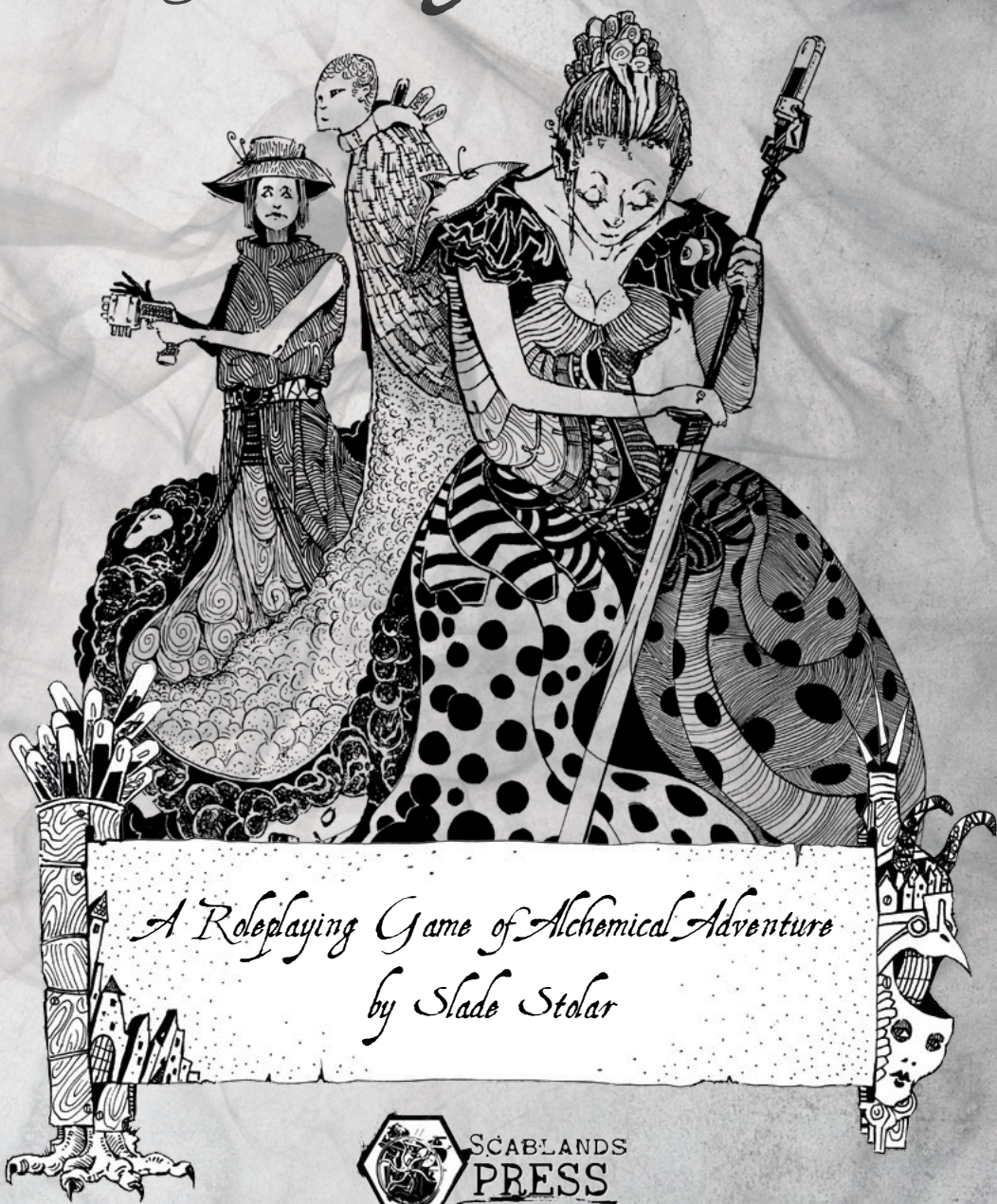


Dust, Fog & Glowing Embers



A Roleplaying Game of Alchemical Adventure
by Slade Stolar



SCABLANDS
PRESS



Dust, Fog & Glowing Embers

*A Parlour Game of Roguish Ruffians
& Their Spagyric Magicks*

using Dice, Notes upon Paper, and Imagination



*Including a Brief Account of the City of Stome
& The Rules Required to Chronicle Adventures Therein*



CREDITS

Dust, Fog, and Glowing Embers

Fourth Kickstarter Backer Edition (September, 2017)

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This game is ***Powered by the Apocalypse.***



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WHAT IS THIS BOOK?

This book contains the setting and rules of a table-top role-playing game. Aside from pencils, dice, paper, and compatriots, this book contains all that you need to start telling stories in the world of *Dust, Fog, and Glowing Embers*.

To play this game, you will have a conversation around a table with your compatriots that describes the adventures of your characters and events in the imagined world.

What is this game?

What if all of the antiquated systems that were supplanted by science were the winners instead? That is, what if science lost? For example: What if alchemy rose to prominence instead of chemistry? What if numerology were the main branch of mathematics? What if the four humours underpinned our understanding of human behavior, rather than psychology? What if the reading of goat entrails were the most accurate method of weather prediction?

In *Dust, Fog, and Glowing Embers*, you enter a world at the cusp of the industrial age. You embody characters that have to face a world in which all kinds of strange (to us) physical laws apply. Therefore, this is a science-fiction game, although it is set in a version of the past.

What are the mechanics?

The mechanics of the game are the rules and guidelines that allow some of the complexity and uncertainty of the conversation to be managed. In this game, the mechanics typically focus on adjudicating conflict, that is, they answer the question, "How do we decide who is successful (and also, what does their success look like?) when there are opposing forces?"

Game terms are written in **bold** at first mention and where they are defined.



What is the end goal?

We're doing all of this in order to craft stories together. The specific kinds of stories that we craft should also be decided together. Are we trying to capture the spirit of comic book adventure, blood-and-guts horror, or gothic romance? Are we playing it serious or goofy? Are we playing it dark and grim or light and hopeful?

Be sure that you have a discussion on the kind of stories you (all) want to tell before getting too deep into the game itself. The last thing you want is for some players to be confused (or worse, disappointed) at the direction that the story is taking.

We're doing all of this in order to craft stories *together*.





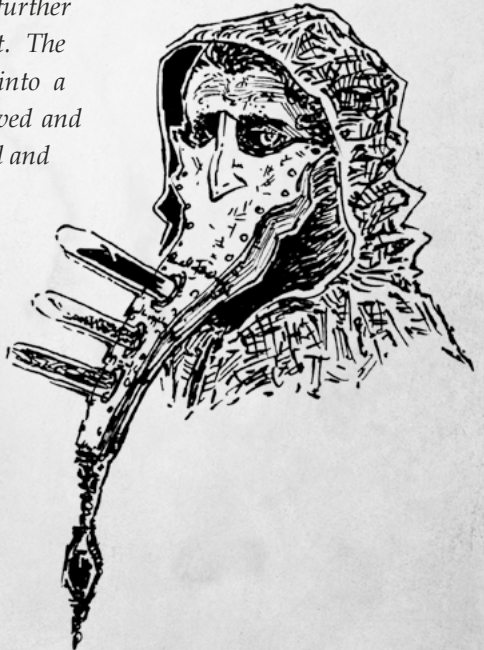
DEAR FRIEND,

It occurs to me that you, despite your many travels and vast knowledge of the world outside Our Commonwealth, or perhaps because of your time away, might not have heard of the many advances that we have made in arts alchemical. Early efforts by our alchemists were devoted to the creation of precious metals or rejuvenating liquors, all of which were of limited use, as their procurement had such great associated costs that few would consider them an overall gain (except in rare circumstances). Other efforts turned to the essences of plants (which could be obtained by extraction, burning, distillation, etc.).

Of course, you well know that certain plants have curative properties (purgative, digestive, soporific, hallucinogenic, etc.), but the greatest advance came with the thorough analysis of Devil's Root. It sprouts in the spring as a small red flower and dies off in the winter; it can only grow in such places as great damp and low wind are more common than not. The seeds are its most potent part. Consumed, they create a great lightness of body, tingling of the lips and tongue, and a feeling of escape from the corporeal world, although one remains fully conscious (and, of course, fully material). The effect is relatively short in duration, lasting some two to three minutes.

Recent work by the spagyrist has yielded further refinement of the products of Devil's Root. The calcined ash of the plant has been mixed into a potion of sorts. The alcohols have been removed and distilled. The oily essences have been extracted and further processed. These three essences form the elemental trinity of Salt, Mercury, and Sulphur (which, though important in their cosmology, mean little to men of science such as myself, and should – more correctly – be typed as minerals, alcohols, and oils).

The great breakthrough of the past decade came with the decision to subject a live creature to injection of one of these essences via hypodermic needle. The creature (in some



versions, a dog, in others, a calf or sheep) was dissolved, which is to say, as salt dissolves in water, the creature changed its composition into such tiny parts that it slipped between the gaps of the air and became like nothing.

The animal, if the commonest tale is to be believed, re-constituted itself some time later on the roof of the building, and was found sleeping peacefully, with no apparent damage physical or psychic.

Human experimentation was begun the following summer at the monastery. Brave or foolhardy souls were given these essences via injection. Each became as rarified as fog and then returned to their corporeal host after some seconds. The experience left many of them feeling freed or jubilant. (I was present at several of these experiments, and so, can be trusted on these matters.) The overall effect was considered terrifying by those who had observed it. Personally speaking, I was skeptical that this could be anything more than a clever trick.

That metallic objects were not transported with their wearers was, initially, confounding. After some further investigation, it was hypothesized that wood, leather, and cloth absorb the bodily oils of the person, and that that, somehow, allowed these materials also to be transported alongside their wearers.

Soon after, the venue of these experiments was moved, after a fire of unknown origin destroyed the monastery's laboratory.

That winter, several enterprising ruffians took to using the essences to waylay people in the street, taking their valuables and throwing them to their fellows on rooftops, and disappearing thereafter (it appears that they managed to direct the movement of their semi-corporeal selves and make their escape). After this became widely known, the spagyrist, who were assumed to be abetting these thieves, were visited by agents of The Ruling Order and told to cease further production of any essences of Devil's Root and any further cultivation of the plant. Anyone caught producing such essences would lose a hand or foot on the first offence, and be killed on the second.

Since then, the production of the essences has continued in secret, of course. The spagyrist have moved their operations to less visible locales (Undercity, Taver's End, Northern Forests, Felnwol Caves, etc.). There are several merchants in the city who can procure them for you, but there will be a high price.

It is likely better to find a patron for yourself.

Yours faithfully, X



THE CORE RULES

Rolling Dice to Meet Challenges

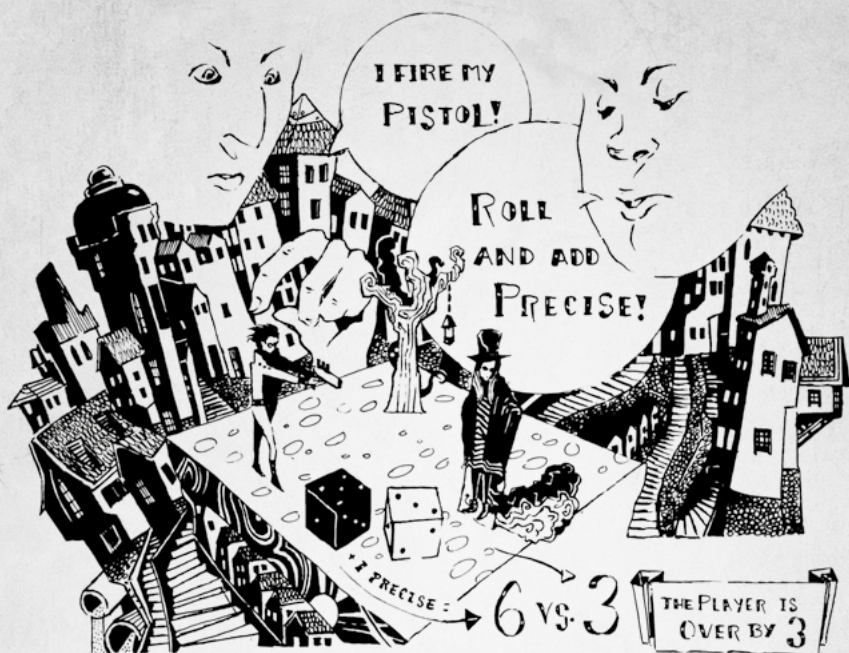
The actions of characters meeting challenges that have risks and rewards are resolved by rolling two six-sided dice (2d6) with one **Light Die** and one **Dark Die**. The Light Die represents the difficulty of the challenge—the higher it is, the more narrative control is given to the **game master (GM)**. The Dark Die represents the character's heroism and prowess—the higher it is, the more narrative control is given to the player. The form that this narrative control takes is the ability to write **details**. Details can be of three types, i.e., **hard details** (most influential), **scene details**, and **soft details** (least influential); details will be explained in the following subsection.

When meeting a challenge, the player rolls one Light Die and one Dark Die (adding their attribute score to the Dark Die) and compares the two results. If the Light Die is higher, the GM wins. If the Dark Die plus the relevant attribute is higher, the player wins. The player always rolls both dice. The GM does not roll dice. Use the chart below to interpret the result:

A Draw	Each side (player and GM) adds one hard detail.
Over by 1	Winning side adds one hard detail but incurs one hard negative detail (e.g., counting against the capacity of their armour or weapon) added by an ally.
Over by 2	Winning side adds one hard detail.
Over by 3	Winning side adds one hard detail and one scene detail.
Over by 4	Winning side adds one hard detail and so does one ally.
Over by 5+	Winning side adds two hard details.

Writing Details

The main task of players of *Dust, Fog, and Glowing Embers* is to tell a compelling story in a mysterious setting. The main units of narrative that you will be adding to the story are called **details**. Details are properties or conditions (e.g., the ornate pistol you found in the cellar of the judge's manor might have the details *Rusted*



and *Engraved with Occult Symbols*). Details are written down when they are added to a character, scene, enemy, or item, and are crossed out when they are no longer applicable. The better your dice result when you roll, the more details you get to add.

Details can range from large to small, broad to narrow, and general to specific; the precise mixture and range of details will be determined by the group that is playing, but note that they are written from the perspective of what the characters expect to be possible, rather than anything that the players can think up.

Details have three main types, which are described below.

Hard details are added when rolling the dice to meet a challenge and describe a fundamental change to some property of a person, place, or thing (e.g., dealing damage, changing an object, annoying someone). During the game, in point form, note down all hard details added to a character, weapon, item, enemy, etc. The player will write hard details applied to their character on their character sheet. The GM will write hard details applied to GM-controlled characters in their notes (index cards work well).

- Φ *During a mêlée, a player using a sword might add a hard detail like Deep Incision to an enemy after a good roll.*
- Φ *During a tense meeting with the court, when a character is prodding the Count for more information, the GM might add the hard detail of Annoyed to No End to the Count after a bad roll. He will hear no more questions from the characters today.*

Soft details can be added more freely and make only temporary or superficial changes to the world (e.g., moving around, calling out to an ally, asking another player's character a question). Soft details need not be written down. If granted a hard detail, you can choose to add a soft detail instead, as fits the narrative.

- Φ *In a brief calm during a huge battle, a character calls out a warning to a nearby friend as a soft detail.*
- Φ *During a mêlée, a character draws a dagger from a sheath at the hip as a soft detail. Finding the dagger in a filled pack would take much longer, and therefore, would probably constitute a scene detail.*

Scene details are details that represent changes to the scenery or your tactics, i.e., things that occur or exist in the scene, but are not a property of a character or item and have more significance than soft details. Scene details can also be spent to move around or change your tactics in combat (in which case, there is no need to write anything down). If granted a hard detail, you can choose to add a scene detail instead. For each scene, the GM will write (and update) a list of scene details in their notes (again, index cards work well).

- Φ *During a mêlée, a character swinging a mace wildly writes Shattered Tiles as a scene detail.*
- Φ *During a mêlée, when a player says, "I slash at his left arm!", the player can write Limp Left Arm if granted both a scene detail and a hard detail. In other words, it costs one scene detail to aim so precisely. If only a hard detail is obtained, perhaps a less precise injury is described.*

Details are typically **negative** or **positive**. Negative details written during combat are often **damage details**, which indicate damage to a character or item. Positive details are beneficial properties (e.g., *Shiny* and *Sharp* for a well-maintained sword).



When a detail is no longer relevant, cross it out.

Exploiting Details

If a detail would influence the outcome of a challenge (i.e., a roll), it can be **exploited** to change the Light Die roll result by +1 or -1 once per scene (which makes the roll or more difficult, respectively). As a reminder, place a small check mark next to an exploited detail, to be erased after the current scene.



Examples of Challenges

Φ During a *mêlée*, a character wishes to attack a *drohghr*. The player says, "I slash at it with my sword!" The GM tells the player to roll the two dice and add Tough, which is [+1], to the Dark Die. The dice are rolled...

 vs.  + [+1] or 3 vs. 5

This result means that the player is over by 2, and therefore, has one hard detail to write; she adds the detail *Deep Incisions* to the enemy. The player won the challenge by rolling and being over by 2; the effect of that victory is represented by a change to the *drohghr* in the form of a hard detail.

