- MEMENTO MORI -

Memento Mori

RECOMMENDED FOR MATURE AUDIENCES

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THANKS TO: Jacopo Camagni, who lit the spark with us, and Stef Kiryan, who helped keep the flame burning.

This book is dedicated to everyone who, in spite of an adverse fate, fights to achieve their Dream.

MEMENTO MORI
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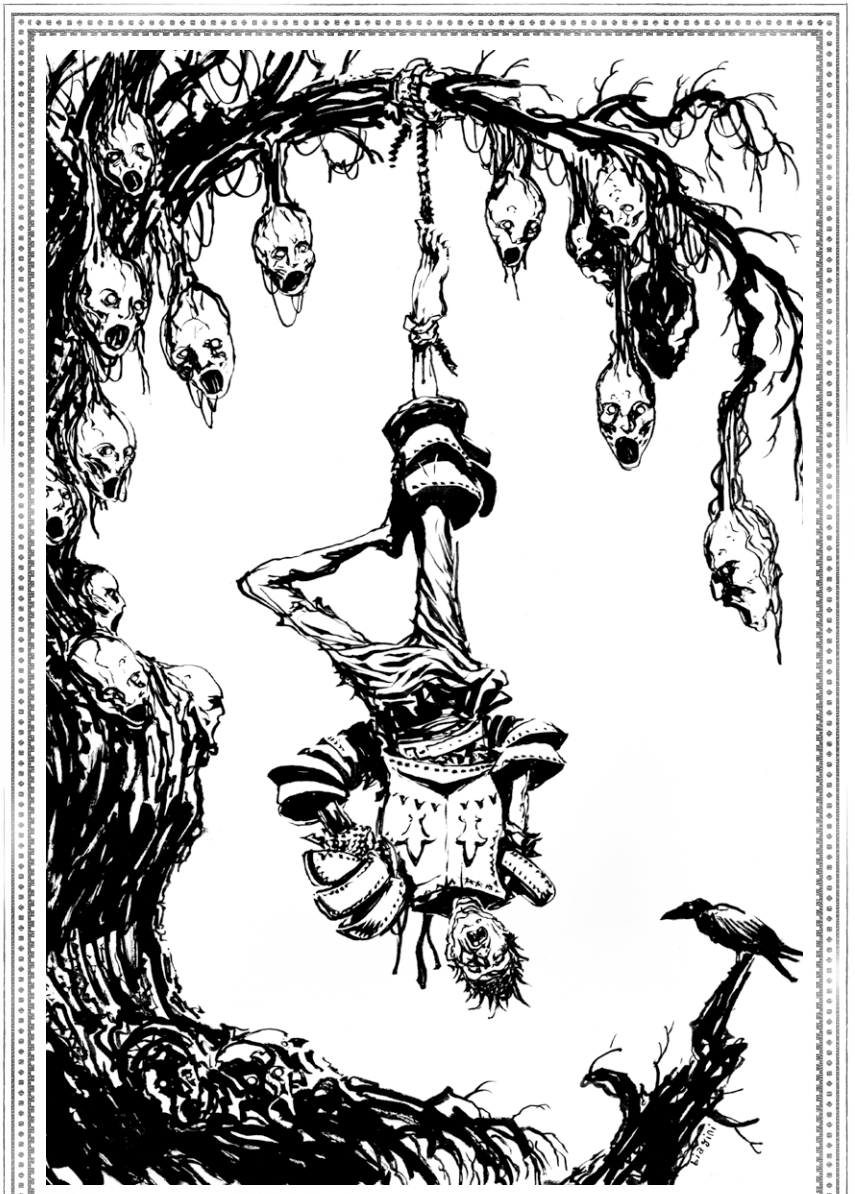


Memento Mori

Memento Mori is a role-playing game in which Players come together to recreate the adventures of a group of Drifters. Drifters are people sick with the plague who, despite their condition and the terrible reality of 14th century Europe, are determined to fulfill their Dream.

The sickness plaguing them opens the doors to a new and darker world, full of power, suffering, horror, and opportunities beyond imagination. The cold hand of fate offers Drifters one last opportunity to succeed before the disease consumes them completely.

When people come together to play an adventure with Memento Mori, they have a chance bring to life and experience unique stories set in this horrific world.

This game is best suited for groups of three to six players, and different adventures can have different sized groups. Each adventure can last however long it needs to, but Memento Mori is best suited for shorter adventures lasting between five and seven sessions.

