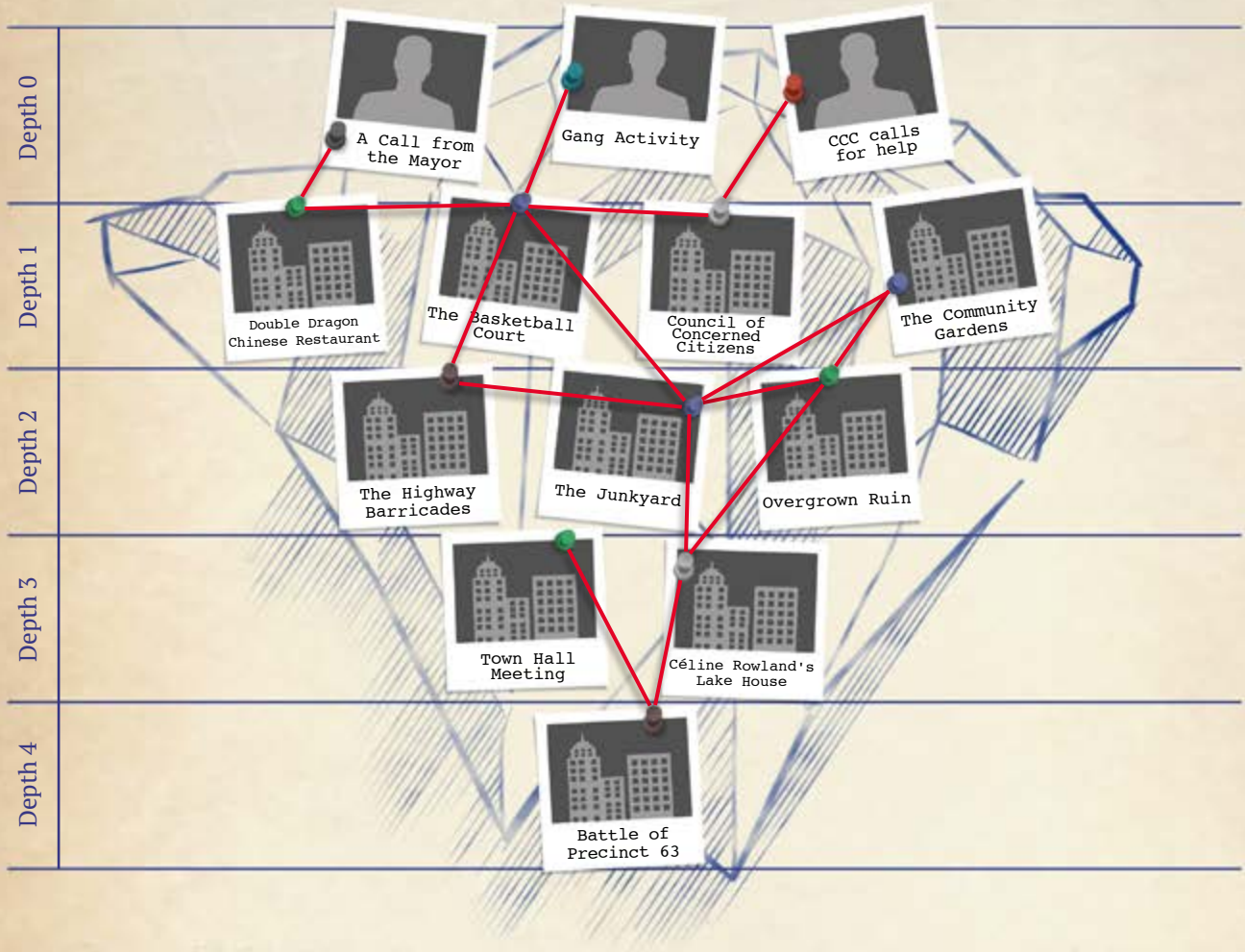
ARE BEAUMONT'S HOSTS STILL THERE?

Beaumont's condition is a strange synergy between two Mythoi. The Mythos of King Arthur, the once and future king, preserves the sum memories of all Arthur Rifts. Normally, these memories make the next Rift in line wiser and more experienced. The Mythos of the Fisher King and the Dolorous Stroke, however, infects these memories with legendary pain, a pain that overwhelms not only the original Beaumont, but also anyone who absorbs his memories through the Mythos of King Arthur. Indirectly, the Fisher King Mythos "rides" the Arthur Mythos to transmit itself to different Rifts. Neither Mythos changes what it is at its core; its their interaction that creates this unique condition.

When a new Arthur Rift awakens, they inherit the Dolorous Stroke and become overwhelmed by Beaumont's pain. This pain is not alien to them: all Arthur Rifts presumably want the power to unite their kingdom and push back invaders who have wronged their land, so often the Rifts' mundane personality also interfaces with the same Dolorous Stroke and secret pain: a desire for power. Each such incarnation melds with Beaumont's memories and create a slightly different persona.

In the current state, Beaumont's hosts are overwhelmed by the combined power of their Mythos and the Dolorous Stroke, and have little power over their actions. It is possible for the PCs to defeat Beaumont by empowering the everyday persona of the host, but that should be as difficult as healing the Dolorous Stroke (see page 18).

THE ICEBERG



DEPTH 0:
THE HOOKS

The crew may become involved in the case in the following ways:

- If the crew is known to solve problems of the criminal kind or is otherwise available for contract work, **Mayor Ricci could contact them** discreetly and ask for their help with figuring out who is behind the latest crime wave in Whitecliff. The crew can talk to her at her office, situated at the heart of Whitecliff and overlooking Precinct 63, or on the sidelines of a political rally or a police awards ceremony held in a park, just as she's about to give a speech and try to reassure the anxious citizens of the neighborhood. The mayor is willing to pay a considerable fee to anyone who could find and bring to justice the leader of the new gang that has been intimidating local businesses. She'll point the crew to one of the affected businesses, the Double Dragon chinese restaurant.
- **Calvin Cyrus (Beaumont) could call the crew himself, if he's thinking of recruiting them.** This is especially relevant if one of the crew has a reputation in the Rift underworld of wielding a legendary weapon that could help bring down the Crimson King or another reputed ability that Beaumont covets for his march on Precinct 63. PCs with Mythoi of knights or other medieval connections also attract his Mythos. Sounding upset and saddened on the phone, he will tell the crew that the Concerned Citizens Committee needs their help in bringing order and safety back to the streets of Whitecliff and invite them to have a longer chat at the CCC offices.
- **Crew members monitoring crime and gang activity** will receive reports of a turf war in Whitecliff. Underworld informants can share that a new biker gang, styling themselves as the Errants, have moved in on Whitecliff and pushed out several smaller local gangs, taking over the neighborhood block by block. They are currently fighting one of the oldest gangs in the district, the Skoonies, who are known for their stealthy guerilla tactics. Word on the street is that the Skoonies have entrenched themselves in the local sewers and that the Errants are having trouble rooting them out. The gangs have agreed to settle the issue tonight at a local basketball court.
- **Supporting cast living in Whitecliff** can report on the local shenanigans to the crew, leading to any of the aforementioned locations. For crew members more interested in supernatural activity than criminal machinations, the contact can report about the strange spaciousness and pastoral feeling at the community garden. While the residents' efforts to grow food locally are admirable, the details about medieval clothing and farming equipment raise a red flag, hinting that what is occuring down in Whitecliff goes beyond mere community work.

DEPTH 1:
WELCOME TO WHITECLIFF

In the first Depth of this case, the crew is just beginning to assess the situation in Whitecliff and are largely still unaware of who is behind it all or why. The different fronts of Beaumont's operation – the Errants, the CCC, and the emerging Enclave of Albion – still appear to be separate players.

The Errants' current objective is to create an atmosphere of lawlessness that would undermine the mayor. While the CCC abhors crimes against the neighborhood, they too would like to see Mayor Ricci replaced. Digging into the actions of the new gang, especially how they handle the Community Garden on one hand and their rivals, the Skoonies, on the other, paints a contrasting picture of gangsters who care for their neighborhood but are ruthless toward anyone who stands in their way to complete their quest.

CONCERNED CITIZENS COUNCIL

Crammed into a small store space on the ground floor of an old apartment building, the Concerned Citizens Committee office facade reads like it belongs to a snoozy, underfunded third-rate nonprofit. The yellowing blinds and hand-drawn sign on the door only bolster this assumption. Once you go through the door, though, the atmosphere changes. The place is a buzzing hive of phones ringing and note-taking, with most of its occupants sitting in tight booths and trying hecticly to answer all calls. A chubby middle-aged man in a sweater and a bushy moustache walks up to you and shakes your hand firmly. "Thanks for coming, we've got a lot to talk about. Step into my office," he chuckles bitterly, and points at the last cubicle.

This scene serves as an introduction to Whitecliff and the current situation therein, as well as laying the ground for a later plot twist regarding Cyrus/Beaumont.

Outwardly, the Concerned Citizens Council is a volunteer body that organizes the Whitecliff residents' efforts to improve their community, mostly by preventing crime. They run a neighborhood watch program to help police patrols, and at the same time maintain deep connections with local gangsters in order to de-escalate situations involving residents and their property. Despite their best efforts, more and more of Whitecliff is falling prey to gangs and mobs, which they ascribe to Mayor Ricci's incompetence (but in truth is due to the fact that the mundane police are unable to stop Rift gangs).

Behind the scenes, the CCC is the incubator for the resurgence of the Arthur Mythos and with it, the memories and violent psyche of Vince Beaumont. The Mythos reawakened in the head of the CCC, Calvin Cyrus, who, like King Arthur, was fighting the invasion of foreign forces into his beloved neighborhood of Whitecliff. Layered with both the Arthur Mythos and Beaumont's knowledge and rage against the Crimson King, Cyrus/Beaumont now plans to make Whitecliff the strongest neighborhood in the City and the platform from which he will launch his final attack on his old archnemesis. To that end, he has been secretly operating the Errants gang.

CYRUS IN THIS DEPTH

Cyrus/Beaumont is a clever man empowered by a legendary wise king; he won't expose himself this early in the game. Using an **Avalonian Charm** to hide his Rifthood from other Rifts (provided by Céline Rowland, Rift of the Lady of the Lake, see Céline Rowland's Lake House), he pretends to be just Calvin Cyrus, a concerned resident who wants the gangs out of Whitecliff. That much is true, so Calvin isn't lying as such, but sharp PCs can detect that his intentions go beyond just cleaning up the streets.

Calvin Cyrus will act as expected of the mild-mannered and gingerly head of the CCC. He will pretend to be completely supportive of the PCs' actions to solve the situation, even if they go against the Errants (as long as they don't hurt the residents of the neighborhood). In this Depth, he is simply weighing them in his palm, observing them and judging whether to recruit, and how. He also wants them to eventually find out about him, so he can reveal his plan – but not yet.

When a PC **Investigates** Calvin Cyrus, especially if they use Mythos power tags, use the counter question option to have him collect information about their abilities and motivations, without indicating who is collecting the information.

If Calvin Cyrus invited the crew here in Depth 0, he will give them the first and/or the second clue below to start them on their investigation.

There is a new biker gang fighting for turf in Whitecliff, called the Errants. They are hard to identify because they wear motorcycle helmets. They have hit some local businesses, like the Double Dragon chinese restaurant, causing some property damage and sowing fear.

Word on the street is the Errants are cleaning out Whitecliff. A showdown with one of the oldest gangs in Whitecliff, the Skoonies, is set to take place tonight at a chosen basketball court.

Gangs have always preyed on Whitecliff due to its central location in this part of the City. Unfortunately, Mayor Ricci and the local Precinct 63 have been unsuccessful in stopping crime in the neighborhood.

The CCC is just a volunteer body of residents trying to help Mayor Ricci and the police, but because they want what's best for the residents, they often work things out directly with the gangs.

THE CCC VOLUNTEERS

The volunteers are *busy-2*, making it difficult to have a decent conversation with them.

There is no love lost between the CCC and the mayor's office. Most volunteers seem disillusioned with what the system has done or even *can* do for Whitecliff.

Volunteer Rita Morales walks in wearing a straw hat and holding a pitchfork and a sack of turnips. She had just come in from working in the community garden and has soil under her nails. She seems elated and will attest to the positive, wholesome experience she has when she goes there.

Volunteer Chuck Gorski thinks the Errants are doing the neighborhood a favor, accomplishing in a month more than the police ever did. Based on your cinematic considerations, this may be empty talk or he could be echoing his friends in the Errants and may lead the crew to them (see next clue).

Checking the computers or work tickets, some of the volunteers, mostly the younger ones, haven't clocked in the last two weeks (they have joined the Errants). Tracking them down could lead to the basketball court, the highway barricades, or the junkyard, eventually proving **the Errants may be an offshoot of the CCC**.

Similarly, analyzing the neighborhood watch program run by the CCC shows they were coincidentally – or conveniently – not patrolling the locations that the Errants' hit at the time the gang was there, **hinting at a possible mole in the CCC**.

CALVIN CYRUS

Asking around about Calvin Cyrus reveals just how much the neighborhood loves him for his work and how much he loves the neighborhood. A middle-aged man, he has been living in Whitecliff for 25 years, having moved here from the suburbs. There is nothing out of the ordinary in his records, then or now.

Following Calvin or tapping his calls may reveal he is in touch with the Errants. If confronted before he is ready to reveal himself, he will say it's a part of his job to foster backchannels with the gangs.

Beyond the Mist, everyone here is a Sleeper enshrouded in Mist including Calvin Cyrus. If the crew is stuck, you can drop a hint that the Mist around him seems different, but that he still appears to be a Sleeper. This can be confirmed by reading his reaction when he is asked whether he witnessed anything legendary, which will force him to come out or lie. Only a Significant **Stop. Holding. Back.** move can break the Avalonian Charm masking his Rifthood.



THE DOUBLE DRAGON

Driving along the main Whitecliff drag, you spot several boarded up businesses where looters have sprayed graffiti of stylized dragons and swords. You pull up by the Double Dragon, an eatery supposedly favorite with the locals; boarded up and locked up, the place seems dead. Through the cracks in the barricade, you get a look at the inside: a traditional Chinese restaurant in shambles, broken glass everywhere, and dust particles floating on pale rays of light. Someone really did a number on this place.

The scene at the Double Dragon serves to show the destruction caused by the Errants but clever PCs can find the first clues about the gang's hidden agenda.

"The Double Dragon" is a traditional, family-run Chinese restaurant owned by the Huángs. The family patriarch and matriarch, the gentle Mîn and the shrewd Xiáxiá (Wū, Chinese shaman or witch) run the business, while their children and grandchildren work the kitchen. The elders and many of their family members live in the building above the restaurant, also owned by the Huángs.

At this time of crisis, the Huángs have locked themselves up in their residences and refuse to talk to anyone but the police (*uncooperative-2*). To ensure no further harm comes to her family, Xiáxiá summoned a guardian spirit to protect their business and home. They will also call the police if they see anyone else trying to enter their property, and Huáng Mîn, who is on the verge of a mental breakdown, may even shoot intruders with his shotgun (*gunshot-wound-3*). Xiáxiá, on the other hand, might curse any crew members who try to break in or even those who simply annoy her (*weakened-3* or *cursed-3*).

Three days ago, in broad daylight, five bikers with helmets rode in and started shouting and behaving aggressively. They subdued Huáng Mîn's son and grandson, who were working in the kitchen at the time, and proceeded to smash everything inside. When they were done, they only said "Tell Mayor Ricci that she doesn't rule Whitecliff anymore."

Mayor Ricci is a regular at the "Double Dragon" and the Huángs are reputedly donors for her campaign. However, Xiáxiá feels betrayed and already plans to stop the donations if the mayor doesn't get a grip on the security issues in the neighborhood.

The damage at the Double Dragon is extensive, but superficial. PCs familiar with the criminal underworld know this is nothing as far as vandalism goes and would wonder why the gang didn't strike harder. The Huáng sons also came away relatively unscathed. It seems amateurish of this new gang, as if **they were reluctant to truly harm this family.**

Magically locating those responsible will place them at the basketball court tonight. The same can be achieved by mundane methods of crime scene investigation, such as profiling and tracking the bikes, finding a DNA sample, tracking phones, etc.

The Huángs can afford to rebuild, but the financial damage of staying closed is considerable. The Concerned Citizens Council has already organized a volunteer taskforce to help them get back up and running. **All in all, the attack mostly damaged their trust in the mayor.**

Huáng Xiáxiá saw the intruders beyond the Mist and can describe them as medieval knights riding noble steeds. She has put a curse on one of them that would make them sneeze ceaselessly (she could do worse, but wanted to track her victim and find out who is really in charge).

MENSHEN (DOOR GUARDIAN SPIRIT) ★★★

The protector spirit summoned by Huáng Xiáxiá is a Conjuration that prevents entry into the Huángs' restaurant and residence. The spirit can sense everything in the space of the house it protects. It manifests as a faded illustration of a Chinese general on the front door.

If the spirit senses an intruder, it materializes as a glowing real-life version of the same general, clad in armor and wielding an iron club. While the Menshen's club can connect with both physical bodies and incorporeal entities, attacks that aren't legendary go right through the spirit. The Menshen will chase intruders out but will not abandon its post.

DEFEAT IN COMBAT 4 / BANISH OR DISPEL 3 / AFFECT MIND –

- **Guardian of the Doorways:** When the Menshen enters the scene, give it *alert-2*, renewable as a soft move. Until it materializes, the Menshen cannot be harmed (*defeat-in-combat:–*).
- **Armored Apparition:** The Menshen ignores mundane statuses of physical harm or subdual. If it takes a legendary status that its legendary armor can block, reduce its tier by 2.

- Thump an intruder with its magical club (*staggering-3*, also against spirits)
- Momentarily transform into a screaming, horrifying demon to scare intruders away (*haunted-3*)
- Chain an intruder with invisible chains (*chained-3*, also against spirits)
- Kick out a weakened intruder (the intruder must **Go Toe to Toe** to resist)

- Show up as an illustration on the door
- The illustration on the door is gone and a creepy creak is heard from inside the restaurant



THE COMMUNITY GARDEN

Faded painted lettering on the wooden archway announces the entrance to the local community garden, flanked on each side by trellises so lush, it's hard to see what's going on inside. As you cross the threshold, you sense the most subtle "whoosh", accompanied by a strange feeling you've been spirited away. What seemed like a narrow strip of soil now looks like a field that stretches all the way to the City skyline in the horizon. Locals in woolen shifts, pitchforks, and hoes till the land, while others pick the season's harvest. You feel… wonderful.

The community garden is the first part of Whitecliff to transform into the Albion Enclave. While outwardly it appears as a normal green patch of soil in the middle of an urban area, those who step in find that the rows of buildings on either of its sides are pushed far away, opening up a great tract of agricultural land in the middle of Whitecliff. The gate of the community garden is a thin place that leads into the Enclave but transitioning in and out of the Enclave is fluid, and in many places the Enclave overlaps mundane reality. The greater the power of the Errants and Cyrus/Beaumont grows, the more the Enclave spreads, and the more thin places show up all across the borough.

The Enclave exudes pastoral tranquility that the people of Whitecliff find relaxing and idyllic. They show up here in droves to till the land, sow, water, and reap. Given the legendary nature of the soil, and seeds provided by Céline Rowland (Lady of the Lake), their crops are plentiful and they produce food in steadily increasing amounts, enough to sustain the neighborhood, just as Beaumont has planned.

Those who work here are slowly changing their clothes and tools to those of medieval farmers, while nearby convenience stores and bodegas are gradually transforming into marketplaces where the produce is traded. Inside the Enclave, the buildings of Whitecliff appear to be made of stone and have thatched roofs. While Sleepers turn a blind eye to this, Rifts may wonder at this change.

The farmers here are candid about this positive change, unless they suspect someone is snooping around with the intention of interfering with their new hipster movement, in which case they will become *guarded-2*.

HOPE AND GLORY

Albion perfuses everything that is good and wholesome in the Arthurian legends, filling everyone who spends time here with positive thoughts and feelings. There is an *ambient wholesomeness* here that supports healing, recovery, and healthy growth.

As the setting for the adventures of the Knights of the Round Table, the Enclave is also a hotbed for mysterious woodlands and grottos, wrongs that must be put right, and plenty of opportunities for undertaking noble quests. Unfortunately, it also attracts invaders to attack it, like the historical Saxons that became the foreign villains in some of Arthur's legends.

Abandoned until recently, **this community garden has been revived by the Concerned Citizens Committee** under Calvin Cyrus as a means to keep youngsters out of trouble. It was a resounding success and now people of all ages and backgrounds volunteer here.

The locals here are enamoured with the community garden and everything it represents. They are delighted to come here and work in nature for the benefit of their community. This place fills them with hope for the future and a sense of serenity.

The stores nearby are selling more and more of the local produce and the residents of the neighborhood are rapidly adopting the fad and consuming less processed foods. **This is gradually turning Whitecliff into an intentional community and a self-sustained neighborhood.**

Based on the style of clothing, tools, and architecture, **historians and archaeologists can connect this place with Albion, the ancient Isle of Britain** (or at least how it is portrayed in medieval legends).

Beyond the Mist, the place looks like an ancient or medieval farmland. Nearby clusters of buildings look like little hamlets but where the concrete jungle grows dense, it takes the form of a dark forest. Those who explore that area may reach the overgrown ruin.

Beyond the Mist, the Enclave can be linked with the same Rift that Touched the Errants, but the source itself is hidden in writhing mist (Cyrus/Beaumont).

The farmers are supportive of the Errants, claiming the gang is fighting the other gangs and Mayor Ricci to make more room for their garden and to embetter the life of the community.

Every night, when there are fewer people around, one of the Errants' bikers shows up to deliver a bag of magical seeds and pick up some provisions. Sometimes they recruit some of the farmers to join their cause. They can be followed to the basketball court, the junkyard, or the highway barricades.



THE BASKETBALL COURT

The rain falls hard on the concrete court, gushing in waterfalls from the bleachers. Through the enclosing chain-link fence, you make out two rival gangs facing off at the center. On one side, short kids in spikey outfits carry improvised spears and bows, as they hoot, wail, and career around their motionless leader, whose eyes are transfixed on the gang across the court. The competition is a band of off-road bikers whose faces are hidden behind their helmet visors. They rev up their motors and tap their baseball bats, steel rods, and nail-studded table legs until someone — you're not sure who — makes the first move, and the whole place descends into violent chaos. As the bikers charge across the court, the spikey gangsters fade into the urban landscape and their arrows start whistling by, as if shot out of the thin air.

The basketball court is the site of one of the final battles between the long-running Skoonies (Pukwudgies, devious forest creatures of Native American folklore) and the newcomers, the Errants (Knights of the Round Table). Both gangs have agreed to come here and settle their turf dispute, following the Errants continuous encroachment into the Skoonies' territory over the last few weeks.

The Skoonies are a very old and tribal gang in Whitecliff. While their Mythos makes them seem short and often has Sleepers mistake them for kids, they range from young to old. The gang seems disinterested in traditional organized crime pursuits, like drug and weapon trafficking, and its members are vagrants living on the streets and in the sewers (in fact, they originally awakened to their Mythos through one of the "Maws", see *The Undertrash*). Unbeknownst to outsiders, they style themselves custodians of the concrete jungle and often cultivate and decorate alleys, underground passages, and hovels under bridges. Their criminal activity amounts to loitering, tagging, squatting, and littering *until* someone interferes with their urban landscaping. They then retaliate disproportionately, becoming violent and vindictive, holding grudges for years, and harrassing *en masse* whoever they see as a threat to their lifestyle. Locals in Whitecliff know to turn back when they see a Skoonie and just leave them alone, but the gang has been a troublesome nuisance here for decades.

The Errants are Cyrus/Beaumont's newly formed gang, made of idealistic Whitecliff youngsters who want to change the face of the neighborhood and the City and subscribe to the Albion movement. They ride off-road bikes, sometimes in pairs, and dress like punks and outlaws in studded biker jackets. One of their most prominent features is their biker helmets, painted over with motifs of knightly helms and bearing stylized visors. Their current objective, as laid by Calvin Cyrus, is to grow their territory, laying the groundwork for the expansion of the Albion Enclave. The Errants are deeply loyal to their community, a loyalty that is only exceeded by their obedience to their king. They envision an Albion that can benefit all residents, but first all other malign influences must be removed – which is what brought them to clash with the Skoonies.

THE FIGHT

The Skoonies are led tonight by Screaming Moon, their wiry and vicious elder, while the Errants act as a circle: they all abide by their objective independently without anyone having authority over the others. Both gangs want the same thing: crush their enemies, disband them, and prove they rule Whitecliff. **Both gangs have a size factor of 2.**

The battle will ensue shortly after the PCs arrive and will rapidly escalate to violence and blood. Don't play out the actions of the NPC gangs against one another; instead, resolve it narratively. If the crew has a favorite, they're losing, driving the crew to intervene. Otherwise, the gangs might both mark the crew as a third contender or simply unwanted attention and send some of their members to attack the crew. If the crew is only watching from afar, the Errants eventually subdue the Skoonies, but both sides suffer extensive injuries and several casualties.

The PCs have a momentary chance to stop the fight before it starts, but the Skoonies are *suspicious-3* while the Errants are *loyal-3* to their leader and cause, so **Con-**

vincing both sides to stand down proves challenging. Once the fight begins, give all combatants *too-enraged-to-listen-4* if anyone tries to stop them from fighting.

Calling Precinct 63 will reveal the police are *reluctant-2* to intervene unless innocent residents are caught in the fray, and prefer to let the gangs do their dirty work by eliminating each other.

AFTER THE FIGHT

The fight dies down when a clear victor emerges, or when there are too many wounded to continue. Whoever has the upper hand will shout at the other gang never to show their faces in Whitecliff, as the losers flee. The Skoonies will disperse back to their alleys, hovels, and sewer tunnels while the Errants return to their homes or to the junkyard. This may allow the PCs to exchange a few words with each gang.

If the PCs sided with either gang in the fight, the other gang takes *hates-your-guts-3* against them. If that rival gang is the Skoonies, this status is especially persistent and difficult to remove (*Player's Guide*, page 226) as they tend to hold grudges for long.

If they haven't shown up during the fight, the police and emergency medical services eventually arrive to treat and arrest injured gangsters and bag the bodies of the dead. They are followed by the media, whose coverage of the story could implicate the PCs and either or both gangs, while highlighting Mayor Ricci's failure to confront crime head on. Calvin Cyrus may show up to interview for the news on behalf of the CCC.

TALKING TO THE SKOONIES

The Skoonies are naturally tribal and reclusive, but if a PC gets a Skoonie to talk or follows them to their hiding place, they can learn more about the customs and organization of this gang (see above).

The Skoonies' beef with the Errants is that they plan to transform the urban landscape into something else. It's already started at the community garden. They also don't care for anyone encroaching on their space, let alone a rival gang.

The Skoonies have no problems with Mayor Ricci, in fact they hardly know her name. She and the police let them be and in return the Skoonies stand down when the police show up, for the most part.

TALKING TO THE ERRANTS

There is very little that the Errants are allowed to candidly share; **Investigating** beyond the following clues would trigger their *loyal-3* status.

However, the Errants are looking to recruit heroes; if the crew wants to join them, the gang will ask them to first prove themselves with a "quest": "slay the dragon" in the overgrown ruin or help them recruit "the best knight of us all" at the junkyard.



The Errants come across as wayward punks, not hardened criminals. They think of themselves as freedom fighters and renegades. Most of them regret their violent actions but have been disillusioned with all other solutions. Some are even shaken after the fight.

The Errants are on a "quest" (as they put it) to transform Whitecliff into a beautiful, verdant "kingdom" that is free and just, where people can be their legendary selves. Mayor Ricci, the police, and other gangs are just standing in their way by trying to maintain the status quo.

Some of the Errants can be linked to the vandalizing of the Double Dragon restaurant. Their helmets and bikes match the descriptions of the perps, but they have alibis backed by various members of the community (all of whom volunteer at the community garden). One of them doesn't stop sneezing; mystical inspection would reveal he's under a curse (the work of Huáng Xiáxiá).

Those who partook in trashing the Double Dragon say they feel bad about it, but that it was essential to reveal Mayor Ricci's inability to keep the peace, that her weakness needs to be shown to all. They are sorry for the damages they caused, claiming that they chose well-off businesses who could endure it, for the good of all other businesses in the neighborhood.

Beyond the Mist, the Errants are young medieval knights clad in armor, their baseball bats are shining lances, and their off-road bikes are gallant steeds. They are Touched by a Mythos whose Rift is hidden by writhing mist (Cyrus/Beaumont) but which can also be linked to the Albion Enclave at the community garden.

THE SKOONIES ★★

The Skoonies (Pukwudgies) are men and women of all ages who live out on the streets and protect the concrete jungle as if they were its keepers. They appear as short, squabby, or haunched individuals, dressed in tattered simple clothes and carrying makeshift spears and bows. Strange spikes come out of their faces, as if they were little imps. Thanks to their Mythos, the Skoonies can disappear in broad daylight, cause accidents, and brew potent poisons that they apply to their weapons.

HURT OR SUBDUE 2

- **Disappearance Act:** When the battle begins, give the Skoonie *hard-to-place-3*, renewable as a hard move. A PC searching for the Skoonie is **Changing the Game** (not **Investigating**) and may spend Juice to reduce this status.
- **Poison:** When you take any tier of *bleeding* from the Skoonies' weapons (after you **Face Danger**), you also take *poisoned-1* and another *poisoned-1* every time you get the spotlight, until you remove the *poisoned* status.

- Wound someone with their poisoned spears and arrows (*bleeding-2*)
- Feint an attack with a spear, or aim with their bows, or gang up on someone, rendering that opponent *vulnerable-1*
- Shove someone to make them fall or crash (*broken-bone-3*)
- Pour gasoline on a dumpster, light it, and roll it at their enemies (everyone in its path takes *crushed-3* and/or *burned-2*)
- (Screaming Moon only:) Scream and bang on a trash can to rally the gang (remove up to three negative status tiers from a single Skoonie)

- Jump and parkour around someone, sounding high-pitched giggles and screeches



THE ERRANTS ★★

The Errants are a biker gang consisting mostly of young adults of varying genders. They dress in steel-studded biker garb, wear motorcycle helmets designed like knightly helms, and carry baseball bats as weapons with trash can covers as shields. Their power shines when they are fighting for what they perceive as a noble cause.

Use the Errant's tags to weaken the PCs' moves, based on the situation. As normal, these story tags cannot be invoked more than once in each exchange. For example:

Offensive moves: *strength-of-conviction* + *makeshift shield* (+ *two-wheeled steed* if the Errant is taking evasive maneuvers)

Face Danger: *strength-of-conviction* + *junk-made sword* (+ *two-wheeled steed* if the Errant is charging)

HURT OR SUBDUE 3

- **Knight Errant:** An Errant always has a *makeshift shield*, a *junk-made sword*, and a *two-wheeled steed* nearby. When an Errant is on a quest from Arthur, as long as she believes it is just, she also has *strength-of-conviction*.
- **Sworn of Camelot:** When the Errant's loyalty is tested, first give her *loyal-3*, renewable as a soft move.

- Charge at the enemy and smite them (*broken-ribs-3*) or dismount and engage in a sword fight (*bruised-2*)
- Give a ride to a fellow Errant who lost their bike (restore their *two-wheeled steed*)
- Renew her own or another Errant's *strength-of-conviction*
- Call her friends to arms, helping them to shake off injuries and fear (burn *strength-of-conviction* to remove up to three negative status tiers from one Errant)

- Circle around her next challenge, revving her bike and preparing to strike

DEPTH 2: RIDING WITH THE ERRANTS

In this Depth, the crew digs deeper into the operation of the Errants, their aspirations to transform Whitecliff, and their mysterious leadership. In doing so, they play more and more into Cyrus/Beaumont's hands.

CRAFTING THE CORE DILEMMA

This case plays best when the crew faces a dilemma about the Errants and the Albion initiative: are they friends, or foes?

If the crew sees the Errants as mere enemies or crooks, use this Depth to swing the pendulum in the other way. Slowly reveal the gang's connection to Albion, perhaps by pointing back to the community garden and the gang's good work there. Emphasize the gang's high-minded ideals and downplay their violent acts, or appeal to pragmatic PCs who know the price of change and are willing to pay it.

On the other hand, **if the crew is wholeheartedly supportive of the Errants**, sow the seeds of doubt by occasionally and subtly highlighting the violent price of their choices and their willingness to use any means to complete their "quest".

If you are playing this case as a oneshot, do this overtly to get the point across. If you are playing it as part of the Criminal Vein, use subtle messages as this dilemma will follow the crew throughout the vein.

THE INITIATION QUEST

Whatever the crew's intentions are, the Errants will want them to prove their worth before letting them into their inner circle; these are instructions from Cyrus/Beaumont, who is looking to recruit worthy heroes with powers greater than his Touched minions.

If the crew wants to stop the gang and bring its leader to justice or if they want to contact the gang leader, the Errants may promise to bring them to their leader after they complete a quest. Similarly, if the crew is trying to join the gang or infiltrate it, the initiation trial involves completing a quest. **Once the crew completes one of the quests, the Errants agree to take them to their leader at the lake house.**

The first quest can be one of two tasks: "slay the dragon" in the overgrown ruin or help them recruit "the best knight of us all" at the junkyard.



THE OVERGROWN RUIN

A murder of crows take flight as you approach the overgrown derelict building, cawing forebodingly. Once a comfortable townhouse, now only a charred ruin remains, thick with the dark green foliage of twining vines and gnarled oaks. The more you look, the more the building seems to be built of old stones and the burnt beams look like those of a thatched roof. Smoke billows from inside; either someone is camping here, or you've found a dragon to slay.

As Whitecliff is taken over by Albion, more and more creatures of medieval and Arthurian legend begin to crop up around the neighborhood. In one building, not far from the community garden, the grouchy and avaricious owner, **Archie Fagan**, awakened as the Rift of a medieval fire-breathing dragon. Taken over by this Mythos, he soon reduced his property to rubble. Within days, trees and weeds covered the charred ruin, nurtured by the Albion Mythos; thus, a menacing woodland dragon lair was formed in the middle of the residential neighborhood. Still, for the Sleepers, it's just a derelict house and a potential hazard.

When the case begins, Cyrus/Beaumont has already learned about Fagan's transformation and conspires to use him to test the mettle of potential heroes. He instructs the Errants to send anyone who deems themselves worthy on a quest to slay the monster, without revealing that the monster is a Rift.

The crew can arrive here by wandering around Albion or with the quest in mind. As soon as they start snooping around the ruin, Archie the dragon will attack; whether they slay it or not sets the scene for their future moral dilemmas regarding the Questing Beast.

Burnt paperwork and framed photos show this place was once owned by one Archie Fagan.

The dragon is enraged because the PCs are trespassing on its property.

A PC Looking At The Mist will be able to see that the dragon is not a monster created by the Enclave but a person, a Rift, who is showing his legendary shape. The man is a furious middle-aged resident of Whitecliff and he is shouting at the crew to get lost before he will force them away.

NEW MOVE: LOOKING AT THE MIST

The erosion of the Mist by the Albion Enclave has a subtle yet consequential side-effect: Rifts start seeing other Rifts' Mythos form more prominently and easily than they see their mundane form. This sensory change applies first to Rifts and eventually to everyone living in the Enclave and therefore Touched by it. For this reason, Rift PCs see Archie as the monster he is inside and not as a person.

PCs who spend a while in the Enclave begin to perceive the Mythos form naturally, requiring special concentration to see what a person or object looks like in the City. To **Investigate** what was the everyday form of a wondrous creature or object, PCs may attempt the reverse of **Look Beyond The Mist**, a new move called **Look *At* The Mist**. Like its counterpart, this move's outcome is identical to **Investigate** but the player rolls+Logos instead of rolls+Mythos (Gatekeepers may either roll+Logos or roll+Mist). In return for Clues, the MC may then dispense information about the mundane form of the subject.

ARCHIE THE DRAGON ★★★

Archie the Dragon is a 50-foot long giant lizard with a body covered in shimmering metallic green scales, two red leathery wings, and eyes like rubies full of swirling flame – all in all, a classic Western dragon.

HURT OR SUBDUE 5 / APPEASE 5

- **Monstrous:** When Archie the Dragon takes a status that is countered by its large size, reduce its tier by 1. When the MC makes a hard move with Archie the Dragon, she can hit two targets or hit a single target for +1 tier.
- **Scaly Hide:** When Archie the Dragon takes a status of physical harm, reduce its tier by 2.

- Slash with a claw (*gash-3*), bite (*mutilated-limb-3*), kick or slap with its tail (*winded-3*)
- Breathe a jet of searing flames, incinerating all in its path (*incinerated-5*)
- Figure out his opponents' plan and turn it against them (**Turn Their Move Against Them**)
- Let out a blood-curdling roar (*terrified-3* to everyone who can hear it)

- Inhumanely loud snoring is heard from the second floor
- Something slithers in the shadows of the trees above
- The dragon stretches out its massive body, showing its size

THE JUNKYARD

At first glance, the Whitecliff junkyard looks like it was taken over by overgrown kids. Along the perimeter fence towers a 10-foot wall of stacked debris and abandoned, rusty metal scrap. At the gate, two shipping containers standing on their heads serve as guard towers, watching over a passageway blocked by a welded steel grate. On the ramparts, metal platforms and half-barrels with arrow slits make for defensible positions. Against the sullen, gathering clouds, a lone tattered red flag flutters. It's not quite Camelot, but it will hold.

The junkyard is the Errant's base of operations. Since their founding, only a few weeks ago, the Errants have turned the place into a small fortress, all thanks to a little child: **Roshanak "Roxie" Zare**, Rift of the legendary Persian blacksmith, Kaveh. Like her Mythos, who led a rebellion against an evil foreign tyrant in Persian mythology, 10-year-old Roxie feels strongly about bossy invaders and she's not about to let the Crimson King and his servants conquer her "homeland" of Whitecliff or oppress her legendary nature (as Beaumont told her it would be). Inspired by the young spirit of the Errants, she helped them build their spiked barricades and transform this junkyard into a little hillfort.

The Errants man the fort around the clock, with a skeleton crew consisting of about six of them (size factor 1). Roxie is here almost every day after school and longer on weekends; her parents are Touched by the Albion Enclave, aware enough to understand she has special gifts that can help support the Albion movement and Whitecliff community.

ENTERING THE JUNKYARD

The Errants won't let just anyone into the junkyard. Sleepers and the police keep their distance for fear of the biker gang and even Touched residents are turned away, kindly asked to let the knights-on-wheels do their work.

When the PCs arrive, it is their manner of approach that determines whether or not they will be let in. The Errants are looking to recruit powerful allies but they won't let just anyone in; some smooth talking or the head of the dragon from the overgrown ruin are required, or a promise to help the Errants with their project (see below). Entry by force is also possible, though more difficult.

INSIDE THE JUNKYARD

The junkyard fort is first and foremost a junkyard, with piles of cars sold for parts, tires, barrels, containers, construction debris, and scrap metal, as well as all manner of appliances. Between the piles there are pathways and enclosures: one serves for parking bikes, another for building and storing barricades.

In some clearings there are shanty sheds and structures made of shipping containers, where the Errants sleep and hang out when it's raining. At all other times, they carry on their business outdoors.



One of the interior rooms, a *locked-2* storeroom, contains a near-empty sack of magical seeds, the same ones the Errants have been supplying the community garden with.

Beyond the Mist, the seeds are infused with magic from Avalon, the mythical island of apples and magic in Arthurian legend. This magic is accelerating the expansion of the Albion Enclave.

When the bag is depleted (or if it is stolen and the Errants can't get it back), an Errant will ride to the lake house to replenish their stock.

THE "LANCELOT" PROJECT

The Errants have a problem. Their leader tasked them with the quest of helping Roxie build "the best knight among them" (they don't know what would be its purpose but they assume it's for the same purpose they serve – to protect Albion). Roxie calls this project "Fereydun" after the legendary king who helped her Mythos overthrow the tyrants; the Errants call it Lancelot; but essentially, it is a war golem – the magical equivalent of a high-power walking tank. Unbeknownst to anyone in the junkyard, Cyrus/Beaumont plans to use Lancelot to take Precinct 63.

To complete their quest, the Errants need the PCs' help. Despite Roxie's miraculous control over metal, she needs more help, more materials, more time, and a lot more magical crafting powers to make Lancelot what it needs to be. By completing this quest, the PCs show their worth. In return, the Errants promise to arrange an audience with their "king" at the lake house.

Building Lancelot requires a total of Juice equal to the number of PCs times 3. The PCs can garner this Juice narratively, by **Changing the Game**, by spending their **Montage (Downtime)** on the project, or from any other source. Each one of the following categories of actions can account for 3-5 Juice, but no single category should be enough on its own.

- Helping Roxie with her work (she sometimes needs someone to pick her up)
- Obtain special materials (e.g., raid a Helix Lab facility for bullet-proof titanium)
- Provide magical crafting assistance (themselves or by appealing to contacts)
- Bend time to make the work faster
- Training Lancelot

Anyone savvy enough who is **Investigating** the project can tell that the dedicated Errants will eventually complete it, with or without the crew. Sabotaging it openly will instantly mark the crew as enemies of the Errants, who will attack and throw the crew out of their fort (size factor 1 or 2 as necessary).

Secretly sabotaging the construction requires a **Sneak Around** move with a risk status with a tier of the player's choice, for example *nice-and-easy-1*, *don't-screw-this-up-3*, or *walking-on-thin-ice-5*. On a hit, give the player Juice equal to the tier of the status, which he can use now to cause delays with the project, or later, to make Lancelot's moves malfunction in battle.