Φ During a tense meeting with the court, a player says, "I press the Count for a better description of the thief: 'But you still haven't described the man's face!'" The GM says to roll *Clever*, which is [0] for the player, to not come off as rude. The dice are rolled...



 vs.  + [0] or 5 vs. 6

This result means that the player is over by 1, and therefore, has one hard detail to write. She might add a detail to the thief of *Scarred Across the Chin*, which is revealed by the Count. As the player is over by only 1, another player will add the detail of *Annoyed to No End* to the Count. The GM states that the Count will hear no more questions from you today.

Φ During a night parade, the player wishes to shoot the Inner Circle Judge who is marching with the other Justices. The player says, "I wait for him to pass and fire!" The GM tells the player to roll the two dice and add *Precise*, which is [+1], to the Dark Die. The dice are rolled...



GMs should remind players about details that are available to exploit.

Details can only be exploited once, because exploiting a detail represents characters seeing a rare opportunity and taking advantage of it. Perhaps the enemy will remember to compensate for that weakness in future.

 vs.  + [+1] or 1 vs. 4

This result means that the player is over by 3, and therefore, has one hard detail to write and one scene detail to write; however, a pistol is Deadly in these circumstances, so an additional detail is granted, she adds the details *Bullet Smashed through Right Shoulder and Bleeding to the Judge*. The player adds *Very Chaotic Scrambling* to the scene, which will later be exploited during her escape. The Judge will probably survive the attack, assuming his wounds are quickly tended to, but that is part of the plan.

Φ During an interrogation by Black-sleeves, a player says, "I spit in their faces: 'Your tricks will not work on me, you fiends!'" The GM says to roll *Tough*, which is [0] for the player, to see which side has stronger resolve. The dice are rolled...

 vs.  + [0] or 4 vs. 2

This result means that the GM is over by 2, and therefore, has one hard detail to write. The GM adds *Starved* to the character. The Black-sleeves simply walk out of the room and close the door; they won't be back for a long time.

Φ During combat with a Lich, a player says, "I want to fire my pistol at this creature as it rushes towards us." The GM says to roll *Precise*, which is [-1] for the player. The GM also says that this Lich is a powerful creature, and so, gets +1 to the *Light* die. The dice are rolled...

 + [+1] vs.  + [-1] or 7 vs. 1

This result means that the GM is over by 6, and therefore, has two hard details to write: bad luck for this player. The creature converts one hard detail into a scene detail to move close enough to attack. Additionally, the GM adds the detail of *Icy Flesh and Bones* to the player: "The Lich surges forward like a wind and grasps your arm. You don't even have time to fire. Your skin goes numb, but you feel your bones begin to freeze."

How Do I Write Good Details?

It might be useful to consider, first, why we write details. The world of *Dust, Fog, and Glowing Embers* is a strange, mysterious, and dangerous one. Items and people in this world are complex, and sometimes, enigmatic. To keep track of the richness of these strange and complex stories, it is useful to note down the properties that emerge during the story. Furthermore, these properties can later be exploited so as to gain a mechanical benefit.

1/Φ The GM asks the long-winded player, "What details does your sword have?" The long-winded player says, "It's currently Rusted and Dented in Several Places, but it's still Sharpened to a Razor's Edge. It's Rusted because I carried it through the rain for many years when I was younger. It got Dented in Several Places in that battle with the Vampire. But I did have it sharpened last week. I told the blacksmith to leave the rust, as a reminder of where I came from."

Φ The GM asks the concise player, "What scars do you have?" The concise player says, "Clicking Shoulder, Crooked Nose, and Limp."

In a sense, no one can possibly know what details will work for your group of players. However, you do a lot of this work already in your roleplaying ("Where do you hit him with your arrow?" "What does the ornate sword look like?" "What kind of sickness does the hermit have?"). The main difference is that in *Dust, Fog, and Glowing Embers*, you write versions of these tidbits of story down, and later, use them to modify the die results.

Removing Details

When a detail no longer holds true, cross it out with a single line. If two details seem to contradict each other, they cancel each other out; cross them both out. Details should never be erased or scribbled into illegibility, because they act as a record of your story.

Keeping Track of Capacities

Certain details have a **capacity**, which is the number of relevant negative details that must be added to the item or character before they are rendered out of action. In the case of a character, they fall in battle. In the case of a torch, it is burnt down fully. In the case of a quiver of arrows, it is empty. In the case of some food, it is all eaten (or mouldy). The specific capacity is decided by the inherent durability of the item or character; the capacity is its "narrative endurance", for lack of a better term.

For example, all characters have a detail of the form *Fallen* (/3) that indicates the number of damage details that can be added before the character falls in battle. Here, the capacity of the detail *Fallen* is 3.

Damage Details

Dust, Fog, and Glowing Embers does not distinguish among physical, mental, social, and spiritual injury. Being *Weary, Insulted, Bleeding from the Left Arm, or Disheartened* are all damage details that count toward *Fallen*.

Item Capacity

Details that indicate the use (or abuse) of items will often be added during the story. These details are added either when you are over by 1 on a challenge, or when the story dictates some damage to an item. Physical-type damage details count toward the capacity of weapons and armour. Time-type details (on different scales) count toward the capacity of Food, Candles, Lanterns (their oil), etc.

Note that the use of arrows does not immediately count toward the capacity of the *Arrows Lost* (/3); that is, although the capacity is 3, the archer carries more than just three arrows (e.g., when over by 1 when firing a bow: You hit the enemy in the shoulder. He howls, reaches up, and snaps the shaft of the arrow; add the negative detail *Snapped Arrow*. If the player had been over by 2, no negative detail would be added; perhaps all fired arrows could be retrieved after the combat.).

However, certain items *are* counted individually. In this case, the capacity will include the letter C. For example, the Pistol has a detail of *Bullets Fired* (/3C). This means that the pistol can be fired exactly 3 times before needing to be reloaded. No details need be added; this is simply a tally.

Helping Others

Once per scene, before a roll, you can declare that you are **helping** another character. The player receiving help rolls one Dark Die and one Light Die, and the helper describes *how* she helps and rolls a single Dark Die. The player receiving help then chooses which die to accept, then adds her bonus to the chosen Dark Die.

If the helper's die is not chosen, the helper can move the helped character's name on the Humours chart from one humour to another (described in a later section). If the helper's die is chosen, the helped character can move the helper on the Humours chart. If a character is not yet on the relevant humours chart, simply add the character.

Exploring the World

Players can meet a challenge to learn about their environment. Typically this challenge uses the attribute *Precise*, for noticing with your senses, or the attribute *Clever*, for drawing on your existing knowledge; discuss with the group to determine which attribute applies. Player details are spent one-to-one to ask questions about the character's surroundings that the GM will answer (often in the form of scene details). GM-granted details are unpleasant truths, signs of danger, or ill omens.

Time and Turns

When given a turn by the GM, the player can perform all kinds of actions within the narrative that are not particularly challenging, and add as many soft details as make sense to those at the table. When the stakes are high, however, the dice are rolled and hard details are added to people, objects, or items. The GM or player can opt to use a soft or scene detail instead of a hard detail, as dictated by the logic of the story.

Timing is a fluid concept in *Dust, Fog, and Glowing Embers*. The focus of the narrative will jump from one character to another (to another, to another, ...). The GM will direct the focus and hand out turns in some natural order as dictated by the flow of the story and the desires of the players. This is a difficult task; however, remembering to look (and speak) to all players to see if they are enjoying the story is the best way to avoid lingering on one player for too long.

The interpretation of Exploring the World by a given gaming group will help to determine the extent to which players participate in world-building. If the GM allows players to beg the question (that is, embed an assumed truth), players will be able to craft small (or even large) parts of the setting.

For example, a player might ask the GM, "What colour is the flesh-eating fungus I see all around me?" This question assumes that there is such a thing as flesh-eating fungus, and that it's all around; in this way, the player is adding to the world in a fundamental way, whereas the GM is only adding a superficial detail (in this case, the colour). On the other hand, the GM might insist on a direct, open-ended question of form "What kinds of plants do I see in the grotto?" In this case, the answer might be "red, flesh-eating fungus" but it could easily be "small berry bushes, with purplish berries" or "thin vines, as strong as rope". It should be clear that in this more direct case, the GM has greater narrative control.

The group should decide the extent to which player creativity is part of exploring the world.



CREATING CHARACTERS

Attributes

The three **attributes** in the game are **Tough**, **Precise**, and **Clever**. Tough represents strength, endurance, and willpower. Precise represents dexterity, grace, and attention to detail. Clever represents charisma, intelligence, and wit.

Attributes can be positive, negative, or zero, and are written in square brackets as [+1], [-1], or [0], respectively.

Aptitudes and Origins

Aptitudes – special talents or realms of knowledge – can be called upon to provide **help** on a challenge once per eight-hour rest (i.e., roughly once per day). If you get help from your aptitude, roll an additional Dark Die, and choose which Dark Die to apply; then, place a small check mark next to the aptitude used, to be erased after the rest. Tell the GM and other players what your character knows and how it applies to the situation.

In the realm of aptitudes, the GM should also offer ideas that the character knows but that the player might not.

Natural aptitudes are granted at character creation. These aptitudes depend upon the character's **Origin**, i.e., where they were raised.

- From the Forests -

The natural aptitudes of those who have spent much time in the forest are Forage, Hunt, Shoot, Chart, and Sing.

Forage – Foraging is a method of gathering useful materials from the environment. Herbs, plants, and fungi are readily available in the wilderness, if one knows where to look.

Hunt - Hunting is a combination of tracking and moving stealthily in dense terrain.

Shoot - Marksmanship is essential in the forest: you need to be able to bring home a kill. Note aptitude cannot be applied in a chaotic battle.

Chart - Those who live in the forest must become skilled cartographers. They create and use many different maps for a single area, each specialized for hunting, foraging, or military strategy.

Sing - This skill encompasses singing, bellowing, and using animal calls. The history of the forest-dwellers is also recorded in epic songs.

- *From the Plains* -

The natural aptitudes of those who have spent much time in the plains are Reckon, Ride, Brawl, Craft, and Intimidate.

Reckon - Reckoning is a method of making an assessment of the state of the natural world. Determining whether an animal is sick, if the weather will change, and the correct time to start planting all use Reckon.

Ride - Ride encompasses the skills necessary to direct a horse from atop its back. Anyone can ride a calm horse through town under daylight; however, riding under pressure uses this aptitude.

Brawl - In a chaotic fight with more than a dozen people (perhaps even with no identifiable sides), when wrestling, or when tumbling, apply Brawl.

Tinker - The ability to assess, repair, or create objects can be very useful when far from town.

Intimidate - When using your words and actions to encourage someone to back down because they don't want to fight you, apply intimidate.

- *From The Great Cities* -

The natural aptitudes of those from The Great Cities are Pilfer, Politics, Duel, Art, and Trade.

Pilfer - This skill includes the ability to pick pockets, cheat on a written test, delicately hand off a bribe, and conceal documents (or weapons) on your person.

Politics - Oratory, political history, and back-stabbing. This aptitude includes detecting the subtle nuances and "tells" of characters.

Duel - Duels have been known to take place over offenses and slights. Apply this aptitude in ritualistic single combat. In a large, chaotic fight, this aptitude does not apply.

Art - City-dwellers have more time than most to play music and put brush to canvas.

Trade - Finance, bartering, and bargaining are all part of life in the city.

- *Latent Aptitudes* -

Latent aptitudes are added during the course of the story.

Alchemy - The ability to make spagyric essences, identify potions, and convert metals.

Healing - The ability to heal physical injuries quickly, gingerly, and with minimal risk of infection.

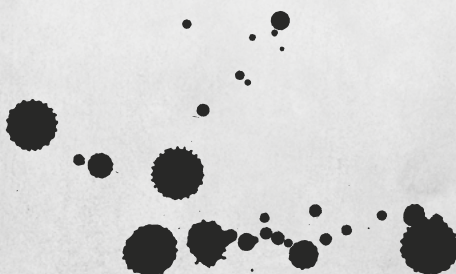
Fighting << *Enemy Type* >> - This aptitude represents the ability to evaluate and counter the offensive capabilities of a particular type of enemy. Typically, this aptitude is only granted after fighting a given enemy on several different occasions.

Additional Aptitudes and Origins might arise as the players explore the lands beyond Stome. Skill in additional languages can be added to the game as follows:

- *From Faraway Lands* -

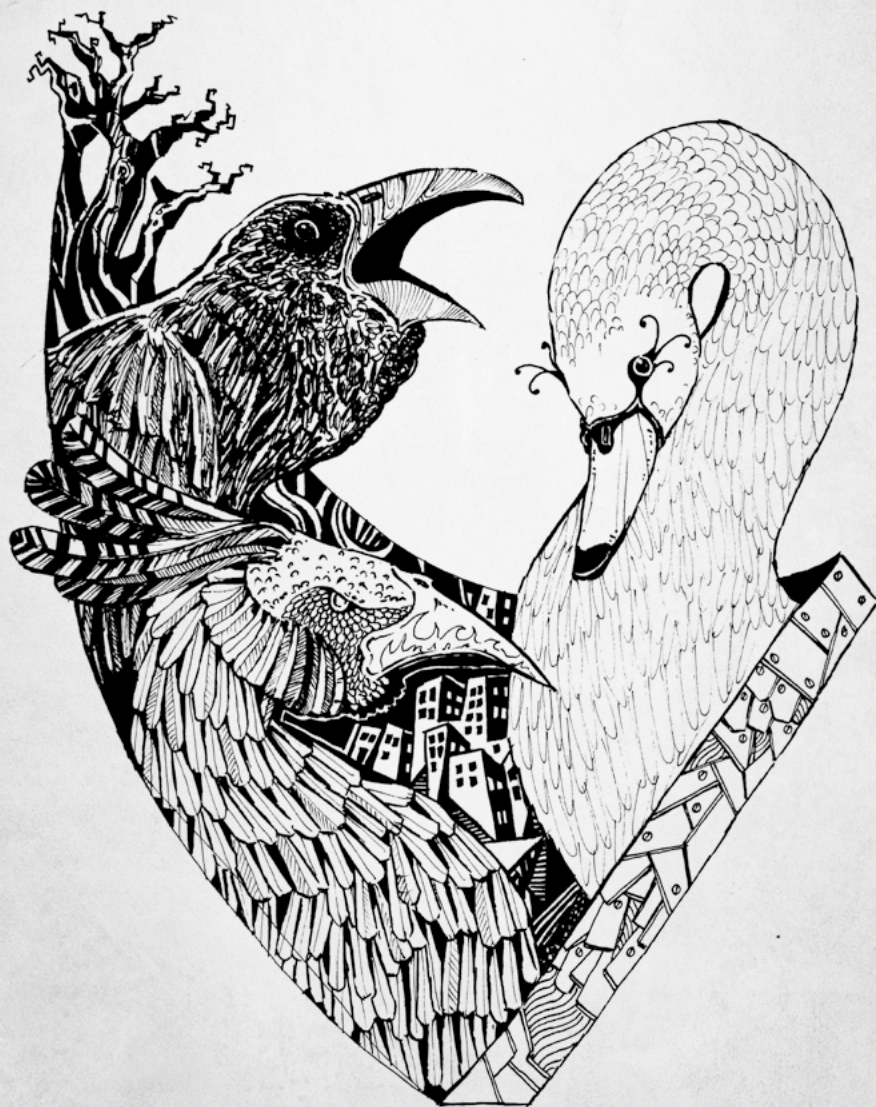
Understand and Speak << *Spoken Language* >> - The ability to understand an additional spoken language, and to speak it. Note that this aptitude does not typically provide help (and thus, an extra die) whenever the language is used; it is mainly used to indicate proficiency.

Read and Write << *Written Language* >> - The ability to read and write an additional written language. Note that this aptitude does not typically provide help (and thus, an extra die) whenever the language is used; it is mainly used to indicate proficiency.





CHARACTER
ARCHETYPES



There are three archetypes for characters in *Dust, Fog, and Glowing Embers*: The Raven, The Swan, and The Phoenix. The choice of archetype will determine how attributes and aptitudes are assigned.

The Raven

Sophisticated, wise, or knowledgeable—The Raven divides the scores [+1], [0], and [0] among Tough, Precise, and Clever in an order of their choosing. The Raven takes three aptitudes from their chosen Origin, and two aptitudes from somewhere else.

Answer this: *How has your patron isolated you from the world?*

Also, answer two of the following questions:

Where can you never go, and why not?

Who provides you with the least comfort, and why do you still spend time with them?

What object can you talk endlessly about, and why?

When was the last time that people saw the limits of your knowledge, and what happened?

How close have you come to dying, and why didn't you?

What causes you the most resentment about being a lackey, and why?

The Swan

Robust, capable, or adept—The Swan divides the scores [+1], [+1], and [-1] among Tough, Precise, and Clever in an order of their choosing. The Swan takes three aptitudes from their chosen Origin.

Answer this: *How has your patron isolated you from the world?*

Also, answer two of the following questions:

Where do you unusually frequently go, and why?