Players and Narrator

When playing Memento Mori there are two fundamental roles: Players and Narrator.
Each Player creates and portrays a character known in this rulebook as a Drifter. Drifters are both the main protagonists and the driving force behind the stories of conflict between the two "worlds". They have the ability to travel from the real world of the late Middle-Ages to the supernatural world that runs parallel to it, known as "Beyond the Veil". As such, Drifters are unique creatures, who can accomplish feats that would be beyond the abilities of any other creature from either world.

The Narrator, on the other hand, is the director of the story the Players experience. They sketch the adventure they want to see unfold, but also have the very important duty of allowing the Players to see and feel what their Drifters are experiencing. They describe places, sounds, smells, the personality of secondary characters, and the repulsive creatures the Drifters meet on their adventures.

Playing Safely

The contents of this corebook will touch on many topics, including violence, anguish, suffering, and esoteric rituals. The stories are set in a disturbing world of horror, which emphasizes gory and macabre details as the focus of the game.

The themes of Memento Mori aim at immersing players in an atmosphere that could prove disturbing, disquieting, or offensive to some sensibilities. **As such, it is crucial that, before the game even begins, the group comes together to discuss the theme and genre they are about to explore.** In this discussion, you should strive to delineate which difficult topics are fair game, and which constitute boundaries you shouldn't cross.

If you feel like the topics and atmospheres of this game could have a negative impact on you, we recommend you to not proceed any further. On the other hand, if you, like us, love gloomy stories and feel the macabre can be fascinating, we welcome you with open arms.

What You Need to Begin

After defining everyone's role, you'll just need to procure one **Drifter Sheet** for every Player, a **Binding Pact**, and a dozen six-sided dice (from now on simply known as **d6s**).

In this module, we will often mention **white dice and black dice**. It is not important for you to have dice in these two specific colors, you just need to have two different sets of dice which are easily recognizable (e.g. white dice and colorful dice). It is very important that everyone at the table knows the difference between the two groups of dice.

DICE FOR MEMENTO MORI

You can play Memento Mori using any six-sided dice.

The official set created for the game perfectly embodies the meaning and aesthetics of Memento Mori.

I. World of the Game

Memento Mori takes players to Medieval Europe in the Fourteenth century. Through the ruins of kingdoms devastated by famine, war, religious crises, and power struggles. To Citadels surrounded by dense fog, weatherbeaten fields, and rat-infested channels. Through narrow reeking alleys populated by the moans of the diseased and invalid victims of an endless streak of failed military campaigns. Where the air itself is saturated with palpable tension, as if the whole world was holding its breath, ready to face its doom. Only the poor folk are left to inhabit city squares, as the wealthy merchants and nobles have sought refuge behind the tall walls of country estates long ago. And in the darkest corners of this reality ruled by superstition, there are gates to Beyond the Veil. To a world where every nightmare, monster, and curse in European folklore is real. The characters in Memento Mori go on terrible adventures, locked between the hardships of their home world and the threats of the supernatural world.

Europe at the time of the Black Death

Memento Mori is set in Europe, in the years between 1347 and 1353 AD.

Europe in the 14th century was gloomy and gray. It appeared like a collage of powerful yet unstable kingdoms in the throes of drastic cultural and political changes. It was a pivotal time, when the Old World was being dragged from the Middle Ages into the modern era.

The central theme of all stories told in Memento Mori is the great plague epidemic that began in 1347. Those years represent one of the darkest and most tragic periods in the Middle Ages.

The epidemic claimed one third of the European population. Texts from the time describe the atmosphere as apocalyptic, they talk about innumerable victims of the plague dumped in mass graves or, much more rarely, burned on huge pyres. **Many people were convinced that the doors of Hell had opened onto our world, and that humanity was doomed.**

Medical knowledge at the time was backwards, people knew nothing about how an epidemic works or about how to prevent contagion. Physicians and scholars at the time searched for a solution in folklore and superstitions, ultimately pointing the finger against innocent people who had already been banished to the outskirts of society.

Death became the protagonist of the age, it donned the executioner's hood, and spent five years demolishing social structures, estates, and titles. When facing Death and its ax, everyone was truly equal.

Plagued and marked

Despite the wave of death scourging the old continent, many keep fighting against the disease. There are houses crowded with sick people, and churches, barns, and old storehouses often become makeshift lazaret. And yet, among the diseased, there were rare individuals who noticed strange spots on their body. Spots unlike the normal sores, arcane gifts bestowed by an unknown power. Because when someone who has the plague receives **the Curse's Mark**, soon enough, they will realize they have become a **Drifter**. This will open their mind to a new parallel reality, and lay eyes on a realm of darkness they could never imagine before.