JUNKYARD HILLFORT ★★★

PENETRATE THE WALL 6

- **Fortified:** Reduce by 2 the tier of any status of physical harm that targets the Junkyard Hillfort's wall or anyone behind its fortifications. Attacks that attempt to penetrate the wall must first max out *penetrate-the-wall*.
- **Rusty Spikes:** When you crash into the wall of the Junkyard Hillfort or when you try to scale it, you first take *impaled-3*.
- **Ramps:** Errants with a *two-wheeled steed* can charge from behind the Junkyard Hillfort walls, along the walls, or inside the Junkyard Hillfort.
- **Spears over Lances:** When fighting enemies outside the Junkyard Hillfort, Errants inside have ample supply of *steel-rod spears*.

- Errants inside the fort pile more junk to bolster its fortifications (remove one tier from *penetrate-the-wall*)

- Stand foreboding against the cloudy sky, its flag fluttering in the wind, while the Errants call obscenities from the ramparts

ROXIE ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / TURN AGAINST THE ERRANTS 4

- **Metallurgy:** Whenever there's metal around her, Roxie can use a soft move to either equip herself with *a metal hammer*, give herself *armored-1* (stackable), or burn one tag related to metal.
- **Derafsh Kaviani:** When Roxie bears her legendary royal banner – a bejeweled leather apron on a pole – into battle, increase the effects of her support moves by 1.
- **Sworn of Camelot:** When Roxie's loyalty is tested, first give her *loyal-3*, renewable as a soft move.

- Restore up to five metal-related tags for her fellow Errants (*makeshift shield*, *junk-made sword*, *two-wheeled steed*, *steel-rod spears*)
- Unleash her inner Kaveh, roaring to rally the Errants (give one Errant *galvanized-3* or remove up to three negative statuses from a single Errant)
- Strike someone with her hammer, sending them flying (*dizzy-3* and a temporary *knocked-back-3*; *knocked-back* PCs must **Take the Risk** with this impeding status to return to the fray, or otherwise remove it before engaging in close-quarters combat)

- Stick an angry glare at her enemy as metal starts shaking all around her

THE HIGHWAY BARRICADES

As you approach the highway ramp, admiring the backdrop of the City's skyline, an unusual happening on the road suddenly catches your attention. A smoking, spiked mass of metal and junk rolls onto the road, forcing the car in front of it to swerve, skid, and come to a screeching halt. Bikers then spring out of hiding and start circling the pulled over vehicle, revving up their engines and banging their baseball bats on their trash-can-cover shields. For a moment you think it's a hit on the people in the car, but after a few words, laughs, and bank notes are exchanged, the barricade is pulled back and the terrorized driver races away.

As the Errants' grip on Whitecliff tightens, they begin escalating their lawless behavior and practicing for Beaumont's final move: sealing off the neighborhood. Whitecliff is delimited by highways from every direction, so when their leader is ready, the Errants will block all highway exits and underpasses. For the time being, they are erecting barricades, harassing passersby, and demanding tolls. This helps them achieve a dual goal of securing a foothold at the highway exits while also spreading an atmosphere of lawlessness to undermine Mayor Ricci.

Near almost half of the highway exits and junctions leading in and out of Whitecliff, the Errants erected **a mobile spiked barricade** from truck tires, barrels, steel rods, barbed wire, and sometimes even the burnt chassis and frame of a car. They then ambush passing cars, rolling out the barricade in front of them so the driver is forced to stop, and then badger the passengers with pointless questions and demands for a toll (although they quickly waive it if the driver resists).

If the PCs or the police clear a barricade, two others pop up in other exits and the same barricade is rebuilt the next day.

The clues that can be picked up from the Errants here are the same as in Talking to the Errants (page 191). In addition, the following clues can be learned:

The materials for the barricades were taken from the local junkyard.

While the Errants here pretend to be just punks acting up, there is a greater plan at work – and they know it (they won't tell, being *loyal-3*, unless the crew completes a quest, see The Initiation Quest, page 193).

Strategic analysis of the barricades indicates they could potentially be used to seal off the neighborhood, if there are enough of them. **The Errants may be planning to take over the neighborhood soon.**

There is nothing inherently magical about the barricades but the craftsmanship behind them is ingenious. **Beyond the Mist**, they leave a trail of horse hooves and sparks that leads to the junkyard (to Roxie Zare, the Rift of Kaveh the blacksmith).

MAKESHIFT BARRICADE ★★★

A Makeshift Barricade is usually manned by a small band of Errants (size factor 1).

SMASH 4

- **Rusty Spikes:** When you crash into the Makeshift Barricade (or vice versa) or when you try to scale it, you first take *impaled-3*.
- **Defensive Barrier:** While a character is ducking behind the Makeshift Barricade, reduce by 2 the tier of statuses of physical harm she takes.
- **Ramp:** Errants with a *two-wheeled steed* can charge from behind the Makeshift Barricade.

- The Errants roll out the Makeshift Barricade in front of a moving vehicle, forcing it to stop or crash into it (**Force Them to Choose**)
- An Errant rolls the Makeshift Barricade downhill, giving it *momentum-3* and increasing its **Rusty Spikes** move damage from collision to *cleaved-apart-4*
- An Errant locks the Makeshift Barricade wheels, giving it *rooted-3*

- An Errant cautiously rears her helmet above the Makeshift Barricade, peeking at the surrounding
- An Errant slowly pushes the Makeshift Barricade to a new position



DEPTH 3:
LONG LIVE THE KING

At the beginning of this Depth, the people of Whitecliff are ready for a change. Those who supported Ricci thus far are displeased with her handling of the rising crime, while those who subscribe to the rapidly-growing Albion movement are ready to replace Ricci with Calvin Cyrus of the CCC, who has done so much for this neighborhood.

Cyrus is getting ready for his next political move, and avoids the PCs, although they might still be able to talk to him should they visit the lake house; if they don't, the attempt to overthrow Ricci at the town meeting takes place, and they can optionally meet the king at the lake house later. The PCs can hear about the town meeting from their contacts, from the locals, on the media, etc.

THE LAKE HOUSE

```
You pull over and dim the headlights of
your car as you near the house on the lake.
In the night's cool air, the sounds of
water lapping gently on the shore is ee-
rily tranquil, so far removed from White-
cliff and all that has transpired there.
Why here? Why did the king of the Errants
choose this place? Is he planning to end
you here, tie your body to a rock and make
sure you're never found? Or is he truthful
in his claims of striving for some greater
cause? Maybe the answers are over there, on
the far side of the gray, silent lake...
```

Whether the crew arrives here on their own or are brought here by the Errants, this is the place where Vince Beaumont will reveal himself and attempt to recruit the crew to his cause.

The lake house is owned by **Céline Rowland** (Lady of the Lake), Beaumont's long-time mentor (see sidebar). It is a country home on the edge of town, on the far side of Lakeside Drive, built on the shores of a lake. Inside, it is designed for comfort with a mixture of country and boho-chic decor. The main room overlooks the lake and has a roaring fireplace, cushy sofas, and wooly throws, but once you step away from the fire, a cool dampness prevails and mists creep along the creaky age-old hardwood floors. There is an occasional sound of gentle ripples from outside.

LADY OF THE LAKE

Céline Rowland (Lady of the Lake) has been Vince Beaumont's mentor, guide, and financier, as well as an advocate for his battle against the Crimson King, for the past three of his lifetimes. When he was reborn again, this time in Calvin Cyrus' mind, the first thing he did was to locate his trusted advisor and reunite with her.

A healer and a mystic, not to mention a refined lady of timeless beauty, Céline leads a reclusive life close to nature at her cozy lake house. Her reasons for supporting Vince Beaumont are shrouded in mystery: either her mortal side blinds her to his violent, wounded psyche or she has a far greater plan in mind and she's using him to find and test the true heroes of the story - the lead characters. The source of her power is equally mysterious: she may be a Gatekeeper, she may be the same person as Ariadne (see page 126), or she may be an emissary from the Sunken City who wants to see the Mist fall, or all or none of the above. Whatever be the case, the boat that is tied to the dock outside the lake house leads beyond the City: to the Enclave of Avalon, into the Deep Mist (see *Shadows & Showdowns*), to the Sunken City itself (see *The Sunken City*), or to the great unknown beyond the Mist.

To further her secret agenda, Céline has provided Cyrus/Beaumont with an Avalonian Charm that would mask his Rifthood and with the magical seeds planted at the community garden that speed up the expansion of the Albion Enclave.

Céline Rowland lives here. As soon as she becomes aware of the PCs, she can magically whisk Cyrus/Beaumont here to talk to them, whether he is at the CCC, in hiding, in prison, etc. She sees her role here as a mediator, keeping everyone talking; if anyone gets violent, they get transported back to Whitecliff (although with the appropriate tags or theme improvement, this can be avoided).

AUDIENCE WITH THE KING

When the time comes, Calvin Cyrus emerges from the back of the house, looking completely different. He is taller, more muscular, wearing a designer leather biker jacket over a tailored white shirt, and he has shaved off his 'stache. All Rifts present can see a crown of golden light shimmering brightly over his brow. More than anything, more than anyone they've ever met, this man exudes the air of true nobility. He is King Arthur manifest in all his glory.

Cyrus/Beaumont is here to talk and he wastes no time. To gain the crew's support, he may reveal the following.

- His retention of memories of past incarnations of his Mythos (but not his hostile takeover of his hosts)
- What he managed to learn about the Crimson King and his wretched grip over the City
- His decades-spanning war with the Crimson King and his discovery that the evil king can't be killed
- His quest to stop the Crimson King at all costs, driven by a fierce conviction that such evil cannot be allowed to rule the City
- His plan to turn Whitecliff into Albion and use it as a source of magic that could rid the City of this tyrant
- The place he has for one or more of the PCs in this plan
- Finally, the next step and the first request he makes of the crew, if they are willing to help him: support him at the town meeting (if it hasn't happened yet) and help him take over the local police precinct (Battle of Precinct 63) and turn it into his Camelot

If you are playing through the entire story arc, adapt this information to the PCs' current Depth in the overarching case *Percival*, based on whether Vince Beaumont is the first, second, or third Grail Knight (see page 260).

Most of all, Beaumont would try to hide his own secret pain and aggravated emotional wound caused by the loss of his daughter, whose name he can't remember (in other words, hide that he is a Grail Knight). He will therefore also attempt to hide his true name from the PCs. This means it'll be harder for the PCs to discover his personal connection to Corbin Payne; this revelation should be saved for the end of the vein.

Let the crew engage in discussion with Cyrus/Beaumont and Céline Rowland. PCs can **Investigate** to try to suss out Beaumont's motives and intentions; give them valuable leads, especially one that would deepen their dilemma, but keep the big revelations for later. Alternatively, you can use Beaumont's *monolithic-4* status to emphasize how hard it is to get information from the king when he does not yet wish to share it. **Convincing** the king is likewise difficult and can at most have a topical effect, swaying him to change the timing of his plan but not its essence; remember that the hatred Beaumont feels toward Corbin Payne is existential and carved into his psyche with *the-Dolorous-Stroke-6*.

STONE OF GIRAMPHIEL

Relic

MYSTERY

Who here covets the stone?

POWER TAGS

magical protection, *resist magic spells*, *empower a champion*, *precious stone*, *immunity to fire*, *flush out greed*, *make one braver*, *make one charming*, *magical barrier*, *double one's strength*

WEAKNESS TAGS

lends itself to stealing, *source of envy and strife*, *chips and cracks*, *loyal to a fault*

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Wizard's Bane:** Whenever you **Face Danger** against a spell using tags from this theme, on a 7-9, you reduce the tier of the incoming status by 3 instead of 1.

PROTECTOR OF ALBION

Turf (Mythos)

MYSTERY

Who threatens peace in this land?

POWER TAGS

forests and fields of Albion, *vigilance*, *knows every path and road*, *leader of the Errants*, *agricultural life*, *the bounty of the land*, *herald of Camelot*, *single combat*, *resistance to the Mist*, *a network of peasant spies*

WEAKNESS TAGS

local monsters, *feudal leadership style*, *old Whitecliff nostalgics*, *the normalcy beyond Albion*

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Challenge the Enemy:** Once per session, you may **Convince** an enemy in your turf to engage you in single combat as if you burnt a tag for a hit (Power of 3 and outcome of 10+, statuses apply). The enemy must fight you or take a humiliating status, such as *dishonored-3*.

IN THE SERVICE OF THE KING

PCs who serve Arthur out of true commitment to his greater quest gain a new ongoing tag *strength-of-conviction*, helpful to all actions to complete the current quest the king has given them. When such a character replaces a theme, regardless of the theme type, the player may choose for the PC to be Touched by Arthur and pick one of the Mythos themes here.

TOWN MEETING

The wind blows rain and street trash in the faces of hundreds of Whitecliff residents as they swarm toward the bleak town hall building on the day of the town meeting. Among them, you see cheerful hippie Albion farmers alongside sensible residents who want to keep their homes and businesses safe, their cable TV on, and their processed foods within reach. With the recent developments, it seems inevitable that Mayor Ricci would face some harsh criticism and that decisive action would be voted on. It's supposed to be a celebration of the people's democratic rights, but you wonder if the choice hasn't already been made for them. What's the point of having the right to vote, when you can't even see the forces that shape your decision?

The showdown between the reincarnated Vince Beaumont and the City begins with a simple vote at the Whitecliff town meeting. Cashing in on the rising crime rates, Mayor Ricci's waning support, and the CCC's strong backing in the community, Cyrus/Beaumont appeals to the residents of the town to remove Mayor Ricci from power and install him as the temporary mayor of Whitecliff. Whether this is even legally possible is besides the point; what he needs is the popular vote of the people which would in essence pronounce him the king and unlock the power of the Albion Enclave.

On the day of the town meeting, the registered residents of Whitecliff gather in the town hall to receive an update from the mayor, discuss the matters of the neighborhood, and vote on burning issues. After the update from the mayor, Calvin Cyrus shows up in his new kingly form, causing a ruckus, to present his appeal to the people of Whitecliff.

THE DEBATE

A heated debate ensues immediately. Someone calls the media, and within minutes news teams show up at the scene, along with agents of other interested parties. As the meeting rules go, the discussion is followed by a vote, which this time will effectively choose Whitecliff's next "ruler". The PCs can influence the vote by speaking to the gathered residents or affecting them in other means (using fraudulent means, whether mundane or legendary, can backfire).

- Mayor Ricci's mundane politics turn out to be useless against Cyrus/Beaumont's legendary rulership. If the PCs speak for her, trying to maintain the status quo, or if they independently speak against Cyrus, they are effectively facing him alone.
- If the PCs speak for Calvin Cyrus, he makes this into a test of their loyalty and steps back, letting them win the crowds for him against the mayor's arguments.
- If the PCs are divided, they face off with each other.
- If the PCs refrain from intervening, Beaumont wins the vote.

The crowd's opinion is represented by a *swayed* status, starting at tier 0. PCs can **Go Toe to Toe** (or **Hit With All They've Got** if they have an opening) to give the audience a *swayed-to-Ricci* or *swayed-to-Cyrus* status. This is a **swing spectrum**: if the opposing *sway* status has tiers, a PC must first spend tiers of the *sway* status they give to remove tiers from the other party's *sway* status, one-for-one, before being allowed to *sway* the crowd to their side.

PCs may not **Face Danger** for the audience, only for themselves in case their opponent attempts to *discredit* them and weaken their arguments. The only exception to this is if the PCs somehow furnish the audience with tags that help the audience resist persuasion, but that can backfire as well.

The final vote is determined by the status of the crowd at the end of the debate, when one party has obliterated the other by reaching tier 5, or when you announce the end because of cinematic considerations. The greater the status at the end, the more sweeping the support that party received.

If Cyrus has overwhelming support, he may move to the next part of his plan there and then and march on Precinct 63 (Battle of Precinct 63). If he loses, he will bitterly walk away and prepare to take Whitecliff by force.

MAYOR RICCI ★★★

Mayor Eleonora Ricci is a sharp, upbeat, but clearly overworked and preoccupied woman in her 50s, usually seen in a tailored yet inexpensive suit. Adopting a working-class rhetoric, her public image banks on reliability and honesty, at the expense of coming across as an unexciting "cog in the machine".

HURT OR SUBDUE 1 / THREATEN 5 / DISCREDIT 5

- **Bodyguards:** When Mayor Ricci takes a status from which her bodyguards can protect her, the bodyguards take the status instead (use Beat Cops / Security Guards).
- **Public Persona:** To *discredit* Mayor Ricci, you must take action publicly, e.g., tip off the media, debate in a town meeting, etc.
- **Public Speaker:** Every time Mayor Ricci gets the spotlight, she can give an audience *swayed-1* or remove 1 negative tag or status tier from herself or her audience (before making a hard move, if any).
- **Seasoned Politician:** When Mayor Ricci takes a mundane compelling status, reduce its tier by 2. When you **Convince** Mayor Ricci, on a 10+, change the outcome to 7-9; on a 12+, change the outcome to 10+.
- **Media Damage Control:** At the end of downtime, remove any status tiers on *discredit*, unless it is at tier 6.

- Make a winning argument against her opponent (*swayed-3*)
- *Discredit-2* her political opponent
- Win back the audience (remove up to two negative tags or status tiers from the entire audience or from herself)
- Mobilize the municipal system to hinder someone (*harassed-3* or create a new Danger such as City Official, Corporate Lawyer, Detective, SWAT Team, etc.)

- Use trite lines and rehearsed body language to appeal to the public
- Seethe behind her fake smile, preparing to counter her opponent

VINCE BEAUMONT ★★★★★

Riding the Mythos of King Arthur, Vince Beaumont's appearance changes with every reincarnation, according to the current person he is inhabiting. Regardless of what they look like, each such host is transformed into a more regal and powerful version of themselves, exuding the presence of the noblest of kings. At the same time, they display subtle marks of Beaumont's rage such as an occasional scathing remark or a burning glare.

Maximum Danger Rating: Vince Beaumont is a dangerous adversary on his own; with his army, he is far beyond the power level of the PCs. However, Beaumont is not designed to be a Danger that the PCs overcome by force, at least not until the end of the Criminal Vein. Instead, use him as a Danger that can corrupt the PCs, selling them a dream of freedom and justice, while driving them to commit acts that only increase the suffering in the City.

Healing Vince Beaumont: As with all the failed Grail Knights, Beaumont bears a deep emotional wound inflicted by the Fisher King, called **the Dolorous Stroke**, represented by a tier-6 status. Only a **Stop. Holding. Back.** move may affect this status: releasing Beaumont from the effects of the Dolorous Stroke for one scene requires a no-return sacrifice, while curing such a wound altogether requires the ultimate sacrifice. Optionally, you may allow a *Dynamite!* **Change the Game** move to reduce the tier-6 status for the duration of a scene.

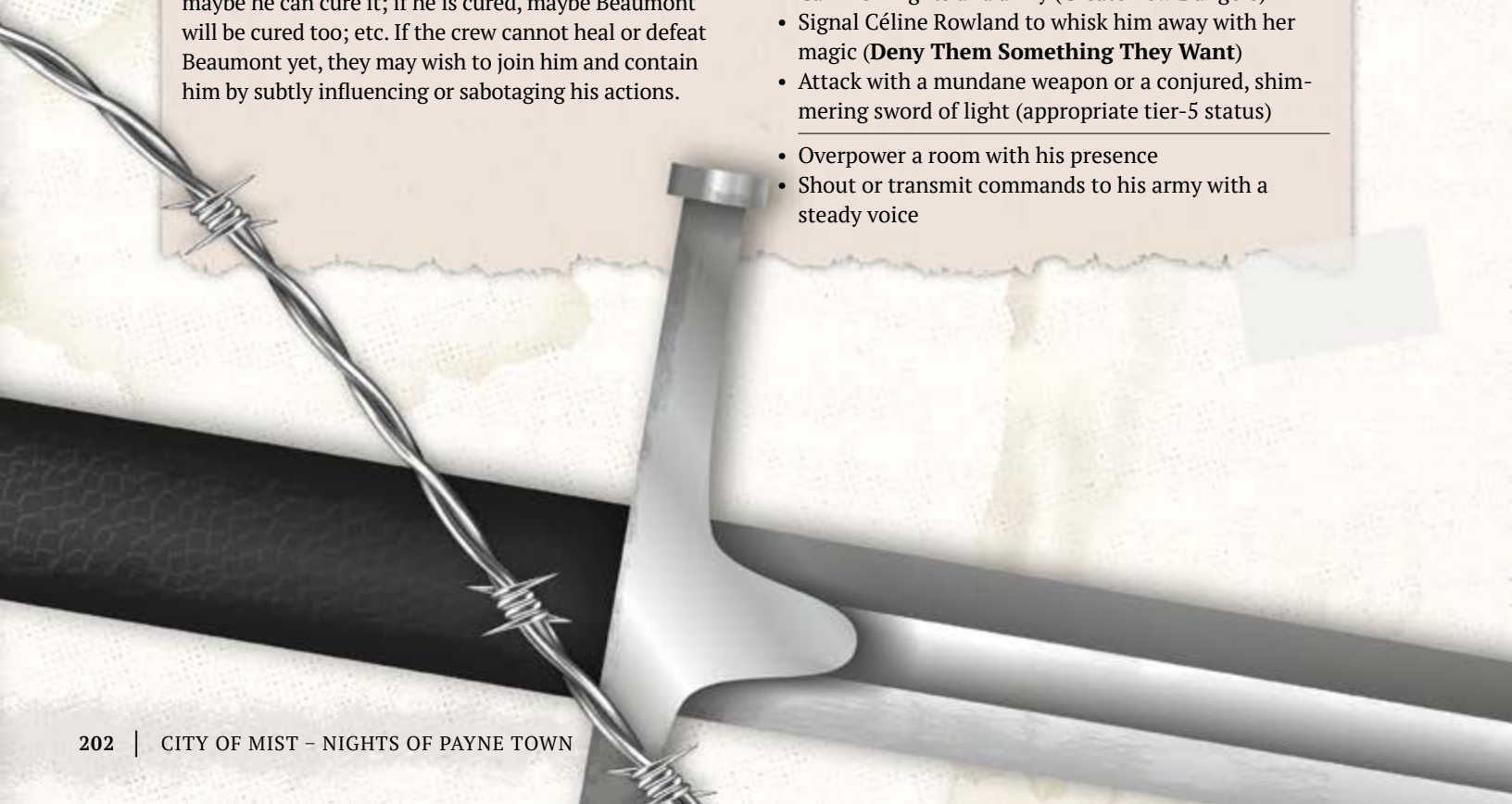
Ultimately, the solution to the problem of Vince Beaumont should be narrative. If you're playing the story arc, it should point to Corbin Payne – if he gave the wound, maybe he can cure it; if he is cured, maybe Beaumont will be cured too; etc. If the crew cannot heal or defeat Beaumont yet, they may wish to join him and contain him by subtly influencing or sabotaging his actions.

HURT OR SUBDUE 6 / THREATEN – / ASSUAGE – / HEAL -

- **Once and Future King:** When Vince Beaumont's current host dies, he reincarnates at the end of the next downtime, or sooner, if cinematically appropriate.
- **Kingly Presence:** Once per scene, when a character first sees Vince Beaumont, she takes *respectful-3*. Willing servants take *loyal-3* instead and cannot **Face Danger**.
- **Bodyguards:** When Vince Beaumont takes a status from which his bodyguards can protect him, the bodyguards take the status instead (use the Errants, Lancelot, or any one of his servants, including the PCs if they are willing).
- **Mythical Battle Dress:** When Vince Beaumont takes a status of physical harm, reduce its tier by 3, except if the status is given by an act of betrayal.
- **Avalonian Charm:** Vince Beaumont can disguise himself as a Sleeper (turning off **Kingly Presence** and optionally also **Mythical Battle Dress**). When Beaumont is about to be afflicted by magic, including Gatekeeper powers, he first takes *shielded-from-magic-3*. This status cannot exceed tier 4.
- **Monolithic:** The King of Britain never yields what he feels. When anyone attempts to read Vince Beaumont's reactions, glean information from him, or negotiate with him, he first takes *monolithic-4*, renewable as a soft move. This status cannot exceed tier 4.

- Speak with confidence, rallying listeners to his cause (*swayed-3*, *impressed-3*, *inspired-3*, or remove 3 tiers of negative emotional or tactical statuses, affecting all who hear)
- Infect his followers with his rage (change the tag of a social or emotional status or tag he inflicted to *raging*)
- Call his knights and army (Create new Dangers)
- Signal Céline Rowland to whisk him away with her magic (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
- Attack with a mundane weapon or a conjured, shimmering sword of light (appropriate tier-5 status)

- Overpower a room with his presence
- Shout or transmit commands to his army with a steady voice



DEPTH 4: CAMELOT

BATTLE OF PRECINCT 63

Storm clouds gather above and crows caw incessantly as the army of Albion marches on the barren plaza in front of Precinct 63. Police officers drop their donuts and coffee takeout cups in shock and scramble inside or take cover behind their squad cars, pointing their meager pistols at the militia. Amidst the advancing ranks of his Errants marches Cyrus Calvin, adorned with a golden crown and an azure cloak. In his burning gaze you can see an impregnable stronghold built on the rubbles of the current order and, with it, the power to defeat his enemy. Nothing must stand in his way.

Whether he was made "king" or not during the vote in town hall, Cyrus/Beaumont plans to take control of Whitecliff and completely transform it into Albion by closing it off and seceding from the City. To do so, he must conquer the most defensible location in the neighborhood – the building of Precinct 63 – and make it into his seat of power, Camelot.

The justification he gives for this action is the failure of the police to stop the recent crime wave and, to the followers of the Albion movement, the fact that the police represent the status quo, the powers-that-be who do not want to allow Albion to exist, let alone flourish.

If you're playing this case as a one-shot, Beaumont's wounded psyche will show up in all its glory here. He will stop at no sacrifice to accomplish his goal, branding any police officer as an enemy and those who won't aid him as weak. PCs who study him during the battle can see his burning hatred toward the Crimson King, which is projected at anyone who stands in Beaumont's way to victory.

If you are playing through the story arc, make these cues more subtle, to prolong the PCs' dilemma of whether to support Beaumont. Also consider adding a small Gatekeeper force to come to the aid of the police, to prove Beaumont right – he does indeed act in defiance of the masters of the status quo, who wish to end Albion and any good that came with it.

RUNNING THE BATTLE

In the battle of Precinct 63, Cyrus/Beaumont mounts an attack on the local police precinct. The local police force is led by **Chief Samson "Sam" Wicks**. The PCs may support either side or fight for opposite sides. If the crew does not intervene, the Albion army eventually overpowers the cops and Camelot is established.

- Divide the battleground into **conflict points**, skirmishes and choke points around and inside the precinct building (see below for a list of locations in the precinct).
- Use each side's units as **Dangers** at these conflict points. Make sure you don't underwhelm or overwhelm the PCs in their conflict points – they will have to go through several of them to determine the final outcome of the battle.
- Define one or more **stakes** for each conflict point that could sway the battle in either direction (see below for suggestions). Each victory or loss at a conflict point determines who controls the stakes, which might sway the battle as a whole in favor of one side.
- **When PCs are involved in a conflict point, use the rules.** PCs can also provide overarching support from the rear, giving their allies an advantage in remote conflict points.
- **In conflict points that don't involve the PCs, use only cinematic consideration.** Strengthen the side that's currently behind to continue the battle, or further weaken them to draw closer to a definitive outcome. You can also **Complicate Things, Bigtime** to narrate how the PCs' side loses such a conflict point, raising the stakes in the conflict points where the PCs are fighting.

The battle ends when one side exhausts the other or has won enough stakes to make the other side's actions insignificant while still maintaining some strength. It is possible for both sides to wear themselves out, in which case any further actions of the PCs will determine the outcome.

AFTERMATH OF THE BATTLE

If Beaumont wins, Precinct 63 rapidly begins to transform into Camelot. At the same time, the Albion Enclave bursts out of the community gardens and washes over the entire district, all the way to the highway barricades, which now turn into walls. A new kingdom is born.

If Beaumont loses, he vows to continue to fight the Crimson King and his servants until Albion and the whole City are free. He fights until he is killed or whisked away from the battlefield against his wish by his mystic advisor, Céline Rowland.



THE PRECINCT 63 BATTLEGROUND

THE ARMIES

Remember to break down Collectives to smaller size factors as they split up and attack different conflict points.

BEAUMONT'S ARMY

- Beaumont (page 202)
- The Errants (page 193; size factor 3)
- Makeshift Barricades (page 198)
- Roxie (page 197)
- Lancelot (page 206; partially operational, if the PCs didn't help build it)
- Peasants from the community garden (size factor 3, *hurt:1*, attack with pitchfork to inflict *stabbed-2*)
- A tamed medieval monster (such as the Black Shuck, page 206, or, if he's alive, Archie the Dragon, page 195)

THE POLICE

- Beat Cops (*MC Toolkit*, page 148; size factor 3)
- A small SWAT Team (*MC Toolkit*, page 150; size factor 1)
- Detectives (*MC Toolkit*, page 148; size factor 1)
- Chief Samson "Sam" Wicks (use the Detective but increase his statuses by 1, and give him *override-authority:–*)
- Security System (*MC Toolkit*, page 150)
- Police Squad Cars (*MC Toolkit*, page 150)
- Gatekeeper Agents (*MC Toolkit*, page 164)

ENTER THE STORMBRINGERS

While the Avatar Council of The Truth avoids like the plague anything to do with Corbin Payne or his Grail Knights, the Crimson King himself may ask one of them to intervene here if Beaumont's forces are set to easily overpower Precinct 63 (especially if Beaumont has the full support of the crew). Payne does this to ensure there is enough misery to go around.

DA Barbara King, Avatar of Shango (*Shadows & Showdowns*, page 148), fields Mythos-empowered law enforcement units to tackle Mythos-powered threats. These **Strombringers** are more durable and pack an extra punch, charging their weapons with scorching lightning. By recruiting Chief Wicks and any other cop in the program, the DA grants them the following Mythos Power Set (in addition to their Danger moves):

- **Peak Physical Condition:** When a Stormbringer engages in a physical fight or struggle, give her *peak physical condition*. When she takes a status of physical harm or subdual, reduce its tier by 1 (this stacks with any other status filters she may possess).
- **Obliterating Force:** Tags describing mundane or soft cover or armor cannot be invoked to **Face Danger** against attacks charged with Stormbringer's lightning.
- (Hard move) Smite with a fire-wreathed thunderbolt (*blast-wound-3*) or charge weapons with such energy

The fire-wreathed lightning produced by Stormbringers is powerful enough to go through walls, ballistic armor, riot shields, etc. If you want to limit their use of lightning, give them a *deplete:3* spectrum and a *discharge-1* status whenever they use lightning powered attacks.

CONFLICT POINTS

GROUND FLOOR

- The plaza and parking area with motorcycles, squad cars, and SWAT trucks
- The entrance hall, complaints desk, waiting area, and lavatories
- The booking room and lock-up cells
- The officers' barracks: cantina, lounge, locker room, showers, and dormitory
- Interrogation rooms, viewing rooms, line-up room
- Storage rooms: the armory, the evidence locker, maintenance

TOP FLOOR

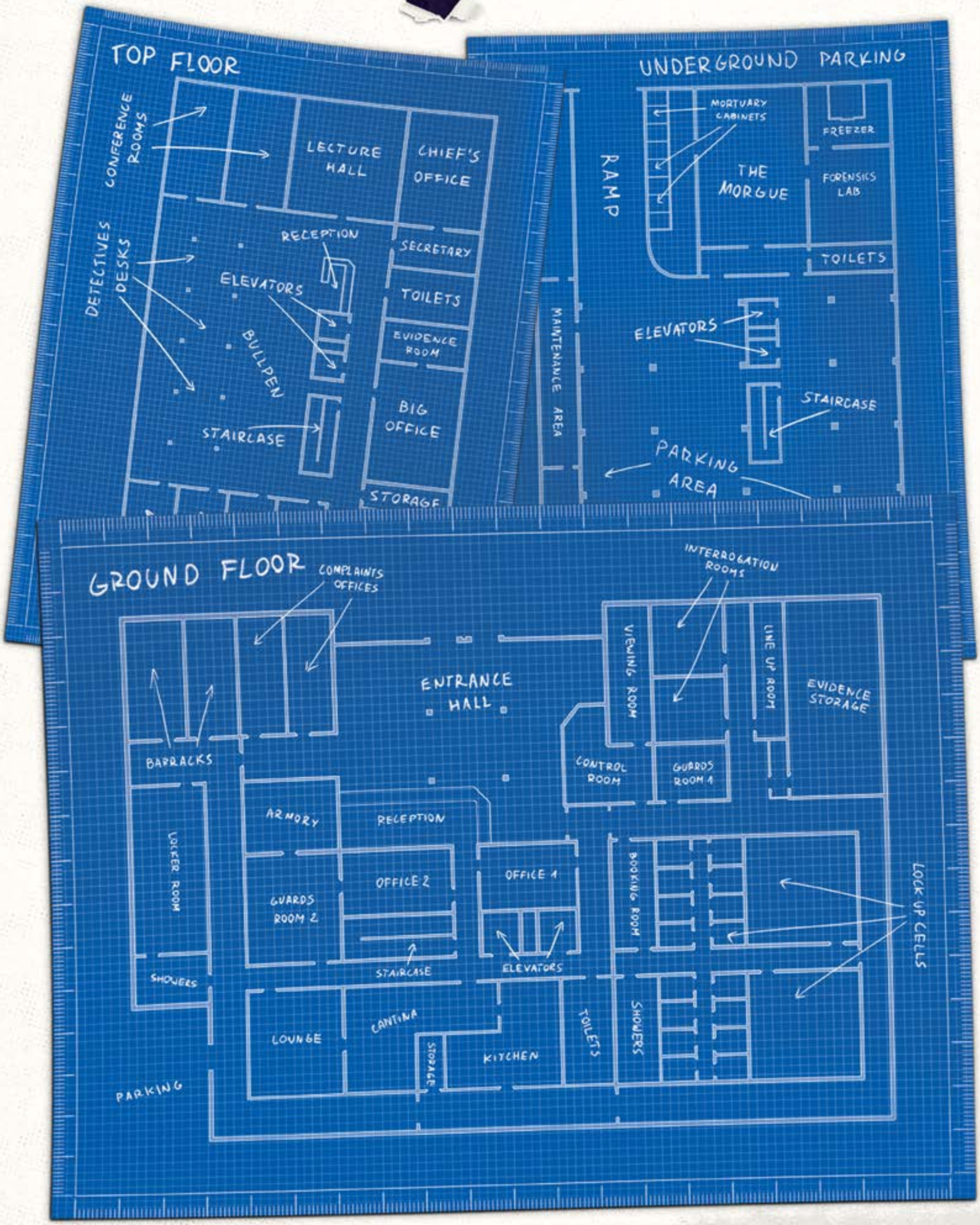
- The bullpen, a large hall with desks for detectives
- Offices, including the Chief's office
- Briefing and lecture hall
- Conference room

BASEMENT

- Garage with ramp to the street level
- The morgue

STAKES

- **Building Access:** Who controls traffic and vehicle access to the building? Is the building under siege?
- **Front Entrance:** Who controls the front door and entrance hall? Can the attackers freely enter the building?
- **Other Entry Points:** What about windows, back entrances, access through the garage, or via the roof?
- **Garrison:** Where are most of the cops when the battle begins? Can they reach the other conflict points? Can they be contained?
- **Firepower:** Who controls the armory? Can the cops arm themselves in time?
- **Leadership:** Who has the Chief? Can he lead or can he be used as a bargaining chip?
- **Comms**: Who controls communications? Are there reinforcements for either side on their way?


TOP FLOOR
CONFERENCE ROOMS
LECTURE HALL
CHIEF'S OFFICE
DETECTIVES DESKS
RECEPTION
SECRETARY
ELEVATORS
TOILETS
BULLPEN
EVIDENCE ROOM
BIG OFFICE
STAIRCASE
STORAGE
UNDERGROUND PARKING
MORTUARY CABINETS
FREEZER
RAMP
THE MORGUE
FORENSICS LAB
TOILETS
MAINTENANCE AREA
ELEVATORS
STAIRCASE
PARKING AREA
GROUND FLOOR
COMPLAINTS OFFICES
INTERROGATION ROOMS
ENTRANCE HALL
VIEWING ROOM
LINE UP ROOM
EVIDENCE STORAGE
BARRACKS
CONTROL ROOM
GUARDS ROOM 1
ARMORY
RECEPTION
LOCKER ROOM
OFFICE 2
OFFICE 1
BOOKING ROOM
LOCK UP CELLS
GUARDS ROOM 2
STAIRCASE
ELEVATORS
SHOWERS
LOUNGE
CANTINA
STORAGE
KITCHEN
TOILETS
SHOWERS
PARKING

LANCELOT ★★★★

"Lancelot" is a 10-foot tall war golem – a walking tank – made of junkyard debris fashioned into the likeness of a medieval knight. It takes orders from Cyrus/Beaumont, then Roxie, then the Errants' current leader. If the PCs did not help the Errants complete Lancelot, it *often malfunctions* and has *obvious weak points*.

As its secret superweapon, Lancelot can have a destructive magical beam projector, a knockout gas grenade launcher, a railgun, an Avalonian transporting charm that moves it anywhere in the battlefield, etc.

DAMAGE OR SUBDUE 6 / MAGICALLY UNMAKE 4 / CHARGE UP 4

- **Armored Knight Golem:** Reduce by 3 the tier of any status of physical harm that targets Lancelot or anyone behind it.
- **Unsurpassed Swordsman:** When you attack Lancelot in close-quarters combat, it first hits you with one of its hard moves.
- **Rusty Spikes:** When you crash into Lancelot (or vice versa) or when you try to scale it, you first take *impaled-3*.
- **Ramp:** Errants with a *two-wheeled steed* can charge from behind Lancelot or use it to leap into high windows.
- **Superweapon:** As a soft move, give Lancelot *charging-1*. When *charge-up* maxes out, Lancelot fires one of its superweapons, winning the stakes at a specific conflict point in the battle and/or dealing a tier-5 status. Reset *charge-up*.

- Shake off a host of attackers or saw off restraints (remove all subdual statuses)
- Slam someone with its giant metal fist or gun them with a sawed-off shotgun strapped to its other arm (*broken-ribs-3* or *gunshot-wound-3* and a temporary *knocked-back-3*; *knocked-back* PCs must **Take the Risk** with this impeding status to return to the fray, or otherwise remove it before engaging in close-quarters combat)
- Fire an array of mounted firearms (*perforated-4* or *blast-wound-3* affecting an area)

- Whir, clank, and thud as it dramatically walks up to the precinct
- Overshadow its next opponent

BLACK SHUCK ★★

A Black Shuck is a fiend in the form of a black dog from English folklore, akin to the Hellhound and the Barghest. A pack of Black Shucks usually has a size factor of 1 or 2. The eyes of a Black Shuck bear a curse of impending death on all who look at them; the resulting status supports any action that has the potential of killing the target or hinders the target's actions to avoid a potentially lethal outcome (such as **Face Danger** or **Take the Risk**).

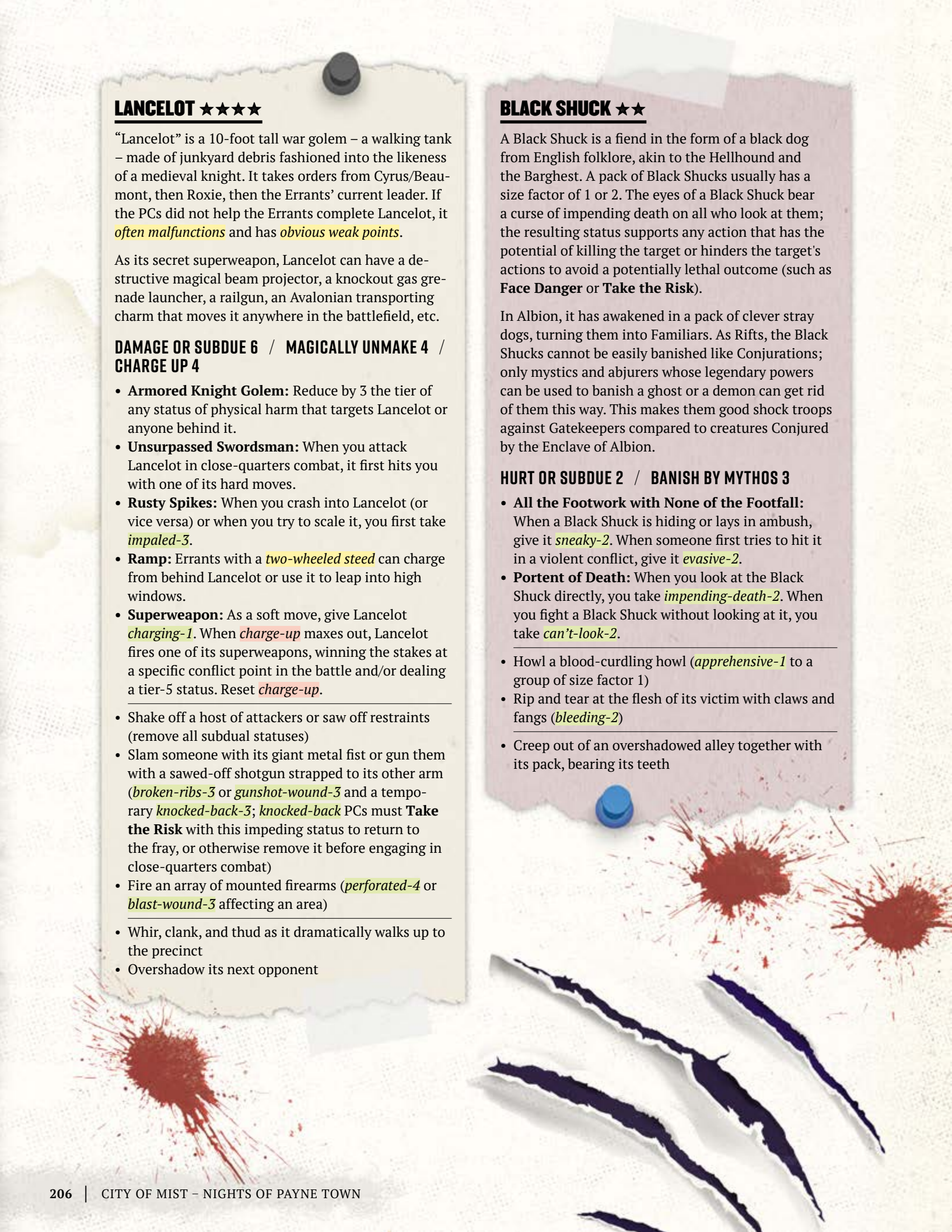
In Albion, it has awakened in a pack of clever stray dogs, turning them into Familiars. As Rifts, the Black Shucks cannot be easily banished like Conjurations; only mystics and abjurers whose legendary powers can be used to banish a ghost or a demon can get rid of them this way. This makes them good shock troops against Gatekeepers compared to creatures Conjured by the Enclave of Albion.