How long has it been since you last saw your lover, and why?

What do most people care about that you reject, and why?

When was the last time that people saw the limits of your composure, and what happened?

How close have you come to dying, and why didn't you?

What about you makes you too good for the life of a servant?

The Phoenix

Proficient, talented, or gifted – The Phoenix divides the scores [+2], [-1], and [-1] among Tough, Precise, and Clever in an order of their choosing. The Phoenix takes two aptitudes from their chosen Origin.

Answer this: *How has your patron isolated you from the world?*

Also, answer two of the following questions:

Where do you long to go, and why?

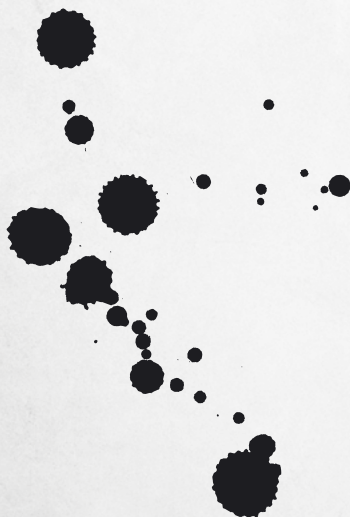
How long has it been since you last let your emotions burst forth, and what happened?

What tool or weapon will be your salvation, and how?

When was the last time that people saw the limits of your inner strength, and what happened?

How close have you come to dying, and why didn't you?

What makes you want to destroy your Patron, and why can't you?





PATRONS



Patrons are people who have extracted you from a dire situation (being in poverty, typically, but also being an outsider and having no network of social/familial contacts). They exploit your need to be accepted and provided for; they clothe, feed, and shelter you.

In exchange for their generosity, they ask that you work for them. Typically, their missions are illegal or immoral: they ask you to steal, sabotage, kidnap, extort, and punish. As part of solidifying your loyalty, they ensure that you are undesirable to the wider world [there are shibboleths like a brand, face tattoo, severed finger, broken leg, scar, accent (or terms or cant), or special clothing]. Furthermore, after missions, you draw the attention of the authorities in proportion to the audacity of your actions.

For your Patron, you complete missions that meet their needs, e.g., to obtain wealth, attention, influence, drugs, weapons, information, or recruits. These missions are dangerous, because you must take something from someone who is protecting it.

If the mission succeeds, the Patron is always pleased, but never satisfied (i.e., there will be more missions in the future).

If the mission fails, the Patron must decide upon someone to blame. The scapegoat will be given less essence or otherwise punished.

At the end of the work week, you are free to do what you want; this is where we pick up the real story. You no longer have the direct support of the Patron, but you have a little essence left over to divide amongst yourselves to advance your own plans. What do you want (individually and as a group)? How can you get it with each other's help? Will your Patron find out? Is this a mission that goes against the goals of your Patron?

To begin on the weekend, propose a mission in vague terms, and work with the GM to determine the specifics.

Before setting out, ensure that you have tentative answers to the following questions:

- Φ *What are we after?*
- Φ *Why are we after it? (Often, how does it help our Patron?)*
- Φ *Where do we need to go to get it?*

If you wish to start the game at the end of the week, roll 2d6 and take the higher number; that's the number of points of essence that you've managed to secret away. Choose whichever essences you want. The different essences are described in the following section.

- Φ Who will be there to defend it?
- Φ How can we avoid attracting attention?
- Φ What is our plan if we are separated and/or injured?
- Φ How will we know whether we've succeeded?

When answering the mission questions, it is often easiest to go around the table, asking one question to each player.

The GM can also use this set of questions from the perspective of the Patron to flesh-out the week-day missions.

Creating your Patron

Patrons have several needs, one written by each player, and have a single attribute called **Influence**, which begins at [0]. After each successful mission, the Patron will either add a new need or **deepen** an existing need. A deepened need becomes stronger, more acute, or more perverse; cross out the old need and write a more intense need that is closely related.

After three successful missions, increase the Patron's influence by 1. Once Influence is [+3], your Patron will decide to be rid of you; if you survive, find a new patron.

On rare occasions, the Patron's influence can be used to add to the Dark Die during a roll. If you are acting on the Patron's behalf in some social situation — a single roll made to be taken seriously by an official, to be let past the guards, etc. — you can roll using your Patron's Influence instead of a player character's attribute score.

Example Patrons

- Agnes Brinne -

Needs: To exalt House Brinne; To gather funds and matériel for war; To indulge in the finest wines.

Influence [0]

- Fell Stodge -

Needs: To smear his political enemies as layabouts and perverts; To defend the farms from nasty creatures from the wilderness; To weed out rogue professors and discredit them.

Influence [0]

- Trane Stlaz -

Needs: To acquire all new technology; To obtain corpses for use in medical training; To see his enemies and romantic rivals humiliated publicly.

Influence [0]



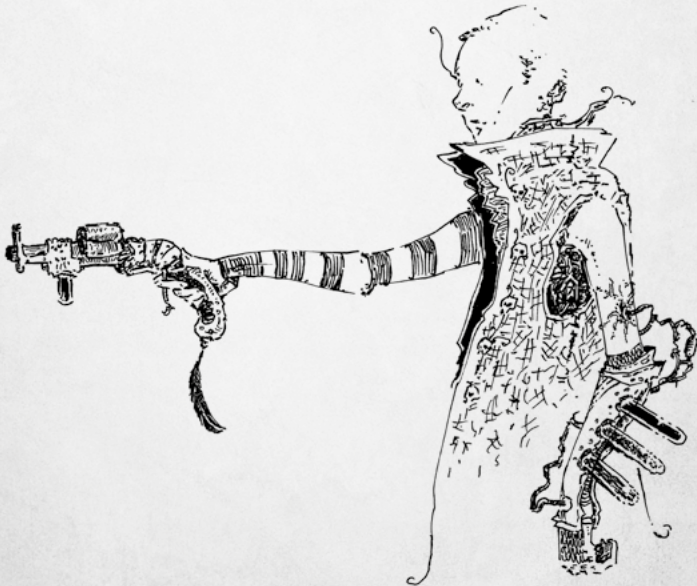
THE SPAGYRIC MANIFOLD

The Manifold and The Essences

The Spagyric manifold is a complex device made of metal, rubber, and glass. It contains phials of spagyric essences, namely, alcohol, salt, and sulphur, which correspond to fog, dust, and smoke forms, respectively.

Essences are counted in points. The maximum number of points you can hold at one time is dictated by the manifold itself (with a default value of 3 for each essence). The maximum number of uses of the essences before needing a long rest of several days is determined by the character's metabolism (see the subsection on Metabolism below), in the form of *Metabolized Essences* ($/3C$).

Characters typically begin missions with 4 points of essence to distribute. These points can be spent to activate the effects described below.



Spagyrist, with Manifold & Pistol.



THE SPAGYRIC ARTS

Spagyric effects are instantaneous, do not require a dice roll, and remain **active** until **metabolized**. Unless noted otherwise, your form is noticeably different: when using these powers, people might mistake you for a ghost or a person made of smoke, or the **telltale signs** might be obvious. Telltale signs are sensible side-effects of using these powers and can be detected for some hours after the spagyrist has left the area.

Changeable Form – By spending 1 of any essence, you may jump at triple your usual height and distance, bypass a door if there are any gaps in or around it, or glide along the ground at double running speed.

Immaterial Structure – Spend 1 of any essence; thereafter, you may ignore the first damage detail that would be applied to you (however, once a damage detail is taken, Immaterial Structure cannot be used to heal it). Additionally, ignore the *Deadly* detail on all non-spagyric attacks.

Detection – By spending 1 of any essence, you may attune yourself to the telltale signs of other spagyrist at a great distance. Your appearance does not change noticeably when using this ability.

Reknit Flesh – By spending 2 points of essence(s), you may instantly convert one damage detail into a scar (as per healing).

False Face – By spending 3 points of essence(s), you may change your appearance to that of anyone you know well. To revert to your true form, metabolize the essence spent.

Fog

The telltale signs of Fog are haze, the damp smell of moss, dew, the smell of sea spray, dancing lights, frost, and the smell of rain.

Snuff – By spending 1 point of alcohol, you snuff out all lamps, torches, and small fires nearby. Metabolizing the essence does not return these flames.

Conceal – By spending 1 point of alcohol, you conceal one small item (less than 1 cubic foot) on your person that would not be found by any search. You may return the item to your hand or pocket by metabolizing the essence. Your appearance does not change noticeably when using this ability.

Evade – By spending 1 point of alcohol, you may ignore one GM detail from a roll for an enemy's physical attack.

Float – By spending 2 points of alcohol, you may fly short distances. Metabolize the essence to return to earth.

Push – By spending 2 points of alcohol, you shift an enemy's position by several feet. This can be very disconcerting to the person experiencing it.

Envelop – By spending 2 points of alcohol, you create a large pocket of obscuring mist. Ranged attacks made into or out of the mist will always miss. Ranged attacks within the mist are at -1 to the relevant die.

Freeze – By spending 3 points of alcohol, you may cool an area significantly. All those remaining within the area become *Chilled*, which counts toward *Fallen*; however, player characters may test Tough to avoid this effect.

Dust

The telltale signs of Dust are scattered bits of bone, dry air, rags, small dust devils, a gritty taste in the mouth, the smell of old books, and sneezing.

Abrade – By spending 1 point of salt, you pass without trace, no matter what material you are stepping on. If you are at the back of a group, all signs of passage are removed.

Blind – By spending 1 point of salt, you blind any non-spagyrist nearby until the essence is metabolized.

Engrave – By spending 1 point of salt, you may write letters from afar, add a damage detail to an item, or add a scar to a character. Metabolizing the essence removes the engraving; therefore, this effect does not grant a Milestone (described below).

Corrupt – By spending 2 points of salt, you may create a swirling dust devil of caustic powder. Those caught in the area take an additional damage detail to themselves or two additional damage details to their items when using armour to absorb damage.

Hone – By spending 2 points of salt, you sharpen a blade to a razor's edge. One bladed weapon becomes *Deadly*. If the weapon is already *Deadly*, there is no additional effect.

Salt for your Wounds – By spending 2 points of salt, no injuries may be healed during this combat. Additionally, all wounds healed outside of combat add two scars instead of one.

Batter – By spending 3 points of salt, you create an area that is filled with stones being whipped by strong wind. All those remaining within the area become *Battered*, which counts toward *Fallen*; however, player characters may test Tough to avoid this effect.

Smoke

The telltale signs of Smoke are the smell of charred flesh, cheroot smoke, ash, a faint crackling sound, choking sound, and malodorous fumes.

Stoke - By spending 1 point of sulphur, you increase the brightness and heat of all lamps, torches, and small fires in the immediate area. This may cause them to break free of their original containers; metabolizing the essence does not cause these secondary flames to subside.

Ignite - By spending 1 point of sulphur, you may start small fires with your touch. If used offensively, this counts as a *mêlée* weapon that ignores armour and requires a Tough roll.

Ash - By spending 1 point of sulphur, you create an obscuring cloud of smoke and cinders. Anyone within the cloud only receives scene and soft detail effects by spending two scene or soft details (even if this means spreading those details across multiple rolls).

Burn - By spending 2 points of sulphur, you may start small fires anywhere nearby that you can see. If used offensively, this ability counts as a *Deadly* ranged weapon that ignores armour and requires a Precise roll.

Scorch - By spending 2 points of sulphur, you may blacken glass and destroy paper. Optionally, apply two damage details to a flammable item carried by someone nearby.

Engulf - By spending 2 points of sulphur, you create a flesh-consuming wall of flames. Those within it take an additional damage detail when rolling under. Metabolizing the essence causes these flames to disappear.

Inferno - By spending 3 points of sulphur, you can create large fires that will not be extinguished by water or smothering; they must completely burn their fuel source to be extinguished. Metabolizing the essence does nothing to slow these flames.

Spend scene details from rolls to flesh-out these effects in the fiction.

Unless otherwise noted, the effect ends when the essence is metabolized.



METABOLISM

Spagyric essences remain in the blood (and many of their effects remain active) until they are purged by being **metabolized**. Every spagyrist has a detail of *Metabolized Essences* (/3C) that is used to track metabolized essences. For example, if a character wanted to deactivate the effects Immaterial Structure and Float, it would require their entire metabolism to do so; thereafter, no more effects could be deactivated.

Any active abilities that cannot be metabolized at the end of the scene cause problems for the user in the form of damage details. If this damage would cause them to become *Fallen*, the spagyrist loses control, becomes immaterial, and floats away. The character will be found some time later, typically far from where they disappeared and very disoriented. Remove any damage details that were due to unmetabolizable essences, but let the GM know that you have done so; the GM will hold this against you at some later date.

The tally for *Metabolized Essences* (/3C) resets to zero after a significant rest of several days.





THE FOUR HUMOURS

The four humours guide the attitudes of the characters. Each character has a primary humour—melancholic, phlegmatic, choleric, or sanguine—that determines the character’s instinctual reaction (i.e., their predisposition) when meeting someone for the first time or happening upon something strange; all other humours are secondary. Each humour has four adjectives that apply, and three situational triggers. When meeting new people or facing new circumstances, try to base your character’s reaction on the adjectives for their primary humour.

Additionally, in some situations, you will reveal hidden aspects of your personality. When spending time in an intimate setting with one other person, you can embody one of your secondary humours by hitting one of its three situational triggers (for example, you can act phlegmatic by reveling in nostalgia). Eventually, you should have this kind of encounter with all fellow player characters and any important NPCs—assuming that you trust them, that is. After hitting the situational trigger, write the name of the other character under the associated secondary humour; you have shown them an aspect of your truer (or, at least, hidden) self.

If, at some point, you have four people listed under a secondary humour, your primary humour shifts. Cross out the four characters listed; the secondary humour that had four names listed becomes your new primary humour. Describe your crisis of personality and values at that time, or in a short, private scene soon thereafter. This shift grants a Milestone (described below).

Melancholic

Reclusive, Depressive, Cautious, Prudent

I show myself to be melancholic...

- Φ *when I express my rejection of a person or thing,*
- Φ *when I urge carefully planned action, or*
- Φ *when I explain the worst possible outcome.*

Phlegmatic

Lazy, Subjective, Emotional, Sentimental

I show myself to be phlegmatic...

- Φ *when I make efforts now to save energy later,*
- Φ *when I revel in nostalgia, or*
- Φ *when I embody the emotions of another.*

Choleric

Angry, Jealous, Bold, Ambitious

I show myself to be choleric...

- Φ *when I use a person or thing to my benefit,*
- Φ *when I show my indignation or my willingness to defend something, or*
- Φ *when I take the first step on a path towards a larger goal.*

Sanguine

Smothering, Judgmental, Joyful, Optimistic

I show myself to be sanguine...

- Φ *when I show affection or a desire for intimacy,*
- Φ *when I make an effort to impress someone, or*
- Φ *when I urge someone to pursue a different course of action.*

Each humour has some associated adjectives and situational triggers that can help guide your roleplaying, but none of these is a dictate: you should react as your character would. This information is a set of prompts to immersive roleplaying in the world of the game, not an excuse to avoid embodying your character. If you (players and GM) can think of a better situational trigger than the ones listed, use it instead.

The GM should make efforts to let players play-out scenes that use their secondary humours. Players should request such scenes, as time and pacing allow, but recall that all of the other players will be your audience (so make it to-the-point and engaging). It may be useful to announce beforehand which situational trigger you are trying to hit during the scene. Once the situational trigger has been hit, wrap the scene up promptly.



MILESTONES

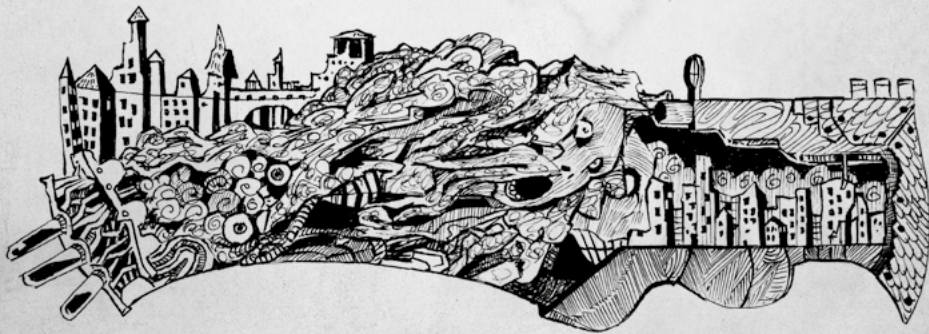
Milestones are the metric by which the experiences and growth of the characters are quantified.

Milestones are granted in the following cases:

- Φ when shifting the Primary Humour,
- Φ when adding a scar,
- Φ when spending several weeks training,
- Φ when overcoming incredible odds (1 to 2 Milestones),
- Φ when instigating life-changing events (3 to 4 Milestones), or
- Φ when meaningfully changing Stome for a generation or more (5 Milestones).