Historical overview

As is widely known, the century where the stories of the Drifters are set is one of the darkest chapters of European history in the late Middle Ages. The crisis of the 14th century was a widespread phenomenon that lasted for several decades, drastically changing the fate of European powers for years to come. After the previous two centuries characterized by economic development and demographic growth, the average temperature dropped considerably around the year 1300, marking the beginning of a series of famines. The ever-growing population had spread to less healthy or scarcely productive environments, and the sudden onset of harsh and long winters, excessively rainy summers, and frequent floods, all led to a gradual worsening of living conditions.

Potions can be sealed inside hollow horns

A good chunk of the population, malnourished and subsisting mostly on cereals for generations, ended up facing the "great famine" of 1315-1317, followed by an increase in food prices, ever-growing vexations for the landed class, and a flux of migration from agrarian areas to the cities, where charity institutions at least provided a modicum of sustenance for the poor and hungry. As a consequence, the depopulated country-side stopped being able to sustain permanent city militias and feudal cavalries, forcing states to resort to a new kind of resource, which was quickly growing at the time: paid fighters.

This gave birth to mercenary companies, actual military institutions composed of free armed men who sold their services to anyone who asked for them and was able to pay. Their presence was widely requested because, on top of the famines, Europe in that time period was plagued by increasingly frequent wars, sometimes turning into raids and long sieges, destabilizing social structures and commercial relationships more and more.

The coming of the plague

And yet, after surviving a second wave of famine and death in the first half of the forties, Europe reaches its breaking point in 1347. The final blow came from the East, aboard the ships that used to sail back and forth between the Black and Mediterranean Seas to trade grain. The Black Death, also known as the Plague or the great death, spread through Italian and Mediterranean harbors in the fall. It remained muted for the winter, only to overflow in mass contagion in all European territories just months later. Famine, war, and disease fed into each-other, a deadly vicious cycle claiming lives and showing no mercy. The further deterioration of living conditions, and the physiological debilitation of the population, especially in the most vulnerable age groups, caused a drastic demographic drop. The cities could see the disease spreading toward them, terrified at the prospect of suddenly spotting the signs of the illness within their walls. This lit the fires of terror and fanaticism.

In search of salvation

Religion mixed in with superstition and was animated by the diffused fear of finding death on your doorstep. The almost complete absence of scientific interpretation left people with no way to explain the unfathomable list of calamities and disasters that contaminated every-day life for every social class. The people resorted to irrational apocalyptic interpretation, blaming a successful devilish plot for pushing humanity on the brink of damnation. The end of the world, the rise of the Antichrist, and the diffusion of stories about demons, possessions, and curses created new enemies. The scapegoats were all bad Christians, but also and mostly Jews, Gypsies, and witches, which became subject to an all-out hunt.

Soon enough, the years between 1347 and 1350 became the emblem of humanity thrashing against a marked destiny. The end was coming, either due to starvation, the blade of a sword, or the fevers of disease.

Beyond the Veil

Hidden from humanity, there is a world parallel to ours, known as Beyond the Veil. This realm is completely sealed off from common perception. Beyond the Veil is divided from our reality by an illusory metaphysical veil, that conceals it completely. There is almost nobody in our world with the supernatural talents needed to see through this glamor. As such, on the other side of the Veil, normal humans are known as **Unawares**.

The two parallel dimensions coexist but never fully overlap. For example, an Unaware could be kneeling in their bedroom saying nightly prayers while, on the other side of the Veil and in the same exact spot, there could be a cave filled with creatures of the night feasting on their screaming prey. The Unaware could never reach the cave, as they are completely oblivious to its existence. Only someone who belongs to both worlds can find the invisible passages between them.

LOCAL FOLKLORE

The world Beyond the Veil is an ever-changing and undefined dimension with few fixed landmarks. This volatile nature means it is the perfect setting for the Narrator to implement many different elements taken from medieval folklore and the game setting. On top of that, local lore from places closer to you, can easily inspire horrific and dark elements you can add to your Beyond the Veil.

The world Beyond the Veil is a dark reflection of our world, its laws of physics are similar to the ones we know, but distorted by supernatural elements. It is an unearthly dimension under constant influence from stories and beliefs of the Unaware world. Myths, legends, and superstitions are reflected in the shapes of creatures Beyond the Veil.

These supernatural entities are powerful and often moved by ill intentions. Many of them know about the existence of the Unaware world and wish to gain access to it in order to hunt its inhabitants or to implement their plans of terror and torment.