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / BANISH BY MYTHOS 3

- **All the Footwork with None of the Footfall:** When a Black Shuck is hiding or lays in ambush, give it *sneaky-2*. When someone first tries to hit it in a violent conflict, give it *evasive-2*.
- **Portent of Death:** When you look at the Black Shuck directly, you take *impending-death-2*. When you fight a Black Shuck without looking at it, you take *can't-look-2*.

- Howl a blood-curdling howl (*apprehensive-1* to a group of size factor 1)
- Rip and tear at the flesh of its victim with claws and fangs (*bleeding-2*)

- Creep out of an overshadowed alley together with its pack, bearing its teeth

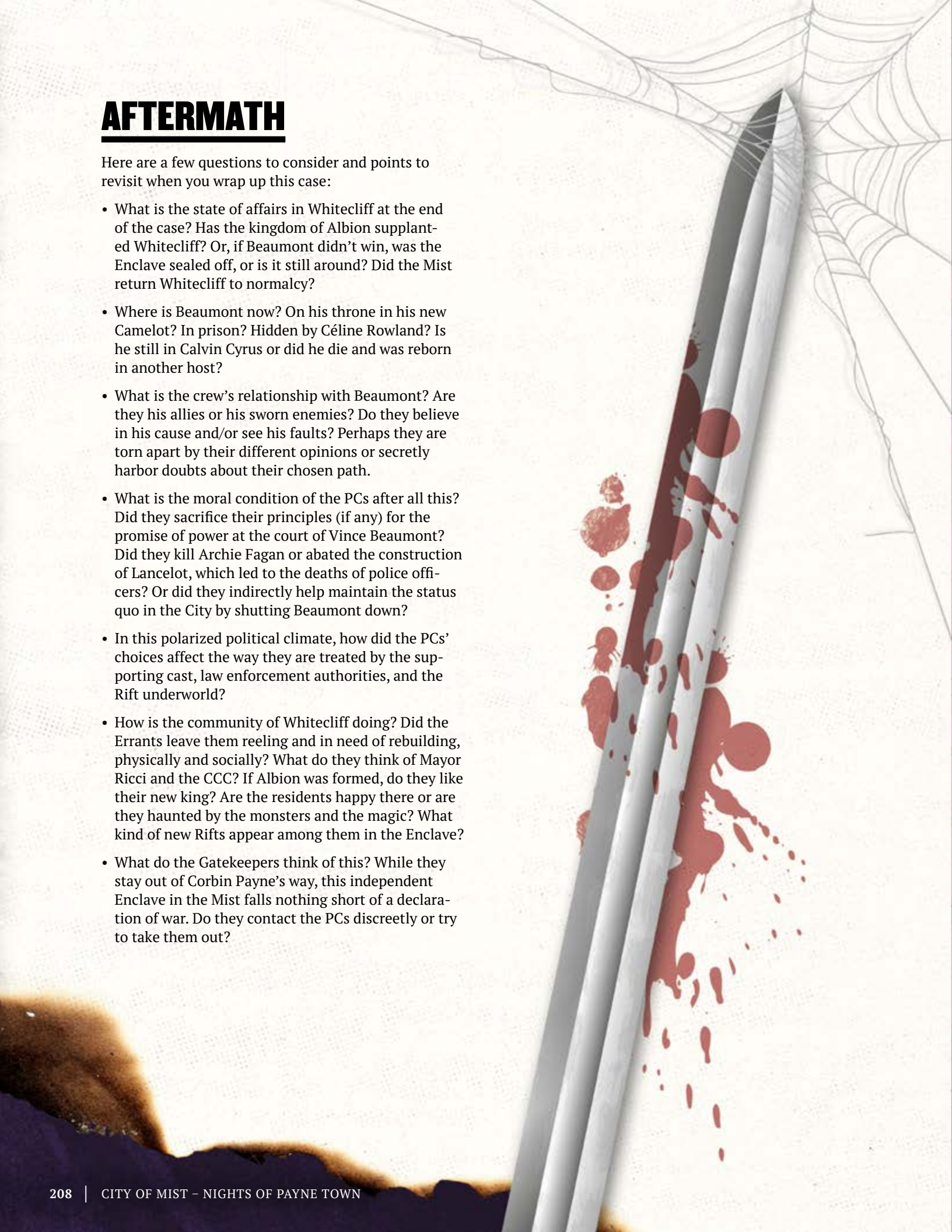




AFTERMATH

Here are a few questions to consider and points to revisit when you wrap up this case:

- What is the state of affairs in Whitecliff at the end of the case? Has the kingdom of Albion supplanted Whitecliff? Or, if Beaumont didn't win, was the Enclave sealed off, or is it still around? Did the Mist return Whitecliff to normalcy?
- Where is Beaumont now? On his throne in his new Camelot? In prison? Hidden by Céline Rowland? Is he still in Calvin Cyrus or did he die and was reborn in another host?
- What is the crew's relationship with Beaumont? Are they his allies or his sworn enemies? Do they believe in his cause and/or see his faults? Perhaps they are torn apart by their different opinions or secretly harbor doubts about their chosen path.
- What is the moral condition of the PCs after all this? Did they sacrifice their principles (if any) for the promise of power at the court of Vince Beaumont? Did they kill Archie Fagan or abated the construction of Lancelot, which led to the deaths of police officers? Or did they indirectly help maintain the status quo in the City by shutting Beaumont down?
- In this polarized political climate, how did the PCs' choices affect the way they are treated by the supporting cast, law enforcement authorities, and the Rift underworld?
- How is the community of Whitecliff doing? Did the Errants leave them reeling and in need of rebuilding, physically and socially? What do they think of Mayor Ricci and the CCC? If Albion was formed, do they like their new king? Are the residents happy there or are they haunted by the monsters and the magic? What kind of new Rifts appear among them in the Enclave?
- What do the Gatekeepers think of this? While they stay out of Corbin Payne's way, this independent Enclave in the Mist falls nothing short of a declaration of war. Do they contact the PCs discreetly or try to take them out?




CITY OF MIST
HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS
A BLOODY CASE OF BROKEN HOMES AND CORPORATE MONSTERS

"People like you have never really known hunger, not *true* hunger. Maybe you've been through some hard times. Maybe you had to skip a meal or two. But have you ever been so hungry that a single, overpowering sensation drowned all reason, an endless clawing at your stomach, begging you to fill the void? That's how much I hunger for this deal to go through. I want it so much I can taste it, and I can't be responsible for my actions if I don't get it. So be a darling and sign the papers. I promise you, by tomorrow night you won't even remember you ever lived in this miserable dump..."

Home Is Where The Heart Is is a classic monster-villain case that combines elements of horror with themes of corporate corruption. As the crew arrives in a declining neighborhood, both their mundane investigation into a predatory real-estate scheme and their legendary hunt after the monster prowling the streets lead them to the same woman. Once the villain is out in the open, however, she proves to be a threat on par with the worst the crew has seen and their investigation pivots: they become the prey and must figure out how to overcome the monster before they become her next meal. To top it all off, their own survival instincts override their logic, potentially driving them to commit unspeakable acts.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Eva Rice (Wendigo) grew up in a broken family. Her alcoholic parents, often unemployed and locked in some neverending and petty domestic dispute, were unable to take care of their daughter or their home, a small house in the neighborhood of **Fritzberg**. As a result, Eva's childhood was fraught with hunger, negligence, and domestic violence. She was frequently punished by being imprisoned in the house's basement, where she stayed locked for hours, cold and hungry.

One day, close to Eva's eighteenth birthday, her parents locked her in the basement for several days. In their drunkenness, they simply forgot about her. Caged and desperate, Eva's frustration with her own powerlessness reached a new threshold. Years of misery, want, and deprivation concentrated into an all-consuming black hole in her heart. She awakened, and when her parents finally opened the door, the wendigo jumped on them, devouring their flesh, leaving nothing but bones. Eva buried their remains in the overgrown backyard.

From that day on Eva vowed to have all of her needs fulfilled, basking in the power of the wendigo. While she was almost always hungry – her Mythos being the embodiment of all-devouring consumption – she made sure to always have the power to satiate this hunger. As the power of the wendigo grew in her, Eva became almost impossible to kill, but to her crippling insecurities "almost" was not enough. Aiming to have power even over her own mortality, she intuited through her Mythos that the only thing that could kill her would be if **her heart was cut into small pieces with a knife made of silver**. Therefore, she cut out her own heart, and hid it in her parents' old house.

CLIMBING THE PROPERTY LADDER

Heartless and ambitious, but practically a feral teenager, Eva started working odd jobs on the street and educating herself. She put herself through evening school and started working the blue-collar neighborhoods of the City as a real-estate agent. Under her newly adopted sophisticated exterior, the wild urge dominated her, and she consumed anyone who stood in her path.

Within only a few years she climbed the stairs of success in the City's real-estate market. Through a series of apparently lucky events of acquisition and selling of properties, her sales flourished and she was able to open her own agency: **Rice Assets**. The agency became one of the fastest growing real-estate businesses in the City, placing Eva as one of the richest and most admired entrepreneurs among the social elite of the financial district.

The secret behind Rice Assets' success is the wendigo. The company is powered by Eva's legendary hunger which drives her to feed on the weak, making her a tycoon of land acquisition in failing neighborhoods. Eva's strategy employs brute force and ruthlessness:

- She marks a sleepy neighborhood of little value as her next feeding ground.
- She haunts the neighborhood as the wendigo, satisfying her hunger and sending the locals rushing to find a safer home elsewhere.
- Thanks to the Mist, Sleepers think the disappearances are simply residents moving out.
- The value of property in the neighborhood falls. Rice Assets swoops in and buys low-cost properties, neglecting them on purpose to make the prices drop further.
- The value of property in the neighborhood crashes. Rice Assets buys all remaining properties.
- Eva sells the land to a redevelopment company, with big talk about what it would be worth once rebuilt, and makes a fortune. In truth, the neighborhood is so run down and unpopular, that redevelopment is financially unfeasible; it is postponed indefinitely, and the neighborhood never recovers.
- Eva moves on to the next target.

The first community to undergo this process was Eva's own home neighborhood of Fritzberg. Once Rice Assets pulled out of the district, the buyers realized that they were unable to finance the ambitious redevelopment plan, and the buildings remained vacant. To this day, the old Fritzberg community looks like a ghost town, with grass growing tall between empty houses and abandoned construction sites.

WILDKNOCK, THE NEXT MEAL

Rice has found her next hunting ground in the blue-collar district of **Wildknock** – a colonial name derived from the native nameplace, Wynoynock. As was the case with every neighborhood since Fritzberg, Eva first haunts the streets of her prey, both as an entrepreneur and as a wendigo. She has been bringing her victims to be devoured in the burial cave under Wildknock's **Fairy Ring Play Park**; to bury the evidence, Rice Assets started building a mall over the cave.

Wildknock is in a rapid process of deterioration. Longtime residents are leaving in droves. The spirit of the wendigo eats away at the social makeup of the district, tainting the minds of the residents with supernatural hunger, just as Eva in the flesh eats at their bodies. Abandoned or sparsely-populated buildings are falling into disrepair.

A DARK PACT – AND BETRAYAL!

If you're playing through the story arc, Eva Rice and Vince Beaumont have formed a dark pact as part of his arms race against the Crimson King.

Eva targets the neighborhoods along the borders of the Albion Enclave. Once she sucks a residential area dry, leaving it derelict and abandoned, the Mist loosens its grip and Albion takes over, turning it into a medieval wonderland. This benefits both sides: Eva doesn't have to clean up after herself, while Beaumont grows his Enclave on the corpses of past neighborhoods.

Naturally, both villains plan to turn on one another. Eva is banking on Albion as a lush woodland where she can roam and feed freely and where she need not fear those mysterious Men in Gray; the more it grows, the more delicious it would be to eventually consume it. Likewise, Beaumont is fattening Eva up for the slaughter: as a reviled creature who committed unspeakable wrongs, she is the perfect candidate for the mantle of the Questing Beast (see page 177). Beaumont is cultivating her to be slain by a worthy hero, which he hopes will unleash immense magical energy that he can use to power his war. That is why he has sent the crew on a quest to solve the murders in Wildknock.

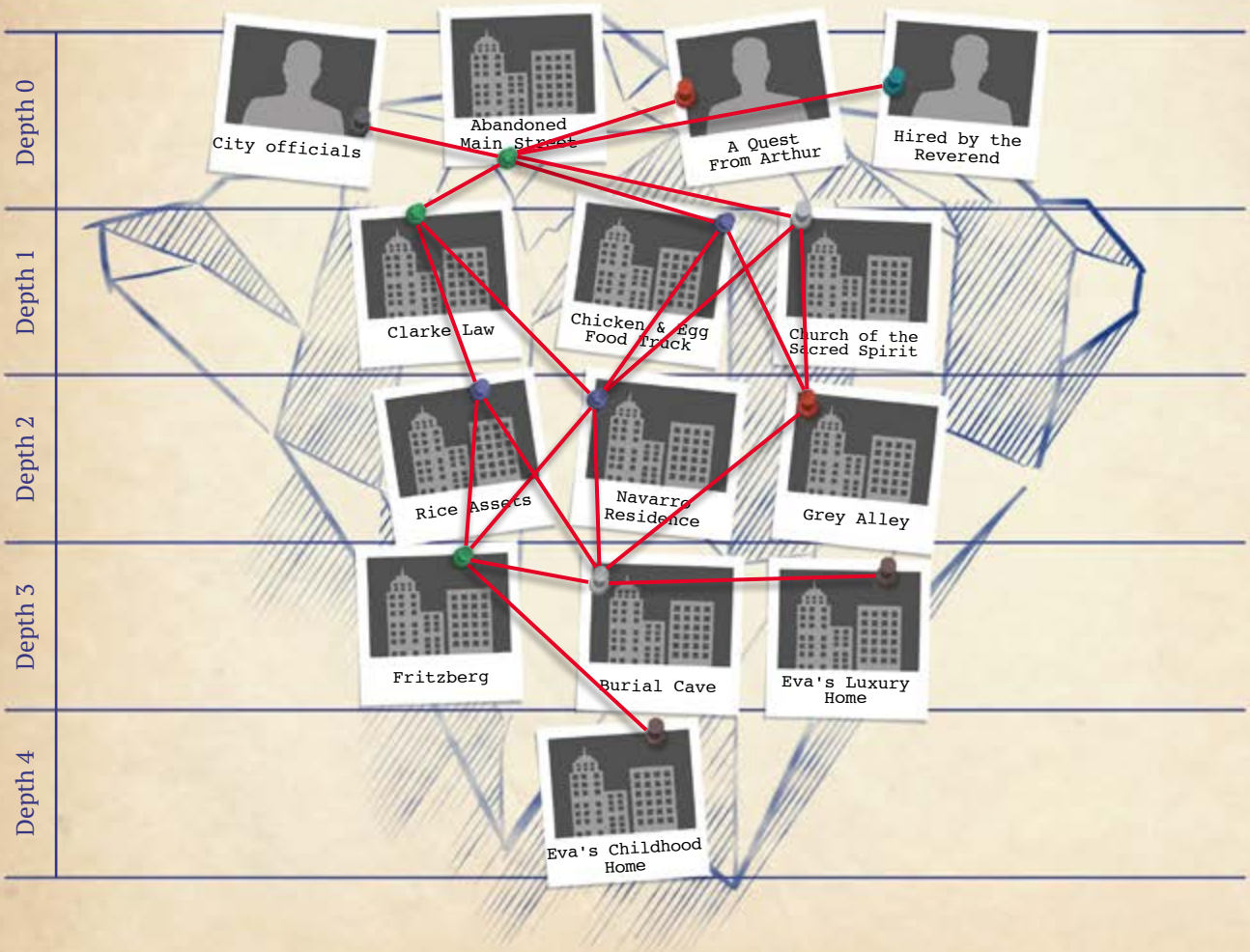
A few alert citizens in Wildknock have taken note of Eva's attack on their community and have made an earnest attempt to expose her, often leading to their own doom:

- First was **Jackie Clarke (Sleeper) [MURDERED]** – a local lawyer (Clarke Law) working on a warrant to stop Rice Assets' takeover of the neighborhood. She was abducted by the wendigo and brought to the burial cave, where Eva consumed her.
- Second was **Mia Gupta (Annapurna, Hindu goddess of food and nourishment) [CAPTURED]** – a cook at the Chicken & Egg food truck, who witnessed one of Eva's murders but was spotted by Eva in turn. She tried to tell her neighbors and customers about the monster, but the next evening Eva caught up with her in Grey Alley. Eva discovered that Gupta can use her legendary powers to temporarily satiate the wendigo's hunger so she keeps her alive at the burial cave until she decides what to do with her.

- Third was **P.I. Luis Navarro (Gwelab'hot, a Native American spirit of medicine) – [MURDERED]** – a retired police officer who was investigating Rice Assets for Jackie Clarke and had dreams about the wendigo prowling the neighborhood. Following Mia Gupta, after hearing rumors she saw something terrible near the mall construction site, he arrived at Grey Alley in time to fight the wendigo but could not overpower her. Using his powers, Navarro then managed to get a glimpse of Eva's greatest secret – that her heart is missing, and where it might be – before bravely and foolishly assaulting her lair in an attempt to rescue Mia. **His ghost continues to haunt Wildknock.**
- Now, the only one remaining is **Rev. Keisha Williams (Ala, Igbo deity of morality, society, and the souls of the dead)** – the clergywoman of the local Church of the Sacred Spirit who cares for the community. Thanks to her connection to the community and emerging Mythos powers, she has become acutely aware that something is eating away at the social fabric of her neighborhood.

To solve this case, the crew must uncover what is consuming Wildknock, expose Eva and her real-estate scheme, and find a way to defeat her, which would require discovering the location of her heart.





THE ICEBERG

THE WENDIGO PSYCHOSIS

Eva Rice's power goes far beyond transforming into a monster: she can turn others into monsters as well, by overwhelming their morals with an aching hunger that drives them out of their minds. The more Eva controls a neighborhood, the more her influence permeates it, inducing this **Wendigo Psychosis** on its inhabitants.

At the beginning of the case, the ambient Wendigo Psychosis in Wildknock is weak, visibly affecting only those already prone to succumb to their survival instincts (see Thorn Sørensen and the looters in the abandoned Main Street). Most people respond to the pervasive sense of lack by stockpiling food, "hibernating" at home, or, if they are wise, migrating away, sensing the dead-ended trajectory of the neighborhood.

With every Depth this effect grows stronger. Upon arriving at the first location or scene in a new Depth, all PCs and accompanying NPCs take a *hungry* status with a tier equal to the Depth (*hungry-1*, *famished-2*, *starving-3*, *consumed-by-hunger-4*). The tag of this status can be changed to reflect any survival instinct such as the need for warmth, shelter, water, migration, procreation, herd protection, etc. Optionally, you can extend this to more figurative forms of hunger such as emotional hunger for attention or a mental hunger to consume entertainment (TV, films, books).

When you first give a PC this status, ask the player:

? WHAT IS YOUR CHARACTER'S MOST POWERFUL INSTINCTIVE NEED?

Eva Rice and her minions can also induce the Wendigo Psychosis directly, by inflicting *hungry* statuses. Whether the effect is ambient or direct, PCs may **Face Danger** with tags that can resist mental effects. If they identify this as a Mythos effect, magical defenses are applicable as well.

The Wendigo Psychosis status compels a character to try to satisfy her hunger. It hinders any action that does not directly attempt to satisfy the urge. If satisfied, the status ceases to hinder actions for the remainder of the scene, but it is not removed; at the beginning of the next scene it resumes its effect. Only by resisting the Wendigo Psychosis or magically removing it can a PC truly regain her self-control (presumably by **Changing the Game** or spending Juice from other sources). Another option would be spending a **Montage (Downtime)** away from Wildknock or Eva, to recover from the psychosis.

DANGERS WITH THE WENDIGO PSYCHOSIS

NPCs affected by Wendigo Psychosis have two additional spectrums, beyond any they already have. First, their hunger can be satiated for a scene, the same as with the PCs, by maxing out their *temporarily-satisfy-hunger* spectrums, for example by conjuring or buying food for them. This spectrum resets at the end of the scene, as their hunger takes over them again. Second, if the PCs are able to magically alter the mind of the victims, influence them, or shield them from the psychosis, they can attempt to max out *reverse-psychosis*. This requires legendary abilities while in Wildknock or in the presence of Eva; mundane psychological advice can help only once the victim is out of Eva's field of influence.

THE FEAR FACTOR

You can add an element of horror to this case by describing strange occurrences in which the presence of the Wendigo Psychosis seeps into everyday reality.

The never-relenting hunger seems to get under the PCs skin and twist their perceptions. They feel like they're being hunted, as if a monstrous shadow is creeping behind every streetlight – some unknown beast, crowned with magnificent antlers. A chill wind or a flurry of snow blows out of nowhere, turning an alley into a snowy woodland clearing surrounded by gnarled trees, only to revert back to normal the next moment (referencing the wendigo's connection to harsh winters).

When Eva and those affected by the Wendigo Psychosis attack, be sure to make it gory to reflect their cannibalistic zeal, if your group can stomach it. Use tier-6 statuses they inflict to describe how they rip off one of the victim's limbs and devour it.

DEPTH 0:
THE HOOKS

The crew may become involved in the case in the following ways:

- **A Quest from The King:** If you're playing through the story arc, **Vince Beaumont** (King Arthur) in his current reincarnation can send the crew on a quest to aid the "neighboring kingdom" of Wildknock by discovering the insidious culprit that is haunting its streets and bringing it to justice. In this, he is secretly hoping to fulfill the prophecy of the Questing Beast. Conversely, if the crew and Beaumont aren't on the best of terms, PCs monitoring the Enclave of Albion may notice that it is growing (or re-emerging) and encroaching on neighboring City blocks and districts. This creeping effect has now reached the edge of Wildknock and has stopped there, as if waiting for something. In either option, the local Chicken & Egg food truck or the Church of the Sacred Spirit are good places to start asking around.
- **A Plea for the Community: Rev. Williams** may reach out to the crew and even hire them to find out what is eating away at her community. She will invite them to discuss matters at the Church of the Sacred Spirit.
- **A Transpiring Pattern:** Crew members in touch with City officials, community leaders, or real-estate agents may be tipped off about a potential real-estate scheme at work in the City. **Rice Assets** seems to be buying up property in middle-class neighborhoods and then figuratively (or not) chewing them up and spitting them out; in neighborhoods affected by this new scheme, the community seems to be falling apart as many residents move out. While this could lead straight to Rice Assets in Depth 2, the crew's contact suggests they start their investigation in Wildknock, at Clarke Law, which has been legally fighting the takeover.
- **A Missing Persons Case:** Someone in the Rift underworld close to Mia Gupta might be looking for her. This could be a fellow Rift she used to hang out with in the Bowl underground club for Rifts (see *The Furnace*, page 94) or one of the supporting cast of the series. Mia works as a cook at the Chicken & Egg food truck in Wildknock. The contact has not heard from her in a week and they are concerned for her wellbeing. Sensing a threat, they would like the crew to go down to Wildknock to check up on her or at least accompany the contact there.

Whatever the PCs' reason to arrive in Wildknock and wherever they may be going, they pass through the Abandoned Main Street on their way.

THE ABANDONED MAIN STREET

Desolation and empty streets are all that welcomes you to Wildknock. The densely-built district, with its rows of tenements and townhouses, almost seems abandoned. You spot one or two residents crossing the street, alone, looking over their shoulders, as if hurrying to find shelter. Loosely boarded up windows rattle as the wind blows through hollowed-out houses. The very street seems emaciated, drained of life. A large poster of the real-estate company RICE ASSETS promises new development "coming soon" but the current situation seems dire. Why did everyone leave?

The arrival of the PCs to Wildknock sets the scene and the mood for the entire case: **a derelict neighborhood is being consumed by a powerful corporation, Rice Assets.** The crew can speak to the locals and get a preliminary sense of what is going on. Meanwhile, as they explore the street, the first signs of the wendigo's creepy delirium crop up.

Residents passing by may tell the crew about **the recent rapid decline of the neighborhood:** people leaving (some say "disappearing"), homes sold, values dropping. No one really knows what started it, but it created a flight out of Wildknock.

Some residents seem to be stocking up quite a lot of food and bare necessities. If asked why, they say they "need it for the winter", regardless of the current season.

Financial lookup shows Rice Assets has been buying up Wildknock. The predatory company has been known to aggressively buy up property and sell it wholesale for redevelopment. They've been enjoying a meteoric success in recent years.

Beyond the Mist, the place looks like a snow-blasted winter woodland, a graveyard of shriveled up, lifeless, black tree trunks. A shadow crowned with antlers creeps out of sight. A deep sense of deprivation pervades the air and it seems to evoke unbridled hunger in the residents. There is no fixed source for this malign force. The only place where it relents a little is around the Church of the Sacred Spirit, at the end of Main Street.

BUSTING THE LOOTERS

Some of the local populace who are more susceptible to greed and hoarding have taken to looting the boarded up abandoned stores on the street. If the PCs engage these looters, treat them as Delinquent Teenagers (*MC Toolkit*, page 146), a collective with a size factor of 2, with the additional spectrums *reverse-psychosis:2* and *temporarily-satisfy-hunger:2*.

THORN SØRENSEN'S WOLFISH RELAPSE

If it suits your cinematic considerations, you can open the case with a bang by having a Rift driven mad by hunger waylay the crew just as they arrive in the neighborhood.

Living on the now deserted Main street, **Thorn Sørensen** is the Rift of Isengrim, the hungry anthropomorphic wolf of the tales of Reynard the Fox (or use the Big Bad Wolf as an alternative). This hulking, tattooed firefighter, brandishing a thick bristly salt-and-pepper beard, is normally a decent and friendly guy. However, he has a past related to his legendary wolfish appetite: overtaken by gluttony, he once broke into a hotel buffet and gorged himself until he became five times bigger, scaring away the guests while swatting any security guards who tried to stop him. The Gatekeeper Agent who was sent to resolve the issue sealed him off, putting him back to Sleep.

Now, the Wendigo Psychosis reawakened Thorn and turned him into a ravenous cannibal. Susceptible to the Wendigo's starvation effect due to his own Mythos, he succumbed to it faster than others; he is already hungry enough to consume human flesh. As the crew passes his building, a shabby tenement on Main St., he lunges at one of them or even at their passing car from the darkness of the hallway.

MADDENED ISENGRIM ★★★

When he channels Isengrim, Thorn transforms into a creature not unlike a werewolf: his muscles bulge to inhuman proportions, his skin grows a thick salt-and-pepper furry coat, he grows claws and fangs, and he becomes a massive beast. Nevertheless, he retains some of his human wits and dexterity. He carries a large firefighter axe as a weapon.

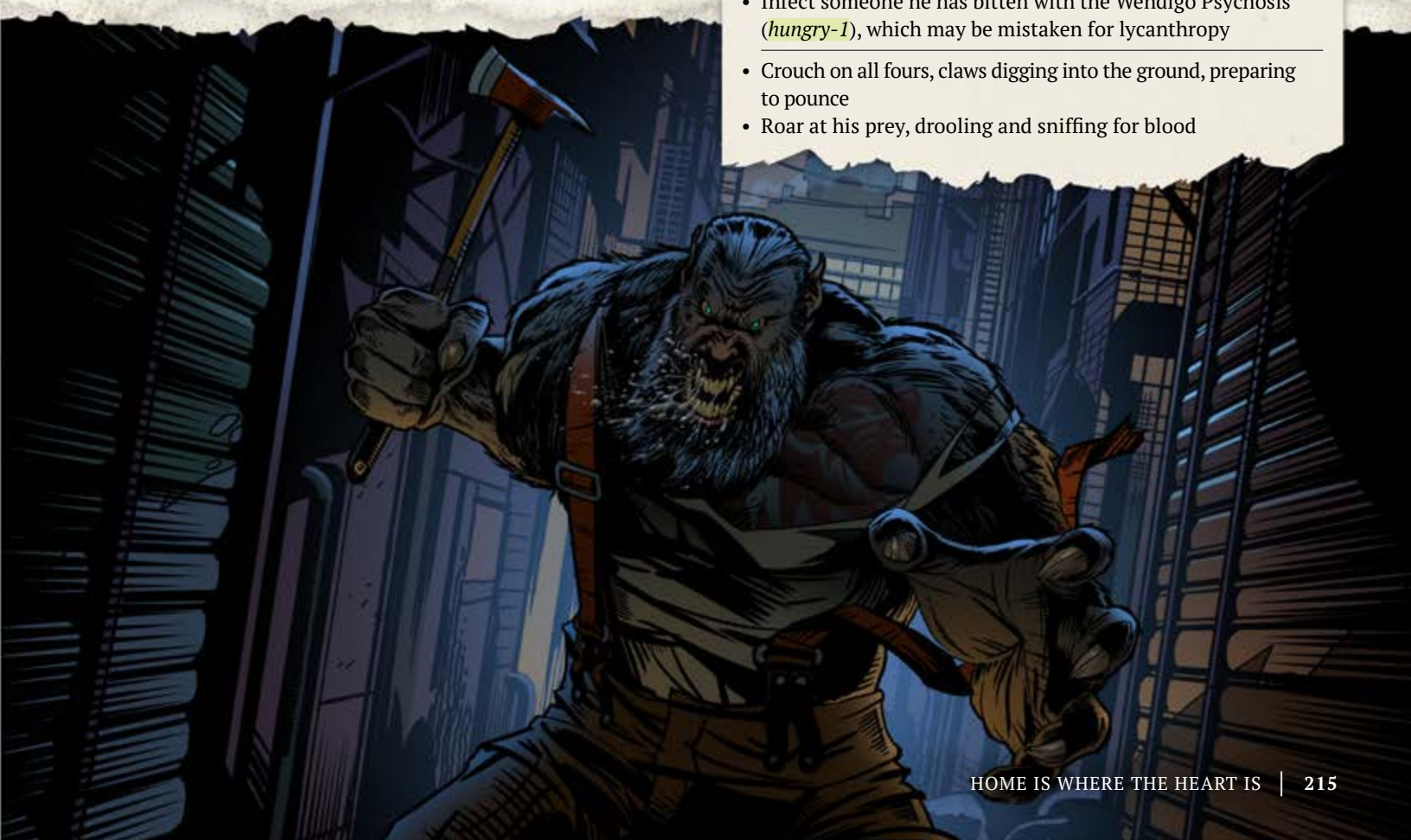
HURT OR SUBDUE 6 / REVERSE PSYCHOSIS 4 / TEMPORARILY SATISFY HUNGER 4

- **Ferocious:** When you attack Maddened Isengrim in close quarters combat, he first snaps to bite you, attempts to sink his claws in you, or slashes you with his axe (*mauled-3*).
- **Cleaver:** When Maddened Isengrim attacks with his *firefighter axe*, the tag hinders **Face Danger** moves that attempt to block or soak the blow.
- **Thick Hide, Dull Senses:** When Maddened Isengrim takes a status of physical harm or subdual, reduce its tier by 1.

- Slash someone with his claws, bite them, or cleave them with his axe (*mauled-3*)
- Pounce at someone, knock them over, and hold them down (*pinned-3*)
- Infect someone he has bitten with the Wendigo Psychosis (*hungry-1*), which may be mistaken for lycanthropy

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- Crouch on all fours, claws digging into the ground, preparing to pounce
- Roar at his prey, drooling and sniffing for blood



DEPTH 1:
STREETS OF WILDKNOCK

Having witnessed the rapid decline at Wildknock, the crew might now seek to understand why this is happening and how to proceed with their investigation. The more they look into the individual stories of the community members, the more they begin to unveil the underlying horror behind the imminent collapse of the district.

CLARKE LAW

At first glance, the humble office of Clarke Law could have easily been just another law clinic in yet another residential building. However, the broken glass door at the end of the corridor tells a different story. Amidst cracking shards and scattered folders on the floor, walks a hunched, pale middle-aged man. His tie is loose and one side of his shirt is hanging outside of his trousers. He seems tired, stressed, and distraught as he paces back and forth through the wrecked room. Once in a while the man stares at the wallpapered walls of the clinic, which are covered with pinned newspaper articles and handwritten notes.

Clarke Law is a legal practice located on the second floor of a residential building. The owner, **Jackie Clarke**, was a tireless lawyer and an activist who truly cared for the neighborhood of Wildknock and became well-loved for her pro bono work. Suspecting Rice Assets' forceful takeover of the area, Clarke started investigating past and current actions of the company. Once she realized their agenda and pattern, she began trying to stop Rice Assets using every legal maneuver she could conjure, with the aid of **Alex Penn**, her assistance.

When Eva Rice decided that Clarke was becoming a pain in her neck, she sent her hired thugs to intimidate the lawyer by destroying her law clinic. However, this only pushed Clarke's buttons. Convinced in her just way, she went over to Rice Assets HQ downtown and confronted Eva, throwing all her collected incriminating evidence at Eva's face. Eva realized she can't terrorize the fearless Clarke, and therefore kidnapped her from her office to the burial cave beneath the Fairy Ring Play Park, where Jackie found her death at the claws of the wendigo.

TALKING TO ALEX PENN

Since Jackie Clarke's disappearance a week ago, Alex has been trying to put the office back in order. However, he is *distraught-3* and unable to accomplish anything of value right now. Talking to Penn could be much more fruitful once Penn has calmed down (he'll need some help with that), as he can help the crew piece some of the financial evidence together.

Rice Assets is buying up Wildknock; given their predatory reputation, Jackie fought to stop them. The company has been acquiring buildings in the neighborhood, sometimes through small straw companies.

Residents are moving out of Wildknock en masse, selling their property to Rice Assets and its subsidiaries. The legal fight has become harder and harder as residents are eager to sell in time and care little for the fate of the neighborhood.

Straining his memory (due to the Mist), Alex will recall **it all started with a wave of residents leaving the neighborhood overnight, practically disappearing (Eva's victims).** Talk of serial murderers, abductions, and violent crime – most recently down at the Chicken & Egg food truck – pushed the perceived value of the neighborhood ever downward.

Jackie was convinced Rice Assets is purposely devaluing Wildknock. Buildings bought by them have been neglected to the point of becoming inhabitable. Jackie saw this tactic as the main reason people were abruptly leaving.

One night last week, thugs trashed the office, apparently as a warning from Rice Assets. They left a burnt up copy of a courtroom subpoena Clarke issued to Eva Rice on the lawyer's desk.

Clarke's strongest ally in her actions against Rice Assets was Reverend Williams at the Church of the Sacred Spirit**.** Williams contacted Clarke after the law firm started sniffing around and filing suits against the actions of Rice Assets and its subsidiaries.



Jackie enlisted Luis Navarro as a P.I. to investigate Rice Assets. He has been working hard on the case but Jackie's disappearance turned his investigation into an obsession, and Alex has not seen him since. Some of the evidence is probably still in his home office (Navarro Residence).

SEARCHING THE OFFICE

The office is a mess; someone clearly broke in and trashed it. The glass door was smashed from the outside. The office table and chairs have been broken with a baseball bat. Some of the newspapers and notes were ripped from the board on the wall and the folder cabinet has been completely overturned with its contents scattered all over the floor. The *cluttered* space makes it harder to find relevant evidence.

Searching the office can provide additional clues as to what Clarke was involved in. There are numerous articles about crime in the neighbourhood, as well as notes on contracts and business transactions between Rice Assets and other real-estate agents in Wildknock, providing an alternative way of learning the clues listed above.

On top of that, the office holds some clues about Clarke's kidnapping, when Eva entered the office late at night, transformed into the wendigo, knocked Clarke out, and carried her off via the fire escape.

Someone or something kidnapped Jackie Clarke from the office.

- There's a shred of a blood-stained tweed scarf on the sofa and Alex Penn can confirm that it belonged to Clarke. It looks like something tore the scarf with strength.
- The window was broken from the inside.
- There are strange scratches on the hardwood floor. These markings look like they could have been made by the claws of some ferocious animal.
- There is blood on some of the scattered documents; the kidnapping took place after the first break-in.

Tracking or divination leads to Grey Alley, the shortcut Eva took to the burial cave.



A savvy researcher going through the material Jackie Clark collected can identify Rice Assets' recurring strategy of neighborhood takeover (see Climbing The Property Ladder, page 210) and notice **it always starts with a wave of strange disappearances.**

As a final step, after Rice Assets buys and sells a neighborhood, leaving it abandoned, it is then absorbed into the Albion Enclave. (Eva's neighborhood of Fritzberg was not absorbed.)

(If you want to implicate Vince Beaumont early in this case:) The thugs were sent by Beaumont, at Eva's request; **Beyond the Mist**, there is a trace of the Errants' knightly Mythos here in the form of a fluttering banner and blowing trumpets. They were sent here on a quest by their king.