Milestones can be spent to improve the character as follows:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2 | Develop a new aptitude from your Origin |
| 3 | Increase an attribute from [-1] to [0], or from [0] to [+1], develop a new Aptitude not from your origin. |
| 4 | Increase an attribute from [+1] to [+2], increase <i>Fallen</i> capacity from 3 to 4, or increase <i>Metabolized Essences</i> capacity from 3C to 4C. |
| 5 | Increase an attribute from [+2] to [+3], once per lifetime. |





SITUATIONAL RULES

Resting, Repairing, Healing, and Scarring

When granted details from healing or rest, characters convert damage details into scars (hard details) at the cost of one-to-one. Re-write the damage as a scar (e.g., *Shallow Cuts* becomes *Thin Scars*).

In an inn, hotel, or lodging house in Stome, characters can fully rest over night (remove up to 2 damage details and add corresponding scars) in relative safety.

During a journey, characters may choose to take a rough rest (lasting 8 hours). In this case, face a Clever challenge to heal (yourself or another character) or remove details that negatively affect armour. GM details will typically be complications or damage details to your supplies.

Scars are a part of each character's adventure. If a character returned without scars, how would anyone know that great feats were accomplished, that foul deeds were thwarted? Alternate rules might count scars toward character advancement, or perhaps a character must be retired after having too many injuries.

Armour

The protection of armour is based on its ability to convert (hard) damage details to the character into (hard) damage details to the armour, on a one-to-one basis. Once the armour's capacity is reached, the armour is in its damaged state and is no longer usable until repaired. Note that some spagyric effects ignore armour.



Avoiding Calamity

Reactions to hazards in the world (e.g., traps, alchemical effects, difficult climbs, stampeding horses, explosions) are made by testing one of the three attributes. When you are not sure what kind of test to make, use the following table as a guide:

Tough	Things that hurt you, inside or out: Fast or close enemy physical attacks, falls, fire, poison, disease, etc.
Precise	Things that might or might not hit you: Slow or ranged enemy physical attacks, falling rocks, lightning, most traps, projectiles, etc.
Clever	Things that trick you: Deception, puzzles, riddles, tactical manoeuvring, etc.



To **avoid calamity**, roll one Light Die and one Dark Die (and add the corresponding attribute to the Dark Die). Player details will be soft or scene details describing evading the danger. GM details might be damage details or other negative detail effects (*Poisoned, Shot by Darts, Trapped by Rocks, Confused, Scorched Arm Flesh*, etc.).

Φ *After being interrogated by a Black-sleeve, a character is thrown from a rooftop. The GM tells the player to roll the two dice and add Precise, which is [+1], to the Dark Die. The dice are rolled...*

 vs.  + [+1] or 3 vs. 5



This result means that the player is over by 2, and therefore, has a detail to write; she adds the scene detail of twisting her body as she's being thrown such that she lands in a soft rubbish heap, not on the hard cobblestones. The player won the challenge by rolling and being over by 2; the effect of that victory is represented by a change to the scene such that her character can avoid injury.

Φ *To save a cherished friend, a character charges into a burning house. The GM tells the player to roll the two dice and add Tough, which is [-1], to the Dark Die. The dice are rolled...*

 vs.  + [-1] or 5 vs. 5

This result means that the roll is a draw, and therefore, the GM has one hard detail to write, and the player has one detail to write. The GM adds Choking on Smoke to the player. The character avoids most of the danger and makes their way to the friend's room (as a scene detail).

Φ *To see through an illusion, a character attempts to shake a mental fog (this is an alchemical effect). The GM tells the player to roll the two dice and add Clever, which is [-1], to the Dark Die. The dice are rolled...*

 vs.  + [-1] or 4 vs. 1

The GM adds Befuddled to the player and Cackling Apparitions to the scene. The illusory effect draws on the character's fears to create additional frightening apparitions.



COMBAT

Who Acts First?

When combat begins, unless the players are ambushed or surprised, the players (in an order of their choosing) act before their enemies. Thereafter, the enemy might retaliate (See Avoiding Calamity above).

If there is any doubt as to which side is surprised, the player closest to the enemy must be over on a Precise challenge to have the players act first; otherwise, they are surprised and must avoid calamity (see above).

Time in combat is a fluid concept, and the GM will hand out turns as dictated by the narrative. However, as a general rule, do not allow the same player to roll the dice twice in a row, unless all of the players demand to see a resolution to that part of the conflict.

Attacking and Defending

To attack with physical weapons, a player rolls a Tough or Precise challenge. The player adds their Tough or Precise score to the Dark Die; the enemy adds their **challenge level (CL)** to the Light Die. In general, players can choose to apply Tough or Precise in combat. However, certain weapons must use certain attributes (a Heavy Weapon must use Tough. A Dueling Weapon or a Ranged Weapon must use Precise). When fighting with most weapons that you are not familiar with, use the lowest of Tough and Precise. When fighting without a weapon, when using a ranged weapon in close combat, or when using a Heavy Weapon or Dueling Weapon that you are not familiar with, use your lowest attribute.

The winner applies damage and other details as described in the Rolling Dice to Meet Challenges section above. GM wins indicate the inability of the players to defend themselves against enemy attacks, and will apply damage details or other negative details to player characters.

Making Ranged Attacks

Ranged attacks can be made using pistols, bows, thrown weapons, etc. Establish whether such attacks can be made in the fiction.

Tactics

Clever can be rolled in combat to manoeuvre around, trick, or observe enemies.

Direct Player-vs.-Player Conflict

If you wish to allow player characters to come into direct conflict (even physical conflict), the aggressor takes the Light Die and the victim takes the Dark Die. Both dice are rolled, and the dice are interpreted as normal, except that rather than the GM getting details when the Light die is over, the aggressor gets the details.

Combat Details

Writing details for combat is not dissimilar to writing details at other times. The main difference to note is that details cannot indicate a killing blow before the *Fallen* capacity of the enemy is reached. For example, *Decapitated* is a poor first detail to add in combat, unless it has been established in the fiction that decapitation is not lethal to this kind of enemy.





THE CITY STOME



Blackhall

The area known as Blackhall is a compound of dozens of government ministry buildings ringed by ten-foot-tall wrought-iron fences. It's best to avoid bumping into any ministers here, as they have "The Right of Due Force" here, meaning that they might have you beaten unconscious with the smallest of provocation, and that fighting back means a literal death sentence. Because of strong resentment from the public, ministers rarely leave this enclave.

- It is a government holiday. The streets are empty. The offices are guarded, but not very well.
- A minister, looking angry, marches through the streets. He's looking for someone to berate for their stupidity. You might fit the bill.
- The tax on dry goods has been increased by 1%. A textile worker sets a government building alight and cries, "Away with the one percent".
- A scandal has broken. A government minister is giving a public speech describing his misdeeds and contrition. His enemies chuckle, waiting in the wings.
- The punishment for vagrancy and squatting has just been changed from flogging to exile. Black-sleeves are receiving their new orders.
- An angry mob is forming at the gates. They demand redress for being evicted (and having their homes destroyed) to make space for a government project. The wrought-iron fences are beginning to bend.







River Sine

The River Sine winds through Our Commonwealth, providing drinking water, and the occasional flood. Ferries carry passengers and cargo to cities up- and down-stream.

- It is swimming day. Children and older people are swimming blissfully.
- It is washing day. People gather by the edge, washing the soot from their clothes. The water becomes thick with grey lather.
- Two ferries arrive at dock. The streets are choked with people.
- A strange orange foam is forming. Government water-testers wander around, taking samples and looking confused.
- The spring thaw has been insufficient this year. A few boats are stranded.
- The storms bring thunder and rising waters. The river is about to flood.







Meep's Thyrl

This neighbourhood houses the more reputable drinking and gambling establishments of Stome. Of course, all profits are used to enrich the merchants who operate these establishments. In years of bad harvest, the beer can become very watery indeed.

	A fight breaks out among tavern patrons. The winner insists on humiliating the loser.
	A beer festival has begun. The crowds are large. People are in a generous mood. Many hidden truths come out.
	The mood is somber. A wake for a teen is being held.
	A wedding has spilt onto the street. People are dressed in their finery. A spurned suitor plans to disrupt proceedings.
	The Black-sleeves are canvassing the area, looking for a thief. You expect they will give you trouble.
	Someone mistakes you for an old friend who owes them money, or maybe there's no mistake; either way, they are looking for the cash or a fight.

Courts of The Inner Circle

The Courts of the Inner Circle handle all important cases in Stome, from murder to horse theft. The courts also appoint members of the public to the civic police force (i.e., the Black-sleeves). The jailers for these courts are well known for their hospitality, until you're found guilty, of course.

	It is a government holiday. The streets are empty, except where people are still awaiting trial.
	Someone has been sentenced. Many in the crowd are grinning and hugging.
	Someone has been sentenced. Many in the crowd are crying softly.
	The Black-sleeves are asking questions about a disappearance.
	One of the accused is tired of waiting and tries to leave. The Black-sleeves are waiting with their truncheons at the ready.
	An execution for treasonous acts is being carried out.

The Promenade

Lovers taking an afternoon stroll frequent The Promenade. The myriad steps can be tiring, but what better way to prove your stamina. Small covered benches provide a place to rest at intervals. Small stalls sell tea and cakes at noon, wine and olives by evening. At night, however, ne'er-do-wells creep out from side streets to snatch valuables from those too drunk (on love or wine) to defend themselves.

- Several pairs of lovers are sitting on stools and benches along side streets, kissing, smoking, eating, and laughing.
- A new shop is having a sale on dainty cakes. The lines have become very long. A fight breaks out about someone cutting in line.
- On a stair, an old man has collapsed; he is having a heart-attack.
- A wedding procession is descending the steps of The Promenade.
- A hunched individual is listening to two lovers intently. His intentions are anyone's guess.
- Two thieves are running away after stealing from a young couple.







The Wold

The Wold is a small hill on the Eastern Banks that was divided up by various religious orders after the founding of the city. Each temple, church, and shrine is devoted to another aspect of the divine. Religious schools form the outer ring of The Wold. In the southeast, there are several park-like cemeteries for those groups that bury their dead.

- School-children, observing some holy day, mug unsuspecting mourners in the cemeteries.
- A procession clogs the streets. The true nature of the event is mysterious.
- Members of one congregation are suffering from a violent and contagious lung infection. They appear to be gathering to pray.
- A fire has broken out in one of the schools. Children flood the streets.
- Hundreds of bells are being rung. The cacophony is deafening. Remaining here will be painful.
- There is building-to-building fighting. Two sects are at war. The Black-sleeves are unable to quell the unrest.







Eastern Heights

Opulent manor houses for the well-bred and small shacks for the servants dot the hillside of the Eastern Heights. The extensive private gardens in the heights contain hedge mazes, ponds, and statues. At night, the popular, or talented, or agèd are fêted.

-  A garden party is overflowing into the streets. At the centre, a unique rose is on display, if the gossip can be believed.
-  An estate sale is taking place inside a nearby manor. Books, baubles, and furnishings appear to be the highlight.
-  A mad patriarch has decided to demolish his manor and rebuild. His frustrated children are looking for new homes.
-  A small group of noblemen is readying for the hunt in the Northern Forests. They seem to be lacking in discipline. Several of their dogs are loose (and hungry).
-  Candles are being held aloft, as is the tradition, while a matriarch is on her deathbed. Squabbling is sure to break out once her Last Wishes are read.
-  A Justice is investigating a suspicious death nearby; you look "out of place".

Kogan Factories

The streets ringing the neighbourhood of Kogan are filled with effluent from the many dye-works and slaughterhouses. The core itself has the permanent smell (and taste) of grease and smoke. The smokestacks of multi-storey factories jut up from cuboid brick buildings with few windows. Sweat-damp workers take breaks to smoke, eat, drink tea, and tell dirty jokes in the wide alleys.

-  Workers' demands have been met. They return to work, jubilant.
-  A great shipment is being sent out. The streets are choked with full wagons. A thief is attempting to make off with some of the goods.
-  Some factory machinery has been sabotaged. The resulting explosion has left many workers with scalds and burns. There is much wailing and chaos as part of the building collapses.
-  Half a dozen strikers have found a picket-crosser (or scab) and are dealing out a kind of back-alley justice with fists and clubs.
-  A factory has been seized from its owners. Workers sleep beneath their machines at night, receiving packets of food and tea from their spouses. Amassed Black-sleeves yawn, gamble, and smoke at their outposts, awaiting the order to smash the doors in and re-take the factory.
-  Black-sleeve strike-breakers are clubbing groups of strikers. A mêlée is breaking out. People wander past with blood streaming from head wounds.

The Circuit

During the day, the ring road called "The Circuit" is packed with carts, wagons, and carriages moving cargo, workers, and factory owners. At night, there is very little activity here, making it a good place to make private deals or agitate for better working conditions.



A cart has toppled over, probably from too much weight. Traffic is at a standstill.



A new factory is opening up, but their drivers aren't local and are, therefore, unfamiliar with the rights-of-way and hand-signals used by drivers here. All is chaos on The Circuit.



A young worker has been run down by a horse. The driver did not stop.



An old couple, apparently lost, is looking for directions, or perhaps a translator.



A group of workers are listening to an agitator. Her message is directed at haulers, who are paid primarily in cheap beer. The crowd is growing.



The Black-sleeves have established a roadblock in your path; they are weeding out smugglers and other undesirables.

Taver's End

In Taver's End, the finest drinks are served, as are some of the least pleasant. The merchants who run the area use it to launder money and entertain the powerful. Graft, perversion, and indulgence are on display behind every door in Taver's End.



Free pies! A drinking establishment is getting rid of yesterday's (or last week's) pies. The brave and hungry push towards a window labelled "Food".



Loud sex noises are coming from the second-storey windows of a famous alehouse. The patrons are put off and the landlord is trying to get things back to normal.



In a tavern, a trade deal between two merchants is going badly. Their bodyguards have weapons drawn.



Mild forms of corruption mire this area. Justices are openly drinking among the elite (certainly against some law).



A mock public execution is taking place. Someone dressed like a Justice is on the guillotine. Pig's blood will soon be fired from a system using nozzles that are supplied by rubber bladders. The bloodiest onlooker wins a prize.



A Justice is granting a public pardon. The guilty party is held aloft by his fellow workers and is discussed in flattering terms by the Justice. A nearby group of workers grumble, "What he's done won't be forgotten."

The Fens

The Fens are vast areas of bogs and stony hills — an ugly strip of swampy wasteland. Those who have been cast out of Stome and strange creatures that hide in the mist are the greatest immediate hazards of these areas; however, the Fens themselves are dangerous too. “The peat will quickly eat your boot / No one should travel alone / The muck and mud drags all men down / No one will know where they’re gone.” So goes the rhyme, at least.

- A wagon is stuck in the mud near the road. The driver would appreciate your strength.
- Thick mist wraps the land. It will be difficult to navigate until it clears.
- A group of soldiers is returning from battle (a mixed victory, judging by their countenances). Several are rubbing sores on their feet. They are making little progress.
- The rain begins. The land will be much harder to traverse for several days.
- A lone figure hunches over a human corpse. There is a sound of crunching as the figure continues to eat.
- There are large footprints in the mud. Something huge stalks these lands.

Felnwol Caves

The Flenwol Caves consist of dozens of labyrinthine sandstone passages. In previous ages, hermits and mystics would hide here to experience deprivation. Later, lords and kings buried their riches (and their dead) here. Since then, their riches plundered, they have become a common retreat for people wishing to escape the heat of the summer and scare their companions with spooky stories.