This means that the Narrator is free to tap into this dark reality to create their desired game experience. The creatures from Beyond the Veil are inspired by medieval lore and Players may or may not have heard about them. These creatures always have a goal which can only be reached with the help of the Drifters, or a plan that can only be stopped by the actions of the Drifters.

Gates and Tears in the Veil

The world Beyond the Veil is not a different planet, it is not metaphysically located in a different dimension. It is completely superimposed on our own world, like a shroud. Its gates and fringes are everywhere, but human beings are unable to recognize them. When these crossings are stable and long-lasting, we call them **Gates**. Gates can take many forms, they could be forgotten doors, abandoned wells, or holes in dead trees. The Unaware are obviously unable to spot Gates, they could walk right by one and remain completely unaware of its existence. Drifters, on the other hand, are always aware of nearby Gates on some level. They feel the dark power of these crossings and can witness disquieting phenomena that influence and change the surrounding atmosphere. Often, there are supernatural creatures living near Gates. They profit from these stable connections, demanding a fee or sacrifice from anyone who wishes to pass through.

Some creatures like to eat teeth

Tears in the Veil are temporary passages between the Unaware world and Beyond the Veil. Imagine the Veil as an impalpable yet sturdy fabric barrier between the worlds. In some places, this fabric might tear, allowing the two worlds to come into contact. Drifters can see the irregular edges of these opening, and glimpse the world on the other side. This is true whether they are in the Unaware world or Beyond the Veil. The truth is that Drifters are the only creatures who can effortlessly spot these crossings without the need to use supernatural powers.

However, Tears in the Veil are unstable. They mend and move often and unexpectedly. Near Tears, you'll often find supernatural creatures trying to take advantage of the crossing to escape their world. Drifters know they can step through Tears in the Veil to travel between the worlds, but they are also very aware that it's improbable they will find them in the same place on their way back.

Creatures From Beyond the Veil

Monsters exist, they are real. They come from Beyond the Veil and, as we know, can travel to the Unaware world.

They are horrible creatures who can kill, torture, and dominate mortals. Their outward appearance varies immensely, as do the substances contained in their bodies and the drives behind their actions. The inhabitants of Beyond the Veil can be living creatures, undying cadavers, beings that have never been alive, spirits of pure darkness, and curses in the flesh.

Regardless of the multitude of shapes, they are all ultimately part of the same eldritch hierarchy.

At the head of this hierarchy stand the **Princes**, ancient demigods with powers beyond imagination. The courts, legions, or packs that follow them are known as **Hosts**, and they are violent, perverted congregations who each swear fealty to a Prince and carry out their will.

Then there are the **People Beyond the Veil**, humanoid creatures who live outside of the Princes' courts and their web of machinations, doing their best to survive despite the tyranny and pillaging of the Hosts. Finally, the most numerous inhabitants of the supernatural world are the **Beasts**: terrible monsters who follow no laws, except for those laid down by violence, hunger, and blood.

The **Princes** pull the strings behind every strategy, intrigue, and conflict. Their goals are amassing power and finding a path to the mythical land known as "Nightmare". For inexplicable reasons, it seems Drifters are the key to opening the doors to this promised land.

CODEX GIGAS

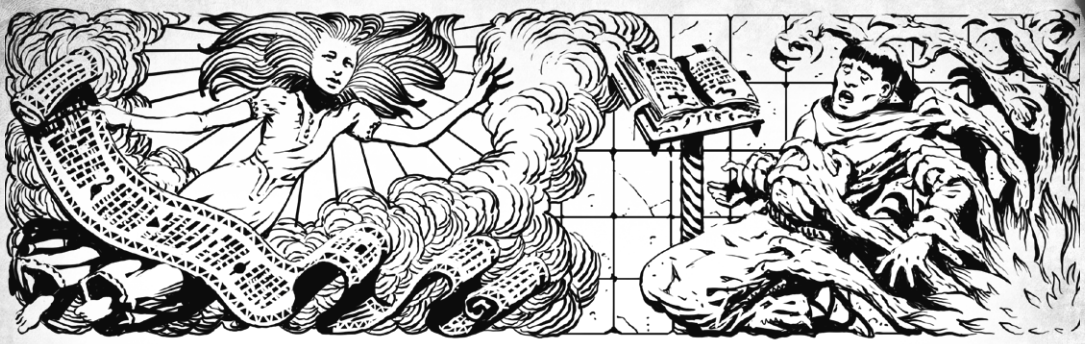
Beyond the Veil is a parallel reality that embodies several aspects of European lore from the Middle Ages. You can find more than 40 different creatures, plant species, and minerals from this body of lore catalogued in Codex Gigas.