THE CHURCH OF THE SACRED SPIRIT

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Upon entering the Church of the Sacred
Spirit at Wildknock one feels protected,
as if they entered a safe haven. The small
church is a humble, dimly lit, and quiet
place. The pungent smell of incense drifts
in the air. It seems like the sights and
sounds of the outer world are forbidden
from entering here. The only noise is the
soft echoes created by the few visitors
slowly pacing on the stone floors.
```

The Church of the Sacred Spirit is one of the few places in this neighborhood where people can still find some peace of mind. This small place of worship is led by **Reverend Keisha Williams** (Ala, Igbo deity of morality, society, and the souls of the dead), a strong, large, and empathic woman who has taken it upon herself to lead the Wildknock community through these hard times.

As the Rift of Ala, Rev. Williams is able to intuitively feel transgressions against social taboos in her community, although she cannot yet tell what they are or who committed them. This presently manifests as a foreboding sense of calamity triggered by the wendigo's rampant cannibalism. She is also able to commune with the dead (in this case, the ghost of **P.I. Luis Navarro**) but being a Touched Rift, she is hesitant to do so and is much more focused on her earthly clerical duties.

Lately, the distress of the people of Wildknock has grown so much that she is worried that if nothing changes, soon there will be nothing left to save. Therefore, Williams will be happy to share any information she has regarding the recent events in Wildknock. She will not disclose the fact she is a Rift, unless the crew gains her trust. Be aware that word travels fast in Wildknock, so knowledge about any action taken by the crew toward solving this case and any resident of Wildknock cooperating with them will quickly be known to Williams. Once the Reverend develops a positive opinion regarding the crew, she will be comfortable enough in sharing information obtained by using her Mythos powers.

Some kind of evil has taken root in Wildknock. Too many members of her congregation have been coming to Williams, seeking help when their loved ones have disappeared. She has also promoted awareness to the situation in the neighborhood, urging people to always walk in groups and carry defensive measures on them.

A week or two after each disappearance, **most people who lost someone just start assuming their loved ones had abandoned them and skipped town.** (This is the work of the Mist.)

This community is slowly dying, as if it is being eaten alive. While some disappeared, others left to search after them, and others yet leave for fear of gangs and thugs. This leads to a vicious cycle where more and more residents are selling or leaving because Wildknock seems to be in rapid decline.

One of the missing persons is Mia Gupta, the cook at the Chicken & Egg food truck**.** A few days ago, Mia came to seek the Reverend's help. The cook was pale and frightened and told her that **she saw a monster prowling the streets of Wildknock.** The monster had blood-dripping fangs and long skeletal claws. Mia suspected that the monster was responsible for the missing persons in Wildknock. A day later, she went missing too.

Williams's closest ally, until her recent disappearance a week ago, was lawyer Jackie Clarke (Clarke Law)**.** Clarke had a theory about Rice Assets engineering the recent wave of migration from the neighborhood, but she thought the "disappearances" were simply residents moving away, perhaps after being bullied or bribed by the company.

Distraught by Mia's disappearance, Williams tried to contact her spirit yesterday. She was unable to do so (Mia is still alive), but instead **she saw a vision of the spirit of Luis Navarro hovering in Grey Alley.** Comparing the ghost's description between the Reverend, Alex Penn, or Otto Scholz (Chicken & Egg food truck) can reveal his identity and lead to the Navarro Residence.

CHICKEN & EGG FOOD TRUCK

The Chicken & Egg food truck must have seen better days; you find it standing in the middle of an empty parking lot. Old newspapers and empty soda cups are scattered around the truck's wheels. While a few foldable chairs serve as an open invitation for customers, sadly, it seems as if the few patrons here prefer to take their order and leave hurriedly.

The Chicken & Egg food truck is a fast food eatery serving fried chicken and diner-style meals to the residents of Wildknock. It is the workplace of the only living person who saw the wendigo in action, **Mia Gupta**; she was subsequently kidnapped and taken to the burial cave.

The food truck is owned by **Otto Scholz** (Sleeper), a likable, uncomplicated middle-aged man, usually wearing a big grin on his face while tightening his stained apron to his bulging belly. Otto is worried over Mia's disappearance as well as the dire absence of patrons in his business, so he will assist the investigation as best as he can.



Too many people are missing from Wildknock. Initially, there were rumors about folks running off with their lovers, skipping town due to debt, and teens running away from home. Lately, there are new rumors about a serial killer prowling the streets, but Otto thought it was just an exaggeration – until Mia vanished.

Mia was a terrible cook. Her chicken tenders were always soggy or burnt and even her omelettes were oily and runny. However, the patrons somehow always left the place satisfied. Otto knows he makes better food (he does) but for some reason customers always wanted Mia to cook their food.

Before she vanished, Mia claimed she witnessed a murder on the street: a ritualistic killer wearing a huge animal skull as a mask, dragging a body through an alley. She was very distraught and scared and her rambling made the patrons uncomfortable. Otto suggested she talk to Reverend Williams at the Church of the Sacred Spirit.

On the night Mia disappeared, just after she left work, an ex-cop named Luis Navarro came looking for her. He asked a lot of questions about what she claimed to have seen. Otto told him he might be able to catch her if he'll hurry, and pointed him at the shortcut she would usually take, through Grey Alley.





DEPTH 2:
THE SCENT OF HUNGER

Once Rice Assets comes to light as the mundane threat hovering over Wildknock, the crew may wish to confront them at their offices. Meanwhile, evidence in the alley as well as the trail of clues left by Luis Navarro point at the supernatural horror behind it all.

THE GHOST OF P.I. NAVARRO

Reverend Williams's fruitless efforts to contact Mia have opened the gate between the worlds for the spirit of Luis Navarro to haunt the neighborhood. Navarro does not manifest as a talkative ghost; he is only a faint conscious presence, nothing more than a weak poltergeist. If brought closer into the world of the living, he may appear as **an audiovisual apparition**, repeating things he said or did in his life like a jammed recording device. He wishes dearly to manifest this way, in order to show the crew the details of his investigation, what happened to him, and the secrets he exposed.

Navarro's ghost can only manifest in three key locations that bear strong emotional significance for him: where he first fought the wendigo (Grey Alley), his home (the Navarro residence), and the burial cave where he found his doom (in Depth 3).

As the crew investigates these locations, the spirit will attempt to make contact by moving evidence, throwing objects at them, and drawing letters on steamy mirrors and surfaces or with ghostly blood on the walls, all of which might inadvertently hurt or frighten them. If they are finding it hard to conjure him, have him spell out CHURCH. Rev. Williams can accompany the group or give them details about *the-ritual-of-the-sacred-womb*, an African dance to Ala which can evoke the dead.



EVA IS PROWLING

The longer the crew spends investigating in Wildknock, the greater the chance that Eva or one of her contacts in the neighborhood will notice them. If a crew member **Investigates** and rolls 7-9, use the counter question option to ask them what their next destination is; Eva will catch word of it. The same will happen if the crew makes waves in the neighborhood without **Sneaking Around**.

GHOST OF P.I. NAVARRO ★

To help the ghost *manifest*, the PCs can use Mythos powers, a ritual given by Rev. Williams, or simply try to inspire a strong enough emotional reaction in him. When *manifest* is maxed out in one location, the PCs can see a vision, the "recording" of P.I. Navarro's past actions in the same place. To see his actions in the other locations, they must go there and repeat the summoning, but they don't need to max out *manifest* again.

Conversely, the ghost's *banish* spectrum applies to a single location or scene. When he is *banished*, he will not affect the scene any further but may show up in the other locations (unless he was *banished* there too). Technically, the ghost is a Conjuration created by Rev. Williams' powers; P.I. Navarro is dead and gone and so are his Mythos powers.

HURT OR SUBDUE – / BANISH 3 / MANIFEST 3

- Hurl nearby objects at the crew to get their attention (*ouch-1* and optionally grant the victim a free Clue)
- Make the exits from a scene lock up or obstruct them by moving an object, if there are still vital clues to be found (*closed-in-3*)
- Attempt to make an appearance which amounts to nothing but moans, wails, and flickering light and shadow, or make letters appear on surfaces spelling out H-O-M-E or H-E-A-R-T (optionally inflicting *apprehensive-1* or *scared-2*)
- Exhaust mediums attempting to contact him (burn one tag related to communication with the dead)

- An object just looked at is seen, after a moment, in another place
- An object moves slightly, as if on its own
- A long creak is heard, or was it a wail?

GREY ALLEY

At first sight, Grey Alley seems like any other alley of this abandoned neighborhood: the same trash dumpster, those same scattered boxes, and the same flickering street light. Still, something doesn't feel right. Every footstep echoes on the alley's cobblestones, every whisper spreads through its stone walls. There's a weird eerie feeling, as if this alley has seen something terrible. And it remembers.

Grey Alley is the spot in which Eva kidnapped Mia Gupta. Since she did so in her wendigo form, all clues here will point to the existence of a monster in Wildknock. Once the crew enters the alley, they will immediately notice a *faint rancid scent*. This is the scent of hunger, left by the wendigo's violent actions here; it hinders attempts to **Face Danger** against the Wendigo Psychosis (page 213).

When the wendigo ambushed Mia, P.I. Luis Navarro – who was chasing after Mia as part of his investigation – appeared just in time to try and stop it. He was able to fire two shots before Eva turned on him. One of the shots missed the beast but the other one hit her and scorched her, since he was using silver bullets. The wendigo was able to knock P.I. Navarro out with a backhanded slap but due to her pain and anguish she decided to deal with him later. In her hurry, she didn't stop to clean the scene before running away with Mia.

CLUES IN THE ALLEY

Someone fired two shots in the alley. Two casings are found on the pavement. **A custom-made silver bullet** is embedded in the wall, matching the casing.

P.I. Navarro was here. He dropped his wallet, which has his P.I. permit (leading to the Navarro residence). Forensics can speculate with a high probability that he was the one who fired the shots, and that he lost his wallet in a fight.

Mia Gupta was here, and may have been injured. There is a big puddle of dried up blood by the wall where she dropped a small shiny bracelet with a heart pendant that has her name engraved on it.

Some feral creature or perhaps a monster was involved. There are huge claw marks on the walls and on the dumpster. There is also some strange sticky, burnt up fur in the middle of the puddle of dried up blood. Maybe whoever fired the shots managed to hit the creature once.

Monster hunters and mystics may know that some supernatural creatures – werewolves, vampires, wendigos, fairies, witches, etc. – **can only be harmed with silver weapons**.

Beyond the Mist, there is a swirling flurry of residual Mythos energies here, making them hard to discern: the same pervasive hunger that plagues the neighborhood (Eva Rice, Rice Assets or the burial cave), but also a benign feeling of nourishment (Mia Gupta, the burial cave), a mystical power of healing (P.I. Navarro, the Navarro residence), and a sense of order between life and death (Rev. Williams, the church).

Mia Gupta's bracelet bears a mote of the power of Annapurna (her Mythos, Hindu goddess of nourishment) and can be used to resist the Wendigo Psychosis status (upon revealing this, give the PC *bracelet of satisfaction*).

CONJURING P.I. NAVARRO IN THE ALLEY

The scene of the struggle can be more easily reconstructed by helping the ghost of P.I. Navarro manifest (page 220). The ghost will reenact the fight in the alley as follows:

A shadow coalesces into a bluish apparition, the shape of a middle-aged man. He seems stressed and in a hurry but he doesn't take any notice of you. The shadowy figure yells to someone inside the alley to stop and then draws a gun. You hear two gunshots echo through the alley and a ricochet of one of the bullets as it hits the stone wall. The man then stares up, frightened, and is then sent flying through the air, as if hit by something big and heavy. You can see the man's keys and wallet flying out of his coat as he falls onto the ground and vanishes.

THE NAVARRO RESIDENCE

The building where Luis Navarro used to live seems to hold nothing but memories: a wooden toy wagon forgotten in the yard, a missing persons poster plastered to the building's stairway. The corridor leading to the Navarro residence is framed by busted doors swinging into looted apartments. Still, as you reach the door carrying the sign 'Navarro', a scared eye seems to be following you from behind the peephole, followed by a faint sound of a bolted latch.

P.I. Luis Navarro was once an excellent cop, forced to retire because of harassment from his fellow officers over his visions and intuitions, the product of his Mythos of Gwelab'hot, a Native American spirit of spiritual knowledge and healing. After his early retirement, he continued to work as a private eye. He lived with his wife, **Mrs. Daisy Navarro** (Sleeper, in her late 50s), in a small apartment in Wildknock.

Since Luis' disappearance a few days ago, the *terrified-4* Daisy has herself *barricaded-2* in their apartment, fearing for her husband's life and keeping herself safe from the growing number of looter gangs prowling the neighborhood. If told about her husband's fate, her fear will turn into *uncontrollable-sobbing-3*.

Daisy has every reason to be terrified: **looters have been eyeing the place**, hoping they can pillage anything of worth still left in the building. Unless the crew's arrival is discreet, a handful of Ravenous Looters (page 224) will show up during the visit and try to break into the apartment.

At the same time, **Luis Navarro's ghost** (page 220) is present and will try to guide the PCs into his home office. The spirit is only vaguely aware of anyone besides the crew and his wife, so when the looters make their move on the apartment, he won't stop the poltergeist act, adding fuel to an already tense situation. Nonetheless, if Mrs. Navarro comes to any immediate danger, the presence will turn against her attacker. Should Mrs. Navarro die, the entire room is beset by the spirit's *overwhelming-grief-4*.

TALKING TO MRS. NAVARRO

Mrs. Navarro has not seen Luis for several days, and she's beside herself with anxiety, fearing the worst. She knows Luis was frantically investigating Rice Assets for Clarke Law and she's worried **he had stumbled across a corporate cover-up and was silenced.**

The last time Mrs. Navarro saw her husband was a few nights ago (the same night Mia Gupta disappeared). He seemed disheveled and she feared he might be concussed, but **he insisted he must go out again to "stop this madness".** He said if anything happens to him, she should point the cops to the Fairy Ring Play Park (the burial cave) but she's been ignored by them since.

Reminiscing, Daisy will share that **Luis has gotten himself into similar trouble in the past.** He always stuck his nose in the most unlikely places and would turn up the most unexpected evidence. Animals loved him but people thought him strange. He could ease her migraines or cough by simply touching her or using herbal medicine, though she never knew where he learned all this, being a cop for most of his life.

The Rice Assets investigation was taking its toll on Luis in the last few weeks. **He called the company a 'monster' and had nightmares about a monster devouring the neighborhood.** He even asked Daisy to carry a gun for protection.

SEARCHING NAVARRO'S OFFICE

The evidence board in the detective's home office hints that Mia Gupta saw something important near Fairy Ring Play Park. On a big map, he pinned a picture of the Chicken & Egg food truck next to Fairy Ring Play Park (the burial cave). Behind the photo he wrote, "Mia was not supposed to see!!". The center of Fairy Ring Play Park is marked with a red X.

Also in the office, a blueprint of the mall project built over the Fairy Ring Play Park (the burial cave) indicates **Navarro thought the mall was a cover-up.** It has a sticky note attached to it: "Clarke says this project is not profitable. Why build here???" Further rummaging will turn up a topographical survey stating that any building on the park's ground is hazardous due to an unstable cave underneath the park.

Navarro was obsessed with an image of a monster. The walls of his office are covered with feverish sketches of a gaunt humanlike beast, with desiccated skin pulled tightly over its bones. Its head looks like a deer's skull with sharp teeth jutting out from its mouth.

Navarro was stockpiling silver weapons. The desk holds a drawer with *a silver knife*, a *.44 Magnum revolver*, and custom-made *.44 Magnum silver bullets*. Mrs. Navarro will add that her husband has been begging her to carry the second gun, but she just couldn't imagine herself using it.

Monster-hunters, cryptozoologists, or PCs with access to supernatural lore can identify the creature as **a wendigo**, an evil spirit born out of great hunger, usually during a harsh winter. **The wendigo can only be hurt with fire or silver.**

CONJURING P.I. NAVARRO IN THE OFFICE

The clues in the office can be found more easily by helping the ghost of P.I. Navarro manifest (page 220). The ghost will reenact Navarro's frantic evidence gathering as follows:

A gust of wind blows into the room, followed by the sound of heavy footsteps. As the sound becomes clearer, the silhouette of Luis Navarro passes through the doorway. You get a clear image of his tired eyes and unshaven face as he passes through you in a hurry. As he reaches the desk you notice that he is carrying rolled up posters under his shoulder, which he quickly unfolds and tacks to the wall. With what seems like triumphant gestures he writes something on a picture, pins it on one of the posters and then walks over to a map and marks a red X on it. After he stares at it for a while, his face changes to a look of intent. The ghost of P.I. Navarro walks over to the desk drawer and pulls out a .44 Magnum revolver. It seems as if he's looking straight at you as he slowly and thoughtfully loads the gun with bullets. "Let's hope she's not home." He groans to himself as he tucks the gun in a holster under his coat and walks through the door, vanishing.

RAVENOUS LOOTERS ★★(+★)

This small group of lowlifes (size factor 1) have quickly fallen prey to the Wendigo Psychosis and are taking advantage of the situation in Wildknock to empty out abandoned, and sometimes occupied, homes. They are dressed like drifters or survivors of an apocalypse, with an assortment of tattered outdoor clothing: woolen hats, fishing vests, bloodied coats, and muddied hiking boots, wearing many layers as if to ward off some terrible cold. They seem to be starving, and could soon succumb to the maddening cannibalistic urge of the wendigo.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / REVERSE PSYCHOSIS 3 / TEMPORARILY SATISFY HUNGER 3 / SUCCUMB 3 / STARVE TO DEATH 5

- **Losing It:** As a soft move, give the Ravenous Looters *succumbing-to-hunger-1*.
- **Descend to Cannibalism +★:** Once per group of looters, when *succumb* maxes out, increase all the Ravenous Looters' spectrum maximums and hard move effects by 1 and make a hard move at a PC or NPC.

- Pry open or smash through a locked door, or clear an obstacle (**Complicate Things, Bigtime** or burn one tag or status tier representing an obstacle)
- Hack someone with a crowbar, hatchet, or pick (*open-wound-2*)
- Lunge at someone and bite them (*bite-wound-2* and gain *succumbing-to-hunger-1*)

- Draw near, fanning out
- Knock on the door and ask to be let in, with a nervous, hungry tone
- Lick their cracked lips and glare at someone as if they were food, visibly battling with their hunger

RICE ASSETS