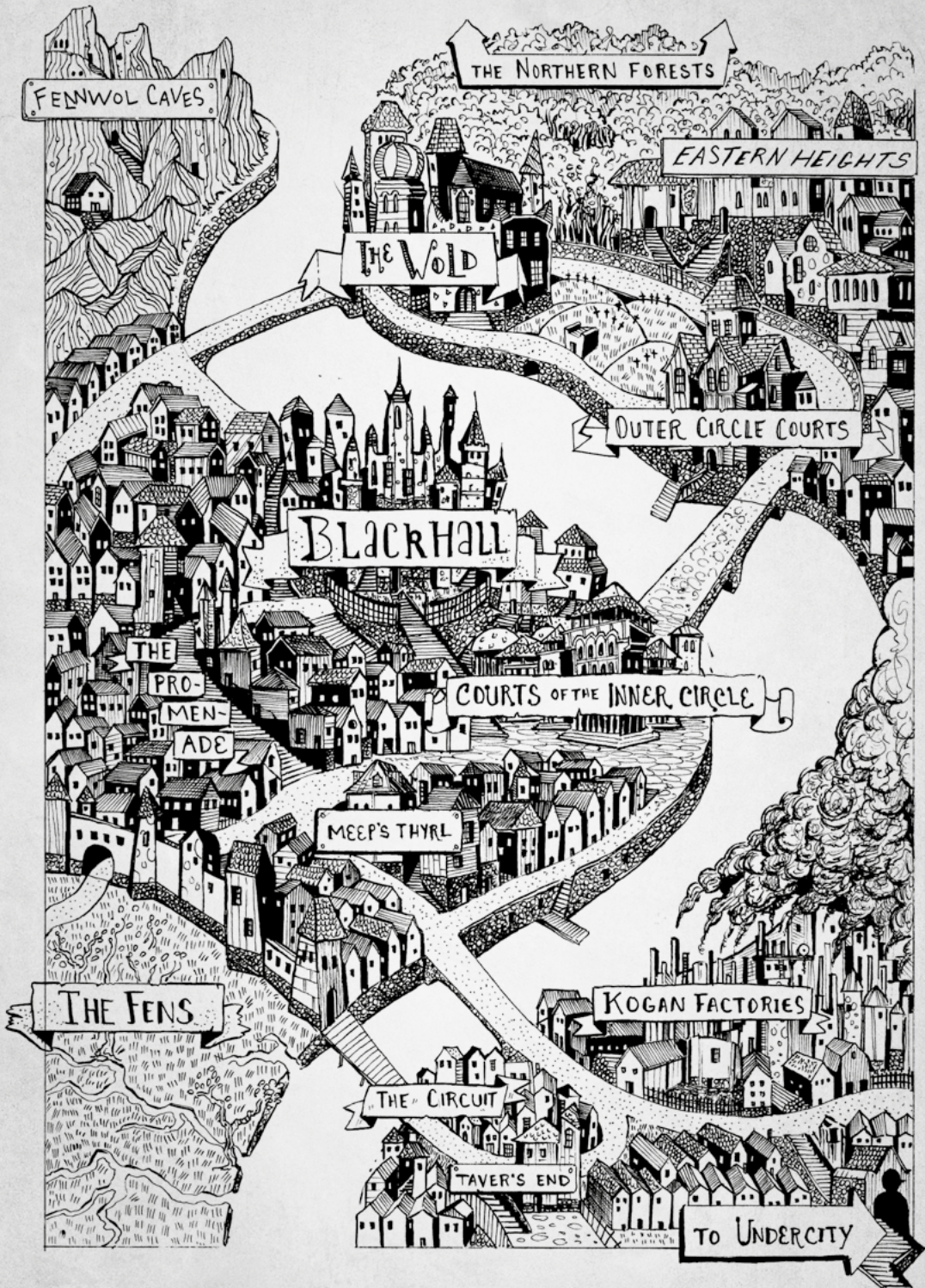
- A group of people are telling ghost stories.
- Two lovers use a side passage for an intimate conversation. Their words echo loudly through the caves, unbeknownst to them.
- In a narrow passage, someone has found a relic. It might lead to treasure.
- A collapse of rocks has trapped someone. Their friends are moving stones to free them.
- A circle of stones is humming faintly. What it means is anyone’s guess.
- A low groan is coming from deeper in the cave.

Northern Forests

The Northern Forests are the hunting grounds of those who live in The Eastern Heights. Additionally, much of the wood that makes up the houses of Stome was cut here.

- A sawyer is out, scouting for large trees to cut down. You do recall seeing a large, healthy tree some few minutes behind you.
- A rotted tree has fallen across the path. It will take significant effort to remove.
- A group of finely-dressed folk stroll through the forest, identifying birds, flowers, and insects.
- There is a small rabbit in a trap, injured but not dead.
- A hunting party (from The Eastern Heights, no doubt) is travelling through the area and demands that you step aside, and do it quietly, so as not to disturb their prey.
- Smoke is wafting in your direction. The fire must be somewhere nearby.







THE FOUR NOBLE HOUSE OF STOME

The Four Noble Houses of Stome are Brinne, Sodge, Karst, and Stlaz. For the past generation they have been in equilibrium, with only small gains or losses in power in a given year. They each build their social empires within the walls of Stome, while threatening the bureaucrats and bribing the Black-sleeves and shaming rivals and killing some enemies and intermarrying with others. The confusion and disorder caused by the overlapping conflicts, debts, and promises among members of these families is the background hum of politics in Stome.

House of Brinne

- History -

The Family Brinne was founded by The Great Patriarch, Thomas Brinne, after accepting a knighthood (with concomitant titles and lands) from The Ruling Order. The details of his service to The Order are not well known outside the family, but he was instrumental in The Commonwealth winning The War of Four Ages.

- Notables -

Agnes Brinne, Philip Brinne, Francis Brinne

- Realms -

Finance, War, Textiles, Fishing

House of Sodge

- History -

The Family Sodge served as ministers in the early Commonwealth governments. They enriched themselves significantly during times of turmoil by assigning themselves greater powers. During famine, they acquired control of agriculture, and, to their credit, made many improvements. During the Monastery Riots, they took control of education.

- Notables -

Harriet Sodge, Fell Sodge, Trick Sodge

- Realms -

Politics, Education, Farming, Lumber

House of Karst

- History -

The Family Karst has recently returned from the brink of ruin. Their Great Matriarch, taking little pleasure in politics, forgave all owed favours and rejected all influence. A young cousin has taken it upon himself to return the family to prominence by marrying into an influential branch of House Sodge.

- Notables -

Kondrie Karst, Gambrel Karst-Sodge,
Gret Karst

- Realms -

Shipping, Mining, Butchery, Leather

House of Stlaz

- History -

The Family Stlaz is even more mysterious than the others. Four generations ago, they were granted noble status in a secretive series of agreements with The Ruling Order, despite being a house from the lands outside Stome. They pushed out their competition in bookmaking and carpentry simply by being very skilled at these crafts.

- Notables -

Garnoc Stlaz, Yevl Stlaz, Trane Stlaz

- Realms -

Bookmaking, Carpentry, Metal-
working, Medicine

This section is designed to provide some jumping-off points for the creation of NPCs with rivalries and conflicts. Powerful NPCs and Patrons can be drawn from among the notables of these houses. Stories can revolve around their different realms of influence.

The Three Fates dictate the passage to the land of death. They are, at once, symbolic and very real: Everyone who has come back from the brink of death has seen some version of them, although not all are willing to discuss what happened in that shadowy realm between life and death.

During a conflict, when a character reaches her *Fallen* capacity, she collapses, unable to continue to participate in the current conflict. Characters in this fallen state are particularly vulnerable, although only the most vindictive and evil of enemies would target a fallen character (and still-standing characters are probably more of a threat).

If the characters lose the conflict or flee, those who have fallen will most likely be killed.

If the characters win the current conflict, those who are given care can be revived and will survive. Most of those who return from this liminal state have memories of meeting The Three Fates. The Three Fates, always together, appear in various settings and make demands of those that seek to return to life. It is often described as a dream-like experience. No two encounters with The Three Fates are the same.

The First Fate is called *The Spinner*. She is depicted in artwork as a young girl at a spinning wheel. As she is associated with games, her secondary symbols are dice and balls. She represents joy, playfulness, and curiosity.

She smiles and giggles at those she meets, failing to see the seriousness of even the direst situations. She often speaks in riddles and rhymes, and seems uninterested in what will happen next. If she finds you entertaining, she will return you to life.

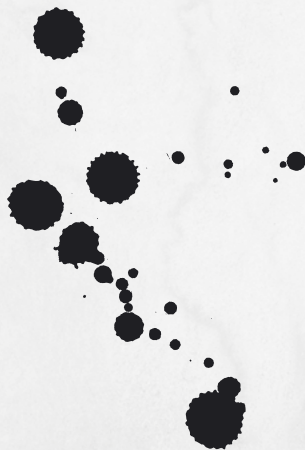
When a character is revived, take the time to have a scene with The Three Fates. If multiple characters need to have such scenes, the scenes should be disconnected, i.e., The Fates are atemporal; it has never yet been the case that someone has met The Fates while another person was there.

Any of The Three Fates might take interest in the character; if none do, a character that wishes to live must attract their interest. The GM and player should work together to determine whether a given Fate takes interest in the future of the character.

The Second Fate is called **The Weaver**. She is often depicted working at a loom or holding needle and thread. Her secondary symbols are fruit and books. She represents charity, teaching, and nurturance. She is direct with those she meets, always making eye contact. She is interested in making sure that you are fit to serve your future purpose (and to assist your compatriots). If she trusts you, she will return you to life.

The Third Fate is called **The Cutter**. She is often depicted holding shears, scissors, or blades. Her secondary symbols are the smoking pipe and the skull. She represents cantankerousness, aloofness, ill-health, and death. She sees the sickness in you and offers to help in exchange for your doing something vile. If she sees your usefulness, she will return you to life.

If none of The Three Fates takes an interest, the character dies.





ECONOMY AND EQUIPMENT



The economy of Stome is as strange and complex as any in the world. Merchants and traders become rich off the trade of clothing, tools, food, artwork, and wine.

The unit of currency was, for many years, called the "Crown". Clerks tallied their accounts, notating the numbers with "C". Since The Ruling Order took power, "C" officially stands for "Coin of Issuance by The Ruling Order". However, the common folk still speak in Crowns, Half-Crowns, and Quarter-Crowns. In times of hardship, the coins were cut in half (and once again, to form quarters); in times of prosperity (in addition to helping to avoid trimming and unequal divisions), smaller Half-Crown and Quarter-Crown coins were minted. All smaller transactions are made in trade or in bulk numbers so as to reach a Quarter-Crown.

Characters begin with 5 C, which they should spend on equipment that they expect will be useful. Additional Crowns can be obtained during missions, via bribes, as a reward from the Patron, etc.

Items Small

The following items are relatively small and commonplace; they are the sort of things that citizens carry in their pockets or bags. Items that are Small do not count toward pack or sack capacity.

ITEM	COST	CAPACITY	NOTES
Flint and Tinder	½ C	<i>Expended (/7)</i>	Used to start fires; <i>Small</i>
Candle	¼ C	<i>Burnt (/3)</i>	Wetness renders useless; Burnt over time; <i>Small</i>
Twine	¼ C	<i>Snapped (/2)</i>	Damage details and items supported count toward capacity; <i>Small</i>
Game Set	1 C	<i>Missing Bits (/4)</i>	Board, game pieces, dice, marbles, cards, etc.; <i>Small</i>
Mirror	1 C	<i>Tarnished (/1)</i>	Used to look around corners, send signals, etc.; <i>Small</i>
Whistle	½ C	<i>Rusted (/2)</i>	Used to signal; <i>Small</i>

Items Mundane

The following items are mundane; they are the sort of things that one might expect working people to carry in their day-to-day movements about the city.

ITEM	COST	CAPACITY	NOTES
Long Stick	½ C	<i>Splintered</i> (/2)	Roughly 2 m long
Instrument	3 C	<i>Out of Tune</i> (/1) <i>Smashed</i> (/2)	Flute, lute, viol, dulcimer, bells, horn, or drum
Writing Supplies	1 C	<i>Written</i> (/3)	Chalk, slate, ruler, pen, ink, paper, etc.
Long Rope	½ C	<i>Snapped</i> (/4)	Damage details and characters supported count toward capacity
Lantern	1 C	<i>Extinguished</i> (/4)	Oil is burnt over time
Caged Pet	2 C	<i>Dead</i> (/2)	Lizard, pygmy fox, redbreast, glow-bugs, chicken, toad, or rat

Items Strange and Dangerous

The following items are of various sizes and might be commonly carried in the city, although, they would always be concealed. Open use of such items might arouse interest from citizens and the authorities, even if their use is not, in itself, illegal.

ITEM	COST	CAPACITY	NOTES
Flasks of Foul Liquids	2 C	<i>Expended</i> (/3)	Acid, poison, ether, lye, etc.
Blackpowder	½ C	<i>Exploded</i> (/2) <i>Damp</i> (/1)	<i>Explosive</i> ; Dampness renders useless; <i>Small</i>
Thieves' Tools	2 C	<i>Bent and dull</i> (/3)	Lockpicks, a prybar, grease, a shovel, etc.
Herbalist's Cornucopia	2 C	<i>Burnt</i> (/3)	Purgatives, incense, healing herbs, curative roots, etc.

ITEM	COST	CAPACITY	NOTES
Tarot Deck	1 C	<i>Missing cards (/1) Shuffled (/1)</i>	Used for divination; Missing cards or shuffling renders useless; <i>Small</i>
Black-sleeve Kit	3 C	<i>Expended (/3)</i>	Black-sleeve coat, shackles, lock and key, torture tools, etc.

Equipment for Expeditions

The following items are conspicuous or heavy. For example, a large group of soldiers returning from battle might wear armour, but wearing armour in the streets at other times would draw attention. Many of the items listed below would be best placed on wagons or horses.

ITEM	COST	CAPACITY	NOTES
Light Armour	2 C	<i>Full of Holes (/1)</i>	Leather, etc.
Heavy Armour	4 C	<i>Punctured (/2)</i>	Chainmail, plate armour, etc.
Shield	1 C	<i>Sundered (/1)</i>	
Pack	½ C	<i>Full (/6+Tough)</i>	
Sack	¼ C	<i>Full (/2+Clever)</i>	Uses one hand.
Rations	½ C	<i>Consumed (/4)</i>	Dried foods, cheese, bread, water, etc.
Cask of Wine	¾ C	<i>Emptied (/6)</i>	Having a drink renders you <i>Intoxicated</i> for 4 hours
Climbing Tools	1 C	<i>Dull (/2)</i>	Spikes, climbing hooks, etc.
Navigation Kit	2 C	<i>Misaligned (/1)</i>	Compass, sextant, star charts, hourglass, etc.
Hunting and Fishing Kit	2 C	<i>Expended (/4)</i>	Traps, hook and line, skinning knife, salt, cooking pot, etc.
Horse	4 C	<i>Fallen (/5)</i>	<i>Large</i>
Cart, Wagon, or Carriage	4, 6, or 7 C	<i>Broken (/4)</i>	<i>Large</i>

Weapons

The following items are both conspicuous and deadly. Openly carrying weapons is treated as a sign of hostility.

Certain weapons have inherent details. The detail of *Deadly* indicates that if a roll to attack is 1 or more over, an additional damage detail is added. The detail of *Directed* indicates that a scene detail can be spent to ignore armour.

ITEM	COST	CAPACITY	NOTES
Hand Weapon	2 C	<i>Battered</i> (/3)	A one-handed mêlée weapon; For use at close range
Heavy Weapon	4 C	<i>Smashed</i> (/4)	A two-handed mêlée weapon; For use at close range; <i>Deadly</i>
Dueling Weapon	5 C	<i>Unbalanced</i> (/2)	A one-handed mêlée weapon; For use at close range; <i>Directed</i>
Bow	2 C	<i>Warped</i> (/3)	For use at long range;
Arrows	1 C	<i>Arrows Lost</i> (/3)	Two-handed
Crossbow	3C	<i>Jammed</i> (/2)	For use at long range;
Bolts	1C	<i>Bolts</i> (/2)	Two-handed; <i>Directed</i>
Wheellock Pistol	5C	<i>Smashed</i> (/4)	For use at long range;
Bullets	2C	<i>Bullets Fired</i> (/3C)	One-handed; <i>Deadly</i>

Note that *Arrows Lost* does not count every arrow, whereas *Bullets Fired* does count every bullet fired.

Spagyric Manifolds

The following items, and their use, are conspicuous and illegal. However, their use remains common at the edges of well-ordered society.

ITEM	COST	CAPACITY	NOTES
Kludged Manifold	2 C	<i>One Essence (/2C) Damaged (/1)</i>	<i>Unreliable</i>
Basic Manifold	4 C	<i>Each Essence (/3C) Damaged (/2)</i>	
Compact Manifold	6 C	<i>Each Essence (/2C) Damaged (/2)</i>	Could be concealed; <i>Small</i>
Massive Manifold	10 C	<i>Each Essence (/8C) Damaged (/3)</i>	A manifold built into a vehicle or piece of furniture; used for long-term experiments or rituals; <i>Large</i>
Specialist's Manifold	4 C	<i>One Essence (/7C) Damaged (/2)</i>	<i>Efficient</i>
Lich's Manifold	12 C	<i>Dark Essence (/3C) Damaged (/2)</i>	Stolen from a Lich; Use of the oily essence inside is very dangerous



ENEMIES AND OBSTACLES

Enemies come in four main types, Mundane, Fog, Dust, and Smoke, based on which spagyric essence has corrupted them. This section provides a number of enemies that can be used, but it is by no means a complete list of things that exist in Stome; feel free to create enemies and obstacles of many different types.

Most of these monstrosities no longer attempt to control their metabolism of essences, and therefore, do not require you to track their metabolized essences.

The Black-Sleeves

These enforcers for The Ruling Order derive their name from the overcoats that they wear, which usually have elaborately patterned black sleeves. They receive orders from a Justice, each of which has their own goals, few of which overlap with their stated purpose of keeping the peace and investigating crimes.

The Black-sleeves are ruthless and clever. They will commit any crime they think that they can get away with. They will run from any fight that they expect to lose.

(CL 0)

- Details -

Injured and Dispersed (/4) (as Fallen)

- Items -

Hand Weapons *Battered* (/3) Clubs, etc. Range: close.

Lantern *Extinguished* (/4) Used as a light source. Oil is burnt over time.



Three Black-sleeves

The Lich

After many years of using spagyric essences, the spagyrist can become untethered from their physical form. Indeed, it might be that this unfortunate person is unable to become fully solid ever again.

Liches tend to appear and grab their victims, and attempt to pull them into their strange realm. Spagyrist are favourite targets, as the Lich is capable of stealing their spagyric essences. However, their metabolism of essences operates on very different principles.