II. The Foundation of the Game

From a practical point of view, a Memento Mori gaming session is nothing more than a conversation between the Narrator and the Players. The Narrator lays down their story to place Drifters in front of looming horrors and great obstacles. The Players react to the situations described by the Narrator while staying in character and try to find the best possible solution. This is the core of the Memento Mori experience. However, the conversation established this way is based on some gaming concepts that everyone needs to understand before the adventure can begin. Here, we will present those concepts, as well as other basic information that will be expanded on in future chapters.

The main terms concerning the group and game sessions are:

- **Participants:** Everyone involved in the game.
- **Narrator:** This is the role of one participant. The Narrator sets up the adventure and describes the context and challenges faced by Drifters.
- **Players:** This is the role of participants who play as Drifters. The Players dialog with the Narrator to build and experience the story.
- **Game session:** The moment when all participants come together to play Memento Mori. Ideally, each session should last about 3 hours.



Delving deeper into the rules, you will also encounter some terms that describe game elements and characteristics of the Drifters:

- **Dice:** Six-sided dice (d6s) are tools we use to determine the outcome of uncertain situations in the game. In such situations, the Players roll dice aiming to score as many Successes as possible.
- **Difficulty:** This is the score that determines how hard actions are. The aim of Players is to score enough Successes to surpass the Difficulty.
- **Slots:** These are the boxes on the Drifter Sheet that represent how many dice a Player must roll.
- **Organs:** These represent the physical, mental, and moral abilities of Drifters. Together with Blood, Organs are the basis of all rolls in the game.
- **Blood:** This represents the mental and physical conditions of Drifters. Together with Organs, Blood is the basis of all rolls in the game.
- **Name, Bonds, and Virtues:** These are memories, symbols, and epithets that marked the character's past and have become their strength.
- **Corruption:** This represents the transformative process Drifters undergo due to the plague. Due to Corruption, the Drifters develop extraordinary powers, but pay a steep price.

Stating an Action

Every time a Player speaks to describe what their Drifter wants and does, they are stating an action. "Walking through the mud, I step closer to the roots of the old tree" is stating an action; "I turn to the beggar and whisper «Quiet, or I'll shut you up for good»" and "I follow the man covered in bandages" are other examples of stated actions.

Most of these statements describe actions that are completely natural and mundane, and as such, there is no need to regulate them.

The rules of the game don't focus on these actions and only deal with critical or risky situations that arise when darkness threatens the characters, when they must face a series of dangers, or when they fight against a creature. These are all situations when the results of the characters' actions make a difference to the story and, as such, a dice roll is needed to resolve them.

Rolls made to determine the result of actions are **called for by the Narrator either directly or in response to Players' statements**.

In the former case, the Narrator describes a situation that involves a risk and asks for a dice roll to see how the Drifters manage to deal with it. In the latter, the Players state their actions and the Narrator calls for a dice roll because they believe the consequences could be uncertain or important for the story.

Example:
The group is exploring an ancient underground temple. Suddenly the Narrator states: "You hear quick and loud steps in the darkness. They are close! What do you do?". This is the Players' cue.
Three of them opt for a cautious approach, stating that they will remain still in hopes that the "steps" don't get any closer. On the other hand, one Player wants to know more, and they try to move forward stealthily without being noticed. The Narrator doesn't ask for a roll from the first three Players (their current actions involve no added risk), but calls for the fourth Player to make a roll to measure how sneaky they can be when trying to step closer to the creature.

As such, the story unfolds as a continuous exchange between Narrator and Players, and dice rolls interrupt the flow only when needed to accentuate specific situations or to keep everyone on the edge of their seat.

ONLY THE PLAYERS ROLL

There are no situations in Memento Mori when the Narrator needs to roll dice. In fact, as far as the rules are concerned, the Narrator's only duty is to determine the Difficulty of a roll, and whether any Bonuses or Penalties apply to the success Threshold (see Chapter V).
We believe that the Narrator should focus on the story, on managing the atmosphere and setting the pace for the game. As such, we leave the burden of dealing with the fateful roll of the dice to the Players alone.

Dice, Slots, and Difficulty

In Memento Mori you roll small pools of d6s to determine the result of all actions with uncertain consequences.

Whenever the Drifters act to complete a task or face a challenge posed by the Narrator, the Players roll a handful of d6s. **The number and color of the dice depends on the number of Slots each character can rely on for a specific action.**

Slots are special boxes on the **Drifter Sheet** that represent the character's skill in a specific field. If the number of Slots in a roll grows, so do both the number of dice the Player must roll and the Drifter's chances to overcome the obstacle.