```
Glaring at the City from the top of a mod-
ern skyscraper, the offices of Rice As-
sets are white, brightly lit, and sterile.
Beyond the reception desk, a handful of
glass-walled rooms hold busy workers. Some
of them are talking over the phone, others
are filing papers, and one agent walks out
of a meeting room, shaking hands with a
well-dressed customer. All around, post-
ers on the walls present smiling people
in front of green lawns and white picket
fences. "Do you have an appointment?" Asks
the secretary pleasantly, already opening
the calendar to find a suitable date.
```

Rice Assets is where all of Eva's transactions take place. For the workers of Rice Assets, the company is capitalism at its best. Right now, the company is focused on the acquisition and subsequent sale of Wildknock, and while some of the real-estate agents working here realize that Rice Assets is taking advantage of the misfortune of Wildknock's residents, none of them know anything about the foul play behind the scenes.

In the midst of this storm of activity stands the famous real-estate tycoon, Eva Rice. Attractive, confident, and almost omni-present, she seems to be swallowing up the attention in the room.

POWER GAMES

If your cinematic considerations call for a dramatic scene, have the PCs barge in on a crucial meeting, just as Eva is trying to line up the sale of Wildknock to a potential redeveloper, **Porky Thatcher** from Porky & Bros.

Give Thatcher the swing spectrum *sway:3* and have the PCs and Eva try to convince the investor to buy or not to buy the neighborhood. Each side can give the investor a *swayed-to-buy* or *swayed-not-to-buy* status. With a swing spectrum, each side cannot inflict their status while there are tiers of the opposing status; they must first trade their own status tiers to remove tiers from the opposing status, one for one, until it is removed.

When *sway* maxes out, Porky Thatcher makes his final decision. If he decides not to buy Wildknock, Eva becomes *aggressive-2*.



TALKING TO EVA

It isn't difficult to schedule an appointment with Eva Rice, as long as the secretary believes you're not going to waste her time. The crew can do this using guile, pretending to be investors, or even by pretending to be lawyers representing the people of Wildknock. As long as they don't step over the line, they can even tell the truth about their intentions and suspicions regarding the company or Eva herself; Eva Rice is not afraid of a conflict.

Eva presents a very calm exterior. It is very hard to make her lose her nerves. She speaks in a steady voice, explaining everything with eloquent, straight-to-the-point rational arguments. Most of the time she wears a little smile, which could be seen as either polite or condescending.

Eva will play the part of an "evil" tycoon (albeit a law-abiding one) to draw attention away from her truly evil legendary alter-ego. According to her, after she completes her purchase of Wildknock, she plans to renew the neighborhood. Something bad *is* happening in Wildknock, but it started well before she became involved. She cannot be faulted for trying to make lemonade out of lemons. She'll confirm that Jackie Clarke paid her a visit, yelling accusations and threatening to sue both Eva and her company. Eva welcomed the challenge, and she's sure she would have won the court battle.

She has no knowledge of the Clarke Law break-in or of Clarke's disappearance. **PCs appropriately spending Clues may pick out the lies in her story.**

A psychologist or a good judge of character profiling her personality will sense **the real Eva Rice wants to devour Wildknock – and everything else, for that matter.** Despite her calm demeanor, she is in fact a woman of instant gratifications who is mostly concerned with having the power to get what she wants, when she wants it.

Beyond the Mist, Eva resonates a monstrous void that holds nothing but hunger and deprivation. Any attempt to look into Eva's true form or mind triggers her custom move **Bottomless Pit of Deprivation**, exposing the mind of the observing Rift to the Wendigo Psychosis.

A medical examination, e.g., taking Eva's pulse, ultrasound, or x-ray, would show **Eva doesn't have a heart**. This can also be achieved with legendary means but may trigger **Bottomless Pit of Deprivation.**

If feeling threatened, she'll try to set a trap for the crew, pointing them to the Fairy Ring Play Park (the burial cave) by claiming that something weird is happening there: her construction workers heard weird screams and have even seen ghosts in the park.

SNEAKING INTO THE RICE OFFICES

The crew might try to sneak into the Rice Assets HQ after office hours, break into their computers, or impersonate someone with access to Eva's office (a cleaning crew, for example). It won't be an easy task: the company has its own private security team and a state-of-the-art security system with CCTV cameras (use the Elite Security and Security System Danger profiles, *MC Toolkit*, page 150); to top it all off, the rooms have *glass walls*. If the crew manages to bypass all of these, they will find some interesting data in the Rice archives; some of it could be used to *implicate* Eva and her company.

The Rice Assets records reveal **the true intentions of the company toward Wildknock** and the process they use to achieve it (see Climbing The Property Ladder, page 210). The method is brutal, but not technically illegal.

This is not the first time Rice Assets consumed a neighborhood under the guise of "urban renewal". There were at least half a dozen of them in the past few years; none of the buyers managed to fulfill the promised renewal. An almost hidden folder holds transactions regarding Rice Assets' first project, in a suburb called Fritzberg.

A very careful examination of Rice Assets will reveal that every offer the company sent to buy a building was preceded by a draft. Oddly enough, the drafts were written before the troubles in Wildknock began. One might wonder how **Rice Assets "foretold" the decline in Wildknock**'s market value.

Fairy Ring Play Park is going to be demolished and a shopping mall is going to be built there. However, the project is suspiciously unprofitable and **there is evidence of a cover up**, burying a topographic survey that showed the site is unsafe due to a cave below it (the burial cave).

EVA RICE ★★★★

HURT 4 / SUBDUE 6 / IMPLICATE 5

- **Indestructible Evil Spirit:** Eva Rice ignores statuses of physical harm that aren't caused by fire or silver.
- **Heartless:** While her heart is outside of her body, Eva ignores all emotional statuses (but not visceral statuses like rage, aggression, fear). If the heart is restored (presumably by subduing her first), she'll become *overwhelmed-with-guilt-5*.
- **You're My Next Meal:** When Eva Rice enters the scene, give her *alert-3*, renewable as a soft move.
- **Ferocious:** When you attack Eva Rice in close quarters combat, she first snaps to bite you or attempts to sink her claws in you (*ripped-open-3*).
- **Haunting:** When Eva Rice's *hurt* maxes out, or when she chooses to, her body disintegrates and all her physical statuses are removed. She rematerializes from the soil in which her heart is buried (the backyard of Eva's childhood home) at the end of the scene.
- **Bottomless Pit of Deprivation**: When you **Look Beyond the Mist** at Eva Rice, or when you magically **Investigate** or affect her mind, heart, or emotions, you first become exposed to the Wendigo Psychosis (*starving-3*) and the clues you get are always fuzzy and incomplete.
- **Bodyguards:** When Eva Rice takes a legal status from which her bodyguards can protect her, the bodyguards take the status instead (use Corporate Lawyer, *MC Toolkit*, page 142).

- Rip through anything, from flesh to stone, using her claws (*ripped-open-4*) or hold someone by the throat with a single hand (*seized-4*)
- Sink her teeth into a helpless victim (turn a *seized* status into a *savage-bite* of the same tier)
- Focus the full dementive force of the Wendigo Psychosis on her victim(s), whispering and taunting (*consumed-by-hunger-4*, or *starving-3* to everyone present)
- Break loose, climb up a building wall, and flee on the rooftops (burn up to three tags of restraint or tactical obstacles and then **Deny Them Something They Want**)
- Hire an expensive lawyer to deflect any lawsuits and countersue (create a new Danger: Corporate Lawyer, *MC Toolkit*, page 142)
- Convince investors to buy her property for redevelopment (*swayed-to-buy-2* and *discredited-1* to her opponents, if any)

- Transform herself into the wendigo, or back to her human shape
- As Eva, smile coldly and answer in a calm, logical manner
- As the wendigo, breathe heavily and drool in anticipation

DEPTH 3:
THE MONSTER'S LAIR

THE BURIAL CAVE

Once a joyous place, cherished by the children of the neighborhood, the Fairy Ring Play Park now stands abandoned, a lonely playground in the midst of a construction site. Rusty slides and carousels lie broken between oily puddles and mounds of dug up dirt. The air here is strangely cold and the entire area smells of decay. It could be a trick of the light, but in the middle of the play park there seems to be a man in a raincoat. A moment later the figure disappears; or did he jump into a hole in the ground?...

The ancient burial cave below the Fairy Ring Play Park was chosen by Eva as the perfect place where she could consume her victims in hiding and leave their bones without causing suspicion. Unfortunately for Eva, Mia Gupta spotted her in the act and forced her to change her plans and spend a fortune to build a new mall over the cave and bury the evidence for good. Mia Gupta is currently imprisoned within the cave, alongside the remains of Jackie Clarke, P.I. Navarro, and dozens of other victims from Wildknock.

Once the crew arrives at the Fairy Ring Play Park, the ghost of P.I. Luis Navarro will direct them toward a hole in the ground that leads to the burial cave. The vertical shaft is 50 feet deep and ends in a *completely dark cave*.

INSIDE THE CAVE

It takes time to get accustomed to the darkness of the cave below the park, but it soon becomes clear that the rocky walls are lined with alcoves, inhabited by shrouded remains of ancient burials. Faded symbols are painted on the stones. Yet, all of these details are pushed into the background of your mind by the horrific realization that the nagging sound your boots have been making against the cave's floor comes from the cracking bones of dozens of human skeletons.

If Eva sent the PCs here to ambush them, or if she became aware of their plans to visit the cave, or simply if it fits your cinematic considerations, the wendigo will be lurking in the dark, waiting for her chance to prey on the crew and end their nosy interference. She is aware of the Collapsing Cave Danger (she knows about the results of the mall topographic survey) but she feels safe inside this secret lair and allows herself to be careless.

Dropping all pretenses, the eager-to-kill Eva will shapeshift in front of the crew and could even admit to her crimes if asked about them, which could later prove an opportunity to *implicate* her. The PCs may even trick her into hinting at where she buried her heart.

If a fight ensues and Eva wins, she will consume the crew members one by one, starting with the most dangerous one, while the others are *maddened-by-hunger-5* and *chained-5* with chains from the construction site. If Eva is destroyed before she can flee, she will reform in the backyard of her childhood home and plan her next attack on the crew.

The burial cave is the monster's feeding ground. While the bones in the alcoves may be ancient, the oldest of the human bones on the floor have been here no more than a few months, at most. All bones are covered with gnawing marks. Not a single piece of flesh remains.

The victims are the missing Wildknock people. The remains of a torn tweed scarf, matching that of Jackie Clarke, can be found among the bones (Clarke Law), as do bits of the raincoat of P.I. Navarro, matching his appearance in the ghostly visions.

The pictographs painted on the walls of the cave tell the story of the wendigo and how it drives people mad with hunger; they were created as a side-effect of Eva's Mythos. Anyone studying them for long enough will open themselves up to the Wendigo Psychosis (*hungry-3*) but will also discover a section that depicts **the wendigo tearing out its heart and burying it in the ground.**

Digging, scanning, or using divination would show **the heart is not in the cave.**



Mia Gupta is chained and gagged in one of the alcoves, left here for days without food or water (although as the Rift of nourishment, she has no problem surviving like this for all eternity). She's *shaken-2* by the horrors she's been through, but she can speak, slowly and frailly.

Mia saw Eva transform into the wendigo before killing a passerby in Wildknock (Mia did not know the man). **Eva saw her too and caught up with her the next night. P.I. Navarro tried to stop Eva from kidnapping Mia but failed. Mia was brought into the cave and used her powers to soothe Eva's hunger and prevent the wendigo from eating her, and so the suspicious Eva decided to keep her alive. Later, Navarro made a daring but foolish attempt to save Mia, but Eva pounced at him from the dark, overpowered him, and consumed the detective before Mia's eyes.**

CONJURING P.I. NAVARRO IN THE CAVE

If the PCs can summon the detective's ghost one more time (page 220), perhaps using *the deceased P.I.'s bones* and *the sacred power of the burial ground*, the apparition will show them his last confrontation with Eva the wendigo in the cave, pointing them to her heart in Fritzberg.

If they don't summon the ghost (or as an added clue if they do), P.I. Navarro's presence will form the message **HEART IS WHERE THE HOME IS** by producing blood on the walls or rearranging bones, pointing the crew to Fritzberg or to Eva's luxury home.

The ghost of P.I. Luis Navarro appears, once again. He is kneeling on the ground, loading his revolver with bullets. Navarro's voice echoes in the darkness of the cave as he mumbles to himself, "Her heart must mean something. I keep seeing it... Damn visions. Is that what you're hiding in Fritzberg, you beast?" Suddenly, Navarro jumps to his feet and starts shooting into the cave's void. As the dead click of an empty chamber is heard, his face darkens. Then, his body flies into the air, landing onto the ground with a thud. It looks as if P.I. Luis Navarro is looking right at you, as he is laying on his back and blood soaks his coat.

COLLAPSING CAVE ★★★

COLLAPSE 4

- **Structurally Unsound:** Whenever someone takes an action that could significantly damage the cave walls, the Collapsing Cave takes *shuddering-1*. If that action was **Hit With All You've Got** and the player did not choose to control the collateral damage, the Collapsing Cave takes *shaking-2* instead.
- **Run For Your Lives:** When *collapse* maxes out, all PCs must **Take the Risk** to avoid being *buried-alive-5*. If they miss, they are also *smashed-5* (they may **Face Danger**, but not with the same tags). While a PC is *buried-alive*, the MC may give her *suffocating-4* as a soft move. The fate of NPCs is resolved narratively.

- Someone stumbles over the bones and slams into the wall (*shuddering-1*)

- Sand sprinkles from the ceiling

MIA GUPTA +

Ally

MYSTERY

Where do I draw the line between hunger and gluttony?

POWER TAGS

***miraculously satiate hunger**, a food truck cook, fix a broken vehicle, determined to feed the starving, cast iron frying pan, remind someone of their humanity, find food anywhere, the Chicken & Egg food truck, summon Hindu devas, aura of benign compassion*

WEAKNESS TAGS

can't pass an opportunity to help, mediocre cooking skills, drama queen, don't offend her cooking

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Goddess of the Last Kitchen on Earth:** When you **Change the Game** with tags from this theme to give others sustenance, double the Juice you get and you may always choose to *scale up the* effect (for 1 Juice).

EVA'S LUXURY HOME

So this is where the monster lives: a luxurious and modern ranch-style house in the middle of one of the richest communities in the City. Cicadas chirp pleasantly all around you and a warm breeze blows by as you look up the wooded rise atop which the house sits. Private security in designer suits walk back and forth on the patio by the pool, watchful. Behind them, in a gorgeously lavish living room, the lights are on but there's no one there. This strange clash of tranquility and tension is just what you'd expect of Eva Rice.

Eva's current home is a **red herring:** her heart is not here, it's buried in the backyard of Eva's childhood home in Fritzberg.

If the crew misinterprets P.I. Navarro's final message and comes here looking for the heart, they will have to sneak inside past the Elite Security Guards and Security System (*MC Toolkit*, page 150), plus any kind of high-pay Rift security Eva may have hired (such as the gargoyles of Spire Security, *Shadows & Showdowns,* page 106).

Attempts to confront Eva herself while she's here do not proceed past the doorway. She either requires the PCs to schedule a proper meeting at the Rice Assets offices, or calls the police to "remove these trespassers". She will not accept visitors.

Searching the place turns up a draft of Eva's biography (never published) which will reveal **Eva's childhood home was in Fritzberg.**

As an additional reward, the crew may find *incriminating evidence* that could help *implicate* Eva, such as messages she sent to the thugs that trashed Clarke Law or classified Rice Assets memos about intentional and hazardous negligence of the Wildknock buildings.

FRITZBERG

Once a densely-populated neighborhood, Fritzberg is now an endless snowy woodland, filled with black, lifeless tree trunks twisted around husks of derelict buildings. The air is cold and the forest is eerily quiet. As you make your way on the cracked remains of a pavement, the sky turns ashen and twilight settles. Firelight flickers somewhere in the distance and soon disappears. You become aware of a low howl in the distance, but you can't pinpoint its exact location. It's cold, and desolate. And you're getting hungry.

The ghost district of Fritzberg is where it all began: where Eva was born and abused, and later awakened and consumed her parents, eventually bringing ruin to the whole neighborhood. Most importantly, this is where she buried her heart.

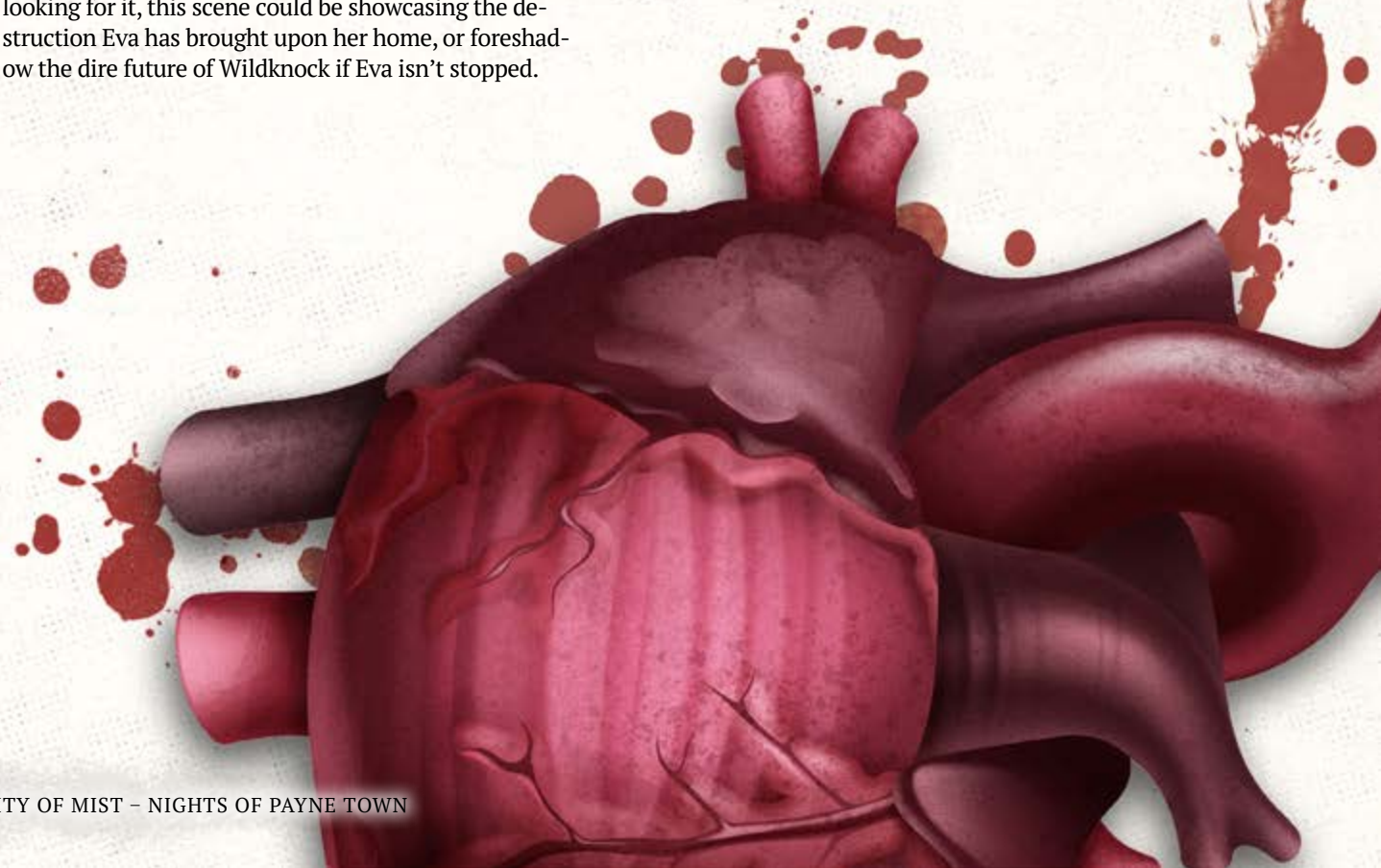
Due to the presence of the legendary corruptive wendigo heart and the withdrawal of the Mist, the derelict neighborhood has transformed into an Enclave of the creature's legendary hunting grounds (if you're playing through the story arc, Fritzberg was not taken over by Albion, unlike the other neighborhoods that Eva devoured).

Depending on the timing of the PCs' arrival and your cinematic considerations, this location can serve for several purposes:

- **A sad scene:** If the PCs are just passing through on their way to Eva's childhood home, or if they are not yet looking for it, this scene could be showcasing the destruction Eva has brought upon her home, or foreshadow the dire future of Wildknock if Eva isn't stopped.
- **A mystery scene:** If the PCS have not yet found Eva's childhood home, this scene could be a creepy investigative scene, with the PCs rummaging among the ruins and finding clues that will lead them there (see the clues below). The abandoned district suffers from *spotty reception*, and the forest is full of *eerie shadows* and *confusing pathways*.
- **A horror scene:** If the crew knows where they're going but your session could use some suspense, have the crew scramble to reach Eva's childhood home before they succumb to the Wendigo Psychosis. In this case, they must **Take the Risk** to make their way through the snow-clad, overgrown ruins of the district. Use the *hungry* status in your hard moves or ugly choices to amp up the threat. The wendigo herself could be hunting them through the neighborhood, eager to devour them before they reach the source of her power.

Crumbling posters of Rice Assets bearing the caption "Fritzberg's Own – Eva Rice" disclose that **Eva was born here** and later bought the place.

Looking Beyond the Mist will allow one to follow a trail of blood-stained stones and cracked bones to what seems like the entrance to a foreboding lair, a maw from which one can never escape: Eva's childhood home.



DEPTH 4:
THE HEART OF EVIL

EVA'S CHILDHOOD HOME

In the midst of a bulldozed housing project, covered with a blanket of snow and ice, stands a lonely old house: Eva Rice's childhood home. The Rice home is a one story building surrounded by a rotten picket fence and a yard filled with broken beer bottles. The peeling exterior paint and the smell of decay make it seem as if it was *built* in its neglected form, that this was never a true home for anyone. The door to the house is ajar and the windows are broken. A gust of wind is blowing from the inside of the house, carrying a few snowflakes to the yard.

After sustaining years of legendary hunger and everyday violence, the house holding Eva's heart has become a pulsing core of malign influence. Somewhere in the backyard, under a thick strata of frozen earth, **Eva's heart is buried**.

Once someone sets foot in the vicinity of the house or inside it, reaching Depth 4, the Wendigo Psychosis hits them at tier 4. In addition, Eva will instinctively sense their presence and race back here, if she isn't already here (she won't disintegrate herself as she may take too long to reform). Depending on Eva's position, the crew may be out of time, have very little time, or have all the time in the world; even with the speed of a forest monster, she may be too far to get here on time, especially if the PCs successfully lured her elsewhere (the courthouse, perhaps?).

THE HEART

If time is of the essence, digging out the heart from the frozen-solid ground requires maxing out *dug-up:5*. Otherwise, this can be resolved narratively. When it is exhumed, wrapped up in a bloody rag, the heart is shriveled up and blackened. Once someone is in possession of the heart, they can:

- Cut it with a silver weapon, if they have one, killing Eva on the spot. If Eva or anyone else resists, they **Go Toe to Toe**.
- Put it back into Eva, if she's restrained, causing her to feel the overwhelming pain of all her repressed emotions, most notably guilt on a legendary scale (as per her move **Heartless**).
- Threaten Eva with it by **Convincing** her; any hit, even the threat of the smallest *cut-1* to the heart with a silver weapon, would be enough to make her cooperate. On a miss, if she's close enough, she will leap and grab the heart. If she's too far, Eva will do the PC's bidding until she gets another chance to retrieve her heart.
- Any other creative solution such as **Stop. Holding. Back.**, mystically manipulate the essence of the wendigo (if they are trained in the mystic arts) or seal it with the Mist (if they're a Gatekeeper). Eva cannot be 'cured' of her Mythos but she can be put back to Sleep or have her Mythos removed with the furnace of the Gingerbread Witch (*The Furnace*, page 108).

If she is at the mercy of the crew or as part of a final speech, Eva can fill in any remaining blanks about her past and her real-estate scheme, and provide more incriminating evidence.

Eva claims that Vince Beaumont (she calls him by the name of his current reincarnation) has been her partner in crime: he knew about the atrocities she committed to devalue the neighborhoods and he still supported her because thanks to her he could (re)grow his kingdom of Albion. He commanded his Errant thugs to intimidate residents who spoke out against Rice Assets, for example, by trashing Jackie Clarke's office.

BEAUMONT'S TROPHY

If you're playing through the story arc, Beaumont's interest in the case reignites when the crew draws closer to slaying the wendigo. Beaumont wants the wendigo to die in Albion, where she may fulfill the Questing Beast prophecy (page 177).

If he has sent the crew on a quest to Wildknock, he will now contact the crew and command them to capture Eva alive, or at least take her heart and force her to follow them into Albion, so that she may be slain there; he offers his support in the fight. If he is the crew's enemy, he will not be afraid to show his hand and be truthful when he tells them that the heart is extremely valuable to him. He'll offer them a truce, for starters – but he's willing to go even further than that, because he is sure that after the prophecy is fulfilled, he'll be able to take back any lost ground.

This leads up to the stone altar in the opening of the next case, *The Streets Bleed Neon* (page 244).

AFTERMATH

Here are a few questions to consider and points to revisit when you wrap up this case:

- Where is Eva the wendigo at the end of all this? Is she still alive? Is she on the loose? Or has she been captured and forced to cooperate by a PC who holds her heart? If so, are the PCs planning to execute her at the behest of Beaumont? Or are they trying to find a solution to her situation?
- How did the PCs come out of their encounter with their own survival instincts? Were they able to resist the hunger or did they succumb to it? Perhaps what happened in Wildknock must stay in Wildknock. How did they come out of the clash with the ferocious and cannibalistic wendigo? Are all limbs accounted for?
- If Eva is decommissioned or out of the picture, what is the future of Rice Assets? Will they turn legit? Will they be broken up, their fortune used to rebuild the neighborhoods they ruined? Who in the company was involved in the dark dealings, and will they be brought to justice?
- What is the state of affairs in Wildknock? Is it too far gone? Will Rice Assets finish what they started? Or will good people like Reverend Willaims, Alex Penn, Otto Scholtz, and Mia Gupta help restore and repopulate it, pulling it back from the brink?
- Has P.I. Luis Navarro found his peace? How will he be remembered – as an obsessed and delirious gumshoe or as the true hero he really was? What about Jackie Clarke, the lawyer who always helped everyone? Will she leave any legacy?
- If Eva's heart was removed from her childhood house, what will be the fate of Fritzberg? Will it be redeveloped, or will the Mist-thin area be taken over by some even greater evil?




CITY OF MIST
POLICE
POLICE
THE STREETS BLEED NEON
AN ALL-OUT WAR OF RUTHLESS KINGS AND UNBRIDLED MAGIC

It is a time of unrest in the City. A new crime syndicate, originating from the previously-sleepy suburb of Whitecliff, has taken over several neighborhoods, pronouncing it their "kingdom". Their "ruler", who has escaped death many times, expands his territory by waging a violent crime war against the other gangs in the City. Or at least, that's what the media tells you. The public knows little about the sheer magnitude of the forces that are about to collide: it is a war of monarchs, of armies, of knights and almighty wizards. Even the government agents in gray suits can't contain this bloody mess. Will you stop it before it tears the City apart?

The Streets Bleed Neon is designed as the finale of a crime drama, in which a criminal empire's unfettered ambitions lead to a Citywide crime war, culminating in either an ultimate victory or an absolute downfall. The case highlights the destruction sowed by the toxic desire to gain power solely to destroy a hated foe, a futile effort ending in a pyrrhic victory at best. While it starts with urban infiltration and gang warfare, it quickly escalates to an all out mythic war and the deployment of a superweapon which could wreak widespread destruction in the City and even cause the collapse of the Mist.

Unlike most cases, *The Streets Bleed Neon* plays more as a sandbox event than a linear investigation. It is made of a series of loosely-connected component scenes which point at each other not through clues, but through the choices and actions of the PCs and main NPCs. It is up to you as the MC to adapt each scene based on the particular unfolding of events in your game.

As such, *The Streets Bleed Neon* can play out very differently every time you play it, with the outcome of each scene heavily depending on the PCs' actions. Crew members can support either side in the conflict and have the chance to change their allegiances multiple times during the case.

At the start of the case, the City is in the midst of a crime war between the organization of Grail Knight Vince Beaumont (King Arthur) – branded by the Sleeper media as **the Whitecliff Syndicate** – their rival Rift gangs and crime families, and the police, backed secretly by the Gatekeepers.

The Whitecliff Syndicate operates from what they call **the Kingdom of Albion**, a legendary Enclave of mythic Britain, which was recently established in the working-class neighborhood of Whitecliff (or at the edge of town, see below) and turned into a self-sustained fiefdom under Beaumont's control. Beaumont's gang, **the Errants**, hold the line against rival gangs as well as law enforcement in the City, occasionally sending strike teams into the City to enact bloody vengeance upon their rivals, whom they view as invading enemy kingdoms. From the perspective of the Sleeper residents of the City, Whitecliff is a neighborhood taken by organized crime, where the police can no longer set foot. Rift crime lords, who see Albion's independence as encroaching on their turf, call Beaumont's gang **"the secessionists"** and target the Errants wherever they show up on the streets of the City.

The border between Albion and the City runs along several highways that delimit the Enclave. Owing to the increased presence of government agents in gray suits (the Gatekeepers), the media has named it **the Gossamer Curtain**, borrowing the term circulating in the Rift underworld. The so-called **"Borderlands"** on either side of the Gossamer Curtain are monitored and patrolled by all involved parties.

THE STATE OF ALBION

If you are playing this case as a one-shot, Albion is as described above: a part-modern part-ancient neighborhood taken over by magic. If you're playing through the story arc, the nature of Albion in your game depends on the outcome of the previous cases in this vein, *Albion Awakens* (page 181) and *Home Is Where The Heart Is* (page 209).

- If the crew prevented the formation of Albion as a kingdom in *Albion Awakens*, its refugees and exiles settled in a shanty town at the edge of town, in which Beaumont re-established the Enclave. Instead of the glorious and wholesome kingdom it was meant to be, **New Albion** is now a forlorn, perpetually-overcast land of bitter souls, all of whom bear a grudge for the destruction of their "homeland" at the hands of the crew.

- If the crew didn't take explicit action to revert the work of Eva Rice after *Home Is Where The Heart Is*, Albion has spread into the abandoned neighborhoods that the real-estate agent has left in her wake, such as Wildknock, making it much larger in area and a much more powerful military force, on par with the rest of the City.
- If any crew members joined Beaumont, they are on the Albion side of the Gossamer Curtain when the case starts, working for him.

THE TOXIC WAR OF TWO KINGPINS

Behind the scenes, the war between the Whitecliff Syndicate and the police is the war of two modern-day kings: Vince Beaumont and "the Crimson King", AKA Corbin Payne.

Long ago, when the City was young, Vince Beaumont's daughter, Rio, was trying to stop Payne from becoming the overlord of misery in the City. She failed and vanished from the pages of history, and the grief of her loss filled her father with rage. Payne used this to inflict the Dolorous Stroke (page 18) upon Beaumont and make him his sworn enemy, knowing full well that an all-out war between the two kings would be the greatest engine of suffering for the City as a whole. Over the years, Beaumont amassed influence and honed his ability to rebuild his crime empire from ashes whenever he died and was reincarnated, and even though he managed to kill Payne, the Grail keeps bringing the Fisher King back to life. Beaumont is therefore pushed into seeking greater and greater power, hoping to foil the Grail's divinity, which inevitably brings him to deal more and more harm.

The hour has come for the two kings to battle it out with their City as their ring, but the game has already been won.

On one side, there is Corbin Payne, the wounded source of all wounds, disaffected, dulled by pain, and uncaring, neither for himself nor for anyone in the City. He plans to use Beaumont to rain destruction upon the City and so, while he pulls strings with one hand to drive the police and Gatekeepers to war, with his other hand he delays Beaumont's defeat and helps him escalate the war.

On the other side, Beaumont is a pawn in the hands of his enemy, unaware that he is a Grail Knight in the service of his greatest foe. While he masks his true motives behind trappings of chivalry and high-minded ideals, in truth he is blinded by his rage and seeks only one thing – the power to destroy his enemy, no matter the cost.

THE ONCE AND FUTURE QUEEN

Thanks to his Arthurian powers and the City's dire need of a savior, Vince Beaumont reincarnates in a new host every time he dies (see page 182).
If Vince Beaumont's previous host, Calvin Cyrus, was somehow killed, his next incarnation would be **Monique R. Juarez**, a 20-something truck driver who soon adopts the oddly self-referencing street name **MoniqueR** and proceeds to take over and rule the Errants with an iron fist.

THE CORE DILEMMA FOR THE PLAYERS

The case plays best when the PCs are not sure which side to help, gradually discovering that no side is innocent and that the war itself is the greatest threat to the City. All factions in this war are deeply wounded, which is why they wound each other – that is the greatest victory of the Crimson King. While Beaumont's crimes take center stage in this case, the Crimson King's insidious evil influence may not be so visible. **To strengthen the dilemma, you should help the PCs to justify Beaumont's violence, at least at first,** in the following ways.

IDOLIZE ALBION

First, present Albion as a utopia in the making, a wholesome alternative to the mundane City. The residents there seem to be happier than in the City, living a pastoral life where the Mist is thin and it's easier to be yourself. It's a place where one can be free, roaming the kingdom and living their legend to its fullest. The Enclave is governed by a just round table of the best individuals, and everyone is respectful and chivalrous. This can appeal to the romantics in the crew, but even cynics could become believers and sign up for defending such a dream. (There is also a dark side to Albion and the Errants that run it, which will be revealed during the case).

VILLAINIZE THE CRIMSON KING

Second, build up the villainous image of the Crimson King as the City's worst enemy.

If you're playing through the story arc and the crew completed at least one vein, **play on what they already know about Corbin Payne**: the personal stories of the victims of Dr. Krystal Knight and/or Armand Kai, or the crew's own suffering, if they had a run-in with Payne. Payne seems to delight in bringing misery to

anyone, everywhere, through remote manipulation. His reach seems endless and his reign unending, much like a dark lord that looms over the City and Albion. Beaumont's efforts might be destructive, but at least they're straightforward and directed at the greater evil – one that no one else seems to be able to face!

If this is the first vein in your series or if you are playing this case as a one shot, **play on the Crimson King's reputation**. Every one of the crew's contacts has heard the name whispered as the hidden lord of all organized crime in the City, the one who pushes *everything* from behind the scenes. He is indirectly responsible for all the people who got killed by trafficked guns or became addicted to drugs. Reveal him to be the source of a personal tragedy of one or more of the PCs, by showing that the person responsible was acting with advice from the Crimson King or directed by him. He is rumored to be a psychopath whose sole pleasure is to watch the City consume itself.

URBAN WARFARE AND THE GANG ARMS RACE

The case begins around when the war among the factions reaches a violent head with a downtown bloodbath.

Meanwhile, Beaumont seeks **the ultimate weapon** with which to defeat the Crimson King as well as law enforcement in the City, whom he sees as direct servants of his dark enemy. By default, this weapon is **Ray Gibbons** (Merlin), an awakening young Rift and the son of **Céline Rowland** (Lady of the Lake), whom she has hidden away somewhere in Miller's Square (Ray Gibbons' man cave). Alternatively or in addition to Ray Gibbons, the superweapon may also be one of the PCs or supporting characters in the series.

To locate this weapon or to unlock its powers, Beaumont seeks to fulfill **the Questing Beast quest:** slay an abomination at the stone altar in order to be rewarded with a vision of his ultimate weapon or the means to activate it. The role of the "abomination" can also be taken by any PC or NPC that has transgressed in a heinous way, including a past villain, a member of the series' supporting cast, or a reviled Nemesis. If you are playing through the Criminal Vein, this is by default **Eva Rice** (the Wendigo), if she survived (see *Home Is Where The Heart Is*, page 209).

HEALED PCS AND BRUTALITY

If you're using the overarching case *Percival* and one or more of the PCs has discovered her secret pain and began to heal from it, ask the player whether his character feels that her new insights conflict with acts of excessive violence.

If that is the case, the player may choose to have the *Healed* status hinder actions that the character feels go against her understanding of what is needed or helpful to cure the City of its wounds.

ENGAGING WITH THE KING

Throughout the case, the crew is presented with growing evidence that the kingpin of Albion is out of control, whether they start out as Beaumont's allies or not. Both in the downtown bloodbath and in his willingness to cold-heartedly execute a prisoner in exchange for power (the stone altar), Beaumont begins to show his true colors.

Because Beaumont can reincarnate, it's very difficult to keep him down. If the PCs want to stop him, they must piece together his past as well as his unique condition (how the Dolorous Stroke interacts with his Arthur Mythos). With the clock ticking and the hostilities erupting into open war, this foray into the King's Secret could come at the expense of handling the escalating crisis in the City.

But Beaumont is no fool; he expects betrayal. He has a spy watching over the PCs or the NPCs they might want to interview, a strange fellow called **MISTER BARLOW** (Burlow Beanie, a seven-headed sprite from Arthurian legend), who reports to him personally. If the PCs manage to discover anything about his past, he will dispose of them.

THE PRICE OF WAR

While the search for a superweapon or the king's secrets is underway, the war between Albion and the City continues to escalate. Eventually, law enforcement, the army, and the Gatekeepers launch a last assault on the fortifications of Albion. Left unchecked, the Battle of Calmann Bridge ends in mounting casualties and wounded on both sides.

At the same time, the growing power of Albion or the unleashing of Beaumont's superweapon threatens to tear the Mist apart, bringing about the rise of Rifts Everywhere. Monstrosities rampage in the streets of the City, Mythoi of calamity and malevolence attracted to the blood-soaked emanations of war.

In the end, each crew member must choose: take a side in the war and watch the City burn to cinders or save it by healing Beaumont from his unrelenting desire to destroy his enemy at all costs.



DEPTH 0:
THE HOOKS

The crew may become involved in the case in the following ways:

- If the PCs are working for **Vince Beaumont** following *Albion Awakens* or *Home Is Where The Heart Is*, they become indirectly implicated in the events of this case. Beaumont could task them with spearheading a raid on a rival gang downtown (downtown bloodbath) or, if they captured Eva Rice, demand they smuggle her into Albion (the borderlands) to act as the Questing Beast in his sacrificial ritual (the stone altar). PCs who are welcome in Camelot may begin to suspect Beaumont's sanity and start snooping around there.
- If the crew is unwelcome in Albion or if they are an unaffiliated third party, they may be approached by **the unorthodox Gatekeeper agent and Rift handler, Lars Erikson (see *Shadows & Showdowns*, page 281)**. Erikson will pretend to represent an obscure third party that has much to gain from defusing the situation. He will hire or inspire the crew to infiltrate Albion (the borderlands) and Camelot and collect vital intelligence on Beaumont and his armies – and how to bring them down. He could also task them with monitoring or interrupting the ritual at the stone altar.
- As the crime war escalates, crew members or their supporting cast can become embroiled in the fighting or affected by it. Passersby around the downtown bloodbath may be caught in the crossfire, leading PCs to vow revenge. Albion's rival gangs – the Adze (page 242) or Samuel Valtierra (*MC Toolkit*, pages 30 and 160) could hire the crew to help push back the onslaught. The crew may be hired by Albion to help them in their fighting, to guard the borders (the borderlands), or to raid either side, but most likely they will be approached as bounty hunters to bring in a crook hideous enough to serve as the Questing Beast (the stone altar). NPCs close to the crew may be the target of such bounty hunting contracts, forcing the crew to protect them, or the same could happen to the PCs' enemies, prompting the crew to show up to the ritual to gloat and make sure their enemies are put to the sword.

MISTER BARLOW

Whether the PCs are infiltrators in Albion or loyal to the Whitecliff Syndicate, Vince Beaumont wants to keep an eye on them to stave off any chance of betrayal. To this end, he has Conjured a being that would serve as his spy, **Mister Barlow**, a Conjuration of the seven-headed Arthurian sprite Burlow Beanie.

In the City, Mister Barlow appears as an athletic, young, mean-faced man, dressed in a knee-length padded-leather trench coat and a waistcoat, often carrying a walking cane. This creepy Victorian touch, visible more clearly to Rifts, gives off the impression that he is a disreputable wheeler-and-dealer for the Longshore Union, the underworld, or both. He often wears his cap or hat so that his scarred face is half-hidden, adding to his sinister presence.

Contrary to appearances, Mister Barlow isn't a single entity nor is he human; he is a shadow spawned from the Albion Enclave. It is capable of existing as up to seven separate copies of itself, each independently roaming around the City and performing espionage and assassintion tasks for Beaumont. All of Mister Barlow's copies share the same consciousness, although none have a will of their own.

Beaumont will use his spy-sprite in the following ways:

- **Espionage:** The various copies of Mister Barlow are watching the PCs from the very beginning of the case. Use a hard move or a 7-9 roll on **Investigate** to have him find something useful and communicate it back to Beaumont (Beaumont usually meets one of the copies in Camelot; if the copy is needed elsewhere, Barlow simply calls in to report).
- **Bullying:** If Beaumont suspects he is about to be betrayed by a PC he likes or needs, he will instruct Mister Barlow to intimidate her. If successful, the PC must contend with a compulsive status (*intimidated-3*) that hinders any action contrary to what Mister Barlow "advised" her.
- **Assassination:** If anyone else betrays Beaumont or if the PC has ignored Mister Barlow's warning, the sprite will be told to "take care of them". Mister Barlow will then strike when the target is at its most vulnerable, with multiple copies attacking simultaneously if necessary (especially if the target is alone and Mister Barlow believes his multi-body secret would remain secure once the target is dead). He will usually have prepared equipment to counter the target's abilities.

MISTER BARLOW ★★★+

As a Conjuration, a copy of Mister Barlow can be *banished* more easily than he can be destroyed by maxing out *hurt-or-subdue*. In either case, the Enclave of Albion must reform this copy, which may take one or more downtime periods. Beaumont may choose not do so if the Enclave is weakened or under an immediate threat. Owing to his Mythos, the Burlow Beanie can also be *magically-controlled* by a sufficiently adept magical practitioner or supernatural being (in Arthurian legend, the Green Knight takes over him and uses him to defeat the King of Cornwall). If the PCs take over a copy of Mister Barlow, give them the extra theme kit on the next page; they can then choose what that copy communicates to the other copies.

HURT OR SUBDUE 5 / BANISH 3 / MAGICALLY CONTROL 6

- **Incorporeal Sprite:** Mister Barlow cannot be harmed by mundane means; attacks just go through him.
- **Underhanded:** If Mister Barrow wishes to remain unseen at the start of a scene, give him *stealthy-2*, renewable as a hard move.
- **Premeditation:** When Mister Barlow plans to assassinate a target, he collects information on the target's abilities. Whenever the target or one of its allies rolls 7-9 on **Investigate**, he learns one detail; he can learn three details as a hard move. For each detail he learned, Mister Barlow prepares one piece of mundane equipment or trap, represented by a story tag. When he strikes, he may use his tags to hinder the target's player moves, or burn his tags to also burn the target's tags, one-for-one.

- Expertly shank someone with his pen knife (*deep-stab-wound-3*)
- Threaten someone he will strike when they least expect it, revealing his eerie sprite eyes (*intimidated-3*)
- Become *invisible* and hide or flee
- Once invisible, escape altogether (**Deny Them Something They Want**)

- Step halfway out of the shadows, wearing a sly smile
- Draw frighteningly close to someone, sending a chill down their spine
- Produce a hidden pen knife that glistens in the moonlight

MISTER BARLOW

Conjuration

MYSTERY

Who is conspiring against my master?

POWER TAGS

A murderous sprite, *a resourceful manservant*, *multiple Mister Barlows*, *fiendish knife-fighting*, *spy on my enemies*, *forewarn against betrayal*, *stronger in Albion*, *only harmed by legendary weapons*, *prepare the right item to counter an ability*, *bound to me by magic*

WEAKNESS TAGS

far from Albion, *bloodthirsty*, *still bound to Beaumont*, *relies on reconnaissance*

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Premeditation:** When Mister Barlow plans to assassinate a target, you may convert any batch of Clues representing knowledge of the target's abilities and weaknesses into a temporary *well-prepared* status with a tier equal to the number of Clues in the batch. If you have multiple batches, convert them separately and stack the statuses.

DEPTH 1: SKIRMISHES AT THE BORDERS

In the first Depth of this case, the City is already in the midst of an escalating crisis between the police, several Rift gangs, and the Whitecliff Syndicate. However, while tensions run high, the situation has not yet erupted into an all-out war. In this Depth, the PCs acquaint themselves with the developing situation while taking part in some of the illicit – or downright immoral – activities of the factions' race for control over the City.

If the PCs are making their way from the City into Albion (if they are sent to spy on Beaumont in Camelot or if they are bringing a captive to the stone altar) or if they are running a raid from Albion into the City (downtown bloodbath), **they must first traverse the borderlands** – that is, unless they have a better means of circumventing the border and the Gossamer Curtain.

THE BORDERLANDS

Under the highway you find only tracts of bare concrete and undeveloped lots, strewn with tall weeds and lined with chain link fences and rusty, chained gates. A wide cement channel, dry except for a scatter of oily puddles, runs under the highway bridge, marking the border with Albion. The roar of gunfire, motorcycle engines, and police sirens echoes in the distance. Barrel fires are lit on both sides, few and far between, casting long shadows on the cement columns and ramps, where huddled dark figures warm themselves and stand watch, undoubtedly keeping hidden weapons upon their person. A single wrong move could light this fire, and blast the dark channel with explosive violence.

The "Borderlands" are the territories on both sides of the highways that delineate the Albion Enclave, about one City block on each side of the border. While the roads and highway exits leading into the neighborhood are barricaded by the Errants, guarded by the police, and beset by news reporters, the borderlands are too



long to defend continuously. Instead, all involved factions patrol the borderlands and set scouts, spies, and informants here to watch the comings and goings of their enemies and to prevent any large scale attack on these fronts. As a result, the borderlands have become a quiet and eerie no-man's-land, feared by City residents and favored by smugglers or saboteurs seeking to venture into enemy territory.

The borderlands pose an infiltration challenge that serves as a tense introduction to the state of affairs in the City. As a game challenge, the crew must cross this location to get to their next location; whether they are making their way into or out of Albion, this is the path of least resistance. However, with all factions on edge, any sign of activity around the borderlands could potentially draw the crew's enemies to the place (Errants, police, rival gangs, or Gatekeepers), igniting a bloody battle and blowing the lid on whatever the crew is trying to achieve. Therefore, **to get to their destination, the crew must find a way to secretly cross over.**

The borderlands include the aerial space above the border, where police choppers and griffon-riding Errants may intercept a flying PC; the underground sewer system below, where spies and gangsters can ambush unwary infiltrators in the dark; and even magical means of transportation: the Gossamer Curtain raised by the Gatekeepers could cause a teleporter to find themselves crashing against a glowing wall in a loud and flashy fireworks display, inviting a welcoming committee armed to the teeth.

CROSSING OVER UNNOTICED

PCs who try to traverse the borderlands must cross three sectors to safely arrive at their destination:

- The borderlands on the PCs' starting side (scouted and patrolled)
- The border itself (crossing the highway or channel and the Gossamer Curtain)
- The borderlands on the far side (scouted and patrolled)

Each sector poses its own challenges. You may wish to forego the challenges on one side (starting or far) if the PCs are welcome there. Once the PCs overcome or sneak past the threats in all three sectors, they are safely through to the other side.

If the crew runs into resistance, the PCs may choose to postpone their business on the other side of the border and hang back. Make life complicated for them by describing the consequences of this delay. For example, if they were going to the stone altar, their monstrous sedated captive might begin to wake up, or if they have a task from Beaumont or Erikson, either could be *cross-2* with them for failing to fulfill it on time.

The crew might also get through yet still be detected. This information could be used against them, from their enemies being prepared for their next raid (downtown bloodbath) to their faces *all-over-the-morning-news-3*, courtesy of Nightcrawler Reiko (see page 179).

SCOUTS on both sides lay hidden and watch for activity to report. They have both a *hidden* status and an *alert* status; the former hinders **Investigate** moves to spot them, the latter hinders **Sneak Around** moves to sneak past them unnoticed. If a scout spots the PCs, she will alert a patrol if the threat level is minor, or a response team if it is significant. Scouts on both sides can usually see into all three sectors. As a hard move, you can have a scout detect the sneaking PC. As a hard move or a move complication, you can have an already circumvented scout refocus their attention (e.g., they hear a rustle and turn their gaze where the PCs are), requiring a new **Sneak Around** move.

PARTOLS on both sides show up regularly to look for signs of trouble and intercept anyone trying to cross over. They are easy to notice and can even be entirely avoided if the crew **Investigated** their patrol cycle. Otherwise, they are *alert* and require a **Sneak Around** move to circumvent. If they spot infiltrators, they will engage, calling for reinforcements from a response team as needed.

RESPONSE TEAMS are heavily-armed units on standby ready to engage a major threat. They only arrive at the scene if called by a scout or a patrol, as a hard move.

THE BORDER poses multiple challenges. First, crossing the ever-watched border is harder than crossing either borderlands: the highway up above is *exposed* and holds the danger of being hit by a passing vehicle, while the concrete channel below is fenced off by *chain link fences* and forces infiltrators to splash through *wet trash* or *oily puddles*.

To make the crossing even harder, the Gatekeepers have erected a massive containment field of Mist titled **the Gossamer Curtain**. It blocks Mythos manifestations from being seen on the City side and from crossing over, stripping any active legendary powers from their Rifts (without otherwise affecting the Rift). Any mythical story tags or statuses are burned when crossing the Curtain but can be recreated on the other side. The barrier also blocks modes of transportation that rely on teleportation or shapeshifting (For more information, see Graywashing Barrier, *Shadows & Showdowns,* page 277). If the barrier has to counteract more than 4 tags or a tier-4 status for a single effect it breaks in that specific point (*penetrate:4*), but this alerts the Gatekeepers to the presence of a powerful Rift at the scene. There is an old, small oil tanker or sewage vacuum truck parked not far from the barrier, a Gatekeeper Graywasher vehicle in disguise, which sustains this barrier and can repair it when necessary.

Studying the movements of the Graywasher crews or studying the Gossamer Curtain itself could indicate that **the barrier won't hold for much longer** and that if they are adamant to keep Albion sealed, **the Gatekeepers will soon be forced to take more drastic action** (Battle of Calmann Bridge).

FACTION UNITS

FACTION	SCOUTS	PATROLS	RESPONSE TEAMS
Albion	Spies disguised as drunk revelers, Mister Barlow (page 238)	The Errants (page 193)	Lancelot (page 206)
Law Enforcement	Undercover agents dressed as vagrants	Police squad cars (*MC Toolkit*, p. 150)	SWAT Team (*MC Toolkit*, p. 150)
Media	Nightcrawler Reiko (p. 179)	Reporter (*MC Toolkit*, p. 144)	News Team, Joany Garcia (*S&S*, p.102), Monte Wolfe Media Sponsored Journalist (*S&S*, p.194)
Rival Gangs	Adze Firefly (page 244)	Adze Witch (page 243)	-
Rift-Powered Law Enforcement (Avatar DA King)	Gawkers (*S&S*, p.156)	Stormbringers (*S&S*, p.155)	Storm Clouds (*S&S*, p.155)
Gatekeepers	Disembodied Intel Percher (*S&S*, p.271), Graywasher (*S&S*, p.285)	Gatekeeper Agents (*MC Toolkit*, p. 164), Security Detail (*S&S*, p.275)	Gatekeeper Seals (page 78), Tactical Weaver (*S&S*, p.276)

DOWNTOWN BLOODBATH

The bass thuds of groovy, mellow music echo outside the oddly cone-shaped and coarsely plastered structure of the lounge bar, identified by a crackling neon sign as "HIVE". Shady, casually dressed men patrol the perimeter carrying submachine guns, as the front door opens to receive a line of bloodshot clubbers itching to get in. Through the barred windows, an eerie, pulsing green glow can be seen faintly illuminating the dark labyrinth of interconnected rooms that spiral inside the building. The place looks heavily-fortified, a tough nut to crack; if the Errants want this gang taken out, there will be a price to pay in blood.

The bloodbath at the downtown **"Hive"** lounge serves as an introduction to the ongoing Citywide crime war and demonstrates how ruthless Beaumont and his Errants have become in their fight to sustain Albion. It involves a raid by the Errants against their enemies, a vampiric underworld gang called **the Adze**, which spirals out of control and turns into a bloody massacre; unless, of course, the PCs intervene.

The crew can arrive here as Beaumont's champions, leading what begins as an Errants' raid on a rival gang's stronghold and arms cache, as bystanders drawn into the conflict, or as enemies of Albion trying to intercept the Errants, possibly joining forces with the Adze.

THE ADZE GANG

The Adze are a gang Touched and empowered by a vampiric firefly, a peculiar Familiar species of the same name. Each gang member, called a "Witch", is controlled by an Adze firefly attached to the back of their neck and follows the commands of the Adze Familiars' hive mind. The gang deals in arms and traffics various recreational drugs, mostly heroin and amphetamines, under the street brand "ENVY". It operates and protects its main feeding ground, a drug house under the guise of a chillout lounge ("Hive"), where its members prey on drug users.

Pushed out of their original habitat and home turf due to the encroachment of Albion, the Adze are now the mortal enemies of the Errants, and have attacked and ambushed the knightly gang on the borders of Albion on several occasions, sucking their blood dry and leaving only shriveled up corpses in their wake. This prompted the current counterattack by the Errants, eager to avenge their fallen brethren. The Errants are not aware that the gang members are hosts to the actual Adze and that they are about to destroy potentially innocent lives.

THE "HIVE" LOUNGE

The "Hive" is a neon-lit chillout lounge downtown that attracts a varied crowd of clubbers and drug addicts looking to score. Alongside its modern groove, it boasts strangely insectoid decor. Set in a cone-shaped adobe building, architecturally designed to look like a termite nest, it is a warren of cozy and smoky lounges coiled around a well-guarded and fortified core. The core cylinder is divided into levels that contain the gang's weapons, cash, and drug stashes, as well as the Adze parasite grass patch on the ground floor, where they breed and grow their larvae. The Adze hosts know every turn and passageway in the Hive, making it highly defensible. The firefly Familiars, if they detach from their hosts, are almost impossible to catch here.

GOING MEDIEVAL ON THE ADZE

Ignorant of the Adze parasite and feeling *vindictive-2*, the Errants are on a quest decreed by their kingpin, Beaumont, to "rid the land of the Adze scourge". What in Albion may sound noble-minded, translates in the City to brutally killing all the gang members, who are in fact merely addicts under the influence of the Familiar bug. Armed with their usual *makeshift swords*, *shotguns*, and *gasoline tanks*, the bikers intend to strike deep at the heart of the "Hive", put it to the torch, and finish the Adze once and for all. The attack will consist of three phases:

- **Shots exchanged around the lounge entrances and windows**, with passersby caught in the crossfire, until the Errants can break in;
- **A scramble through the lounge rooms**, butchering any Adze guards or operators in the Errants' path, with collateral injuries and fatalities among the patrons (who are just as damned as the Adze in Beaumont's eyes);
- **Breaking into the *fortified-3* core cylinder** with explosives, exterminating the remaining Adze gang members, looting their cache, and setting the place on fire.

At first, the brutality should appear as an integral part of the fight, from both sides, considering the casual way in which the Adze parasites are willing to discard their hosts. As the Errants delve deeper, however, it should become apparent that the once-idealistic Errants are now on a hateful extermination spree. Whether the crew is aiding the Errants or fighting against them, use a hard move (or **Hit Them After a Fair Warning**) at a key moment to **Make Something Horrible Happen** and have the Errants brutally and callously kill a defeated Adze gang member who was released by a fleeing parasite, or an unlucky bystander.



As the situation unfolds, observant PCs can **Investigate** and potentially come up with the clues to stop the bloodbath.

Each of the Adze gang members has **a tiny glowing bug attached to the back of their necks.** These are fireflies, which don't normally bite people, as any zoologist would know.

The Adze hardly speak and seem to be communicating amongst themselves with near-imperceivable signals or perhaps telepathically. Examining the behavior of the fireflies shows **they are communicating amongst themselves.**

Looking Beyond the Mist or using divination will show a skulking figure in a loincloth riding on the back of the host, grasping his or her shoulders in its clawed fingers, and sinking its teeth exactly where the firefly is. **This vampiric being is feeding off of the gang member's blood and at the same time controlling his or her mind.**

Premonitions or monster-lore may indicate that **capturing the Adze firefly will cause it to transform into its humanoid form.**

RŌSHI O'KANE

A sweet and gentle Zen Buddhist monk and a street preacher, the venerable and humble Rōshi O'Kane roams the streets downtown in his brown and orange robes in search of broken people to help and emotionally heal. For now, he is a Sleeper driven by sheer spiritual and religious commitment, but he could soon awaken to his very own Mythos, that is, if he doesn't get killed tonight.

If you need a moral compass to contrast the actions of the Errants, Rōshi O'Kane can show up at the scene and try to dissuade the warring gangs from any further hostilities. He'll even follow the Errants into the "Hive" and try to get in their path. He isn't at all careful so unless the PCs intervene, he will be a casualty of the bloodbath. Use this to rattle the PCs and realign them with their moral core (if any).

The Errants have no clue that the Adze are mind-controlled. For them, the Adze are criminal lowlifes and the sooner they are slain, the sooner the City will be free of their disease.

Beyond the Mist, the Errants' gallant knights-in-shining-armor Mythos is slowly **transforming into bloodied, battle-worn medieval crusaders** who would massacre anyone in the name of their holy war.

ADZE WITCH ★★

The Adze gang members, also known as "Witches" (regardless of gender) are individuals possessed by an Adze firefly. The gangsters wear stylish and bling sportswear or inconspicuous jackets and jeans if they are operating on the down low. They don't actively hide their Familiars but rather wear them as a badge of membership that signals other gangs to back off.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / REMOVE FIREFLY 3 / EXORCISE 3

- **Possessed:** The firefly Familiar can be removed from the Adze Witch by maxing out any of *subdue*, *remove-firefly*, or *exorcise* spectrums. The Adze Witch then passes out and a new Danger is created: Adze Firefly, which is temporarily *disoriented-2*; the next attack against it has the opening needed to **Hit With All You've Got**.
- **Vampiric Jealousy:** For every power or story tag the target of the Adze Witch possesses that represents enviable riches, status symbols, or good looks, give the Adze Witch one tier of *frenzied*. This status cannot exceed tier 3.

- Fire short bursts of gunfire (*flesh-wound-2*) or clobber someone with a knucklebuster (*knocked-out-teeth-2* or *disoriented-2*)
- Grab someone and grapple with them, preparing to bite (*restrained-3*)
- Sink her teeth into someone and drain their blood and strength (for each tier in *restrained* the target has: gain one tier of *strengthened* or burn one relevant tag or status tier)

- Leer at someone who evokes her jealousy
- Stare at her next target and smile audaciously to expose her fangs



ADZE FIREFLY ★★★

The Adze Firefly Familiar is the driving force behind the Adze street gang. By *possessing* the strongest victims it can find and forcibly recruiting them into its swarm, the vampiric species is able to secure the desired feeding and breeding conditions in the urban setting of the City. *Possessed* victims become "Witches" who retain their cognition and skills but are compelled by their overridden instincts to serve the Adze gang.

According to the tales, an Adze is indestructible as a firefly but catching it will force it to reveal its humanoid vampire form, which can be harmed. Furthermore, nothing can stop an Adze in firefly form from entering your home and biting you.

HURT – / CATCH 3

- **Vulnerable in Captivity:** When *catch:3* maxes out, the Adze Firefly assumes its humanoid form. Change its *hurt-or-subdue* maximum to 3.
- **All-Penetrating:** There is no known defense against the Adze in its firefly form. Tags representing barriers and defenses are not applicable and the firefly can circumvent or drill through any barrier as a soft move.
- **Vampiric Appetite:** For every power or story tag the target of the Adze Firefly possesses that represents enviable strength, vitality, or magical power, give the Adze Firefly one tier of *frenzied*. This status cannot exceed tier 3.

- (In either form) Latch onto its victim and *possess-3* or *drain-3* them (for each tier of *drain* that remains after the target **Faces Danger**, if at all, gain one tier of *strengthened* or burn one relevant tag or status tier)
- (In firefly form) Burrow into the walls or escape through a window or small opening (**Deny Them Something They Want**)

- Buzz around the room, flickering a sinister green glow
- Swoop down on its next prey

THE STONE ALTAR

```
The leaves of the ancient alder, yew, and
hazel trees around the glade rustle gen-
tly in the brisk wind. Under an overcast
sky, a band of Albion's so-called knights,
their visors lowered, drag the prisoner to
the center of the clearing, where an old
dolmen capstone rests askew in the mud,
covered in lichen. With their tattered
banners fluttering in the wind, they chain
their captive to the altar and await their
king. Not long after, he arrives, stern
and grimacing, yet you can see burning in
his eyes is a rekindled hope for victory.
```

The Questing Beast prophecy is one of Beaumont's paths to unlocking enough magical power to mount an attack on the Crimson King. In this scene, the prophecy may be fulfilled at the cost of a life, by slaying the reviled "Questing Beast", framing the PCs' moral choices against the backdrop of Beaumont's growing cruelty.

In the City, **the Questing Beast** isn't a specific person but a title that can be given to anyone who is despised or reviled enough to receive it, whether unjustly, due to bigotry and hatred, or because that person has committed atrocities heinous enough to justify it. By default, this is **Eva Rice**, the real-estate mogul and the Rift of the Wendigo who consumed numerous City residents and then used their disappearances to take over their homes and neighborhoods (see *Home Is Where The Heart Is*, page 209). Other alternatives can be an older matron of the Adze gang (mistaken for the leader of the gang) or the poor Archie, hated for his draconic nature (see *Albion Awakens,* page 194). However, **the Questing Beast can be any PC or NPC in your series,** including loathed archvillains, Nemeses, supporting cast who slipped, etc. – the more dramatic, the better.

In this scene, the crew partakes or interferes in the slaying (read: execution) of the person who is the Questing Beast. The PCs' role can be anywhere on the spectrum from party crashers, to observers, to captors of the Questing Beast who smuggled it into Albion, and all the way to the executioners. If they are in league with Beaumont, he gauges what they are willing to do for him and may push them to take a more active role, to determine if he can trust them to set aside their qualms and morals for the ultimate goal of defeating the Crimson King.



THE RITUAL

The captive Questing Beast is brought to a stone altar in a glade somewhere in Albion. There, either one of the PCs, Beaumont, or one of the Errants must slay them. For Beaumont and the Errants, there are two arguments to follow through with the execution, which they will use to convince the crew:

- The Questing Beast is an irredeemable abomination deserving of death.
- The Questing Beast's death is the only way to give Albion the power to quash its enemy, and the enemy of the entire City – the Crimson King.

Investigating the madness that is taking over Beaumont and his gang in this scene yields the same clues as in Camelot.

If the crew is unfazed by the moral implications of this execution, bring in a moral counterweight such as a member of the supporting cast, a trusted mentor, or any other NPC. Some options include:

- **Céline Rowland** (Lady of the Lake), who issues a cryptic warning that the prophecy can be interpreted in different ways and that the way it is interpreted will determine its effect
- **Monk Rōshi O'Kane**, who has wandered here to turn Beaumont from his violent ways
- **Nightcrawler Reiko Ikeda**, who has been covering the event from the shadows but couldn't help but intervene

Taking notice of Céline Rowland's objection, a good judge of character could tell **she has her own reasons to oppose the ritual.** She is worried of what Beaumont would do should he find his superweapon; because of the danger to the City but also because she's protecting someone. Tracking her won't be easy (see her Danger profile on page 252), but it could lead the crew to Ray Gibbons' man cave.

If a PC is about to execute the Questing Beast, give them a final description of the abomination's vulnerability and ultimate humanity and **Force Them To Choose**.

THE OUTCOME

If the execution is opposed and successfully averted by the PCs, Beaumont sees this as the deepest betrayal. If the PCs had any status in Albion, they now lose it and become *branded-as-traitors-5*. Beaumont and the Errants attack, with their usual brutality.

If the execution goes through, a powerful gust of magical wind blows out from the bloodied altar in all directions and a chilling, thundering wail echoes

throughout Albion. The quest is completed and the immense power unleashed is now stored within Albion, as any arcane practitioner could sense. This power can manifest as the awakening of **Ray Gibbons** (Merlin) and a vision that leads the Albion king and knights to him (Ray Gibbons' man cave), although it can be used to power any superweapon Beaumont acquires. If the PCs are still Beaumont's allies, he may task them with the quest of bringing Gibbons to Albion. On the flipside, if some PCs had even the slightest qualms about this, give them appropriate statuses such as *disillusioned-2*, *guilty-3*, or *horrified-4*.

If a PC who supports or even undertakes to perform the execution repents in the final moment, the prophecy is fulfilled in a different way. The power of the prophecy is then booned upon that PC, instead of Albion, and only she can choose what to do with it. If the power manifests as a vision of Ray Gibbons and the power to awaken him, only that PC receives the vision and only she can awaken the Mythos of Merlin. Whatever the power may be, the PC becomes a chief component in the superweapon Beaumont so desperately desires.

CAMELOT

There's not a lot left of the original facade of Precinct 63 to remind you of the building upon which this "Camelot" was built, but you can still make it out, if you squint hard enough. Since the last time you were here, gray stone parapets and pointed spires sprouted from the rooftop, their colorful banners borne upon the wind. The arched front doors, once made of glass, are now a heavy portcullis. Much water has gone under the drawbridge since the Errants first established their foothold in the City, and what began as a rebellious gang is becoming a new social order - perhaps even a possible replacement to the existing one? It remains to be seen if Camelot can become the legendary seat of a wise ruler, or continue to support the purpose all fortresses are built for: to wage war.

Camelot is the center of power of the Albion Enclave and the headquarters of Beaumont's Errants, notoriously known across the City as the Whitecliff Syndicate. It's exact description and condition depend on the actions of the PCs in previous cases and how they affected the Enclave of Albion (see The State of Albion, page 234). By default, it was erected in Whitecliff by transforming the conquered building of Police Precinct 63.

Depending on their relationship with Beaumont, the crew members may arrive here as enemy infiltrators or as welcomed champions; either way, they will find the same clues about Beaumont's increasing obsession with the power to defeat the Crimson King.

SECURITY IN CAMELOT

If Camelot is a besieged and poor castle hanging on by a thread, its security can be limited to Beaumont himself, the Errants, and Mister Barlow. Alternatively, if the Enclave has become a formidable local superpower, it could include legendary military facilities such as a griffon aviary, a smithy where legendary weapons are crafted (by Roxie, page 197), or a small army of Lancelot Mk II war golems (see page 206). Add the appropriate story tags to the respective Dangers profiles, such as *a griffon steed* and/or *a magical sword* for the Errants or *Mk II modifications* for Lancelot.

The castle is guarded at all times by patrolling Errant footmen; doors and gates are *locked-and-barred-2*. In addition to this, the castle is *blessed-by-Avalon-3*, the work of Céline Rowland (Lady of the Lake). This blessing protects the castle from outside magical forces, including unwanted scrying into the premises.

If the PCs are Beaumont's allies, he may allow them to roam freely about the castle but keep tabs on them through his spy, Mister Barlow.

INVESTIGATING IN CAMELOT

The following clues can be picked up in conversations with Errants or servants in the castle; by spying on these individuals; by uncovering physical or mystical evidence around the castle; or even by spying on Beaumont, conversing with him, or confronting him.

Beaumont has been increasingly preoccupied with the war against the Crimson King and his servants in the City. Local folk justify his rude, aggressive, and even cruel behavior by saying the war "has taken a toll on him", but the truth is many wonder if he cares about Albion at all, except as a means with which to wage war. The motivation for Beaumont's war with the Crimson King seems to be personal, but the background for it is shrouded in mystery and Beaumont keeps insisting he fights to liberate the City.

Beaumont is looking for a superweapon, a game-changer that will end the war. It's yet unclear how he intends to use it, but all his waking attention is focused on this.

(Before the slaying of the Questing Beast) He is relying on **an ancient prophecy that will reveal the path to a superweapon**, something to do with a secret ritual at the stone altar.

(If the Questing Beast was slain) The king has seen a vision of **the person who could change the course of this war, a teenager named Ray Gibbons,** who lives in Miller's Square (Ray Gibbons' man cave). Apparently, the vision showed the king that if Gibbons could be brought back to Albion, he would awaken as the greatest wizard of all (Merlin). Beaumont hopes this would be the weapon he sought to change the tides in favor of Albion.

Beaumont can't be stopped by merely killing him, and imprisoning him won't affect the Enclave of Albion. This can be easily established if Beaumont has reincarnated since the crew first met him, but it can also be confirmed by studying his Mythos by **Looking Beyond the Mist**.

To prevent Beaumont from reincarnating, one must first understand *why* he is reincarnating (the Dolorous Stroke, his legendary wound from Corbin Payne). Beaumont will try to hide this using his **Monolithic** move and any other means.

To understand either Beaumont's motivation or the source of his power (which are one and the same, but this is not yet revealed), the crew must confront him, seek the help of someone who knows him, or consult a powerful mystic (The King's Secret). The obvious choice is **Céline Rowland**, Beaumont's trusted advisor, who can be traced to Ray Gibbons' man cave, albeit with some difficulty (see her Danger profile, page 252).

DEPTH 2:
WAR ERUPTS

At the beginning of Depth 2, the cinematic pace of the case picks up and turns into a race against the clock. On the one hand, the police and Gatekeepers mount an attack on Albion (Battle of Calmann Bridge) and on the other hand, Beaumont is rapidly approaching his superweapon (Ray Gibbons' man cave). While all this is taking place, the crew may be scrambling to find answers about Beaumont's true motives and the secret behind his reincarnation.

From here on out, time is ticking, the opportunities for downtime are scarce, and the PCs have to make their hard choices fast. Electing to visit one location may mean the PCs lose the chance to affect what happens in another place.

Describe the City skyline teeming with police and news helicopters, the chatter on all radio frequencies, and the streets in the night glowing with long-exposure streaks of brake-light crimson and xenon-headlight azure. A decisive night in the history of the City has begun.

THE KING'S SECRET

In this Depth, the crew can reveal that **Vince Beaumont is a Grail Knight** operating unknowingly in the service of the Crimson King.

This information can be shared by Céline Rowland if the crew helps her prevent the recruitment of her son, Ray Gibbons, to the service of Beaumont (Ray Gibbons' man cave). Bold PCs can attempt to pry this information directly from the king himself by confronting him, if they can circumvent the defenses of his moves **Avalonian Charm** and **Monolithic**. Unfortunately for the crew, the Arthurian Rift does not keep any physical evidence of his past life.

Alternatively, the crew can consult with any of the following great mystics in the City – for a price – and learn the same information.

- Destiny Melancon (Maman Brigitte, Haitian Voodoo Loa of Death and consort of Baron Samedi) operates **Destiny Melancon's House of Psychic Reading**, a

cheap backroom draped in purple velvet and illuminated by magenta neon, where she offers seances, palm readings, crystal ball scrying, and tarot readings. Destiny is one of the most qualified practitioners in the City to answer questions about death, the afterlife, and reincarnations. She'll take her payment in rum infused with hot peppers but she'll need an item belonging to Beaumont to trace his soul back in time. She also works for **Samuel Valtierra** (Baron Samedi, *MC Toolkit*, pages 30 and 160), an enemy crime lord of Beaumont's that wants to see Albion gone, and might demand the PCs' cooperation as a condition for the rendering of Melancon's services.

- Librarian **Fadi Malek** (Thoth, see *Percival*, page 270) will be loath to share personal reincarnation information with the PCs, who must find a way to persuade him or instead steal and research his *Book of the Dead*.
- At the **"Sacred Land" Tiki Bar** (see *Shadows & Showdowns*, page 90), owner Ailani Jack and her unborn embryonic sage (Madame Pele and Hi'iaka) can reveal arcane knowledge for the price of blood (even if not quite a life).

Vince Beaumont has lost a child to the Crimson King, a child whose name he no longer remembers due to the Mist.

In fact, no one remembers this child anymore; the only record of her is encoded into Beaumont's grief. (This could point to the third and final act of *Percival*, the overarching case, page 281).

The Crimson King, lord over all pain, was able to infect Vince Beaumont's grief with his own foul magic and amplify it into an infernal wrath. This wrathful Beaumont is used by the Crimson King to make the whole City suffer, to tear the City apart and make it bleed. In other words, **Beaumont is a pawn in the hands of his sworn enemy.**

Beaumont can reincarnate thanks to a synergy of his own Mythos and the wound inflicted upon him by the Crimson King. The Mythos of Arthur, "the once and future king", allows its Rifts to retain the memories of its past reincarnations. The corrupted pain of Vince Beaumont is transferred from one incarnation to the next and takes over them, so that the only thing they can do is respond to this pain by fighting the Crimson King. This includes all the reincarnations the crew met: Calvin Cyrus, MoniqueR, etc.

If the crew has been to Corbin Tower (see *Percival*, page 273) and has seen the vision of Vince Beaumont killing Corbin Payne over and over again, they can now identify him as the unnamed man in that vision.

BATTLE OF CALMANN BRIDGE