If sufficiently drained of power and damaged, the lich will become solid a final time, only to die.

*They say that these men lost all their memories. Their body
knows what it needs, but doesn't know how to use it. -
Rold Jr., Urchin*

(CL 0)

- Powers -

Clawing Grasp - By spending 1 point of alcohol, the Lich immediately grapples a target, flying past any obstacle and applying *Chilled Flesh* (or similar) as a damage detail. Characters can escape the grapple as a scene detail. If the target remains grappled, on future rolls, the Lich may steal 1 point of essence from a spagyrist as a GM scene detail. Note that *Clawing Grasp* is the primary method by which the Lich attacks.

Obscuration - By spending 1 point of alcohol, the Lich ignores a damage detail. This power can only be used once for each roll.

- Details -

Fallen (/1)

Used Alcohol (/4C) *Once fully used, the Lich dissipates into mist.*



Lich with Victim

The Vampire

Over the course of many years, when the human liver and kidneys have metabolized too much essence, these organs begin to degrade and lose function. This leaves the unfortunate spagyrist without a well-filtered blood supply, which, left untreated, will cause total dissociation or death.

Some of those who are suffering from this condition take to stealing blood from healthy people, despite the damage this causes. If they wish to use their spagyric capabilities, they can inject minute amounts into their unwilling hosts, draw this infused blood back into their veins and activate their powers.

These blood-thieves will eventually be caught, I expect. Although, the path of destruction they leave is never easy to clean up. - Rissa Karst, Black-sleeve Patrolswoman

(CL 0)

- Powers -

Blind and Corrupt (as Dust powers, but spend blood instead of salt)

Feed - By spending 1 point of blood, the Vampire grapples a target, inserts needles, and injects essences; a character can test Precise (as per Avoid Calamity) in an attempt to evade the grapple. If grappled, the Vampire can steal 1 blood to render the target *Drowsy*. Thereafter, the Vampire can remove 1 blood again to render the target *Unconscious*; anything more will likely kill the target. Additionally, during combat, 1 blood can be stolen as a scene detail. Note that Feed is the primary method by which the Vampire attacks.

Heal - By spending 1 point of blood, the Vampire can remove a damage detail. This effect is instantaneous.

- Details -

Needle Claws (as Hand Weapon)

Used Blood (/4C)

Fallen (/3)



Vampire with victim

The Werewolf

Those who overuse their powers sometimes find themselves awakening on The Fens. There are few beasts there but crows and wolves. Some spagyrist begin to believe that they have a spiritual connection to the wolves. A spagyrist that traps a wolf, permeates its flesh with essences, and somehow combines their incorporeal bodies could create such an abomination; however, this is only one theory among many as to the origin of these monsters.

(CL +1)

All members of the human race are bestial by nature. They seek food, warmth, opportunities for procreation, and so on, even at the expense of others. We can acknowledge this fact and try to do better... or we can ignore it and let it eat us from inside. - Yervl Stlay, Warden of The Fens

- Powers -

Transformation - By spending 1 point of sulphur, the person can change into a hulking wolf-like form. Tough tests against the werewolf in wolf form are made at CL +2.

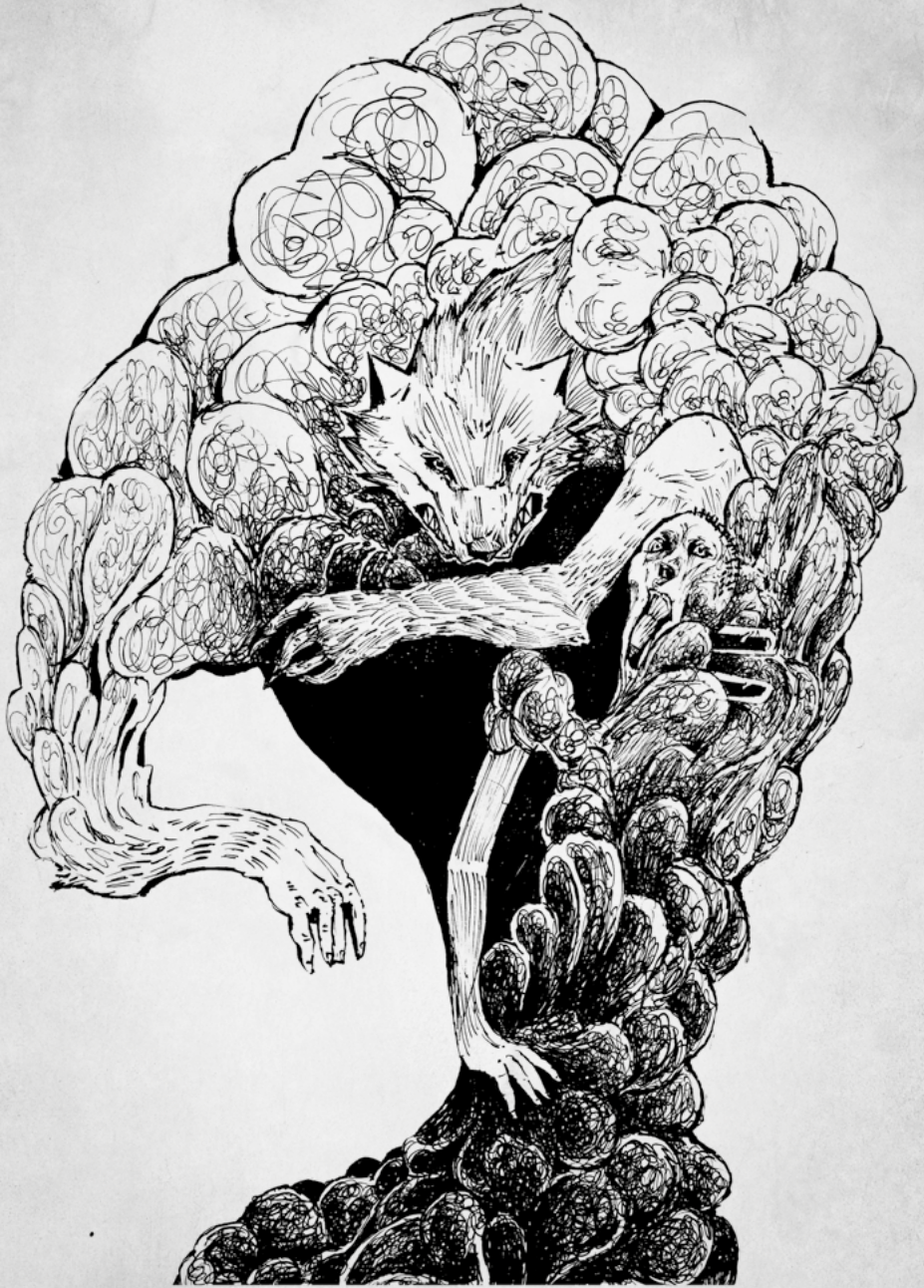
Detection and Ash (as spagyric powers)

- Details -

Sharp Claws and Teeth (as Heavy Weapon)

Fallen (/5)

Used Sulphur (/3C)



Werewolf during transformation

The Grave Golem

The grave golem is a construct made of bone, decaying entrails, and blood-infused grave earth. Its overall goal is seldom clear; however, it seems to be defending gravesites from those who would exhume or defile the dead. They do not speak and are difficult to distract from their purpose.

The locomotive energy of these creations is tortured souls, which they can banish to the lands beyond The Three Fates in exchange for increased power. If destroyed, the grave golem will be indistinguishable from upturned graveyard earth.

Hangman's hill was never much of a thing to look at. Just another infected pimple on the land, you know. The scaffolds had all come down by then, of course. It was a winter's day when the hill began to shudder and creep, and the hands of the dead came out, grasping for the living. We looked at it close that day, I will tell you. - J. C. Winthrom, Farmer

(CL 0)

- Powers -

Continuation - By spending 1 soul, the grave golem can require someone nearby to pass a Clever test or become *Haunted by Tortured Souls*; this damage detail may only be healed by seeking proxy revenge or otherwise easing the suffering of the soul.

Snuff and Engrave (as spagyric powers, but spend souls)

- Details -

Manifold Grasping Limbs (as Hand Weapon; often entangles targets using scene details)

Pulverized (/4)

Expended Souls (/4C)



Grave Golem during self-exhumation

The Yawning Corpse

Some early spagyrist also practiced an art from the southern islands that involved meditation and breathing exercises. The most talented of these can become so-called yawning corpses. As they use their essences, they breathe out deeply. This practice allows them to create a very thin mist-form body that retains their consciousness and travels outside their own. This mist form is able to move far from its point of creation.

Even when encountered far from their host body, these creatures are able to use spagyric powers. They are unable to make or receive physical attacks. (CL 0)

- Powers -

Extreme Immateriality - All physical attacks fail; however, spagyric effects do have an effect.

Yawning corpses have many skills. Select any three spagyric powers.

- Details -

Dissipated (/3)
(For mist form)

Fallen (/3)
(For "yawning corpse")

Used Essences (/4C) Once fully used, the mist form returns to its host.

The Unravelled

The unravelled has invested time in allowing the waxes and oils produced by the skin to infiltrate the fibers of their clothes. They are able to move (roughly instantaneously) between sets of such clothes within the city. It is rumoured that up to five sets of clothing can be maintained in this way.

(CL 0)

- Powers -

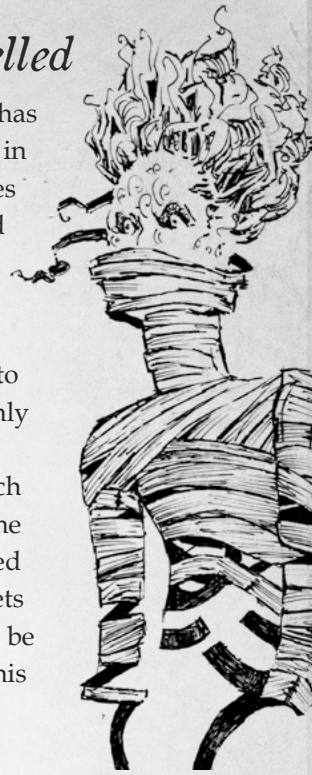
Unravelled have many skills. Select any four spagyric powers.

- Details -

Knives and Scissors (as Dueling Weapon)


Cut to Shreds (/2) For each set of clothing; Once all are Cut to Shreds the Unravelled loses all connection to the physical world and is, for all intents and purposes, destroyed

Used Essences (/4C) Once fully used, the unravelled must move to another set of clothes to recuperate for several days.





ORDER OF PLAY

- 
- Φ *Create your Patron (players, working together).*
 - Φ *Choose their name.*
 - Φ *Each player writes a need.*
 - Φ *Assign them Influence [0].*
 - Φ *Create your character (players, working individually, but conferring at times).*
 - Φ *Choose your character type, from among Raven, Swan, and Phoenix.*
 - Φ *Allot attributes and choose aptitudes.*
 - Φ *Answer the character questions.*
 - Φ *Choose your prime humour, from among melancholic, phlegmatic, choleric, and sanguine.*
 - Φ *Choose your spagyric powers.*
 - Φ *Describe the city of Stome (GM, with players asking questions at times).*

Describe the main districts.

Describe the main families.

Describe how the Patron fits into this world.

- Φ *Begin play (players and GM, working together).*

Describe and play-out a mission.



NEW MONSTERS

Concept

New monsters begin from a concept of fearsome or terrible powers (often granted by spagyric effects) and something mundane. For example, the werewolf combines the alchemy and shape-changing of spagyric effects with an animal (and, of course, werewolves are common monsters in folktales, and get 'explanation' as products of alchemical experimentation). As other examples, the Unraveller is a combination of spagyric effects and fashion, and the Vampire is a combination of spagyric effects and organ failure and the medical treatments of dialysis and transfusion.

Challenge Level

With a concept established, select how powerful the creature will be. Note that characters facing CL 0 are roughly evenly matched for a given roll, but will outlast the monster (or monsters) if they outnumber it (them). A CL of -1 is reserved for a very weak enemy. CL values of +1 or +2 should be rare, and represent significant (even deadly) challenges for the player characters. A CL value of +3 should only be used for foes that are much more powerful than the characters. Additionally, CL values can be different for certain tests; for example, a particularly intelligent enemy of CL 0 might have a detail like "*Crafty - All Clever tests against this monster are at CL +1*". The Werewolf in wolf form is particularly strong, which is represented by more difficult Tough tests against it.

Powers

Powers can be drawn from the existing spagyric powers or made from whole cloth. Most of the creatures above are some extreme version of humanity that has been corrupted by alchemical addiction. Additionally, don't discount that player characters can be attacked with traditional, physical weapons.

Attacks can be directed at the player characters in many ways. Details can count toward *Fallen*, of course, but they might also create instantaneous scars, remove names from the lists of humours (such as in a memory-wiping attack), or be menacing and mysterious in other ways (as in disappearing, in damaging items, or in requiring unusual actions to counter—as seen in the Grave Golem power of *Continuation*).

Details

A detail with a capacity to count the destruction or dispersal of the enemy is necessary. Thereafter, a detail for used essences is required if the monster needs to fuel any spagyric powers. Additionally, any physical weapons or implements should be listed.

Any details that modify the CL based on the situation should be listed.

Any treasures that the monster possesses (or hoards or wealth stashed nearby) can also be listed under details.

Other Options

In addition to the above aspects, a monster might get help on rolls (which means that an additional Light Die gets rolled and the GM takes the highest result), such as in a mob of enemies. A particularly sophisticated enemy might have aptitudes similar to those of the player characters.

Additionally, there might be powers that have solely narrative consequences. Powers might affect the humours in different ways, such as removing, adding, or shifting entries. Other powers might build upon the answers to character questions, ask additional character questions, or necessitate changing existing answers.





SYSTEMS OF THOUGHT

What Are These?

The world of *Dust, Fog, and Glowing Embers* is a world suffused with proto-science, pseudo-science, and non-science. The extent to which these systems are prominent within the setting remains up to the players. In the following text, many systems of thought are given in very brief terms; it is up to the players to craft the world in more detail.

When confident, each player should choose two systems of thought that they are interested in exploring and write two **rituals**. These rituals are similar to spagyric arts, in that they are in-game effects that have fictional and mechanical aspects.

For example, a ritual for Trepanning might be: Open Your Mind - Take a damage detail similar to "Hole in the Skull" to be able to re-roll your next failed Clever test, so long as you don't allow the hole to fully heal.

The Systems of Thought

- Mathematical and Metaphysical -

Numerology - Complex relationships among numbers can be used to extract hidden meanings (and predictions about the future) from texts. Letters, and certain words, also have numbers associated with them.

Astrology - The movements and positions of celestial bodies can be used to determine the actions and predispositions of people and to predict events.

Alchemy - Different materials, when heated, cooled, and combined, can be used to produce new materials. Spagyrics is a subset of alchemy that is meticulously defined earlier in this text.

Aether Winds - The Earth moves through a thin, but slightly viscous, substance called the Aether. The wake of the earth, and the winds produced by the movement of other planets, can influence the way light travels.

Wards, Talismans, Etc. – Certain materials or inscriptions can prevent harm or the passage of undesirable creatures.

Ghosts, Spirits, Mediums, Séances, Necromancy, Etc. – After death, a visible, but incorporeal, version of the person can remain on Earth. Certain special people can communicate with these vestiges of humanity. Several aspects of this system of thought are already defined earlier in the text.

Divination – There are many hundreds of methods of divining the future. Many of these practices use the reading of visible patterns in seemingly random arrangements of objects. For example, settling tea leaves, scattered sand, thrown salt, burnt leaves, thrown dice or bones, letters in books, and events in dreams can be used.

Vitalism – Living things are fundamentally different from non-living things. Life is a unique kind of energy.

Near-death Experiences – When near death, people experience a strange mental state in which they can see things that others cannot. Several aspects of this system of thought are already defined earlier in the text.

Reincarnation – After death, a person's soul is placed into another body. Sometimes, memories can remain.

Extra-planetary Beings – Beyond the Earth, other forms of sentient life exist. These beings communicate with us, or spend time on Earth.

• *Reading Entrails, Haruspicy, Hepatoscopy, Etc.* – See Divination, above. The entrails (primarily the liver) of slaughtered animals can be used to determine the future.

Nominative Determinism, Autochthony, Etc. – A person's name or origin determines their future.

- Biological -

Trepanning – Making holes in the skull can allow people to heal mental ailments or expand consciousness.

Bloodletting – Leeches and blades are used to remove bad blood and thereby treat sickness.

Faith Healing, Reiki, Therapeutic Touch, Etc. – Energy is emitted by a skilled practitioner into the body of the injured person to heal them.

● *Herbalism* – Various wild or cultivated herbs are used to create cures in tea, balm, and pill form.

Acupuncture, Acupressure, Chiropractic, Etc. – Needles are inserted (or pressure is applied) at various locations on the body to relieve pain or chronic ailments.

Preformationism – All living things begin as smaller versions of themselves.

Cleansing, Purgation, Cupping, Etc. – The body accumulates toxins and poisons that can be purged to improve health. Hot cups can be placed on the skin to suck out harmful vapours.