To determine whether a roll is successful or not, the Narrator must assign a **Difficulty**, a numeric value that represents how challenging the Player's stated action is.

Players always roll all the d6s at their disposal, trying to score a number of Successes equal or greater than the Difficulty set by the Narrator. If they manage to score enough successes, their action goes as planned.

SLOTS

To draw a parallel with other game systems, Slots are the equivalent of the numeric values usually assigned to a character's abilities. In addition to describing skills, they can also be turned black as the game advances, a very important choice in Memento Mori.

Defining the Difficulty

The Narrator should consider the circumstances on a case-by-case basis, evaluating the objective feasibility of actions declared by the Players and assigning a number between 1 and 5 (or rarely above this limit) as the Difficulty.

The scale below is an indication of how we define Difficulty:

Difficulty 1: a demanding action which many could still accomplish;

Difficulty 2: a complex action that should not be taken lightly;

Difficulty 3: an extremely complex action with a pretty low success rate;

Difficulty 4: an arduous and almost impossible action;

Difficulty 5+: an action beyond the reach of even extremely corrupted Drifters.

EMPTY SLOT

This symbol on the Sheet represents an empty Slot. When counting for how many dice to roll, you should ignore empty Slots.

FULL SLOT

This symbol represents a full Slot and adds one White Die to your roll.

CORRUPTED SLOT

This symbol represents a Corrupted Slot and adds one Black Die to your roll.

For example, this combination of Slots indicates you must roll two dice, one black and one white.

What are Successes?

Successes are specific results scored by rolling the dice, that are used to calculate the effectiveness of actions taken by a character.

To score a Success, the Player must roll a number equal to or higher than the success Threshold.

The standard success Threshold is 5, but there will also be rules to determine when and how the Threshold varies.

Example:
A Basilisk is looking for a Player, who decides to hide among some ornamental sets of armor in an ancient castle. The Narrator wants a pretty high Difficulty, and sets it at 3. This means that, when the Player rolls their dice pool for the action, they are is looking to score at least 3 Successes (3d6 with a result of 5 or 6). If they are successful, it means they managed to hide, otherwise...

When to Roll

AUTOMATIC ACTIONS

All actions that are part of normal every-day life and have no implications for the story should be considered as natural and automatic during the game. Running, jumping, shouting, biting, drinking, or opening a door; these are all actions that can be resolved in the exchange between Players and Narrator.

Rolling the dice should not be the first thing taken into consideration when a Player states an action. If the outcome of an action does not include strong implications for the rest of the story and rolling dice would interrupt the narration, the situation should be solved "verbally", with a simple exchange between Narrator and Player.

If the success or failure of a Player's stated action could influence the story going forward, then it's time to pick up the dice.

These are all the steps that go into making a dice roll to determine the outcome of an action:

- The Player states their action and narrates their approach;
- The Player identifies the Organ and any other attributes that are relevant to their action. The Player gathers a number of d6s equal to the number of Slots involved;
- The Narrator communicates the Difficulty needed to succeed, applying any relevant Bonuses or Penalties to the success Threshold (see Chapter V - Success Threshold);
- The Player rolls the dice and counts the number of Successes scored;
- The Narrator or the Player describes the outcome of the action interpreting the result of the dice roll (see Chapter V - Roll Results).

THE MIDWIFE OF THE PIT

The Midwives of the Pits are Hekatoncheires, creatures with one hundred arms who have no internal organs and nothing that would normally constitute a creature able to move and talk. They are nothing but arms connected to more arms, clasped hands and interlocked fingers that somehow end up taking humanoid form. However, nobody has ever seen the true appearance of the Midwives, as they disguise themselves as monks, friars, clerics, and nuns. They are especially comfortable when covered by the long and heavy habits of religious orders, and successfully live among humans thanks to an elaborate web of lies. They can carry on this deception for a surprisingly long time without ever arousing suspicions. The Midwives' goal is to get their hands on the corpses of unbaptized babies and take them to safe dungeons that they call "nurseries". They take meticulous care of these tiny bodies, lavishing them with attentions. Over time, the desiccated bodies move their first creaky steps, and after some years, they develop full mobility and become independent. The Hekatoncheires secretly take care of them at night, when they can stop acting like a good friar or a strict nun. And this goes on until "the baby corpses" – as they call them – are ready to leave for Beyond the Veil and join the Hosts of Their Highness Hagazi The Silent Scream, Mother of Horrors, Keeper of the secrets of the Sighs of Ruin.