```
Police SUVs, armored SWAT team trucks, and
army vehicles all pull up in front of the
Whitecliff barricades, fashioned like a
menacing medieval wall, as the kingdom's
trumpets blow signals of alarm. Just when
you think law enforcement rolled out their
last troops, the loud noise of metal roll-
ing across concrete drowns all others, and
the cops and soldiers stand aside to let
a convoy of tanks approach the wall. Up
above, police choppers exchange fire with
a careering hawk-faced steed. The earth
shudders when the tank fires, but its first
round never makes it to the wall. When the
smoke clears, you see an iron giant forged
of scrap metal and debris collapsing to
the ground with a gaping, charred hole in
its chest. Then the armies roar and charge.
The final act of the war has begun.
```

At some point during the gang war, the stalemate is broken and the City law enforcement and Gatekeepers must risk an open attack on the Albion Enclave, to see if it can be taken and sealed. This is especially true if the downtown bloodbath has caused a public panic or if Beaumont is on the path to obtaining his superweapon after the ritual at the stone altar, and even more so if his emissaries (PCs or NPCs) have already found Ray Gibbons' man cave.

THE ROLE OF THE CREW

Unless the PCs are actively watching the border, this scene takes them by surprise, in the middle of whatever they are working on. As the attack unfolds, they must choose whether to let the battle play out – in which case the police and Gatekeepers penetrate the border and begin fighting their way through Albion toward Camelot – or whether to intervene and steer the outcome one way or the other. If that is the case, they may join the battle themselves, or try to rush over to Ray Gibbons' man cave and enlist him to their side (see Forging Ray, page 253, if they do).

Before the PCs make a choice, set out the consequences before them and ask them what their PCs feel when they contemplate the prospects of either side winning. Remember that no side is innocent:



Beaumont is transpiring as an unhinged warlord, who may not know when to stop fighting; the police and the Gatekeepers, on the other hand, will make short work of the beautiful Enclave of Albion and will likely try to tie up the loose end of the crew by erasing their memories, no matter what Lars Erikson says. **Enhance the dilemma for your players by highlighting the flaws of the side they are currently supporting or are inclined to support.**

THE CONFLICT ZONE

The battle takes place on a bridge that crosses the highway which separates Albion from the rest of the City. Both sides are using the patrol and response units listed under the borderlands (page 241) and in addition employ more powerful units and weapons as shown below.

THE ALBION ARMY has built two defensive lines on the bridge: **a wall** and a frontline of two **barricades**, both an amalgam of a medieval brick wall and junkyard cars, metal fences, barbed wire, etc. These Albion junkyard fortifications are the work of legendary blacksmith Roxie (see page 197) and are therefore much more durable than they seem. A little further back from the bridge the **Command Tent** was erected, brandishing colorful flags atop a pole, where Beaumont soon arrives to command over the battle, unless he has more urgent business to attend to (Ray Gibbons' man cave). Depending on your cinematic considerations, the Albion army can roll out some of the following surprises:

- **Catapults** in a nearby parking lot provide artillery support.
- **Explosive charges on the bridge** can provide a last resort to slow down the attack.
- **The tunnel**, a thin place near the battle, can be used by Céline Rowland to transport reinforcements or provide an escape route if the battle is lost.
- A platoon of **Lancelot Mk II war golems** or **trolls** from the woodlands of Albion can be used to charge the enemy.
- **Griffon-riding Errants** can intercept any aerial forces trying to cross over.

THE CITY'S LAW ENFORCEMENT have chosen Calmann bridge because of the nearby high hill, giving them *the high ground*; it also limits their access to two roads from the north and the west. They have set up their **Frontline HQ** in one of the buildings neighboring the main conflict zone, where several police cars and a special forces SUV are now parked. Some of their special units include:

- **Police snipers** positioned on the roofs and clifftops
- **Army tanks** providing the mundane firepower needed to punch through the magical Albion walls
- **A turret or tank** on the southern cliff, providing artillery support

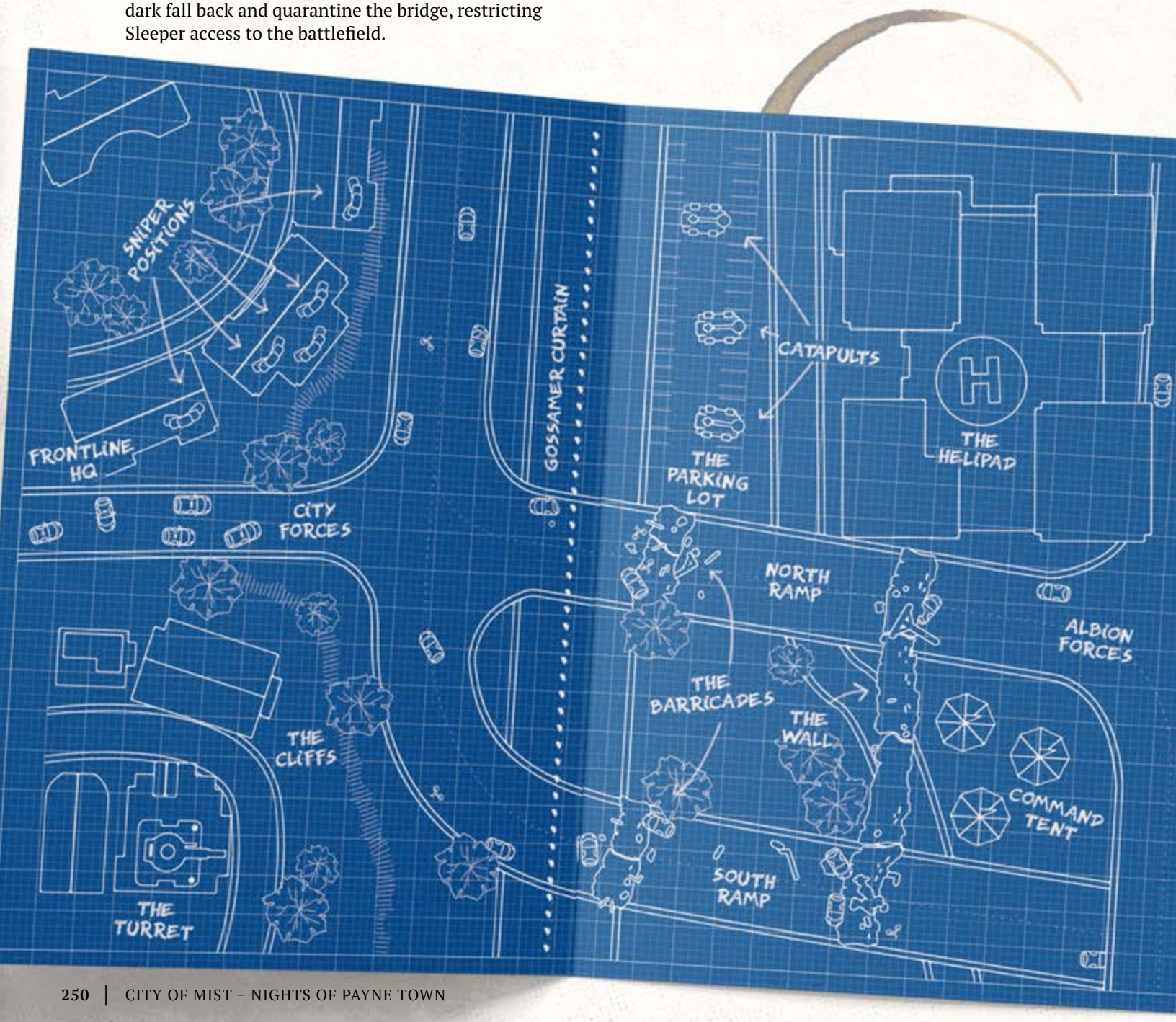
Note that **the Gatekeepers** are fighting at a disadvantage on Albion soil; the Mist is so thin there that they must deploy **Mist Beacons** to reinforce it, or all their Danger effects are reduced by 1. Instead, they can serve as a defensive line on the City side and provide support; or, if things are looking bad for the City, launch an all-out suicide attack despite their weakened Mist abilities. This weakness is exactly why Rift handlers like Lars Erikson exist; his role in the battle is to try to enlist agreeable Rifts, perhaps like the crew, to contain rogue Rifts like the Whitecliff Syndicate.

Soon after the battle erupts, the auxiliary barrier of the Gossamer Curtain crumbles in this section, unable to bear the intense clash of legendary and ordinary. The Gatekeepers responsible for keeping Sleepers in the dark fall back and quarantine the bridge, restricting Sleeper access to the battlefield.

Whatever it is that's hiding the legendary in the City (the Mist) won't be able to take much more of this. If the hostilities don't stop, the whole City could become exposed to legendary powers from beyond the veil (Rifts Everywhere).

THE AFTERMATH OF THE HOSTILITIES

Some time after the battle ends, and regardless of who won, the very air of the smoking, ruined battlefield seems to shimmer. Soon thereafter, glowing neon-colored ruptures begin to form in the very air here, as the Mist itself caves in and Mythoi start swarming in (Rifts Everywhere).



RAY GIBBONS' MAN CAVE

You push the door gently and it swings wide open without a sound, revealing a run-down apartment that smells of greasy food and unwashed laundry. This place looks like someone has been living here for a while, either in captivity or in solitude, and they haven't been up to much. Books, comics, and video game cases are thrown around the living room, along with socks and snack bar wrappers. Just then, you hear a flushing toilet and a tall and lanky youth in shorts comes out of the bathroom, absent-mindedly picking up a box of cereals on a nearby counter and reaching into it for a handful of crunchy bites. There is no way this slob is Beaumont's superweapon. No friggin' way.

In a crummy studio apartment in Miller's Square lives **Ray Gibbons**, the awakening Rift of Merlin, the greatest wizard of all. Still a naive 19-year-old and unaware of the vast Rift underworld, Ray is a potential doomsday weapon in the hands of Beaumont, Erikson, or the crew. (You can replace his Mythos with any other powerful legend that befits your campaign.) Gibbons was hidden here by his mother, Céline Rowland, Rift of the Lady of the Lake, who intends to keep him out of harm's way.

Beaumont and/or the crew may learn about this place following the events of the stone altar, and Céline Rowland, while she hides it, has always known about it. The PCs can also find this location by searching for Beaumont's superweapon with other methods, such as divination or their network of Rift informants.

Once they arrive here, the PCs must contend with multiple challenges:

- **Ray Gibbons** (Merlin) is a scared, awakening Rift, who will try to flee any unwanted attention, especially if it's someone who wants him to get off his sofa and do some work. A lanky young slob dressed in a tracksuit and a beanie, he doesn't look much like a superweapon; his true powers will be unleashed if and when he makes it to Albion, where the Mist is much weaker.
- Unless the PCs took pains to elude Beaumont and his spy Mister Barlow as well as hide the location of Ray Gibbons from them, **Beaumont** will be here in person. If he was beaten before by the crew, he'll come with reinforcements. Beaumont will try to convince Ray Gibbons that his future is at his side, inflicting *swayed-3*, *impressed-3* or *inspired-3,* playing on their shared *Mythos connection* and acting as a *father figure*.
- **Céline Rowland** (Lady of the Lake), Beaumont's mentor and Ray's mother, will fight to keep her son hidden from Beaumont and anyone else who wants to weaponize her son's powers. If the PCs help her do so and she survives, she will share what she knows about Beaumont (see The King's Secret, page 247) and optionally why she has been helping him (see Lady of the Lake, page 199). When she realized it was her son Beaumont was after and that Beaumont was so deeply wounded that he cannot be healed, she decided to stop cooperating with him and arrived here to protect her son.
- As always, if any NPCs clash between themselves, you can narrate it without using the rules, or use the rules to spur the crew into action, e.g., by giving Céline Rowland an *injured-3* or by having Beaumont try to max out Ray Gibbons' *recruit* spectrum. Remember that anyone Beaumont mortally wounds but doesn't kill could potentially receive the Dolorous Stroke, complicating things even further.

LANCELOT MK II'S "RING OF DISPEL"

Beaumont imagined he might earn the ire of powerful magicians such as the crew, the Lady of the Lake, or even Merlin. To prepare, he had the protective powers of his Avalonian Charm reverse engineered by Roxie and he tapped further into the Lancelot Mythos in his war golem Relic. The result was an improvement to the Mk II that allows the golems to create a ring effect around them that negates magic, giving everyone inside *shielded-from-magic-3*. To circumvent this effect, one must shut down each and every Lancelot Mk II war golem in the vicinity. Beaumont is keeping this upgrade secret as another ace up his sleeve, just in case some of his allies turn on him.



RAY GIBBONS ★★

Use the *catch-escape* swing spectrum to simulate the chase; when either side of the swing spectrum has tiers, the opposing party must first remove them by inflicting the opposite status and spending its status tiers, 1 for 1, to remove the existing status. Only then can status tiers be added to the opposite spectrum. If opposing parties are trying to convince Ray Gibbons to join their cause, *recruit* also becomes a swing spectrum.

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / CATCH-ESCAPE 3 / RECRUIT 4

- **Seeking to Belong:** While *recruit* is not maxed out, Ray Gibbons is *impressionable*. While *recruit* is maxed out, Ray Gibbons is *haughty-3*.
- **Sloppy Alteration Magic:** Reduce by 2 the tier of physical harm or subdual statuses Ray Gibbons takes if he can change the attack into something else or change a nearby object to block it, e.g., a bullet to a butterfly, a sword into a butter stick, or a trash can lid into a shield.
- **Emotional Burst of Protection:** Once per scene, if another character is about to be seriously hurt, physically or mystically, Ray Gibbons instinctively shields them, canceling the status they were about to receive.
- **Alleyway Escape:** When *escape* maxes out, Ray Gibbons successfully eludes his pursuers (**Deny Them Something They Want**).

- Use his innate magic to transform a wall into a doorway, or a dumpster into a pile of mattresses he can land on (remove 2 tiers of statuses from *catch* or give himself *fleeing-2*)
- Use his innate magic to knit someone's pants together or expand an oily patch into a sticky tar pit (*tangled-2* or *slowed-down-2*)
- While running, try to beg his pursuers to leave him alone (*hesitant-2*)

- Feign a welcoming handshake and then make a run for the fire escape
- Fiddle with his beanie hat as if it was a wizard's pointy hat

CÉLINE ROWLAND ★★★★

The powers of protection and subterfuge bestowed by the Mythos of the Lady of the Lake make Céline Rowland a powerful ally in battle and a dangerous enemy when it comes to court intrigue, but not a formidable combatant in her own right.

To represent her extensive support abilities, assume she can extend any protection or transportation ability she has to others, including her custom moves. When affecting collectives (even if it's just her and her son), reduce the effect by 1 for every rank of size factor, as normal.

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / WHISK RAY AWAY 4

- **Mists of Avalon:** As a soft move, Céline Rowland can become *concealed-by-mists-4* which hide her from senses and scrying, and also negate legendary powers.
- **An Enchantress' Fortifications:** When Céline Rowland takes a status of social, emotional, or mental influence, whether mundane or legendary, reduce its tier by 3.
- **Beyond the Reach of Kings:** When *whisk-Ray-away* maxes out, Céline Rowland transports herself and Ray Gibbons outside of the City.
- **Counterspell:** Once per scene, Céline Rowland can use her dispel hard move as an intrusion.
- **Lady of the Lake:** When Céline Rowland's environment takes a tag or status of dryness, it hinders all of her magical abilities.

- Make the gestures and speak the incantations of a power spell (*gathering-mist-3* on *whisk-Ray-away*)
- Transport herself or someone else to the other side of the City (*transported-5* or **Deny Them Something They Want**; the target is only transported when the status reaches tier 5; remove the status thereafter)
- Dispel any active magic spell, ability, or device, including Beaumont's **Avalonian Charm** (burn up to 4 tags or status tiers)
- Change her appearance and identity in a manner undetectable to all but the most powerful magic (**Complicate Things, Bigtime**)
- Conjure magical weapons out of water (create up to 4 story tags such as *magical sword*, *parry against magic spells*, *pierce mundane armor*, *Avalonian steel*, etc.)

- Make the water nearby ripple and whisper ancient words
- Speak or sing in a soft and mesmerizing voice from within the mists

DEPTH 3:
THE QUEST FOR POWER

Depth 3 begins with the discovery of a game-changer that could land either faction a decisive, permanent victory over its enemies: Ray Gibbons (or any other PC or NPC chosen as the superweapon). This begins a scramble to hold sway over this person, involving the crew, Beaumont, the Gatekeepers, and possibly other factions which leap at the chance to climb to the top of the criminal food-chain, such as the Adze or Samuel Valtierra.

Soon enough, however, Ray Gibbons' powers backfire and cause an eruption of Rifts Everywhere; the crew must relinquish this power and help others do the same, or face the imminent destruction of the City.



FORGING RAY

Like any superweapon, Ray Gibbons is volatile; he is opening up to his powerful Mythos too fast, setting him on a crash course. Like many of the Knights of the Round Table in Arthurian legend, he is **a teen at risk**: raised fatherless and in hiding, he craves to go out into the world and prove himself, especially to someone as authoritative and magnetic as Beaumont.

Unfortunately, most everyone around him wants to use him to assuage their own pain: Beaumont – to fight his endless war, the Gatekeepers – to bury all their Rifts in the Mist, and his mom – to keep him hidden behind her wispy skirt. Even some crew members may only see him as a weapon to deploy or decommission. **The secret pain of each of these adults has the potential of breeding the secret pain that will define the Rift of Merlin.**

Upon arriving in Albion, Ray's powers explode, transforming him into one of the most powerful Rifts in the City. His magic can change reality itself, turning swathes of people into insects or reorganizing entire City blocks with the snap of his fingers (dealing tier-5 statuses as a soft move and occasionally as an intrusion). Now, all this power is held in the hands of an impressionable, ill-prepared youth.

Each faction wants to use Ray to realize a different endgame, which also determines the location of the possible final confrontation with him:

- **Beaumont wants Ray to flush out and eliminate the Crimson King** by breaking the powerful spell (or Mist cover) behind which his enemy hides. This takes place as a wrestling of tidal magical powers – the raw Mythos of Merlin vs. the ancient and entrenched magic of the Grail Castle – at the top of a downtown skyscraper (which isn't Corbin Tower). Once the castle is revealed Beaumont wants Ray to undo the power of the Grail so he can kill Payne, but he won't make it that far (see below).
- **The Gatekeepers want Ray to close the Albion Enclave.** If he complies, he will undertake the transformation on the hill on Calmann bridge (Battle of Calmann Bridge). Conversely, conservative Gatekeepers may see the destructive potential in Gibbons and wish to eliminate him or seal him forever.
- **The crew may want to use Ray for their own agenda.** Tempt them with the power to change anything in the City and especially eliminate any enemy they may have, starting with Corbin Payne / the Crimson King, a possibility which may align their interests with those of Beaumont.
- **Some may want what's best for Ray.** If asked, he will repeat the argument of whoever convinced him most so far. If, however, someone persists in asking for Ray's own wish, he admits sheepishly that he would like to return to his man cave and take things slow, confessing that he is terrified of his unleashed powers and how much suffering they can cause others. If left to his own devices, he would do so, becoming a Touched Rift with only limited power, beginning the long journey of self-discovery.

The battle for the City now becomes the battle over Ray Gibbons, and symbolically, the battle over one's own hunger for power over one's enemies. Will the PCs bend this individual to their will and weaponize him or will they relinquish power to bring peace to the City? No legendary power can affect the magician's mind, so roleplay the conversation with him as a heart-to-heart, at the brink of mass destruction.

THE POWER TO DESTROY

Whoever can convince Ray to side with them will get their wish fulfilled, or rather *almost* fulfilled. As Ray's powers bend reality itself, the Mist begins to crumble, leading to the doomsday event where the City is overrun by Rifts Everywhere.

Most NPCs will go back on their wish and ask the magician to stand down before he tears the City apart; but not the tragically-wounded, grieving Kingpin of Albion. As a wounded Grail Knight, Beaumont is unable to admit his mistake or defeat and

RAY GIBBONS (LEGENDARY) ★★★★★

Merlin is perhaps the strongest wizard known in legend. He could transport entire armies across the land, move the stones of Stonehenge from Ireland to England, shapeshift into any form, transform a king and his entourage, and so on. He had the power of prophecy and could see the past and predict the future, and his actions were planned and intentional. At the same time he was often described as the offspring of demons and was prone to let his romantic pursuits get the better of him.

Once he arrives in Albion, Ray Gibbons obtains nearly all of Merlin's power but he has not had any time to internalize the insight and wisdom of his wizardly Mythos. Instead, he is just experimenting with his newfound unbridled power, amazed and terrified by the secrets and marvels of creation revealed to him. Emotionally, he is still a young and impressionable kid.

To represent the unleashed Ray, remove his custom moves, except **Seeking to Belong**, and add the following:

- **The Transformation of All:** The MC can use any hard move as an intrusion to reflect Ray Gibbons' immense magical powers. Each such display of power gives the scene a *thin-Mist* status of tier 1 or higher; at tier-6 the Mist in the area collapses – see Rifts Everywhere.

Because Ray Gibbons is so powerful and is most often fighting NPCs, his powers are best reflected by narrative moves, such as:

- **Complicate Things, Bigtime** as he removes entire sections of the opposing army from the battlefield.
- **Deny Them Something They Want** as he swats away attacks against him or his allies.
- **Make Something Horrible Happen** as he loses control and kills swathes of combatants or innocent people, directly or as collateral damage.

If the PCs pick a fight with him, use **Deny Them Something They Want** in the same way to ignore their attacks, but increase the tier of *thin-Mist* caused if Gibbons must contend with a PC's **Stop. Holding. Back.** move. He is also capable of causing tier-6 statuses (although he will stop at tier-5), burning up to 6 tags simultaneously, etc., for example freeze someone solid (*encased-in-ice-5*), shrink someone infinitesimally (*shrunk-5*), bind someone in magical bonds (*magic-bound-5*), blind everyone around (*blinded-5*), or shatter someone's Relic (burn all tags). There is no real limit to his power but the more power he uses, the faster the Mist around him degrades.

can only do one thing: blame the Crimson King. His psychosis escalates and he becomes convinced that the only way for the City to be free of his enemy is a desperate, all-out attack, even if it decimates the City itself. Abandoned by his Errants and accompanied only by the last standing Lancelot, he will do everything to keep Ray Gibbons tearing at the Grail Castle – raining down abuse at the kid until all hell breaks loose – or until someone stops Beaumont by killing him, restraining him, or forcing him to flee. If thus defeated, at least temporarily, Beaumont will then go or ask to be taken to Le Griffon Segreant.

RIFTS EVERYWHERE