Blood Type Personality Typing – A person's blood type dictates their personality.

Internal Heat and Coolness – The body can become overheated or underheated, causing auxiliary health problems, based on the kinds of foods one eats.

- Psychological -

Clairvoyance, Precognition, Psychic Powers, Extrasensory Perception, Telepathy Etc. – Certain people have the ability to sense things that others cannot (e.g., events occurring far away, in the future, or in the minds of others).

Physiognomy, Craniometry, Phrenology, Etc. – Personality can be determined by looking at the size and features of a person's body or head.

Mesmerism, Hypnotism, Etc. – A deep state of concentration can result in susceptibility to suggestion from a trained practitioner.

The Lunar Effect, Lunacy, Etc. – The phases of the moon influence the behaviours of people.

Graphology, Handwriting Analysis, Etc. – A person's personality carries through to their writing.

Neurolinguistic Programming, Mantras, Recitation, Chanting, Hymns, Etc. – Repetition of carefully designed phrases and songs can influence behaviour or ingratiate oneself with higher powers.

Psychoanalysis – Human failings result from suppressed trauma or neglect as children, or repressed desires. Analysis can bring trauma and desires to the surface, where they can be processed.

Palmistry, Chiromancy, Etc. – See Divination, above. The human palm has patterns that can be used to predict a person's future.

Polygraphy – The body produces consistent physiological responses when a person is lying that can be accurately measured.

- Geological -

Dowsing – Rods or sticks, held correctly, can be used to locate underground water.

Flood Geology – The Earth was shaped (and continues to be shaped) by cyclical world-wide flooding.

Geomancy – See Divination, above. Stones or sand can be cast to predict the future.

Feng shui, Bagua, Etc. – The locations and shapes of residences and burial places should be chosen based on the geography. Poorly placed buildings will result in bad luck for their inhabitants or their descendants.

Bermuda Triangle, Vortices, Etc. – Certain areas of the Earth are able to swallow people and vessels.

Crystal Powers – The ordered arrangement of crystals projects power into the physical world.

- Eschatological and Teleological -

Prophecy – The writings of previous practitioners of divination contain (sometimes coded) information about the future.

Apocalypse, Cataclysm, Etc. – The world is doomed to be (mostly) destroyed at a certain date or after a certain series of events.

Augury, Myomancy, Ornitomancy, Entomomancy, Reading Omens, Portents, Etc. – See Divination, above. The behaviour and noises of animals (particularly mice, birds, or insects) and aspects of the weather (particularly clouds) can be read to predict events.

Tarot – See Divination, above. Cards can be used to determine what future events will occur for one person.

Cyclical Time, Gyres, Rota Fortunae, Etc. – Time and events repeat in cycles. Although the actors change, the roles remain the same.

Scrying, Crystal-gazing, Oculomancy, Catoptromancy, Etc. – See Divination, above. By staring into a crystal ball, a person's eyes, or a mirror, the practitioner can receive guidance, hidden knowledge, or inspiration from the universe (or their subject).



OPTIONAL RULES

Bouncing Details Back

Sometimes the GM or player in a given challenge does not know what detail(s) to add. In this case, bounce the detail to another player or the GM to write. If a highly player-oriented world is desired, most GM details can be bounced back to the player(s).

Mapping Relationships

The complex web of relationships that develops during the game can be difficult to recall. Draw each character and write relationships along lines connecting related characters. Label the lines with the type of relationship. If the relationship has a strong power differential, draw an arrow pointing to the subservient party.

Mapping the World

Regions have two kinds of details: **features** and **notables**. Neither should be purely positive or negative, just interesting. Features are geographical or physical. Temples, ruins, cities, towns, cliffs, forests, wastelands, rivers, bridges, and oceans are features. Notables are people that can make the characters' lives interesting. Feared warlords, influential merchants, thousand-year-old spagyrist, and talented artists are notables. Notables might have relationships with the characters, and notables might become enemies, allies, or new Patrons.

Removing your Patron

At any time, a chosen representative character can face a challenge (Tough for an all-out fight, Precise for an assassination, or Clever for a betrayal, adding the highest bonus among the characters). Add the Patron's influence to the light die. If you succeed, your Patron is destroyed; then, create a new Patron. If you fail, make another challenge as above to fight your way out; if you fail this second challenge, all of the characters are killed by the Patron.



HOUSE HAUTE *by Bri*

History

Members of the epicurean Family Haute see themselves as the defenders and promoters of art, fashion, and luxury. In general, they have little political ambition, because that would take away from their pursuit of pleasure, indulgence, and love; ironically, this means that on those rare occasions when the other Families desire to talk in person, the Hautes can provide neutral ground.

However, the Hautes are not without their dark side. After all, if one were to trace back the accounting of any number of brothels, they would find that the Hautes own significant shares—pleasures of the flesh fall under their purview.

One limit to the power of the Hautes is that the other families control the raw materials that the Hautes need to further their own pursuits. One cannot make wine without grapes, for example, and most vineyards are under the control of the Sodges.

The Hautes maintain considerable investments in the Promenade, such as art galleries and fine eateries (which facilitates their image of respectability), in addition to several businesses in Taver's End, such as brothels and opium dens for their seedier endeavors.

One tradition peculiar to the Hautes is that they will formally adopt orphans into their family, preferably as babies or young children who they think can still be trained. The reason for this is that childhood maladies and accidents claim many of the children born to the Hautes.

Notables

- *Felicia Haute* -

By all accounts, the elderly Matriarch of the Haute family, Felicia, accepts the status quo, which puts her at odds with some of the younger, more headstrong family members. However, Felicia secretly encourages the more rebellious tendencies of the younger family members. "A family entirely bound by the rules grows stagnant, and might as well be dead."

- *Elizabeth Haute* -

Elizabeth, a Haute by marriage only, is Felicia's devoted wife. Whereas Felicia makes decisions for the betterment of the family, Elizabeth executes them. Elizabeth has never been afraid to prune some of the family's more unruly branches.

- *Padraig Haute* -

Padraig is considered a rising star in the Haute clan. He has considerable skill at painting, but he fancies himself a great musician (he is not). However, those who criticize his music have a habit of meeting bad ends. If Padraig is not careful, he might tangle with the wrong person, and his family connections might not be enough to save him.

- *Charity Haute* -

Charity sees herself as a benefactor to the beautiful young men and women who she takes into her employ. Once there, she will train them in the arts of conversation, music, and pleasure... making them the most superb companions anyone might wish for. If these companions gather useful information from pillow talk, Charity will certainly put it to good use.

- *Diarmuid Haute* -

Every family has its black sheep, and the Hautes are no exception: Diarmuid, seeing the excesses of his family develop, became rather puritanical as an adult, and is now considered a terrible bore by other members of his family. With growing disgust, Diarmuid quietly gathers notes and information on the misdeeds of his Family, which he hopes to use as bargaining chips to marry into one of the other Families.

- *Charlotte Haute* -

Charlotte is a girl of eleven with a grudge. One of the Haute adoptees, she has vague recollections of a poor, kindly mother before growing up in luxury. As such, she has taken to sneaking away from the Family home and searching for her true parents, to find out why they gave her up. A child would normally be easy prey for the city's rougher elements, but they tend to shy away because she is accompanied by her mastiff, Fluffy, a dog the size of a small pony.

Realms

Diplomacy, Art, Fashion, Brewing



THE ESSENCE OF VITALE

by Bri

Some spagyrist talk—in hushed tones even amongst their own kind—about a fourth kind of spagyric power. Some say that it is Miasma, a foul substance that destroys what it touches. Others say that it is the Breath of Life itself, the generative force given to us (indeed exhaled to form our precursor selves) by the Fates.

Breath

The essence used by breath is called vitale. The telltale signs of Breath are the smell of sweat, the sensation of warm breath upon exposed skin, the smell of fruit ripening on the vine, the smell of roses, brief flashes of light, hair standing on end, and echoes of laughter.

Purify – By spending 1 vitale, the player may expel decayed material or poison from nearby plant, animals, or people. Remove one damage detail without writing an associated scar.

Enrich – By spending 1 vitale, the character accelerates the growth of nearby plants, bringing them to fruition and/or causing them to entangle nearby objects.

Spark – By spending 1 vitale, a brief spark of electricity jumps from the character's finger. This causes a minor injury that does not normally count toward Fallen, but must still be healed.

Bliss – By spending 1 vitale, a nearby person is overwhelmed with visions of things that bring them pleasure. All scene details received must be spent to flesh-out these visions. Weak-willed people might seek to experience this effect again.

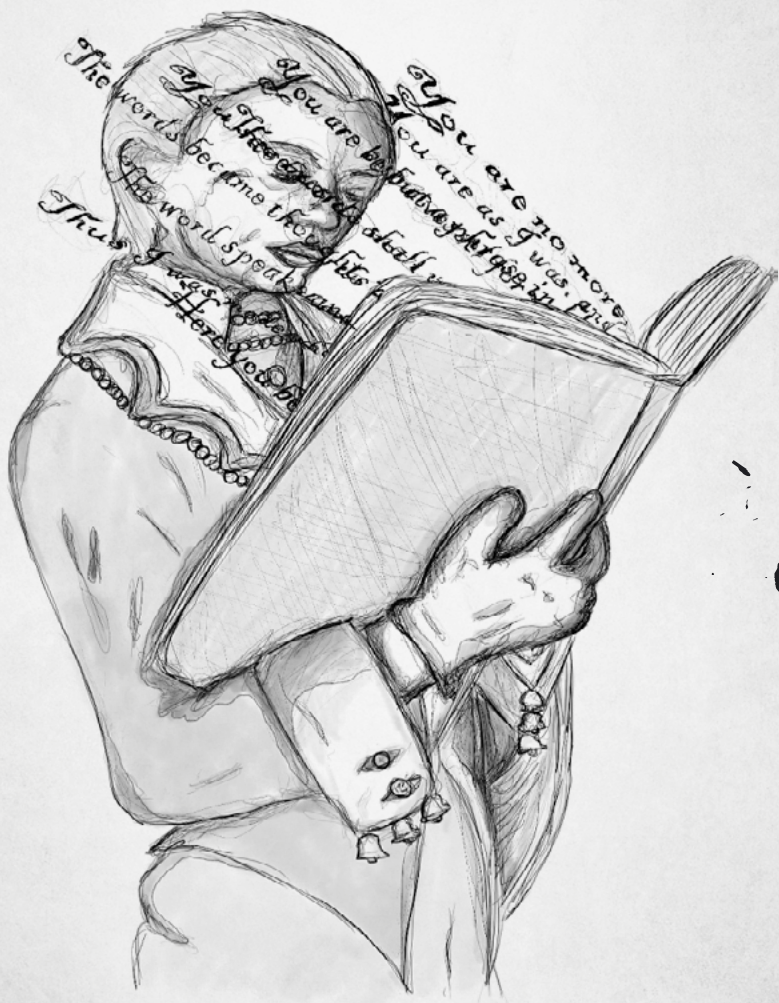
Sway – By spending 2 vitale, the spagyrist sees into the mind of another character. The character may ask the GM “How can I convince them to do what I’m asking of them?” It is acceptable for the GM to respond “There is nothing that you could do.”

Vigor – By spending 2 vitale, energy flows through the target, causing them to become stronger, faster, and sharper of mind. The character gets help on the following roll. No shift in humour occurs as a result of this power.

Revitalize – By spending 3 vitale, the character instantly heals one damage detail (for themselves or someone else) without creating a scar. Alternatively, one scar may be permanently removed.



HOUSE LEXETS *by Ian Hagan*



History

The Lexeis (*sing.* Lexis) are a family of viruses, transmitting and replicating not through the humors or the breath, but rather through words and their meanings. Each Lexis is a unique strain with an infected population of one—a disease that values its own individuality. Books are their vector, allowing replication of their contained identities within the mind an unwitting reader. These books, called Logoi (*sing.* Logos), are poetic autobiographies, transmitting a Lexis through knowledge, forcing the readers to know their invader better than they know themselves.

The souls of these unfortunate readers are not displaced (and their bodies remain unchanged), rather, a new personality is impressed upon their minds, supplanting their identity but retaining their memories. (Any memories needed by the invader are transmitted along with the Lexis via the Logos.) Once a new host is infected, the Lexis goes about family business, however inscrutable it may appear to outsiders. One might work to undermine the influence of the great families of Stome, while another might simply hand out bouquets to the sick and homeless.

Those few who know of the Lexeis (yet have not become consumed by them) are unaware of their exact number, but assume that most are dormant in their books, waiting for an unwary bibliophile to read them. The Lexeis meet as a family at an interval and location known only to members. At this meeting, they report their activities to the Scriba, the member of the family who converts the next version of the Lexis into words, deciding what is remembered and what is forgotten. The Scriba, like the others, may infest different bodies at different times, but always retains a singular identity.

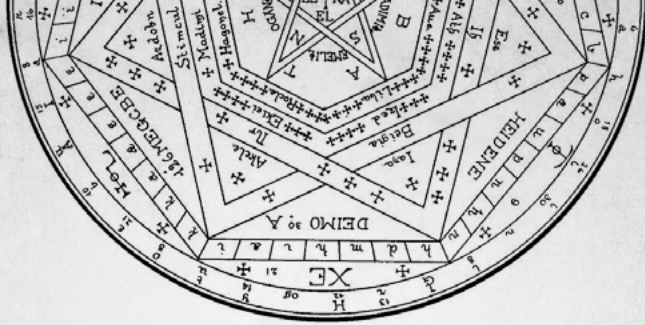
Each Lexis marks their identity by choosing the name of a splendid work of poetry or fiction and, during family meetings, wears a mask made from pages of the chosen work. Familial recognition comes not from the face, body, or dress, but rather from the words of their namesake.

Notables

A Time of Turmoil, The Best Revenge, Life and Times of a Lonely Courtesan, Letters from the Undercity

Realms

Unknown



GAME MASTER GUIDANCE

A player could read these, whereas a Game Master must read these.

Interpreting Dice Results

Unless you're co-GMing, you don't really have allies. Therefore, when you are over by 1 or over by 4, you can decide how to distribute those details. When over by 1, simply choose which negative detail to add. Most of the monsters have a weapon like "Vicious Teeth (as Hand Weapon)", so when adding a negative detail, smash up their teeth and add a capacity of form "Broken (/3)". When over by 4, if there are multiple monsters, distribute the ally detail to another monster, or, get creative and bring another monster into the combat from the shadows at far range. If over by 4 when a player is working with the monsters, have the traitorous player add a detail.

If none of the above solutions make sense (for example, when you aren't fighting monsters), have the Fates (or your game's equivalent) influence the situation and add a related detail. Following the logic of the fiction, when the player is over by 4 but no ally is present or able to participate, have another player add a detail about how the rolling player succeeds. If none of the other players has an idea, have the Fates influence the situation and add a related detail.

When the player is under on a ranged attack or ranged skill, it can be hard to know what details to add. The enemy might move closer by one range step (a scene detail). The enemy might change their tactics to avoid further ranged attacks (using large trees for cover, hiding behind a door, using a player's character as a human shield—all scene details). The enemy might have their attention drawn by this ranged attacker (a soft detail). Simply missing the enemy is not an option, because you're always changing the world and adding a detail.

The downsides of spagyric arts can also come into play on failed results. Ask the player which spagyric arts have yet to be metabolized, and then, show how their continued effects cause problems for the character (and write a relevant detail).

Keeping Secrets

As a general rule, the GM tells the players the detail(s) being added. However, if your players are amenable to it, you can hold a detail or two in reserve (written, but not divulged) until a suitably dramatic moment. In this case, have a dramatic reveal. It is recommended to only keep a detail in reserve that would shock the players when it was revealed.

Using Resources

Have the players talk about how they use their items to achieve goals; that way, when rolling over by 1, it should be clear which item gets a damage detail.

Getting Lots of Help

Players can get help from allies and aptitudes (and even Patrons). Each helping bonus stacks; therefore, the player might be rolling up to 4 dark dice and choosing the best. The only downside is that they have used up all of the help available to them (and possibly imposed upon their Patron). Players are responsible for knowing whether they have helped this scene, and therefore, that they cannot help again. One of the two players changed their humours chart, so it shouldn't be too hard for that player to remember.

Helping assumes a rare opportunity to act synergistically. Always have players describe how they help. Don't let them just say "I help!" and roll the die.

Preparing for Sessions

Work with the players to determine the kinds of stories you all (GM included) want to experience. In preparing for sessions, avoid having a strong idea of the goals that you, as GM, think that the players should accomplish. Instead, look at their Patron to determine the kinds of missions that the players might get. Look at your notes and scene details from the last session to see how the world has changed. Move the plans of the evil, dominating, and corrupting forces in the

world forward one step, and show the impact of that step to the players.

When prepping the first session, be careful not to answer the character questions. The character questions are a chance for the players to give useful input for the world-building process. One method of describing the world is to have the Patron call the player to a certain part of their domain to answer for some disobedience or get a new assignment. Have the player describe the turf of their Patron.

Running Enemies

Keep the damage details in mind when narrating the movements and actions of the monsters. Perhaps they limp or cough blood as they act when they are one detail away from Fallen.