Organs and Blood

Every roll in Memento Mori is based on two core elements: Organs and Blood.

Every time a Drifter undertakes an action with an uncertain outcome, **the Player rolls a number of d6s equal to the number of Slots in an Organ plus their Blood Slots.**

Example:
A Drifter is in danger: a mad executioner, possessed by an ördög from the Balkans, is about to decapitate them with their ax. A friend decides to intervene by striking the executioner from behind. Stealth actions, like back stabbing and other things regarded as "foul play", fall under the scope of "Viscera".
The Player has 3 Slots in that Organ, to which they can add their 3 Blood Slots. This means they will roll 6d6, trying to score a number of Successes equal or greater than the Difficulty established by the Narrator.

Name, Virtues, and Bonds

Aside from Organs and Blood, Drifters also have three truly important attributes. The first of these is their **Name**.

Every Drifter can rely on a nickname or epithet to give and use it to gain an advantage. These names represent a specific feature that has always made them stand out and that can give them an edge in specific situations.

Examples:
"Annie Fleeting Shadow", "Cold-hands Greg", "Eric the Lightless", or"Mary the Holy" are all perfect names for Drifters as they hint at features that can prove extremely useful in-game.

Firewood spell

The **Virtues**, on the other hand, describe the practical and theoretical skills of a Drifter. They usually coincide with the names of professions or with roles covered by people and encompass a series of proficiencies that can be useful in-game.

Examples:
Merchant, Strategist, Acrobat, Seducer, Barber-surgeon, and Artist are all valid examples of Virtues.

Finally, going into the more intimate sphere of a Drifter, we find **their Bonds**.

Characters in this game are people with a marked destiny, the life they had before the disease is only a melancholic memory. However, this doesn't mean that their old feelings or bonds have grown any weaker. Today, the memory of those cherished moments represents a precious reservoir of hope, and Drifters can call upon them to get through the darkest times.

Examples:
My father – the days at sea, My wolf – the taste of blood, My old mentor – the will to stand up again. These are some examples of Bonds.

How are these attributes called into play?

Name, Virtues, and Bonds are all assigned a number of Slots.

Whenever the in-game events tie in to the Name, Virtues, or Bonds of a character, the Player can add a number of dice equal to the Slots in the relevant attribute to their basic roll (Organ + Blood).

Example 1:
Cold-hands Greg is a Drifter with the "Barber-surgeon" Virtue.
In front of him, there's a woman who is about to bleed to death because of some terrible lacerations. The Player states he wants to help her. The "Barber-surgeon" Virtue is exactly what he needs, on top of that, his Name "Cold-hands" could also be used to intervene quickly and with precision on the poor wretch.
The Player can choose to roll additional dice for the Slots tied to either the Name or the Virtue.

Example 2:
Friedrich "Bloodletter" has been captured by a Bogeyman and is
being interrogated with less than pleasant means.
The creature presses him on all sides and isn't skimping on a long series of delicious tortures and cruel mind games. The Player wants to withstand these tortures without revealing important information. To do this, they call on their Bond "Bent but never broken", which ties in perfectly with the situation.

How many attributes can be used in a roll?

For every roll, you can only call on one attribute between Name, Virtues, and Bonds. The dice from the Slots tied to an attribute will be added to the dice pool composed by the sum of Slots for Blood and the relevant Organ.

Corruption

Corruption is the core theme of the gaming experience in Memento Mori. It is at the heart of the stories, of the Players' performance, and above all of the game mechanics. As the plague spreads, so does the Corruption, and vice-versa. This will also be represented on the Drifter Sheets.

How does Corruption influence the rules?

Whenever the Corruption of a Drifter grows, the Player will have to blacken one or more Slots on their sheet.

This action has crucial consequences on the game economy: whenever a Player makes a roll that involves **corrupted Slots** (the black ones), they must add to the pool **a black die instead of the standard white**.

A non-corrupted Slot always grants a white d6, while a corrupted Slot always grants a black d6.

What is the difference between black and white dice?
Compared to white dice, black dice have two peculiarities:

- **When rolling a 6 on a black die, you gain a special type of Success known as a Dark Success, worth as much as 3 normal Successes.** When this happens, the Player must also blacken 1 Blood Slot;
- **When rolling a 1 on a black die, you score a Dark Failure, which will erase a Success gained with another die.**

Example:
An especially corrupted Drifter (with many black Slots on their sheet) is waiting for his companions to lead toward him a caravan that is secretly transporting the archbishop of Arles. He was tasked with organizing an ambush.
When gathering the dice he must roll for the action, he picks up 6d6 with 3 of them being black.
He scores 2 Successes in his roll, but one of them is a 6 on a black die. This means that he scored a total of 4 Successes (not 2), as rolling a 6 on a black die is equal to 3 normal Successes.
But that's not all, as one of the other black dice has landed on a 1. As such, his total is 3 Successes (1+3-1=3).