```
Something is not right, you can feel it.
You notice an unusual disturbance in the
air, at first almost imperceptible, like
a mirage, but then more and more evi-
dent. The more you look at it, the more it
seems like something is pushing through
the atmosphere, from some dimension be-
yond this world, a place you cannot fath-
om. And then, in front of your incredulous
eyes, the air splits apart with a shower
of flashing sparks! Something, some iri-
descent force, bleeds out of the wound and
into the streets. Another flare erupts in
the corner of your vision, and then anoth-
er, and another, until you gaze at a sky
full of wide open, scintillating cuts, out
of which swarm a horde of nightmares.
```

Eventually, the Mist gives in. Either the war between Beaumont and the City or the mystical power of Ray Gibbons prove too much for the Mist to conceal. In the aftermath of the Battle of Calmann Bridge or Ray Gibbons unleashing his power (Forging Ray), the fabric of the Mist is stretched too far and numerous ruptures form simultaneously. Each such rupture is Rift to a different Mythos, through which the Mythos can either manifest directly (as a Conjuration) or attach itself into individuals, animals, and objects nearby (Touched).

As this doomsday event unfolds, monstrous creatures and malicious beings emerge from the neon-colored glowing ruptures everywhere in the vicinity of the warzone, sowing chaos and destruction. This scene includes several Dangers of Mythoi that can cross over from the other side of the Mist to plague the City, but any Mythoi of violence and chaos would do.

STOPPING THE RIFT CASCADE

By now, the Gatekeepers have exhausted themselves fighting the Whitecliff Syndicate and they lack the massive Mist-power needed to seal the warzone ruptures.

As a last resort, they must employ other Rifts and their controlled Mythos powers to fight back and contain the chaotic ruptures. The crew will be contacted by Lars Erikson, begging for their help with containing the ruptures.

As much as they may hate the Gatekeepers or wish to see the fall of the Mist, the PCs are faced with the impending destruction of the City by uncontrolled Mythoi of chaos and ruin. As the PCs work to contain some of the ruptures, they might find themselves fighting alongside Gatekeeper units during the battle. Point out to the players that at least this once, allowing the Gatekeepers to mend the Mist and even protecting them while they regroup, may be in everyone's interest.

RUPTURE ★★★

A "rupture" is a Rift in the form of a glowing, localized tear in the fabric of the Mist, the very fabric of the reality of the City itself. Such a gap in the Mist is quickly exploited by a Mythos related to the ambient energies, in this case, any Mythos symbolic of hunger for power, violence, and war.

SEAL 5 / TAKE OVER 6

- **Easily Reopened:** Whenever a PC near the Rupture **Stops. Holding. Back.** or invokes more than 5 Mythos power tags and/or legendary status tiers in a single action, reduce *seal* by two tiers. On a miss, reduce it by 2 additional tiers, to a minimum of zero.
- **Spawn:** When the Mythos that occupies the Rupture is defeated, the Rupture is momentarily vacant. Change its spectrum maximums to *seal:2* and *take-over:2*. As a soft or hard move, the Rupture is taken over by a new Mythos (create a new Danger).
- **Push In:** When a PC tries to integrate with an occupied Rupture, they are **Going Toe to Toe** with a Power equal to their Mythos (roll+Mythos). When the PC maxes out *take-over*, the current Mythos is ejected and the PC takes over the Rupture. The player sets aside one of the PC's Logos themes and creates a new fully-evolved Mythos theme. Avatars gain *supercharged-3* instead. Reset *take-over*. If the Rupture is sealed, *taken-over* by someone else, or if the PC chooses to disengage with it, the Mythos theme is discarded and the Logos theme is restored (for Avatars, the status is removed).

- Surge with mythical power and become destabilized (remove 2 tiers from *seal*)
- The occupying Mythos pushes back (remove 2 tiers from *take-over*)

- Shimmer and crackle with brightly-colored energy

THE WIZARD

If Ray Gibbons has not been contained yet, it will become evident that this also must be done, because his unchecked powers are at the very least exacerbating the rupture, if not causing it (Forging Ray). If he is allied with the crew, he cannot use his powers to mend the ruptures, which are in themselves an outcome of overuse of power.

BLUETONGUE LIZARD ★★★ +

Bluetongue Lizard is a mighty sorcerer-singer from Australian Aboriginal myth, appearing either as an old Aboriginal man with a bright white beard or an anthropomorphic pale-green reptilian. As power-hungry and aggressive as the war that pulled him here, Bluetongue Lizard regularly cheated his own sons of a meal and eventually incinerated them for accidently hunting his favorite kangaroo. This cunning, selfish Conjuration will defend its Rupture to the death, hoping to establish itself in the City.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / BANISH 3 / BURN –

- **Steal Sorcery:** Once Bluetongue Lizard has seen a magic spell or ability in action, he can use a hard move to repeat it (create the same effect), counteract it (cancel the effect), or absorb it (cancel the effect, and for every tag or status tier it had, remove one tier from *hurt-or-subdue* or *banish*). Steal Sorcery cannot be applied to magic effects created with **Stop. Holding. Back.**
- **Hunter Instincts:** When Bluetongue Lizard enters the scene, he is *on-his-toes-3*, hindering attempts to hit him or sneak up on him. This status is renewable as a hard move.

- Fling his spear at someone (*impaled-3*) or retrieve the spear
- Cause someone to dehydrate (*parched-3*) or dry up an area (burn up to 3 tags)
- Conjure a raging hovering conflagration that hunts his victim (Create a new Danger: **Homing Bushfire**, *extinguish:–*, *dispel:2*, *engulf:3*, the fire can give itself *closer-1* on *engulf* as a soft move; while *engulf* is maxed out or if anyone touches it, it gives the target *incinerated-4* as a soft move.)
- Offer someone to teach them his magic if they protect him (**Complicate Things, Bigtime**)

- Start singing a strange song, as embers and sparks swirl around him



CHAOS-MONGER OF SET ★★

One of the Ruptures turns non-Rift bystanders into Touched warriors of the Egyptian god Set, lord of disorder, violence, and aptly, also foreign invaders. These ancient soldiers will swarm any military force that attempts to take control of the warzone. Starting as a collective of size factor of 1, their numbers will grow exponentially as time passes if their Rupture Rift isn't sealed. Magical adepts can attempt to free the warriors from the influence of Set (*disenchant*).

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / DISENCHANT 2

- ***Was*-sceptre:** When the Chaos-Monger of Set takes a status of physical harm she can parry with her forked sceptre, reduce its tier by 2.

- Strike or stab someone with her *was*-sceptre (*flesh-wound-2*)
- Break property or equipment with her spectre or bare hands (*damaged-2* or burn up to two tags)
- Grab someone's face and stare into their eyes, forcing the victim to go *undiscerningly-berserk-3*
- Wail as her head transforms into that of a Set-beast (increase all of the Chaos-Monger of Set's spectrum maximums and effects by 1)

- Charge into the battlefield, shouting war cries in ancient Egyptian

BAKEKUJIRA ★★★★

The Bakekujira are Japanese ghost whales which plague villages that greedily hunted whales for the wealth of their meat and oil. An eerie, hovering whale skeleton, accompanied by strange, unrecognizable schools of flying fish and flocks of birds, this figurative armored bomber of misfortune indiscriminately spreads famine, plague, fires, and disaster wherever it floats.

HURT OR SUBDUE 6 / BANISH 2

- **Gargantuan:** When a Bakekujira takes a harm or banishment status, reduce its tier by 4, unless it can affect all of the Bakekujira.
- **Mass Panic:** When a Bakekujira enters the scene, anyone who can see it takes *panicked-2*.

- Bombard an area with misfortune or cause a tsunami, an earthquake, a fire, or a tornado (*starving-5, sick-5, unlucky-5, hit-by-debris-5, drowned-5, burnt-5*, etc., adjusted by size factor, but the Bakekujira cannot affect a size factor smaller than 1)

- Turn its empty eye socket at its next unfortunate destination and then heavily and slowly start meandering in its direction
- Coil and turn like a whale about to emerge out of the water
- Emit a strange, booming moan



DEPTH 4:
AFTER THE WAR

By now, the PCs should have discovered that **Beaumont can't win** – all he is is a pawn in the hands of Corbin Payne. Beaumont is so consumed by grief, that should they ever meet, the pain-controlling Crimson King will have complete control over him, just as he did when Beaumont tried to kill him. As long as Beaumont's pain rules him, no amount of power can change that.

Therefore, **the Albion War can only end when Beaumont is captured (not killed), deweaponized, and healed**; otherwise, he will keep coming back, in another form, to continue the battle and – if not stopped – he will complete his unconscious destiny and leave a war-ravaged City in his wake, if he hasn't already.

If Beaumont loses the war – by losing Ray Gibbons, Albion, or both – he falls into despair and retreats or asks to be brought back to Albion, or what's left of it.

If he is unconscious or in captivity and he can't be there in body, Le Griffon Segreant can also be a vision of the inner landscape of his psyche, seen by anyone trying to heal him or communicate with him.

LE GRIFFON SEGREANT

Warm flickering firelight welcomes you to Le Griffon Segreant, Albion's most popular tavern, but there's not a soul to be seen. Among crude overturned pub tables you find the Kingpin of Albion collapsed under the counter, cradling a flagon of hard cider and humming a melancholic tune to himself. Of the once great and powerful ruler, only a husk remains. Dark circles around his eyes speak to his grief and betray the presence of the lasting obsession still clawing at his soul. He bitterly raises his drink to you as you enter, shooting a hateful leer across the pub, but given his condition it would appear he accepted his temporary defeat.

In his favorite pub-turned-tavern, the now-abandoned *Le Griffon Segreant* ("The Rearing Griffon"), Beaumont will drink himself into a stupor and regale anyone who would listen to him with the details of his past with Corbin Payne.



As the power of the Kingpin of Albion wanes, his appearance reverts back to that of his host, and the crew is reminded there is still someone taken hostage by the combination of the Arthur Mythos and the Dolorous Stroke. His wound still haunts him, however, and as much as he may want to, he cannot relent from his hatred for the Crimson King or his oath to overthrow his tyranny – not until he's freed of his pain, even for just a moment (see below).

At the end of the conversation, Beaumont will either raise his wrists up to be taken away or attempt to kill himself, right after he vows to return.

HEALING VINCE BEAUMONT

As with all the failed Grail Knights, Vince Beaumont's **Dolorous Stroke** is represented by a tier-6 status. Only a **Stop. Holding. Back.** move may affect this status: releasing the host from the effects of the Dolorous Stroke for one scene requires a no-return sacrifice, while curing such a wound altogether requires the ultimate sacrifice. Optionally, you may allow a *Dynamite!* **Change the Game** move to reduce the tier-6 status for the duration of a scene.

Ultimately, the solution to the problem of Vince Beaumont should be narrative. If you're playing the story arc, it should point to Corbin Payne – if he gave the wound, maybe he can cure it; if Payne is cured, maybe Vince Beaumont and his host will be cured too; etc. If the crew cannot heal Beaumont yet, they may wish to find a way to prevent him from reincarnating, perhaps with the help of Céline Rowland, the Gatekeepers, Ray Gibbons, or Destiny Melancon.



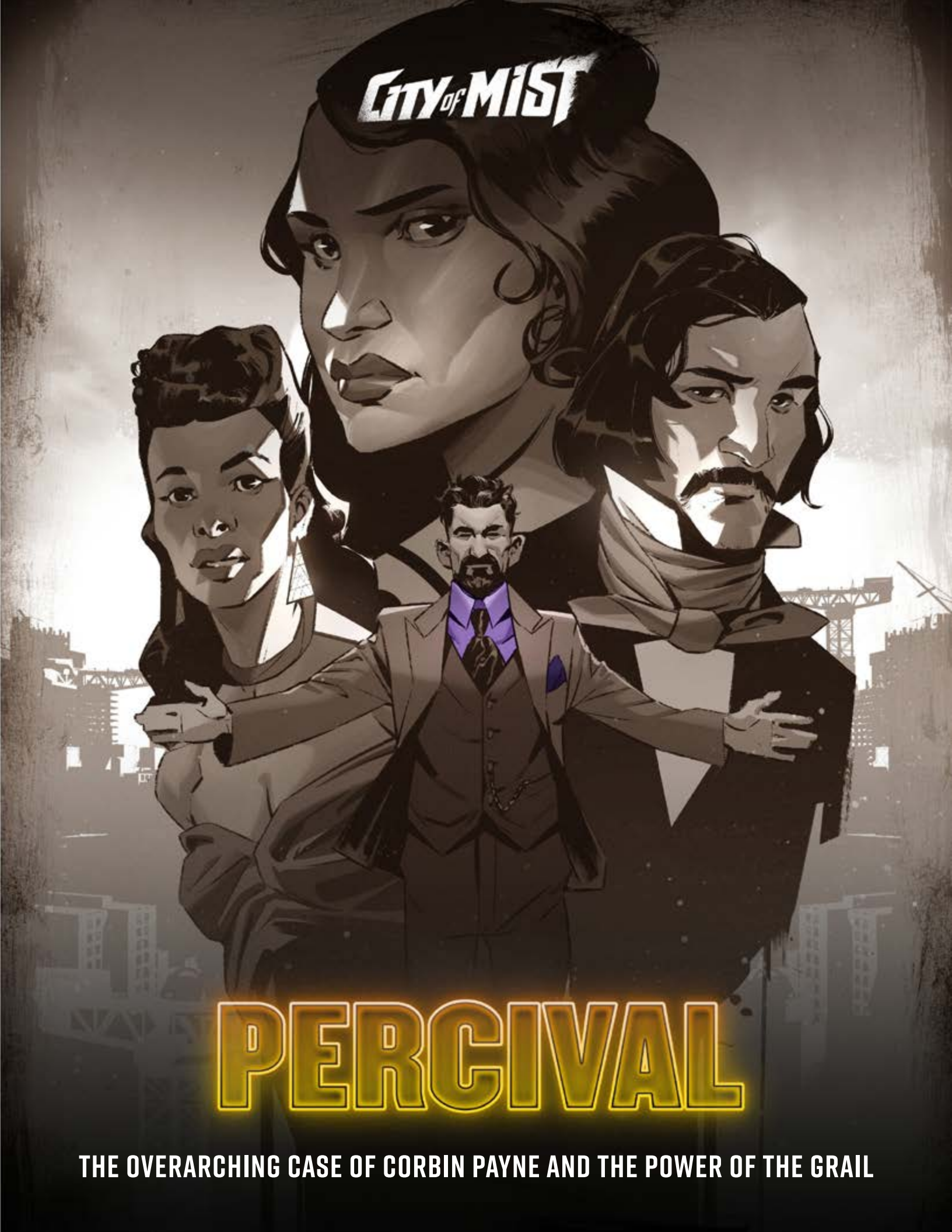
If you are running Percival as an overarching case, Beaumont will reveal information corresponding to his role as the first, second, or third Grail Knight to be encountered.



AFTERMATH

Here are a few questions to consider and points to revisit when you wrap up this case:

- How did the PCs come out of this? Have any of them taken actions or positions that they now regret? Did they take part in the execution of the Questing Beast or in the faction hostilities? Would they do it again or are they feeling guilty? What did each of them discover about their own lust for power – and that of their fellow crewmates?
- Where is Vince Beaumont now? Have his memories been healed of Corbin Payne's magic, finally allowing his current incarnation to live out their life? What about the reincarnations that were completely overridden by him? Is anyone acknowledging their silent sacrifice? And if he wasn't healed, is he still out there, waiting to be reborn when the City next needs a savior?
- How was the City left after this ravaging crime war? Do people treat each other with more compassion or with more suspicion? If there was widespread destruction, does the City have the funds to rebuild or will these events mark an economic and social downturn?
- How did each of the rival gangs weather this storm, and did they come out of it stronger or worse for wear? Now that the Kingpin of Albion is gone, who will fill up the vacuum left in his wake? Will another Rift with big ambitions or even an Avatar make a similar attempt to carve out their own kingdom in the City?
- What about the frayed Mist? If it collapsed, has it been fully restored? Do the Gatekeepers see the crew as allies, threats, or loose ends? Will they try to wipe their memories of the whole affair or will Lars Erikson recruit them to help with future outbreaks of unsavory Mythoi?
- Has the kingdom of Albion been sealed forever, restored into the mediocre neighborhood of Whitecliff? Or is it still a place of wonder in the midst of an unsuspecting City, even if secretly so? Did its disappearance leave a gaping hole in the makeup of the City? Or did it transform into something worse, a graveyard for legends?
- What is the fate of Ray Gibbons? Did he lose control over his powers or did he get his wish to return to semi-normalcy? Will he get a chance to develop his powers his own way, or are other forces already planning to make use of him? And what of his mother, Céline Rowland? What was her secret agenda all along and did she accomplish it?


CITY OF MIST
PERCIVAL
THE OVERARCHING CASE OF CORBIN PAYNE AND THE POWER OF THE GRAIL

Percival is the overarching case of the Nights of Payne Town story arc. It involves not only an investigation into the story of Corbin Payne but also a foray into pain itself: the lead characters' secret pain and the path to healing it.

The case and the story arc is broken into three acts, each taking place after an encounter with one of Payne's Grail Knights, each revealing a new piece of evidence that will lead the crew to Corbin Payne.

As the crew delves into *Percival,* they are forced to consider some of the questions at the spiritual core of the City: what makes a villain, why is everyone in the City essentially corrupt, and what is needed to heal these wounds. While some crew members may be hopeless cynics, justice-seeking vigilantes, or lost causes, this case beckons one or a few of the lead characters to undertake the daunting task of bringing peace back to the City - by first finding peace within themselves.

The background for this case, the history of Corbin Payne, is given under The Past (page 13). At the beginning of the arc, the state of affairs is as follows:

Corbin Payne and **the Grail** are where they've been for almost a century: Payne is hiding in Corbin Tower (Enclave of the Grail Castle), agonizing over his legendary pain. The Grail is at his disposal, but he doesn't have the means to activate it. Though the Tower is located at the heart of the City, none but the most noble of heroes can see or find it; both the Enclave's magic and the Mist keep it inaccessible.

Dr. Krystal Knight, wounded by her shame, is at the Asylum just outside town, pretending to be Dr. Esther Monahan and poisoning the City with hatred toward Rifts. Her operation is the **Personal Vein** (page 20).

Armand Kai, wounded by his fear, is sequestered in Canseliet Manor in the Old Quarter, from which he runs his Rift harvesting operation. This is the **Mystical Vein** (page 84).

Vince Beaumont, wounded by his grief and overcome by rage, is at Whitecliff, a neighborhood he plans to turn into an Enclave called Albion, the base for his attack on the City and on the Fisher King. This is the **Criminal Vein** (page 176).

Rio Beaumont (Percival), wounded by her ignorance, is now an old lady who lives in Parkside, a neighborhood adjacent to downtown. Unlike the others, she has spent all this time coping with her secret pain and healing her wound, preparing for a day she may hold the Grail again. In the meantime, she is **Denying the Beyond** (*Player's Guide*, page 277), living as a Sleeper.

THE THREE ACTS

Every time the crew completes the investigation of one of the veins – Personal, Mystical, or Criminal – they meet one of Payne's Grail Knights: Dr. Krystal Knight, Armand Kai, or Vince Beaumont (this is the recommended order, but you may change the order of the veins as you see fit). Each Grail Knight in turn reveals a critical piece of information which begins the next act of *Percival*.

ACT ONE begins when **the first Grail Knight reveals the existence of Corbin Payne.** The crew is spurred to investigate more of Corbin Payne's story (Researching Corbin Payne) and understand his power to corrupt individuals by using their secret pain (Inquiring About the Secret Pain). This could lead some PCs to try to heal their own secret pain.

ACT TWO begins when **the second Grail Knight tells the crew how to reach the Fisher King**. This brings the crew to Payne's secret lair, Corbin Tower. If they don't seek him out, Payne himself stages an Attack on the City. This encounter with Corbin Payne in the Flesh serves as a wake up call; some crew members may even be corrupted by Payne. It also reveals **the existence of the Grail**, leading the crew to Research the Grail.

ACT THREE begins when **the third Grail Knight points the crew to Rio.** At the unassuming Parkside Cafe, Rio has all the answers about the Grail and Payne. Together with her the crew meets Payne again, this time at the Salvage Yard, the only place outside his tower that Payne visits regularly, to fish. There they may finally heal the Wounded King and with him the City; or, if they collude with other parties to end Payne violently (What Must Be Done), they doom the City to a deeper Sleep.

THE GRAIL

The Grail holds the power of absolute grace: it can forgive any wrong, heal any wound, and free from all suffering. It is the key to healing Corbin Payne and the City; that is why it remained in his possession all these years, waiting for a worthy soul to unlock its magical powers of benevolence.

However, the Grail only answers to a worthy bearer, **one who knows who they are, one who has been wounded and has coped with their wound, one who could resist Corbin Payne**, for only such a person could use the Grail for the good of all. When the young and naive Rio Beaumont tried to wield it, it smote her with confusion and bewilderment by merely reflecting her own self-ignorance, showing her she was not ready.

To be able to call upon the power of the Grail, the crew must know someone who took the path of self-knowledge and healed their own secret pain - or else, one of them must take this long and tortuous path. It is described under **Healing Your Secret Pain** (see page 262).

WHY ARE THE GRAIL KNIGHTS HOLDING ALL THE CLUES?

Just like everyone in the City has buried their worst pain, the Mist has buried the City's worst resident, Corbin Payne. No one but the Grail Knights themselves remembers him or any substantial details about him. All public knowledge was locked away by the Gatekeepers (see page 76) and by the City Librarian, Fadi Malek (see page 267).

The Grail Knights are the only ones still directly connected to Payne. Even their minions don't really know him, except as an ominous moniker at best. Therefore, when the crew wants real clues about Corbin Payne, they must get them from a Grail Knight.

RUNNING PERCIVAL AS A STANDALONE CASE

While this case is designed to be played as an overarching case, you can use the materials in it to run a one-shot. Change the Grail Knights into Borderliner Rifts so that each can be overcome in a single scene and change Corbin Payne into a Legendary Rift on the brink of Avatarhood. The crew must stop him before the entire City is submitted to his pain.



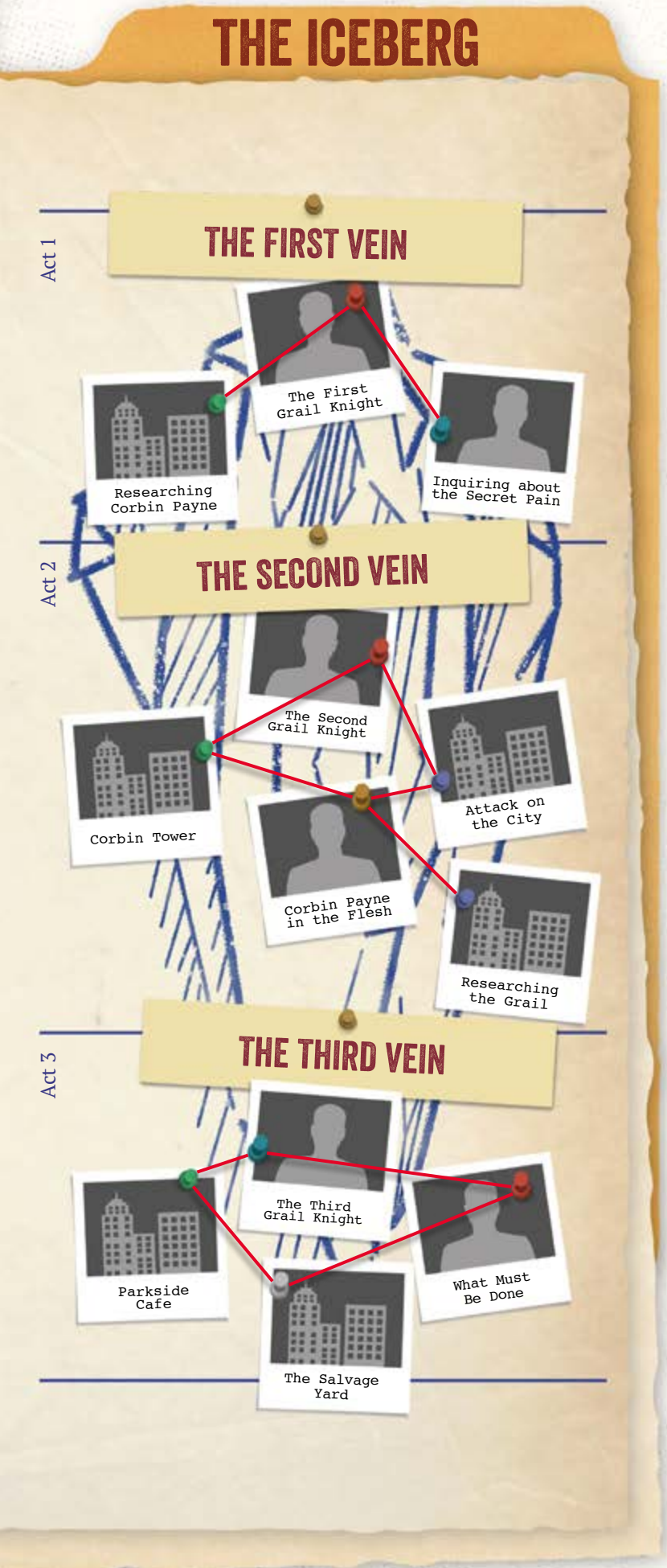
THE FISHER KING AND PERCIVAL

In the legend of the Fisher King, a mighty king is wounded by a stranger and becomes miserable and incapacitated until all he can do is go fishing. Subsequently, his castle and kingdom fall into ruin. Percival, a naive young man who is pure of heart, finds the castle and discovers that the king possesses the Grail (or the Magical Cauldron, in some versions) which can cure all wounds. Percival wants to unlock the power of the Grail but, being naive and out-of-his-depth, he misses the opportunity. The castle vanishes, and the king remains wounded for years to come. Tormented by his failure, Percival wanders the world for many years, seeking the Grail Castle and a deeper understanding of himself, until, finally, when he is worthy of a second chance, he communes with the power of the Grail to heal the Fisher King and restore the kingdom.

THE GRAIL

The legend of the Grail and those who seek it is a story about returning to a spiritual point of origin, the source of all things. When the heroic individuals finally prevail over adversity and connect to something deeper in themselves, something that binds all things together, it is immensely restorative and heals not only them but everyone around.

What is the power to which the Grail calls? It is always a mystery. Perhaps it is another Mythos. The Grail itself certainly is; it started out as a story about a Magic Cauldron that could be used to produce – and heal – anything. But maybe the Grail points at something even beyond the realm of Mythoi, a field of endless possibilities and freedom, the fountainhead from which all Mythoi and all existence originate. Such a place is hard to understand; only the initiated can grasp its vast, empty silence. When everyone else looks at the Grail, they just see themselves, their pain, reflected in it.



HEALING YOUR SECRET PAIN

To heal the world with the Grail, one must first heal oneself.

The Grail is a vessel for attention and, when it is full, it is capable of tapping into a much greater source of attention, greater by many orders of magnitude, one which exists beyond the Mist and beyond the realm of the Mythoi. When the power behind the Grail reveals itself, it is absolute: all is harmonized and brought to its place, and peace is restored.

The problem is that no one, not even Rifts and Avatars, has enough attention to fill the Grail. This is in part because of the Mist, which distracts and 'steals' people's attention, and in part because of people's personal and secret pains (which are in turn the reason the City inhabitants crave distraction and submit to the Mist so willingly). Even the Mythoi, while they help awaken from the Mist, consume some of this attention. Since virtually all the City residents squander their attention on their lives, ordinary or legendary, there is no one who can activate the Grail, and the suffering of the Fisher King and the City continues.

To become worthy of the Grail, a PC must find and grapple with her own existential wound, her secret pain, and heal it. This wound may only be healed by consciously giving it attention, or in other words, listening to the pain and learning to know it.

THE HUMAN CONDITION: THE WOUNDED STATUS

Everyone in the City is wounded - this is the great unspoken truth that everyone knows and no one talks about and the reason why the City is so corrupt. Whether it's existence itself, the Mist, the trials and tribulations of life, the traumas of the past, a haunting Mythos, or all of the above, every City resident bears **a secret pain**, including the PCs (*Player's Guide*, page 63).

In *Percival*, the City residents' secret pain comes into play as a status that has been assumed and therefore ignored thus far: every City resident is *Wounded-6* (with a capital W). While this wound does not kill anyone, it defines them and dictates their actions.

This status is revealed for the first time when a PC inspects her own motives (see below) and discovers that she too is driven by her secret pain, and that she has always been driven by it. It does not reflect the character's transient physical and emotional wounds nor does it stack with them; it reflects her fundamental, existential wound.

This wound (and its status) is what allows Corbin Payne to corrupt even the greatest heroes. As one of his abilities, Payne can convert the *Wounded* status into *the-Dolorous-Stroke*, instantly augmenting the pain in someone to the point of making them a villain.

SELF-REFLECTION: DISCOVERING THE SECRET PAIN

A lead character may discover her own *Wounded* status by **Investigating** herself at any point in the story arc. The character doesn't need to explicitly be looking for the secret pain, and any kind of soul-searching or self-reflection is an opportunity to introduce this revelation. Treat this as a regular investigation action; as such, a PC can use downtime to *work the case* while figuring herself out or spend a Clue from any other relevant source.

The motive for this action is first introduced into the story in Act One, when the crew learns about Corbin Payne's manipulation of the secret pain to create Grail Knights (from The First Grail Knight, page 265). This leads to Inquiring About The Secret Pain (page 271), which more clearly encourages the characters to **Investigate** their own motives.

When a PC first **Investigates** her secret pain, ask the player:

? WHAT IS YOUR SECRET PAIN? HOW DOES IT RULE YOU?

(Note that a PC can only **Investigate** her *own* secret pain. A PC may not become aware of another character's *Wounded* status before she is aware of her own.)

A HIDDEN PATH: HEALING THE EXISTENTIAL WOUND WITH ATTENTION

Once a PC discovers her *Wounded* status, she may further **Investigate** how to heal it, discovering the following:



This pain you bear is deep-rooted. It hurts to even think about it, but so long as you keep it buried, it will rule you. To even begin to think of healing it, you need to spend time with yourself, look inwards, and give it the attention it needs to heal.

The choice to heal the secret pain requires a sacrifice, not of anything or anyone specific, but of all the things a PC wants to do with her attention and her time.

The *Wounded* status can only be reduced by paying Attention points. No other method of increasing or decreasing a status applies to this status. The Attention for this can be generated in the following ways:

- Once a PC unlocks this path, add an option to the **Montage (Downtime)**: *Give attention to your secret pain*, which generates 1 Attention for this purpose. When chosen, the player tells the table where and how they do so, e.g., by contemplation, conversation, etc.
- **Making a Hard Choice** by giving up something to nurture her healing process (1 Attention). For example, if her secret pain drives her to violence, refrain from violence in a situation where it would be more valuable to act violently.
- **When gaining an improvement on a theme**, a PC may convert the improvement for 3 points of Attention for the purpose of healing her wound.
- **When replacing a theme**, a PC may convert each point of Build-Up to 3 points of Attention for the purpose of healing her wound.
- A PC may use **Stop. Holding. Back.** to try and heal her secret pain, gaining Attention based on what she actually loses due to the move: 1 Attention if she marked Crack, 2 Attention if she marked Crack and burnt all tags in a theme. If she replaces a theme, use the rules given above for replacing a theme (including if it was replaced through marking Crack). If the character makes the ultimate sacrifice and dies, she generates Attention as if she lost all her themes at once, with a minimum of 10 Attention. However, since she may not use this to heal her own wound, she may put it toward healing others' wounds: the player distributes the Attention among the PCs the character chooses to heal.

Every point of Attention spent on healing reduces the *Wounded-6* status by 1 box (or pip), starting with the rightmost (6-MC) box. Therefore, the first point reduces the status from tier 6 to tier 5 with four checked boxes. The next point reduces it to tier 5 with three checked boxes, etc.



NARRATE IT, OR IT DIDN'T HAPPEN

Whenever a player chooses to spend Attention to heal his character's *Wounded* status, ask him a question:

- **? WHAT NEW INSIGHT DID YOU GAIN ABOUT YOUR SECRET PAIN?**
- **? HOW DO YOU GRAPPLE WITH YOUR SECRET PAIN?**
- **? HOW DO YOU WORK ON LETTING GO OF YOUR SECRET PAIN?**

Healing does not always have to be a peaceful or cathartic experience; sometimes the healing character is suffering in the process, and may despair, tire, or experience frustration, but something in her is slowly changing, and eventually, this change leads toward a greater understanding.

GENTLE POWER: THE HEALED STATUS

When a character first heals one box of the *Wounded-6* status, reducing it to tier 5 (with four checked boxes), she also gains a *Healed-1* status. This status too refers to Healing with a capital H - a deep transformation of her being. To enhance the mystery, you may wish to reveal the *Healed* status only when it first becomes relevant.

The *Healed* status is a mirror image of the *Wounded* status and its tier is always equal to 6 minus the tier of the *Wounded* status. It cannot be increased or decreased by any other method.

The *Healed* status gives the character the ability to resist the power of the Fisher King. The character may **Face Danger** against *the-Dolorous-Stroke* with the *Healed* status as a helpful status. She may also use this status in the same way to **Face Danger** whenever someone is trying to manipulate her pain, as the Grail Knights or Corbin Payne himself are likely to do.

Finally, the *Healed* status grants the character a greater resistance to the Mist, allowing her to **Face Danger** against the powers of the Gatekeepers, with *Healed* as a helpful status. A *Healed-6* character has transcended the Mist; for her, the Mist is just another Mythos (such as Babylon, see *Shadows & Showdowns*, page 297), the separation of Mist and Mythos is gone, and all existence is one ever-changing unity.

HEALING OTHERS

A *Healed* PC can help others recover from the corrupting effects of *the-Dolorous-Stroke*. She can do so by simply listening to them or by using her Mythos powers in an attentive way that helps them overcome their aggravated secret pain. She may spend relevant Juice (generated by **Changing the Game** or otherwise) to remove tiers from *the-Dolorous-Stroke* status of Grail Knights. However, she may not reduce the tier of *the-Dolorous-Stroke* below the tier of her own *Wounded* status. The Grail Knight remains subject to the compelling effects of *the-Dolorous-Stroke* status until it is removed completely, although at tier 4 or below she may attempt to take actions that go against it (with *the-Dolorous-Stroke* acting as an impeding status, as normal).

The healed Grail Knight still maintains their *Wounded* status as it was before the healing. A *Healed* character cannot reduce another character's *Wounded* status, although she may help that character narratively by guiding her down the same path.

PACING THE *HEALED* STATUS

The feat of healing one's secret pain should feel formidable and span the entire story arc. Otherwise, the PC will become *Healed* too soon and Act Three would lose its powerful cinematic impact.

If one of your PCs is approaching *Wounded-4* before the end of Act One or *Wounded-2* before the end of Act Two, you can introduce a dramatic setback in her path to help pace her healing.

Narrate how the character's journey of healing becomes much harder and demands more of her **as her secret pain fights back**. To reflect this, raise the price of healing one box of the *Wounded* status to 3 Attention points (tracked separately from the themes), one improvement (whenever a theme Attention track is full), or one Build Up point.

A NEW TYPE OF CHARACTER EVOLUTION

The possibility of healing one's secret pain represents a new path of advancement, one that is not reflected in a greater external Mythos or Logos power but in inner transformation.

As the character is healed from her secret pain, **she herself becomes Percival**, able to unlock the Grail, as described below. When the character's wound is completely healed, **she herself becomes the Grail**, a vessel full of attention that is able to tap into a higher source and heal Corbin Payne and the City.

ACTIVATING THE GRAIL

Throughout the story arc, keep the players in the dark about what tier of *Healed* is needed to unlock the Grail. Let them theorize, but never confirm. Not even Rio could tell them this. Keeping this a mystery until the very end would make the cinematic finale that much more exciting!

Anyone who is still *Wounded* and attempts to activate the Grail sees a reflection of their secret pain in the water of the Grail and becomes *disoriented* with a tier equal to the tier of their *Wounded* status. At *Wounded-6* this could mean the character is smitten or shocked with permanent effects such as *blinded-6*, *deafened-6*, *paralyzed-limb-6*, etc. (similarly to what the unprepared Corbin Payne suffered at the hands of his own Conjuration). **This is most applicable for Act Two, when the PCs come in contact with the Grail for the first time.**

At the final moments of Act Three, let the cinematics dictate the outcome. Do not roll or use the rules to see if the character has activated the Grail successfully; this should already be apparent from the narrative and her sacrifices throughout the series.

The Grail may be activated by:

- A single dedicated PC who healed herself completely (*Healed-6*) or almost completely
- A group of PCs (and possibly NPCs) who combine their attention, even if individually they are insufficient
- An inescapable sacrifice of a PC who **Stops. Holding. Back.**
- Rio Beaumont, aided by the PCs
- An unexpected grace, honoring the hardships that the PCs went through

ACT ONE

Act One begins when the crew first learns about Corbin Payne, the mysterious "Crimson King" who has the entire City twitching with pain at his whim. As the crew sets out to discover more about this man, they begin to uncover the source of his power and the bleeding existential wound that has everyone in the City at his mercy.

THE FIRST GRAIL KNIGHT

At the end of the first vein, **the first Grail Knight reveals the existence of Corbin Payne to the crew,** leading them to Research Corbin Payne. Examining the Grail Knight's backstory may also lead the PCs to Inquire about the Secret Pain, which stands at the core of the Knight's suffering and transformation into a villain. However, the Knight has no idea how to find the tycoon (which will be revealed by Grail Knight #2) or how to heal him (Grail Knight #3).

ABOUT CORBIN PAYNE

There is a king who runs this entire City. Even the greatest legends bow down before him because he is the king of the greatest power of all - suffering and torment - who can make anyone experience the greatest misery with a snap of his fingers.

He is the reason the City is as it is, corrupt and violent. Those who have met him can always feel his presence, twisting the knife in the City's wound, itching at its scabs, driving people mad.

His name is Corbin Payne. Once upon a time, he was the tycoon who built this City.

ABOUT PAYNE'S WHEREABOUTS

No one knows where this king is. Legend has it he resides in a tower by the sea, but few have ever found it, and once they did, they can never find it again.

The first Grail Knight once visited this tower. Therefore, they may never again find their way there.

- Krystal Knight was brought there by Payne when it was still under construction
- Armand Kai found it in his quest for the Philosopher's Stone
- Vince Beaumont discovered it while searching for Corbin Payne

ABOUT THEIR RELATIONSHIP

Investigating the Grail Knight's past with an interview, retrocognition, asking the dead, or finding old photos in public records reveals **details of their relationship with Corbin Payne** (but only for the first Knight):

- Krystal Knight was Corbin Payne's therapist until he broke her
- Armand Kai sought the Grail for his alchemy but Corbin Payne exacerbated his fear of death instead
- Vince Beaumont's daughter (Rio, **but he cannot recall her name**), went to see Corbin Payne and was never seen again, and the grief of losing her has filled him with rage and despair

You can find additional details about each Grail Knight's shared past with Corbin Payne in the background for *Broken Glass* (Krystal Knight, page 62), *The Alchemist* (Armand Kai, page 152), and *Albion Awakens* (Vince Beaumont, page 182).

ABOUT THE DOLOROUS STROKE

The Grail Knight is under a horrible and extremely powerful spell, one which causes them a great deal of suffering, to the point of maddening, and drives them to violence. **The spell seems to tap their innermost, most essential pain.**

Beyond the Mist, they seem to be imbued with their own Mythos but also under the influence of another Mythos (the Fisher King). Rifts can see glimpses of one of the following:

- The Grail Knight in rusty, shoddy knightly armor
- A decrepit old king in his rotting throne, resting his wrinkled hand on the Knight's shoulder
- A medieval spear or lance, bejeweled yet murky, embedded in the core of the Knight's being/heart
- The shining Grail hovering beside the Knight
- In the background, a ruined tower by the sea which the viewer feels exerts some dark influence over the Knight

Mystical or occult research can identify this magical force as the Dolorous Stroke, a legendary Arthurian injury that plagues one forever.

Connecting the dots, it can be speculated that **Corbin Payne is the source of the Dolorous Stroke.** If he inflicted it on one person, he may have done the same to many more.

AN ONGOING INVESTIGATION

The crew doesn't have to find all the clues in one encounter or in one place. At any point, they can go back to clues that were available earlier, such as meeting again with the Grail Knight or spending their **Montage (Downtime)** delving into public records.

CORBIN TOWER IS BEYOND REACH

As the base of operations of a powerful Avatar and the Enclave of the Grail Castle, Corbin Tower enjoys dual magical cloaking of both the Mist and Avatar-grade Mythos powers that is simply impenetrable. There is no need to represent this with the rules; any attempt to find the Tower that isn't backed by special narrative circumstance fails, and the seekers just go around in circles. Even **Stop. Holding. Back.** attempts by the lead characters cannot locate the skyscraper, although they may provide valuable clues comparative with the sacrifice level.

Those who already know the Tower exists can sometimes see it looming among the skyscrapers downtown, but the building escapes them if they try to find its street.

To pace the story arc, the key to finding Corbin Tower lies in the hands of the second Grail Knight the crew encounters (page 272).

RESEARCHING CORBIN PAYNE

When the crew digs into Corbin Payne's public persona in the early days of the City, they most likely have to do so in the following ways:

- At the public library in the Old Quarter, where public archives are accessible via computer, microfilm readers, almanacs, legal records, etc.
- By using psychic powers, such as peering into the past or conversing with the ghosts of the dead and getting a first-hand account of the past
- At the Historical Society, a honeytrap set by the Gatekeepers for Rifts who dig too deep (see *Broken Glass*, page 76)

Both in the public library and on the psychic plane, all files or visions regarding Payne have been *magically-encrypted-5* by the chubby and mild-mannered librarian and guardian of knowledge, the Rift **Fadi Malek** (Thoth, Egyptian god of knowledge). Fadi is aware of Corbin Payne and how he corrupts those who seek him, which is why he prevents people from accessing it. The crew must prove themselves to Malek – or defeat him and decrypt the files – before they can access this knowledge. Malek himself does not know what's in the records, he's too smart to dabble with it.

"THE CRIMSON KING"

While practically no one on the street recognizes the name Corbin Payne anymore, some veteran Rifts and informants in the Rift underworld may have learned of the existence of an overlord "king" that runs the City.

For those who have heard of Payne indirectly, discussing him is always accompanied with a deep-seated terror and a strong urge not to let his moniker cross their lips, but if pushed they will name him. Depending on who they crossed paths with, they may know the king as the entity known as "The God-King" (Armand Kai's Magnum Opus cult), "The Crimson King" (Vince Beaumont's gang), or "Patient Zero" (Krystal Knight's Mending the Broken).

Once the crew knows about Corbin Payne, this doesn't add new information. However, it may serve as a hook for the next vein by pointing the crew to those who speak this name.

WEIGHING OF THE HEART

Fadi Malek will approach or contact anyone who is trying to access knowledge of the early years of the City and let them know about the encryption. To unlock this knowledge, he invites the crew to **the Weighing of the Heart**, the Egyptian mythical ritual by which the souls of the dead were judged worthy or unworthy of the afterlife. He will warn the crew against attempting the trial without prior preparation: anyone found unworthy will be devoured by **the goddess-demoness Ammit**.

If the crew is not prepared for the trial, Fadi Malek will advise them "to search their souls and cleanse themselves of their darkness". His advice and suggested reading materials may point some of the PCs to Inquire About the Secret Pain. Fadi will welcome the crew to return to face the trial later in the arc.

When they decide to go ahead with it, the ritual takes place in the library at night. Fadi Malek magically removes the heart of the candidate and puts it on a scale against a feather. If the heart is pure enough, it is lighter than the feather and the candidate is deemed worthy; otherwise it sinks lower and Ammit creeps out of the shadows of the library. You can resolve the ritual narratively or with a **Take the Risk** move, where only power tags of kindness, compassion, and purity of intention are helpful. If the PC already acquired a *Healed* status, it applies (see page 264). Anyone without any such tags or statuses cannot even attempt the move and is automatically deemed unworthy.

If at least one representative is found worthy, Fadi decrypts the files. Those found unworthy are *marked-for-Ammit-5* without **Facing Danger**. Only fate- and soul-manipulation powers can remove this status. Ammit then emerges from the darkness between the bookcases and begins the hunt.

The ideal contact to reach out to in such a case is smuggler **Ben Pelican** (Henet, the Pelican who safeguards souls in the afterlife), if he's alive and awakened (see *The Alchemist*, page 162).





PAYNE BEFORE THE FALL



About a century ago, **Corbin Payne was a construction tycoon** whose company, Payne Construction, built more than half of the buildings in the City. His name was so synonymous with the City that, **at the time, newspapers referred to the City as "Payne Town"**.

He was a businessman, a philanthropist, and a playboy. There are numerous newspaper clips about his immeasurable wealth, ostentatious lifestyle, and considerable donations for charity. While some links to the underworld were assumed, they were mostly unfounded. Payne kept good relations with City Hall and the police department.

Payne was a self-made man. He came from an immigrant family and grew up in Cross End (back when the Santa Teresa of Ávila church was still active, see *Demons in Cross End*).

Deep research can turn up some photos and memoirs depicting young Payne as an energetic, sanguine, and life-loving child who grew up to be a boisterous and industrious man, with a work-hard, play-hard mentality.

A psychological profiler or the ghost of an acquaintance can theorize that **there was a growing emptiness in the man's life**, one which may have driven him to constantly seek and expand outwardly, but this remains a speculation.

THE RED CARPET SHOOTING



At the height of his success, Corbin Payne was shot in the gut (some say groin) by an unidentified shooter who was never caught. This occured when he was alighting from his limousine on his way to a charity gala. **He did not die, but the shot left him with a permanent disability.**

Analyzing old photos or retrocognition of the shooting reveals **the shooter looked just like Corbin Payne.**

The event is *faded-by-time-3*, but arcane practitioners who can overcome this (including Fadi Malek, if he is recruited) may even discover **the shooter was a Conjuration, created by a Rift's magic.** An additional Clue will reveal **the Conjuration was created by Corbin Payne himself**, identifying him as a Rift.

THE DEMISE

Confined to his penthouse, Payne became a recluse and was never seen again. His company collapsed and was broken down into its subsidiaries. Roughly two decades later, he was found dead and his few remaining assets were liquidated to settle his immense debts.

The death certificate indicates Payne died of long-term complications of his wound, citing a blood clot as the cause of death. Studying the attached documents or using retrocognition shows it was fabricated without an autopsy. **In fact, Corbin Payne has no grave and his body was never found.** It would appear his many creditors pressured City Hall into declaring his death. Another possibility is that the Mist itself formed the documents to hide the existence of the man.

RESIDENCES

Corbin Payne owned multiple homes in the City and just outside town but according to City records they have all been demolished at some point during the past century.

After the shooting, Payne's greatest and most megalomaniac construction project, **the skyscraper** Corbin Tower, came to a halt, but there is no record of completion or demolition nor any record of the construction site or architectural plans.

FADI MALEK ★★★★

The Rift of a powerful knowledge deity, Fadi is hard to fool; only the sneakiest Rifts can pass him by without getting caught. In his human form, he can't put up much of a fight but he will try. Hurting him severely triggers his more aggressive and durable giant baboon form.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / AFFECT SENSES OR MIND –

- **All-Knowing:** When Fadi Malek enters the scene, give him *near-omniscient-4*, renewable as a soft move. This status impedes any attack Fadi may foresee coming.
- **God of Magic:** Fadi Malek can dissipate, reverse, or redirect any magic spell or effect of a magical art. He may do this as an intrusion if he is the target of the spell, or as a soft move if he is not (thus affecting only ongoing spells).
- **Giant Baboon Form:** When Fadi Malek's *hurt-or-subdue* is maxed out or as a hard move, reset this spectrum and increase its maximum to 6. Unlock Fadi Malek's baboon moves (see below).

- Smite someone with *addled-brains-3*, *sensory-seal-3*, or *forgetfulness-3*
- Know everything there is to know about an intruder (**Complicate Things, Bigtime**) and then use it to make them doubt their actions (*self-doubt-3*) or threaten them with leaking this information to the authorities or to their enemies (**Force Them to Choose**)
- Cast a tailored spell to disable a specific set of Rift powers (burn 3 tags or give a tier-3 restraint status specific to the target)
- As a baboon: Bare his teeth (*apprehensive-2* to all onlookers)
- As a baboon: Slam an adversary with force (*winded-3*) or pin them down (*pinned-3*)
- As a baboon: Bite an adversary (*bite-wound-3*, stacks with any *winded* or *pinned* statuses)

- Warn intruders that they don't know what they're getting into
- Close his eyes and touch his fingers to his brow, reading someone's history
- Twiddle his fingers, tracing hieroglyphs in the air with a trail of golden dust

AMMIT, DEVOURER OF THE DEAD ★★★★

Fadi Malek's iguana, formerly known as "Spike", is now a Familiar channeling the soul-devouring crocodile-lion-hippopotamus Egyptian chimera Ammit. She hunts and devours souls judged unworthy for the next life, who freeze or falter in her presence.

DESTROY 6 / BANISH 4 / COMMUNICATE –

- **Judged:** Anyone *marked-for-Ammit* applies the tier of this status to any move made to avoid or hide from Ammit, even if made by others on the marked target's behalf, and to **Face Danger** against her attacks.
- **Beyond Life and Death:** Tags and moves representing necromantic or death-related power tags or powers affecting the dead do not apply to Ammit.
- **Supernatural Might:** When Ammit takes a status of physical harm, subdual, or magical effect, reduce its tier by 2.
- **Otherworldly Prowler:** When Ammit enters the scene, give her *mystically-aware-2*.
- **Soul-Devourer:** When Ammit kills her prey, she consumes its soul. In addition to the killing status, give the soul *lost-forever-6* and remove all statuses from Ammit's *destroy* or *banish* spectrums.

- After being banished, show up again (**Complicate Things, Bigtime** and reset *banish*)
- Knock down or smash through a wall or barrier in her path (**Complicate Things, Bigtime** or burn up to 3 tags)
- Attack those close enough with claws and bites (*mauled-4* to anyone nearby)
- Pounce from the shadows on an unaware victim and tear them to pieces (*mutilated-5*)
- Spit a jet of liquid fire (*burns-3*, affecting a small area)

- Growl in the darkness before her crocodile snout emerges into the light
- Prepare to pounce at her prey



INQUIRING ABOUT THE SECRET PAIN

After the PCs learn about Payne transforming the first Grail Knight into a villain, the following clues could then help to put them on the path to Healing Their Secret Pain (page 262). A PC can make this connection **mystically**, if she's interested in the magical powers of Corbin Payne, or **psychologically**, if she's interested in what makes villains tick. Both paths end up leading the PC to look at herself.

The information is best conveyed as **thoughts, insights, or intuitions** that the PC experiences. **Cinematically, these clues should be revealed gradually and thoughtfully**, as they are contemplative, profound, and personal in nature.

The PC can be encouraged to think about these topics through a conversation with an appropriate NPC, such as the following:

- A member of the supporting cast who is wise, innocent, or genuinely loves the PC
- A trusted therapist, psychologist, coach, priest, helpline representative, radio show host, philosopher, poet, etc. (such as Geraldine Granger of *Broken Glass*, page 72 or Rev. Williams of *Home Is Where The Heart Is*, page 217)
- A reliable mystical guide, shaman, psychic reader, psycho-active drug dealer, ghost of someone dead, etc. (such as Ariadne of *Cult of the God-King*, page 126 or Destiny Melancon of *The Streets Bleed Neon*, page 247)

Alternatively, you can incorporate moody scenes that highlight the lead characters' own secret pain. Describe one of them walking alone in the rainy City, drinking in a bar, looking at the traffic or pedestrians, or any kind of contemplative scene. Then ask the player to describe what his PC is thinking of and how she is feeling, not just regarding the case at hand but on the grand scheme of things. Is the character happy? What is bothering her in her life? What kept her awake last night?

UNLOCKING THE HEALING JOURNEY

As described under Healing Your Secret Pain (page 262), these clues may lead a PC to attempt to **Investigate** if she herself bears a secret pain. If a character learns about her own secret pain, reveal her *Wounded* status. If she continues to inquire and receives guidance on how to heal it (the bottom clue in each set), present to the player the possibility to spend Attention to do so.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CLUES

Everyone in the City carries some kind of secret pain with them, not a temporary or topical pain, but something deep-rooted, essential, and existential; their human condition, the pain of being a person in the City.

Even the most well-intending soul, when subjected to great pain, may be driven to harm others. In other words, anyone who carries a secret pain can potentially become a villain.

You (the PC) also bear your secret pain. You thought you could ignore it forever but now it seems like a ticking time bomb. **If it erupts, it could potentially turn you into the worst villain the City has seen.**

In the end, only you can heal your secret pain, by turning your attention inwards and facing it. It's a long journey which comes at the cost of relinquishing things you care for but its rewards are invaluable, not just to you but to all those around you whom you hurt, have hurt, and will hurt.

MYSTICAL CLUES

Payne's influence over the Grail Knight (the Dolorous Stroke) seems to draw its power from the Knight's secret pain, which has been hiding deep within them all along.

If he can truly activate people's innermost pain, Corbin Payne has everyone in the City at his mercy, since pain is universal.

The secret pain is too personal to be removed by an outside force. There is no scientific or magical treatment that can heal this pain without altering the very essence of the subject into something inhuman.

And yet, there is a path to healing that is neither scientific nor magical: human beings are blessed with the power to turn their attention to their own pain, to understand it, and thereby heal it. This path is hinted at in many myths and legends, yet it is always described as a long and almost insurmountable challenge.

THE HEALING MONOLOGUE

You can use the following as the words of a guide or mentor that is teaching the character how to use her attention to heal her pain.

"How to heal pain?

Just be with it. Don't run from it, don't wallow in it, don't try to stop it. Just be with it.

Understand that everyone is wounded. Start seeing other people's wounds behind their words and actions. Someone hurt them, too.

Understand that those who hurt you, were also wounded. It doesn't make what they did right, that's just the way it is.

Now, what to do with this pain? Do you let it drive you? Do you let it consume you? Do you pass it on to another? It wants to pass on, and when you pass it on, it leaves you for a while. It's a relief, but a temporary one.

You must realize that all attempts to manipulate pain only end with more pain.

So what to do with this pain, if you really want to heal it? Look at it. Give it attention. Do not try to change it. Feel it, but don't drown in it. Hold its hand, just a little. Give it the room it needs, but don't let it take over. There, you see - you are with the pain, and you can feel its root, why it's there. And you accept it, as something that is here, as a fact, as something to bear. And when you do, it doesn't hurt so much.

You accept it.

You accept that you have failings - you are what you are, you did not make yourself, and not everything is in your power to change.

You accept that you will die - it's the nature of this existence and what makes it what it is.

You accept that you are weak, that others can hurt you - you are just a human being after all.

Take a deep breath. You accept the story of your life, your situation. And with that - the pain stops.

Tomorrow, you do this again. You have a long way before you."

ACT TWO

Act Two begins when the crew finds out how to reach Corbin Tower, which leads to a direct confrontation with Payne: either they venture into the Tower and confront the Avatar of the Fisher King, or they are forced to respond when he loses his temper and emerges from hiding to personally drown downtown in a maelstrom of pain. Unfortunately, the crew is not yet prepared to face off with the tycoon. Instead, they receive a lesson in humility and discover what happens when one's secret pain takes over.

THE SECOND GRAIL KNIGHT

By the time the crew confronts the second Grail Knight, they may already have a good picture of the past and what Corbin Payne is doing to the City. **The second Grail Knight knows how to find Corbin Tower**, but does not know how to handle or ever hope to heal the cruel tycoon (for that, the crew will need to find Grail Knight #3).

ABOUT CORBIN PAYNE

The second Grail Knight was also corrupted by Corbin Payne. Investigating their past reveals details of their relationship with Corbin Payne; investigating their mystical conditions turns up the same findings about the Dolorous Stroke (see The First Grail Knight, page 265).

This confirms that Corbin Payne's transformation of well-intending individuals into arch-villains is methodical and systematic, making him responsible for all the suffering they caused.

ABOUT CORBIN TOWER

Corbin Tower is Payne's unfinished project, a husk of a skyscraper at the center of the City. It is the Enclave of the Grail Castle, hidden by its own magic and by the Mist.

Those who are true of heart may find Corbin Tower. However, **you only get one shot:** once you've been there once, you may never return, no matter how true your heart is.

While the Tower's magic hides it from humanity, it is also the loophole by which it can be found. If one sets out on an **intentional quest** to find the Grail Castle for a specific reason, they may eventually find it, if their heart is true.

More directly, the second Grail Knight may present the crew with the Relic **Galahad's Dagger**, which serves as a compass that points to Corbin Tower (see extra theme below).



If you're using the *Crime Board Map*, Galahad's Dagger serves as a riddle. When the hilt and the blade are combined and placed on the map of the City, and aligned with the locations of the two known Grail Knights, the hole in the pommel marks the location of Corbin Tower.

GALAHAD'S DAGGER

Relic

IDENTITY

Where is the Grail Castle?

POWER TAGS

hilt points to the Grail Castle, *a moral compass*, *good intentions*, *bejeweled dagger*, *the sharpest blade*, *shatter illusion*, *stronger in the hands of a knight*, *detect Arthurian legends*, *reveal nearby Enclaves*, *inflict the Dolorous Stroke*

WEAKNESS TAGS

cannot aid the unworthy, *answers to a higher power*, *green knights*, *obsessed with the Grail*

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Perfected Dolorous Stroke:** When you **Hit With All You've Got** with tags from this theme and choose to inflict the status *the-Dolorous-Stroke*, if you choose to *hit them* good, increase your status tier by 3 instead of 1. The Dolorous Stroke may never kill your target, only cripple them and transform them into a villain.

CORBIN TOWER

Corbin Tower, Enclave of the Grail Castle, is the hidden unfinished skyscraper abode of Corbin Payne. It is a 50-story husk of a building, with only some partially constructed floors and no curtain walls. Most of Corbin Tower appears to be a mundane abandoned construction site, yet some doors and passages lead into glitzy turn-of-the-century art-deco halls, where the Grail Castle Enclave takes over and melds with Payne's personal history. These passages are unexpected, from a neon-framed art-deco door that's clearly out of place, to a moving fogbank the crew walks through only to find themselves seemingly in another time.

FINDING CORBIN TOWER

As explained by the second Grail Knight, Corbin Tower cannot be found by any ordinary or magical means. To find it, a PC must either:

- Combine Galahad's Dagger and the City map (the *Crime Board Map*) to pinpoint the tower.
- Set out on an intentional quest to find the Grail Castle. In this case, she **Investigates** with tags describing kindness, compassion, and purity of heart, relevant tags from Galahad's Dagger, and/or the *Healed* status, if she has it. The Tower is *Mist-hidden-5*, hindering the quest.

THE UNFINISHED SKYSCRAPER