Hitting Telltale Signs

Each type of spagyric art has telltale signs. Use these signs either to have characters leave traces that can lead back to them or to let the characters know that other spagyrist are active in the area.

Passing the Spotlight

This game does not have a system by which turns are handed out in combat. Because of the way the GM gets details when the players roll under, it's not essential to have the enemies act in turns. Occasionally, give the monster a turn to do some characteristic action (use a special kind of attack or power) and have the players react (see the section called "Avoiding Calamity"). When a player helps another successfully, if they were next up, reconsider giving them the turn (don't forget about them entirely, just move them down in your mental ordering by one or two).

Making Patrons Unpleasant

The repercussions of not following the orders of the Patron are left vague in the main text. The character might lose the Patron's help for a time. The character might next get a menial assignment. The Patron might refuse payment or (suspiciously) miscalculate the reward for a task. The character might be sent on a mission that is doomed to fail (is this done intentionally to remove the character?). The character might be assigned a minder, someone to ensure that the character is following the Patron's dictates. The Patron might order the assassination of a rival. The Patrons might send assassins after the character.

Remember: The Patrons strive always to further their own power; if they think that they can get away with something, they'll attempt it. If they think that they can avoid punishment by dastardly means, they will use them.

Nurturing Creative Players

At every roll of the dice, the players are enriching the world in ways that get written down (and sometimes, eventually crossed out, but never erased). If there is any competition among players, it should be to have the other players and GM say "Wow, that's cool!" when writing details down. When your players are comfortable with the system, start to bounce some details back. Be prepared to adapt to the playstyle of your group. In a playtest session of this game engine, a player wanted to use his shield as a scoop to throw flesh-eating beetles at an enemy. "Okay, neat! Roll Precise!" was all that there was to say. When it failed quite badly, the character took a damage detail for dropping many of the beetles on himself.

Enjoying Failure

The characters should feel that they live in a mysterious, illogical, and deadly world. Narrate interesting and dangerous situations and characters by putting monsters (both human and supernatural) in their paths. Show them the plight of the downtrodden. Show them what happens to the world when they fail to intervene. Show them what happens to themselves when they indulge too deeply.

Make failure fun by embracing it (statistically, you'll fail quite a bit in this game): Gritty adventure wouldn't be gritty adventure if the characters could easily overcome every obstacle. Have the players converse (or even argue) with The Three Fates when they fall in battle (or fall from a high building). Characters returning from missions will be more scarred and wiser (and will not always get what they were expecting). If the characters are unstoppable, they don't get chances to be vulnerable; humans are vulnerable.



EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Four players gather, with dice, printouts, and mechanical pencils. One will be the GM. The other three players will make characters. The group has already decided that the characters will be named Hilkan Frem, Lowry Sodge, and Riss Ludge. We start play...

GM: Alright, you've had a look at the Patron, Agnes... Which needs are you adding?

Lowry: She's got a competitive spirit. Lowry has noticed that she's got a rivalry with someone from the Karsts.

GM: Do we know who?

Lowry: I think... it's... Actually, no, not yet.

GM: Should we write it as a general rivalry with the Karsts, and then deepen it later by specifying the exact person?

Lowry: That works for me.

GM: Okay, I've got that written down. Who else has one?

Riss: I've got an idea about her library. Maybe she's looking for a rare book.

GM: Cool. I like it. How should we word that?

Riss: "To obtain the Codex of the Mad Count"

GM: Creepy. Yes! ... Hilkan?

Hilkan: It sounds like she's driven by more lofty ideals, but maybe she also has some baseness. She wants to seduce some popular member of the government to get some influence in politics. He's a Justice.

GM: Hmmm. Is everyone okay with taking it to dark, sexy, and depraved places if we go that way?

Lowry: As long as we don't get too graphic with the descriptions. I know from the rules that these needs can get more and more perverse.

Riss: Agreed. Yeah, I'm fine with it either way. I'll let you know if it starts down a path that I don't like.

Hilkan: Yeah, I don't want this to become too debauched. We can always fade to black or cut away. Maybe, over time—and it's kind-of subtle—she starts threatening his actual love interests to scare them off.

GM: That'll be you... You'll be the ones doing the threatening.

All: Right. Yeah. *Nods of agreement*

GM: Okay. We're set for the Patron. Influence is zero... Now you guys need to make characters.

Hilkan: I've got an idea for a really political guy, a Raven from the city, very astute, high cheekbones, bonus in Clever, etc.

Riss: Cool. I've got an idea for a Swan, from the city also. She's going to have a bunch of sulphur powers to burn stuff. Maybe take the bonuses in Tough and Precise. She's going to be good at combat.

Lowry: Lowry's an old guy. Really twisted and scarred from many years of working for Agnes. His body is hunched over, and his fingers have been broken in multiple places and re-healed many times. Very *Nosferatu*.

GM: Gross. Okay! It sounds like everyone has a good starting point. And remember that you all know each other well from the start—you're colleagues and companions.

Furious writing interspersed with discussion

GM: It seems like everyone is ready. We only have a bit of time, so let's just read out one of our character questions each.

Lowry: I'll go. "Where do I always go?" I go down to the docks to see Lowry Junior. I don't know for sure that he's my son, but I strongly suspect it. He hasn't seen me, as far as I know. I just check up on him.

GM: And he's doing fine? Where's his mother?

Lowry: For now... Umm... Not sure. Maybe he's old enough to be out on his own.

GM: Yeah, so thirteenish?

Lowry: I was thinking more like sixteen. He's got a factory job.

GM: Okay. And, how about Riss?

Riss: "Who provides me with the least comfort?" It's got to be Lowry. He's just hideous. Beyond being partners in crime, I think I try to take him out for food every so often, because I feel pity for him. Strong pity is why I do it.

Lowry: I accept, of course. And have no idea that you pity me.

GM: That works. Sure.

Hilkan: And I've got "How has your Patron separated you from the world?"... I've been lied to about the nature of the world. I'm convinced that working for Agnes is the right thing to do.

GM: How so?

Hilkan: Not sure yet. Let's find out during play.

GM: Trying to make me work harder?

Hilkan: Of course!

The players take a short break – coffee, tea, bathroom, finding snacks, etc.

GM: Okay, we're all back. You're sitting around a table at the local restaurant – meager fare, mostly bread and stew and ale.

Lowry: Let's get things moving. I have an inkling of an idea. Agnes wants this codex, right?

Riss: Yeah, the Codex of the Mad Count.

Lowry: So then, we have heard from someone that there's a copy in a rare book shop in Stome.

Riss: That's possible. It's rare, but not too rare. Or maybe it's a bootleg copy.

GM: But you won't know until you go and have a look. This isn't the sort of book that will be on display in the front window.

Hilkan: I've got some skills that we can apply. Are we thinking of a smash and grab by night?

Riss: I think we'll have to be sneakier than that. And anyways we don't know for sure where it is or that it's even there. I think we need to find out where it is first.

Lowry: I'm happy to try to bamboozle the bookseller.

GM: It sounds like we have the start of a plan here. Lowry goes in the front trying to get some info and distract the bookseller. Hilkan and Riss sneak around and look for the book. Is that what you're all thinking?

All: Yeah. *General nodding of agreement.*

GM: And what is your plan if you get in trouble?

Lowry: What kind of trouble?

GM: The most likely thing is that the bookseller sees your sneaky friends and calls for the Black-sleeves.

Hilkan: I can take 'em out.

GM: The Black-sleeves? Is everyone okay with that plan? The Black-sleeves are a serious force. There are always more of them.

Riss: I'm the combat dude, and even I think let's just punch him and run away if he gets in our way.

Hilkan: Oh, that's fine. I was getting a different vibe. Sure, let's just shove him in a closet and book it.

GM: All future puns shall be punished.

Hilkan: Boo!

GM: But only *gently* punished. Okay. So, we've got a plan. Let's skip to you're in the bookseller's establishment. It smells of leather and old glue and dust. There are seven tall—like, ceiling-height—bookshelves in a row. There's a desk. The wooden floors creak as (I think) Lowry walks in. (Right?)

Lowry: Yep, I'm hunched over and kind-of shuffling. My voice is just a strained croak: "Hello, fine Sir! Quite an establishment you have. I'm looking for a certain tome. I wonder if you could help me." Then I'm taking out my glasses and some scraps of paper from my pockets.

GM: This bookseller is in glasses also—probably almost blind from reading by

candlelight for his whole life. Balding. Shortish. Fashionably dressed for the previous decade. He squints at you. "I might be able to help you. Is it an old book?"

Lowry: "Not too old, no; something from the recent era. Let me see here." I'm still fumbling with these little notes, trying to keep him engaged.

Riss: That's our cue! I'm in through the front door, looking very sheepish and naïve. Just looking around in awe at all the books. I see that the bookseller is with a customer, so I just start to wander around between the shelves.

Hilkan: Don't forget to come and let me in at the back door.

Riss: Cool! Yeah, I make my way to the back, and carefully, quietly unlock the door.

GM: No roll for that. It's pretty innocuous.

Hilkan: "Thanks, Riss. I knew you wouldn't leave me out here. It might start to look suspicious."

Riss: "Of course not, comrade." So, now we spread out, looking for the book?

Hilkan: Yes. "I'll take the back area here, so I'm not too far from the back door."

Riss: Great! I just nod. I'll head out to the front and look around. Maybe it's a history book, so I'll check the history section.

Hilkan: I'm looking for the rare books. The kind that might be in a locked cabinet or back room. Can I roll for that?

GM: Umm. Cool. Not just yet. This seems like a good plan. But let's jump back to Lowry. I think this bookseller is getting impatient. He's saying, "Well, if you don't have the name of the book, then I'm afraid I can't help you." He looks mad. This guy has no patience for living things. Let's have a Clever roll to keep him distracted.

The dice are cast. The Dark Die is a 3 (with a +1 from Lowry's Clever); the Light Die is a 4: a tie. Each side will get one detail.

Lowry: I'll take my detail as the scene detail that I've remembered the name of a book that would be at the front of the shop, where I'm going to try to lead him. "I'm sorry, fine Sir. I've just now remembered. It's called 'The Great Plagues of the Fourth Age'. It's an account of the... uhh..." —

GM: —Oooh! Perfect! He's insulted (and I'll write that as a detail on him, which counts towards him kicking you out, for my detail), because he just cuts you off: "It's an account of the various successive maladies that struck Stome in those years, of course, of course, I know it well." He leads you into the front area. He mutters, "Any schoolboy knows it well..."

Lowry: Haha! That's great! I'm following obediently.

Riss: Okay, now can we roll?

Hilkan: I've probably found the cabinet by now.

GM: Yeah, let's roll it. Is one helping the other, or are you working independently?

Hilkan: What's the difference?

GM: Well, a roll going badly for one of you shouldn't spoil things for the other, assuming you act separately. On the other hand, a helped roll is more likely to succeed because of the extra Dark Die. But! It could still only grant a maximum of two details and could get you both in trouble.

Riss: Why don't I be a smoke screen? I'll try to draw the attention of the bookseller if he comes your way.

Hilkan: Then, I'll roll with Riss's help.

GM: Roll to do what? What are you doing and how are you doing it?

Hilkan: I'm going to quietly hunt through this dusty back area where there might be a locked cabinet.

GM: That sounds like you need to be pretty precise. Roll a Precise test, and Riss will add a Dark Die, but don't mix them up, because it matters which one you choose to count.

The dice are cast. Hilkan's Dark Die is a 2 (with a +1 for Precise); the Light Die is a 5. Riss has a 6 (with no bonus) on her Dark Die. Hilkan chooses to take Riss's die.

GM: So now, we need to take a short break from the action. You succeed by 1, so you're damaging something, such as an item, but you get your success. The book was nowhere in the shelves, but you find a chest (it's a chest, not a cabinet), and it's the only place you can think of where the book would be. However, you needed Riss's help to pull it off, so move Riss on your chart.

Hilkan: She's not on my humour chart yet.

GM: In that case, you'll need to add her somewhere.

Hilkan: So, my primary humour is choleric, but I'll show her that I'm phlegmatic: I'm just lazily looking around and generally being sloppy.

Riss: Uh oh. "Uhhh! Excuse me, Sir. Could you tell me where I could find...?" blah blah.

Lowry: I'll see you and look a bit annoyed that you're interrupting, as if we don't know each other.

GM: "I'm sorry, I'm afraid I'm helping another customer..." But, he sees a brief shadow of Hilkan moving in the back. Here's your chance to distract him.

Riss: "Yes, well, I'm afraid that this can't wait. You see, my brother, back at home, he's very ill and if I don't get a book on home remedy tonics, I think he might die. And you wouldn't want that to happen, Mr. Bookseller, Sir." Etc. Etc. And I'm getting all furrowed in the brow and forcing a slight tear and looking kind-of pathetic.

GM: That works for me. That's how Hilkan got that extra Dark Die.

Hilkan: I'm working on things, okay? I've got to figure out this chest. Is it locked?

GM: Oh yeah. For sure. Big, heavy lock.

Hilkan: Is it chained to the floor?

GM: Actually, no.

Hilkan: I'm going to try to pick it up.

GM: It's probably got twenty books inside, so it's pretty damn heavy.

Hilkan: I'm weak: my Tough is -1.

GM: You guessed it! Tough test! You need to not trip and/or drop it. He's definitely on to you if you fail this.

Hilkan: Whew! Okay! Here goes.

The dice are cast. Hilkan's Dark Die is a 5 (with a +1 for Precise); the Light Die is a 2. Hilkan is over by 4.

GM: You've got your hard detail.

Hilkan: Nice! I take the chest and calmly walk out the back door.

Lowry: And that's that! We've got it.

GM: Well, you've got a chest of *something*. But don't forget, an ally gets a detail too.

Lowry: I wouldn't know what I'd do with it, other than keep distracting him.

Riss: I need that medical book. To keep up the ruse. Can I use the detail to keep him occupied and bring me a book?

Hilkan: Sure. I give it to Riss.

GM: Sure. He's found you something related and asks how you intend to pay.

Riss: "How much is it?"

GM: "Two Crowns and a quarter."

Riss: Woah. Hmmm. That's way too much. Is everyone okay if I smack this guy and run off with the book?

Lowry: Just to keep up this ruse?

Riss: Actually, yeah, no. I think I just hang my head and walk slowly out the door. "Poor brother..."

GM: But he doesn't exist, right?

Riss: Right. I'll be back to burn this place to the ground. But not today.

GM: Holy hell! That's pretty dark.

Riss: He just killed a kid over two Crowns and a quarter!

GM: True! Sorta... But anyhow, I think you're all home free. You have a chest that might contain the book.

Hilkan: Oh yeah, I'm miles away by now.

Lowry: I'm still there. "Well, this copy is in very poor shape. I think I will continue my search elsewhere. Thank you."

GM: "A fine pair of customers I've had today!" He's fuming. Not as fuming as he will be once he finds that his chest is missing, but still.

Hilkan: Boom! Haha! Actually... I'm not used to doing the heavy lifting. I think I meet with Riss and Lowry a few blocks away and ask them to carry it.

Riss: Because you're so damn charming.

Hilkan: Fine. All three of us can carry it somehow.

Lowry: "I'm happy to oblige."

GM: Nice. You made it out. Mission 1 completed.

Riss: So, is the book in the box?

GM: Yep. But there's also something even more interesting...

All: What?



NAME _____

APPEARANCE _____

ARCHETYPE _____

ORIGIN _____

MELANCHOLIC CHOLERIC PHLEGMATIC SANGUINE

HUMORS

TOUGH

PRECISE

CLEVER

APTITUDES

CHARACTER QUESTIONS

FALLEN

DETAILS

METABOLIZED ESSENCES

DETAILS

SCARS

SPAGYRIC ARTS

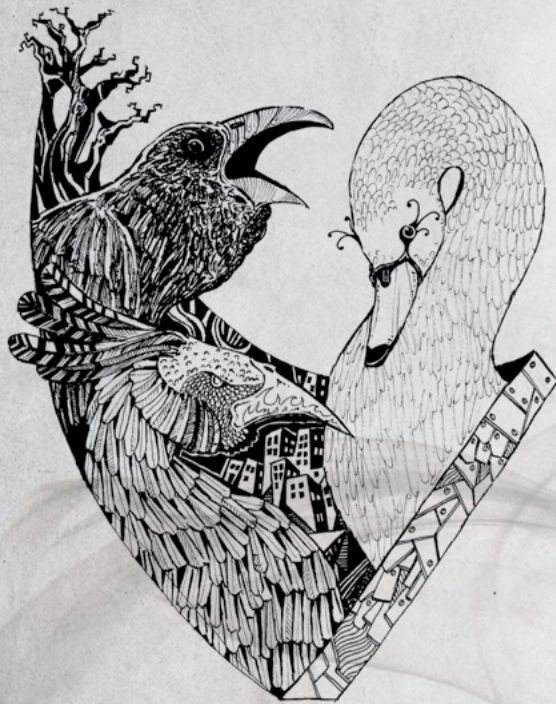
ALCOHOL

SALT

SULPHUR

ITEMS





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