```
The street leading to the skyscraper
stretches through a dense, impenetrable
fogbank, blinding you to what's to come.
You plunge in and keep moving, going on
faith alone. Just when it seems you are
truly lost, red beacon lights appear
above, staining the white mist like drops
of blood. You come to a rusty, collaps-
ing chain-link fence. The gate is chained,
but its hinges are entirely corroded. An
old sign reads: PAYNE CONSTRUCTION COMPA-
NY - DANGER! CONSTRUCTION ZONE. A fallen
billboard, consumed by mold, displays the
contractor's face with the once-flashy
caption CORBIN TOWER. Above you, under
dark skies, looms a derelict, foreboding,
unfinished skyscraper. It seems abandoned,
empty, and yet every bone in your body
tells you to turn around and run.
```

The mundane sections of the tower, originally intended as a lavish hotel, casino, and office building, now lay empty in the punishing elements. They mostly serve as a way to set the mood and build up suspense, but can pose some challenges and risks for the PCs:



- **Environmental dangers**: Weather (wind, rain, pooling rainwater, lightning), collapsed floors and stairs, shabby ladders, inoperable elevators, slippery ledges, pointy steel rods, corroded machinery (e.g., cranes)
- **Legendary inhabitants:** Grail Wights or Avalonian Valets
- **Pain fallout:** Invisible vortices of trauma and misery plague certain places in the building or travel around it
- **Corbin Payne's presence:** Trying to locate Payne psychically creates an emotional link with him, allowing him to hurt the PC (see Corbin Payne In The Flesh, page 279)

Looking Beyond the Mist reveals a desolate and forlorn medieval castle. There is at the same time a feeling of immense pain (the Fisher King) and great compassion (the Grail).

GRAIL WIGHT ★★★

A Grail Wight is an individual who became lost in the skyscraper on their way to find Corbin Payne or the Grail, and absorbed an unhealthy amount of the building's pain fallout. They initially appear as a stray vagrant or squatter, but their ghostly knightly panoply flashes around them when they fight. They seek nothing but to transfer their pain to others. Healing a Grail Wight requires a no-return **Stop. Holding. Back.** move.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / HEAL – / STARVE OR SUFFOCATE –

- **Not Quite There:** When the Grail Wight enters the scene, give her *blurred-senses-1*.
- **Pain Overflow:** When you cause harm to the Grail Wight, you take the same status you've given with a tier lower by 2. This pain strikes from within, so you may only **Face Danger** with tags that resist pain.

- Slash someone with their imaginary sword, but cause real pain (*sharp-pain-3*)
- Search for someone to give her pain to (remove *blurred-senses-1* and take *sense-emotional-beings*)

- Wander onto the floor the crew is in, not noticing them at first
- Raise their invisible sword, which momentarily flashes

AVALONIAN VALET ★★★

Avalonian Valets are Conjurations created by the Grail Castle Enclave. They are elfish-looking maidens and youths dressed in fine garments that flicker between medieval and turn-of-the-century styles. Trained in Avalon in healing and magical arts, they were sent to serve the Fisher King and help relieve his pain. Unfortunately for interlopers, the valets' charms are quite addictive, leaving the interloper in their arms until Corbin Payne finds them.

HURT OR SUBDUE 1 / CONVINCE TO DESIST 4

- **Radiating Kindness:** When you harm an Avalonian Valet, you first take *remorseful-3*.
- **Addictive Healing:** As a soft move against a willing target or as a hard move against a resisting target, the Avalonian Valet can remove up to three status tiers of pain, negative emotion, or injury. For each tier removed, the target gains one tier of *pleasantly-relieved*, a status that compels her to stay with the Avalonian Valet (walking away requires **Taking the Risk**).

- Apply salve or drip ointment on someone they've healed (*pleasantly-relieved-2*)
- Blow a strange powder on someone aggressive (*sleepy-3*)

- Offer to lay their hands on someone's wounds and alleviate their suffering
- Warn the crew that the Fisher King is beyond healing

THE LIVING MEMORIES

In some of the spaces and halls of the skyscraper, Corbin Payne and his Enclave created lifelike re-enactments of scenes from his life. The characters in the scenes are Conjurations that have no sentience or substance; they are just talking and moving puppets that replay a memory.

These scenes may provide vital information for the crew's investigation of Payne or complete the missing pieces. Make the necessary omissions or adjustments to avoid revealing specific details about your third Grail Knight.

Anyone witnessing a scene may be infected with its emotions; at your option warn the PCs and then **Hit Them After A Fair Warning** with an emotional status which might interfere with **Investigating**.

The clues are laid in chronological order of the events, but the PCs may locate these re-enactments in any order. **The clues about Rio and the Salvage Yard are vital.**

The Red Carpet Shooting: The area in front of the skyscraper's entrance re-enacts the red carpet shooting, where the shooter – Payne's own Conjuration made in his own image – inflicted the Dolorous Stroke upon the tycoon as he alighted from his limousine. It is almost unbearable to be here, not only because of the incredible physical pain Corbin experienced in that moment but also because of everything he feels about this moment in hindsight: rage, bitterness, and untold despair.

Krystal Knight: One room looks like a turn-of-the-century psychoanalyst's office, with Payne on a sofa and Dr. Knight in an armchair. It depicts Knight's desire to heal Payne, and his ability to hurt her in the process with his bitter and wounding verbal remarks. The prevalent emotion here is **shame**, with Payne deriving a strange mixture of satisfaction and guilt from his abuse.

The fourth knight (Rio Beaumont): This is one of Payne's old apartments, to which he retreated after the red carpet shooting. He is still an impressive man, but crippled by his festering wound, leaning on a cane and wearing a dirty bath robe. A hopeful youngster present in the room (Rio Beaumont, **but do not name her**) says that it's her destiny to unlock the Grail and heal both Payne and the City. Payne asks her bitterly, "What do *you* know?" and shows her to the Grail, in the form of a stained wash-basin. When she looks into it, the entire scene becomes a blotty watercolor painting and fades into gray mist. **She feels lost**, out of touch, and clueless so she shuts out; **Payne feels hope**, as he believes she may one day return to heal him.

Armand Kai: This is the actual room where Payne revealed his wound to Armand Kai (in his Avatar of Agony form, see Corbin Payne In The Flesh, page 279). This act exposed Armand's true motive for seeking the Philosopher's Stone – his fear of death – and filled him with paralyzing horror and disgust. Here too Payne derives pleasure from the act, but there is also sadness in him for the loss of a potential cure.

Vince Beaumont: This is the actual room where Vince Beaumont, reborn in another body decades later, found and killed Corbin Payne multiple times as revenge for taking his daughter. Every time he kills Payne, the Grail revives the tycoon, compounding Beaumont's violence and **rage** to no end. Underneath all that, Beaumont feels untold **grief**. Payne, who isn't defending himself, is surprised, momentarily relieved when he dies, and is washed by withering disappointment and anguish each time he is revived.

Other Grail Knights: There are other scenes scattered around the building for every Grail Knight that Payne knighted, including the lead characters, supporting cast, or Nemeses, if any.

The Sewer Tunnel: Below the skyscraper there is a sewer tunnel that runs all the way to the ocean, spilling out in the Salvage Yard. While it is not a living memory, the tunnel radiates residual feelings of melancholy, quiet contemplation, and fragile **peace**. There is a dinghy marooned in the tunnel, in which **Payne sometimes goes out to fish** (this allows the crew to know where to meet him again once they are out of the tower).

THE THRONE ROOM

Your skin prickles as if stung by invisible pins or burnt from an unseen fire, as you walk on the wet concrete onto the last built floor of the tower, pulling yourselves through the pain. Above you, the supporting columns of the unfinished skyscraper extend way on high, into the heavens, like fingers stretched out. Little by little the exposed floor takes on the trappings of a ritzy gala, where high-flying socialites wine, dine, and chatter in their turn-of-the-century suits and evening gowns.

On the far side, just before the gold and crystals wash over, you see a dark concrete slab throne overlooking the City, and in it, a slouched old figure sits. A moment later the figure is replaced by a tall, broad-shouldered gentleman you recognize: Corbin Payne, the man who built the City. He is expecting you.

Corbin Payne receives guests in the top built floor of the skyscraper, where he created a living memory – or rather, a fantasy – of the glamorous charity gala he was going to attend when the red carpet shooting occurred. Depending on the way the conversation goes, his varying emotional states can make him revert the room back to bare concrete. The details of the encounter with Payne are given under Corbin Payne In The Flesh (page 279).

If Payne left the building to stage his Attack On The City, the same floor provides a stunning vista to the destruction and mayhem that ensues.

ATTACK ON THE CITY

All of a sudden, that knot in the pit of your stomach, the one that's always there but you always push away, becomes so overbearing that it makes you want to throw up. Something terrible is happening, inside you, around you, everyone can feel it. You hear a crash from the street: a bike ran into a bodega. For a moment, you think maybe that's it. Then a scream, and elsewhere an agonizing wail, and all of a sudden the smell of something burnt from downstairs. You hear an explosion a few blocks away and then feel the ground shudder below your feet, ready to erupt. It's happening. It has begun. Payne is here.

Corbin Payne relies on his Grail Knights to siphon suffering away from himself and onto the City. Because the source of his pain is legendary, this does little to stop his suffering, but it does allow him to shoulder less of the burden. When the crew shuts down the operations of the first Grail Knight, the Avatar's suffering spikes, but somehow he keeps it together and continues to insidiously spread misery. When the crew interferes with the operation of the *second* Grail Knight, the Avatar can no longer bear the accumulated pain. For the first time in a century, he leaves Corbin Tower to a public space and all hell breaks loose.

This triggered scene describes the disastrous event of Payne attacking the City. Use it as befits your cinematic considerations. It can occur in any of the following ways: before the crew finds Corbin Tower, spurring them to action; after they visit there, as a retaliation; during the visit, as an ominous vision of what Payne could unleash; etc.

DOWNTOWN CHAOS AND MAYHEM

Cinematically, this scene plays out like a disaster movie. Initially, the PCs see or learn of a series of isolated events around the center of the City: smoke billows from a car or a helicopter crash; someone throws themselves off a building; mass panic in the subway. This rapidly escalates into a City-scale disaster: a bridge collapses; a fuel tanker explodes; hysterical crowds lose control.

The incidents originate from Payne, walking around downtown and venting out his misery, either by inflicting extreme pain on random individuals or groups, which drives people to try to make the pain stop in disastrous ways, or by wrathful manipulation of the urban terrain (another ability he possesses, see Corbin Payne In The Flesh, page 279), causing destruction on a massive scale.

Given Corbin Payne's extensive powers, there is little the crew can do to stop him. However, they may protect passersby from harm by providing support, preventing them from hurting one another, sheltering them from debris and explosions, and shielding them from the ambient psychic pain.

THE EPICENTER

At the center of all this devastation, in a downtown plaza, walks the barefoot Corbin Payne, despondent and miserable. When the crew finds him there, they may attempt to engage him, especially if they haven't interacted with him yet. See Corbin Payne In The Flesh for details.





CORBIN PAYNE IN THE FLESH

The first time the crew meets Corbin Payne they are still oblivious to the Grail and have no means of killing or healing the tycoon. This scene serves to humble them by using their secret pain to turn some of them into villains but also to reveal the clues they are missing, which can be garnered during the conversation with Payne:

Corbin Payne is not evil; he is simply a man subjected to more pain than he can bear.

Corbin Payne possesses the Grail, a Relic of untold power that prevents him from dying, yet he cannot use it to cure himself.

The root of his misery lies in his growing realization that nothing is "real" in the City - everything in the City is made of the Mist and therefore nothing has any concrete meaning. This perceived loss of meaning made him awaken as the Fisher King.

Any missing clue from Act One or Act Two.

APPEARANCE

As an Avatar, and specifically the Avatar of the Fisher King (who could conceal his wound very well), Corbin Payne can appear in almost any form he desires, favoring these:

In his **Heyday form**, Payne is a healthy, tall, and well-built man in his late 40s, in a dashing turn-of-the-century suit and haircut, oozing confidence and charisma, quipping, laughing heartily, and showing everyone a good time. Anyone can sense the dissonance between this facade and his true state of mind; he can amplify this irony to the point of inducing vomiting.

In his **Vagrant form**, Payne is the same man only in his 70s, his suit tattered, his body broken, his spirit weary, his hair disheveled and dirty. He is barefoot. He seems despondent and unfocused, losing the thread of conversation often as if suffering from a degenerative illness. He wears this form when he is in a calm or candid mood, or when alone (e.g., fishing).

In his **Avatar of Agony form**, Payne is a sight few can stand. He uncovers his wound, but the actual sight never registers in the minds of onlookers. Instead, an unbearable torrent of misery blasts his environment with sensory waves of torment while he swears, spits, kicks, and screams. Every onlooker sees a different apparition, based on their own secret pain, with *Healed* individuals seeing Payne's true wound: the lack of substance and meaning.

In whatever form Payne takes, **the Grail** follows him everywhere, appearing as a different receptacle every time, from a wine goblet to a dumpster. If no one moves the Grail, it disappears and appears close to Payne, as if it predicts the direction he is going. In contrast to Payne, it exudes a peaceful stillness.

POWERS

As with all Avatars, Payne is not designed as an adversary but as an interesting encounter for the crew. First, he is invincible: the City terrain shields him; he can siphon away any amount of pain; even if he dies, the Grail revives him; etc. Second, he can inflict a tier-5 status as an intrusion and a tier-6 status as a soft move.

As the **Avatar of Suffering**, Corbin Payne can:

- Sense any form of pain in the City and therefore have complete awareness of all its inhabitants, their state-of-mind, painful memories, and secrets.
- Inflict upon any number of people any sensation or feeling on the spectrum of pain and tailor it to the victim(s) to evoke specific emotions like fear, rage, shame, despair, etc.
- Inflict *the-Dolorous-Stroke* with a tier equal to the tier of the target's *Wounded* with a word, a gesture, a facial expression, a vision, a revelation, etc. (He will not knight more than one or two Grail Knights in one encounter, see below)
- End the Avatarhood of, or awaken into Rifthood, someone in his presence (including those Denying the Beyond) by amplifying their secret pain.

HEALED CHARACTERS

A *Healed* character may **Face Danger** against Payne's suffering powers, including *the-Dolorous-Stroke*. If a *Healed* PC receives *the-Dolorous-Stroke* with a tier lower than 6, she may attempt to reduce it like any non-permanent status.

A partial *the-Dolorous-Stroke* still compels the PC to harm herself and others, but the character does not lose themes (as described under The Dolorous Stroke, page 18) until the status reaches tier 6.

Regardless of tier of *the-Dolorous-Stroke*, *Healed* PCs may try to resist *the-Dolorous-Stroke*'s compelling effect for a scene by **Taking the Risk**.

As **the King who is the City**, Payne has absolute mastery over urban terrain: He is able to shape any street, building, block, or neighborhood no matter its size, while bending the laws of physics. For example, he can make someone charging him track in place on an endless strip of concrete, or link the same slab with a road on the other side of town, stranding them instantly. He can resurrect old demolished buildings in the middle of a plaza or flatten existing skyscrapers, killing all therein. This power set is the same anywhere in town, and diminishes only Just Out Of Town.

As **the bearer of the Grail**, Corbin Payne is immune to death, corruption, disease, poison, and any such degenerating effects. The Grail sustains him and protects him from harm, but having surrendered his entire attention to his Mythos, to pain, he is the single most incapable person in town when it comes to activating the healing properties of the Grail.

THE CONVERSATION

In the conversation with the PCs, Corbin Payne is a conflicted and weary man, melancholic at the best of times and deranged most of the time. While his conscience still tells him he should not throw his pain on others, he ends up doing it anyway, and he has been doing it for so long he hardly knows anything else.

He is so overcharged with misery that anything may cause him to change moods (angry, resigned, bitter, sad, etc.), switch forms, or throw a tantrum by afflicting others with pain.

Payne will try to knight the PCs using *the-Dolorous-Stroke* one by one, relishing the moment and taking his time to expound on their secret pain, which he can instinctively feel. After one or two PCs are knighted, he will stop, leaving the crew to deal with the aftermath.

THE GRAIL

Payne will allow any character not fully *Healed* to access the Grail and attempt to activate it, hoping for the best but knowing full well it will backfire (see page 265).

Having chosen Payne as its bearer, the Grail will simply vanish from anyone who attempts to take it and return to Payne. No power in the City can keep it from doing so, but coming in contact with the Grail may provide clues vital to the case (Researching the Grail).

RESEARCHING THE GRAIL

Once the Grail is revealed, the crew may wish to learn more about it. The encounter with Payne provides a brief chance to examine it in person; when the Grail returns to Corbin Tower, it is hidden by the Enclave and the Mist and cannot be examined remotely, leaving theoretical research as the only option. The crew may try to:

- Examine the Grail
- Commune with the Grail
- **Look Beyond the Mist** while in the presence of the Grail
- Meditate on the Grail to acquire a mystical vision of it with the use of appropriate tags
- Consult rare mystical manuscripts or hard-to-reach guides
- Study the mystical properties of the Grail Water from the Mystical Vein (see pages 149 and 171)

According to legend, the Relic of the Grail, sometimes known as the Magic Cauldron, can heal any wound and even bring the dead back to life, but there is little information on how these properties are evoked.

The Grail is much more than a tool for healing. It is a doorway into a great, still emptiness, a field of endless potential that exists beyond even the Mythoi, where all is one. For the one who holds the power of the Grail, all is possible.

As a doorway to endless possibilities, the Grail may even awaken Rifts.

The Grail does not give its power to those still caught up in the mortal coil. Instead, it reflects their suffering to them, so they may begin to awaken.

The Grail does not give itself to those who were never caught up in the mortal coil, such as Conjurations or beings who somehow escaped suffering. Only those who have been Wounded and Healed may know the secret of the Grail.

ACT THREE

Act Three begins when the crew learns the name Rio Beaumont, identifying her as the Grail Knight who disappeared and in whom Corbin Payne puts his hopes. As the concluding act of the story arc, it allows the PCs to bring to fruition all the experiences that they've accumulated over the course of the series, for better or for worse.

Before you run this final act of the story arc, take a step back and look at the journey the lead characters made from the hooks of the first case to this point. Who did they save? Who did they hurt? Who did they abandon? Who was beyond their help? The most poignant emotions and memorable NPCs can come back to take part in the conclusion of the story arc.

Consider *who the crew are* at the end of this story, and what happened with their secret pain. Has one or more of them come to terms with their pain, a realization which then transformed them? Were they *Healed*? Did some of them only pay a little Attention to their wound, just enough to get by? And were there among them true paragons of the noir genre, unhealed and tormented to the end?

Based on all of the above, decide what kind of ending you would like for the series.

- If the crew has already been through turmoil and hard choices fighting the Grail Knights and healing their secret pain, perhaps a serene and cathartic ending is most appropriate. Skip What Must Be Done and focus on the healing of Corbin Payne.
- If they are still wrestling with their demons and you feel hard choices are needed to complete the arc, or if you wish to introduce the option for a darker ending, you can play the trigger scene What Must Be Done to tempt cynical, vindictive, or pragmatic characters to make a cold-hearted trade.

THE THIRD GRAIL KNIGHT

While similar to the first and second Grail Knights, the third Grail Knight knows (or remembers, in the case of Vince Beaumont) one simple but vital detail: Rio.

As with all Grail Knights, the third Grail Knight had a relationship with Corbin Payne and received the Dolorous Stroke (see The First Grail Knight, page 265).

The third Grail Knight recounts something Payne told them: that Rio Beaumont is his Percival, that she is his last hope. No one has seen Rio since she left Payne's apartment decades ago, lost and confused. **Still, the third Grail Knight believes Rio is the key.**

The third Grail Knight believes Rio is another (fourth) Grail Knight, that she too tried to heal Corbin Payne and failed, but that for some reason Payne still had faith in her.

PARKSIDE CAFE

You find Rio in a small coffee shop on the ground floor of her apartment building, across the road from the park. At first, you see a young woman, gazing into the horizon with hope and anticipation, the same naive page you saw in the visions of Payne's memories in his skyscraper. But then a passerby obscures her for a moment and she is now an elderly lady, wearing a look of profound peace. Your eyes lock and you know you found the one you were seeking. You've found Percival.

FINDING RIO

Since Rio Beaumont is **Denying the Beyond**, actively embracing the Mist and hiding herself from everyone, she can only be found by mundane means. **Once the crew has her name, finding her is as simple as looking her up in the phone book or online.**

If you're using the *Crime Board Map* with Galahad's Dagger, Rio's apartment and favorite cafe are found where the lines of Corbin Payne and the other Grail Knights intersect, at the center of the crossguard.

MEETING RIO

Rio is a dignified elderly woman, almost 100 years old, but you couldn't tell. Her head held high, she exudes serenity, warmth, and freedom from cares and worries. She is at peace, seeing the true unified nature of all that surrounds her. From the vantage point of her *Healed* spirit (assume she is at tier 5 or 6), all opposites are one: Mythos and Mist, good and evil, pain and healing.

Rio relates her past. When she peered into the Grail the first time, it revealed to her that she really didn't know who she was and, if she wanted to shed light on the mysteries of others, she must first take the journey herself. She then decided to become a Sleeper, to forego the world of Rifts in order to truly understand herself, to fall asleep in order to awaken. Little by little, year after year, she began opening up to this realization.

Rio relates what she knows about the Grail. The Grail is not a vessel at all, but a model for how one may become a vessel. To unlock the power of the Grail, one must become the Grail, full of attention, full of consciousness. To unlock the power of the Grail, one must know oneself wholly; when this is so, **all it takes to call upon the power of the Grail is to be still and listen.** Still, Rio doesn't know how much self-knowledge is enough; no one can know if they are ready, not until they hold the Grail and look into it.

(If the PCs overlooked it:) **Rio knows Corbin Payne goes out fishing at the Salvage Yard.**

Armed with a new understanding of the Grail, the PCs may be ready to confront Payne for the last time. Some may wish to use this to heal him, while others may realize that gaining power over the Grail could mean the old wretched king could finally be killed.

At the end of the scene, Rio faces a decision whether to stop Denying the Beyond and open herself to the world of Rifts and to her own Mythos again. Being a *Healed* Sleeper, she makes this decision consciously and cannot be tricked into acknowledging the legendary.

If you want to keep a dramatic card up your sleeve, she refuses to come with the PCs, arguing she's not ready yet. In the final moments, when the crew tries to activate the Grail but comes up short, a shining figure of a young woman shows up to save the day. It is the same elderly Rio, transformed by the scintillating power of her Mythos, Percival.

WHAT MUST BE DONE

Neon crackles above the dirty Industrial Zone back alley where your contact said you would meet. You nervously tap your fingers as you wait for them in the gathering mist, occasionally taking a glimpse at the passing headlights. After a while, you make out the vague shape of a man in a raincoat and a fedora looming out of the fog and into the dim light. He approaches



and lights a cigarette, takes a drag, and blows out smoke lengthily. "I'm glad you came." A long silence ensues. "We have a rare opportunity. I think you know what must be done."

Some of the lead characters may feel Corbin Payne cannot or should not be healed, or perhaps be put out of his misery or whisked away to a hell from which he can never escape. They are not alone; many of the big players in the City share this sentiment. Following the talk at Parkside Cafe, the possibility to "control" the power of the Grail (by Rio or a *Healed* PC) presents a new opportunity to hit Payne at his most vulnerable and rid the City of him for good. The big players in the City are aware of this and they approach the crew members who are most likely to cooperate with an offer to help them do what must be done.

The top candidates for this are the Gatekeepers (although you can use an Avatar, a Grail Knight, or any victim of Payne's). Having seen what Payne can do to the City, they are willing to betray their unholy pact with him to make sure he doesn't awaken swathes of Sleepers at once with his next tantrum. The Gatekeepers make the PCs an offer: they will provide the means to eradicate Payne forever, if the PCs tamper with the Grail and execute the plan. If there's a deal, the Gatekeepers produce the **Cloak of Mannanann**, a sheet of writhing fog that nonetheless can be grasped as if it was cloth. Anyone who is wrapped in the Cloak will be transported into the Deep Mist and from there to Thorne Penitentiary (Tartaros, the abyss in which the Greek Titans are imprisoned, see *Shadows & Showdowns*, page 153). Unfortunately, the Grail protects Payne from the Mist, which is where the PCs come into play.

To succeed, the PCs must tamper with the Grail while it is activated (which requires a *Healed* individual), subdue the Avatar, and wrap him in the Cloak. Alternatively, once the Grail is activated, the Cloak can be used to spirit the Relic away, leaving Payne vulnerable to harm and even death.

THE SALVAGE YARD

Massive rusty skeletons of sunken ships tower out of the water all around you. Seagulls cry way on high, careering in the pale rays of sunlight and the salty sea mist. In a miserable dinghy, billowing with the waves, sits Corbin Payne, the man who is the City, fishing in silence. He slowly bends to pull a small fish off his hook, slam it against the side of the boat and toss it lifeless in a bucket beside him. A moment later, the fish springs out from the bucket back into the great blue sea.

In the final scene, Corbin Payne is fishing peacefully at sea, against the backdrop of capsized ships. He is strangely calm, perhaps because of engaging in his hobby of fishing, his recent Attack on the City, the fall of the Grail Knights, or a premonition of what's to come. This poses an opportunity to reach him, both physically and emotionally, and through him, the Grail. When the scene begins, he is not the monster he was in Act Two; just a weary, broken man bearing an unimaginable burden. Yet, he is still the Avatar of the Fisher King.

Choose who is present. Is Corbin Payne there alone? Or maybe the whole City shows up on the seashore to share in the Fisher King's pain, and healing? Perhaps key NPCs from the arc are present in this scene; they may even intervene.

If the PCs succeed in unlocking the power of the Grail (see page 265) and heal Payne, it is a sacred moment of harmony and wholeness. Depending on your style and mood, the special effects here could range from a minimalist yet beautiful moment of absolute stillness, through a classic vista of a column of light shining through the clouds over the bay, to a cosmic transcendental experience of coming in contact with the source of all things, the endless field of potential at the heart of existence. Payne then dies peacefully or ends his Avatarhood and becomes a Sleeper, leaving the PCs with the decision of what to do with him next. As an alternative, leave his fate ambiguous and shrouded in mystery.

If the PCs unlock the Grail but use this moment of vulnerability to try to kill Payne or exile him to the Thorne Penitentiary, an Avatar-level struggle may ensue. Without the Grail and with no urban terrain to manipulate, the Avatar is greatly weakened and must rely on his pain powers. With the stakes so high, don't bother with core moves; resolve actions narratively, or at most, with a **Stop. Holding. Back.** move. If Payne defeats the PCs, some or all of them can become his new Grail Knights. If the PCs defeat Payne, there is an unspeakable price to pay, which no one could have foreseen until the moment of truth: pain and grace, Payne and the Grail, are two sides of the same coin; if one goes, the other goes too. Burying either one in the Mist will push the City into a new depth of sedated Sleep, with the greatest force for awakening gone forever. Killing Payne before he is healed would end in the same result.

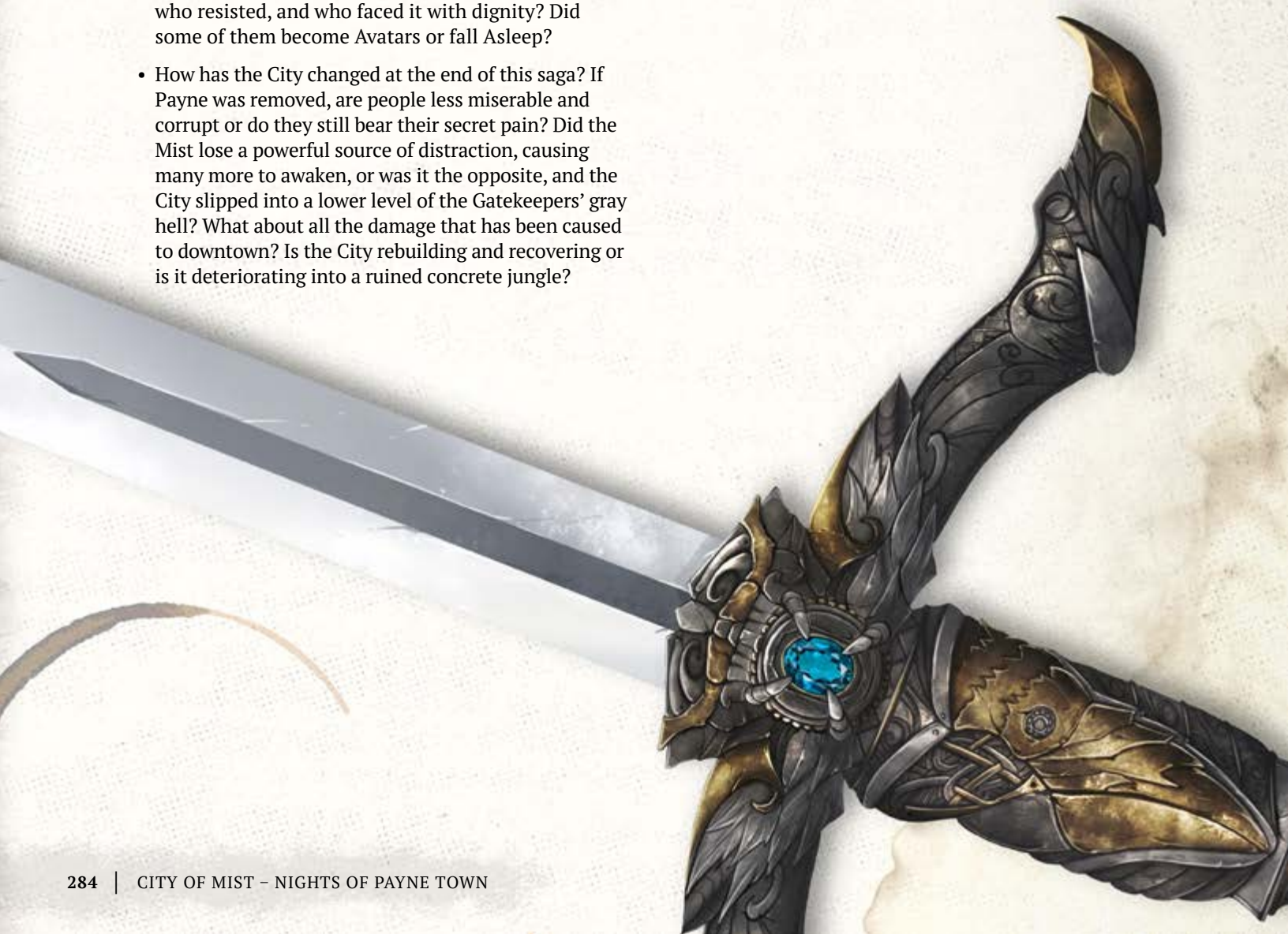
If the crew members take opposite sides on this, let them battle it out in words or blows and find out what happens.

In the words of a great game creator: I envy your finding out.

AFTERMATH

Sometimes, a cold *"CUT!"* is the best way to end a story. However, if you decide to explore what happens in the City at the end of the arc, here are a few questions to consider and points to revisit:

- What was Payne's fate? Was he healed, killed, exiled, or otherwise transformed, and how did it all transpire? Is there a chance of him coming back or the Mythos of the Fisher King being reawakened, or is his story complete, at least for now?
- Where is the Grail now? If it served its purpose, perhaps it disappeared back to the infinite field of grace from which it came. If not, maybe it found a new bearer from among the PCs, the City's high and mighty, or series regulars and supporting cast.
- How did the crew come out of this? Are they still alive and well? Are they still friends? When they got a long hard look at who they really are, who cowered, who resisted, and who faced it with dignity? Did some of them become Avatars or fall Asleep?
- How has the City changed at the end of this saga? If Payne was removed, are people less miserable and corrupt or do they still bear their secret pain? Did the Mist lose a powerful source of distraction, causing many more to awaken, or was it the opposite, and the City slipped into a lower level of the Gatekeepers' gray hell? What about all the damage that has been caused to downtown? Is the City rebuilding and recovering or is it deteriorating into a ruined concrete jungle?
- How is the balance of power in the Rift underworld affected by these events? If its greatest member is out of the picture, does the Council of the Truth (see *Shadows & Showdowns*, page 130) turn on itself? Does another Avatar rise to power? Did Payne have a contingency against the other Avatars in the City, such as a file with their secret identities and secret pains? Or, if Payne's reign continues, perhaps he emerges from the shadows, and knights an army of tormentors?
- What of the Grail Knights: Krystal, Armand, Vince, and Rio? Were they healed, killed, or imprisoned? Were they instrumental in helping bring Payne down or are they now once more his hateful servants?
- And finally, what about the little person on the street, such as the series regulars and iconic NPCs Goldie, Hans Woods, Ben Pelican, Reiko, or Officers Das and Quinn? Now that the City has changed, where do they find themselves?



APPENDICES



MYTHOI IN THIS BOOK

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Rasmussen, H1ghdra, Hægin, Hagai Mordechai Gumpert, Haggai Elkayam, Haley & LJ Yerelian, Hana Lupačová, Hank Driskill, HappilyPsychotic, Happy bunny, Harald Eckmüller, Harold Bosstick, Harpal Khalsa, Harrison Parker, Harrison Redd, HarveyOC, Hassan Zahir Fajri, Haus of Qwert, Hawk Haines, Hayden Tunnicliffe, HealthCare Futurists, Heath Wilder, Heather Dench, Heimi, Henry "PandaDad" de Veuve, Herman Duyker, Hermann Agis, Hervé Gengler, Hesy, Hilel Yehuday, Holland Wilson, Hondo the Doggo, Hörður A., Howard M Thompson, Huston Todd, I M Pirsic, Iain Cramphorn, Ian "Lyrander" Date, Ian Blomfield, Ian Dale Weeber, Ian Jenkinson, Ian M Ward, Ian McFarlin, Ian Noble, Ian Phillipchuk, Ian Semmens, Ian van de Laar, Ibon Presno, Idan Ariav, Ido Merhcav, Ido Solomon, Ido Tzang, Ignacio Sato, Ignatius Montenegro, Igor Faria, IJSM, Ikki, Ilya Shishkonakov, Imunar, In Memory of Brandon Wilson, Indigo Pohlman, Indraneel Dutt, Ingo Beyer, Ingólfur Valsson, Ingvar Karlsson, Inside the Box Board Games, Ioannis Krommydas, Irina & Randall Dorn, Ironchicken, irrion, Isaac at Quillhound, Isaac Carr, Isaac Eshkenazi, Isaac Lee, Isaiah Speights, Ismael D. Sacaluga, Itai Ben-Ivri, Itai Sanders, J - SirCrazyNugget - K, J Backer, J F Lewis, J Healy, J Scott Rumptz, J-Y "Eureka" Trouveroy, J. Asher Henry, J. B. Garner, J. Derrick Kapchinsky, J. M. Kelly, J. Mauricio Hoffman, J. Michael Lanaghan, J. Moran, J. Nicklas Andersson, J. Wilkins, J. Wrenn, J.Carter, Jack "The Hammer" Stone, Jack Godwin, Jack Gulick, Jack Krause, Jack Liska, Jack Toth, Jack Williams, JackoFyre, Jackson Rime, Jacob A. Lackey, Jacob Auer, Jacob Bush, Jacob Collins, Jacob R. Hunter, Jacob T. Reed, Jacob Waldman, Jacques DuRand, Jacqui Macgregor-Pahl, Jae Walker, Jaime O'Brien, Jaime Robertson, Jake Johnson, Jake Terng Hui Leong, Jake Topolie, Jakob Pape, Jakob S. Pfafferodt, Jakub 'Baddy'

Baudyš, Jamas Enright, James Adam Brittain, James Brown, "James C. Reeder, III", James Cunningham, James David Samuel, James Dicks, James Dillane, James Dunbier, James Harnett, James hawkes, James Hays, James Henry Steinberg, James Klement, James L. Aevermann, James Margotta, James Mena, James Meredith, James Newman, James Pacheco, James Parks, James Patrick Parks, James Piiparinen, James S. Barratt, James Smith, James Stoner, James T Rex, James Tiberius Stewart, James W Paulsen, James Woodward, James Worley, James Yoo, Jameson Mulroney, jamie, Jamie and Jonathan Gilmour, Jamie Bellamy, Jamie Lee, Jamie Leitner, Jamie Mercer, Jamie Shaske, Jamie Smith, Jamie Yoshida, Jan Arkebauer, Jan Pieter, Jan Richter, Jan Schattling, Jana Schierwater, Jana W., Jani Reinikainen, Janne Vuorenmaa, Jared "xavl", Jared Cardon, Jared Dumont, Jared Morrison, Jarrod Farquhar-Nicol, Jasn Painter, Jason 'Jaynay' Hewett, Jason "Panda" Hayes, Jason A. Reid, Jason Alexander Phillips, Jason B Beck, Jason B. Smith, Jason Blackmer, Jason C Lund, Jason Chen, Jason Corley, jason e. bean, Jason Enos, Jason Fryer, Jason H Massie, Jason Hipe, Jason Irwin, Jason Jordaan, Jason Klemm, Jason Kottler, Jason Leisemann, Jason Miller, Jason Moses Wong, Jason Nero, Jason Pasch, Jason Pelloni, Jason Petry, Jason Pickup, Jason Pitre, Jason Ray B, Jason Skavlebo, Jason south, Jason Spencer, Jason Templeton, Jason Tocci, Jason W, Jason Wall, Jason Warlock, Jason Wendling, "Jason, Kristin, and Peter Childs", Javan Buratynski, Javert Alfred Prufrock, Javier J. Velez, Javier Joaquin Palenzuela, Jay Gainsford, Jay K, Jay Loomis, Jay M., Jay Mann, Jay Peters, Jay Trask, Jay Watson, Jay Wigglesworth Jensen, Jayded777, Jayhad' Wrobel, JD Maynard, Jean-Gabriel Bolduc, Jean-Louis Réthoré, Jean-Olivier "Volsung" Ferrer, Jeff "JSP" St . Pierre, Jeff Caro, Jeff Crews, Jeff Dean, Jeff Geisperger, Jeff Krakenberg, Jeff Morgan, Jeff Smith, Jeff Sweet, Jeff Troutman, Jeff Wikstrom, Jeff Wilkinson, Jeff Zitomer, Jeffrey A. 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