CORRUPTING BLOOD

Chapter IV will explain Corruption in depth and give details on how the Blood attribute works.

III. Anatomy of a Drifter

This chapter illustrates the characteristics of Drifters and describes the process of character creation. However, Players should come together to create characters in a specific stage of the game known as **Session 0**, as described at page 199. The following list summarizes the characteristics you find on a Drifter Sheet. In upcoming pages, we will describe in depths what each of these represents and how each can be used during the game.

- **1- Name:** "Nomen omen", as the ancient Romans said. This means that, on top of encapsulating the essence of a Drifter, their Name and epithet can grant great advantages in set circumstances.
- **2 - Dream:** The beating heart of a Drifter. The great ambition that gives meaning to their last quest, a goal they can possibly reach before the end.
- **3 - Mark:** The plague leaves a peculiar mark on the body of each Drifter. These spots speak to the darkest side of their wearer, and reveal omens of a dark future to those who can interpret their shapes.
- **4- Organs:** The representation of the different approaches a Drifter can have toward the challenges posed by the Narrator. More than all others, these attributes illustrate the personality of the character.

5 - Blood: This attribute is shared by all Drifters, and represents their physical and psychological state. Blood is closely tied to the concept of Corruption and to all mechanics that surround it.

6 - Bonds: These represent the memories from the Drifter's past, loved ones and important tokens they keep with them. While they can appear like unimportant personal items, in Memento Mori, these are powerful simulacra.

7 - Virtues: The body of practical and theoretical knowledge the Drifter has accumulated through many years of experience.

8- Starting Equipment: The items and gear a Drifter carries as part of their equipment.

Name: _____

Your Name and an epithet that represents you

Gift of the Name: _____

Which new identity will emerge after you sacrifice your Name? ☐ • ☐

Dream: _____

Your greatest ambition

Mark: _____

The sign placed on you by the curse

Bonds

☐☐ _____ ☐☐ _____ ☐☐ _____

Your most precious memories

Key-phrase

Gift of the Bonds: _____

Which new desire will emerge from the ruins of your Bonds? ☐☐☐☐ • ☐☐

Virtues

☐ _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____

Things you are skilled at

Gift of the Virtues: _____

Which new instinct surfaces when your Virtues disappear? ☐☐ • ☐

Stigmata: _____

Which monstrous trait makes its way in your body or mind? ☐☐ • ☐

Equipment and notes: _____

Weave

☐☐☐ Instinct above all

Cerebrum

☐☐☐ Reason at any cost

Blood

☆☐☐ Mental and physical conditions

Heart

☐☐☐ A life devoted to others

Viscera

☐☐☐ A life of self-interest

The Drifter's Journey

Much like in the hero's journey of mythos, Drifters abandon their everyday lives and venture into an unknown supernatural world. In the last days of their lives, they will encounter overbearing forces whose existence they never fathomed, and have their every conviction and moral construct challenged. Their journey is made possible by the guiding presence of an eye-opening Omen and by their wish to fulfill their Dream before dying. To do this, Drifters are willing to face the horrors and terrible discoveries that lay on their path.

However, Drifters are not destined to become heroes in the classical sense. As their powers grow, the corruption of the plague consumes them. They know that there will be no happily ever after, only eternal rest. Their only hope, is that they might have a chance to see their Dream come true before departing.

Despite this, the Drifter's journey can still be epic. It can take a human facing imminent death on the trail of mysterious creatures. Lead them to discover unholy rituals, terrible lairs, and cursed treasures. Take them through the Tears in the Veil to explore the lands of pure horror that lay on the other side. Drifters can be very dangerous for the creatures Beyond the Veil, especially when they gather in groups who share the same Omen and the same goal. Some Drifters even stand a chance of challenging the Princes themselves.

Drifter creation in short

There is no set order that Players need to follow when creating characters for Memento Mori, they can proceed freely. However, the list below suggests a procedure that can encourage creativity and help Players who feel the need for some prompts.

- **Come up with or choose 3 Virtues.** What can your character do? What has been their occupation? The Virtues answer both questions;
- **Come up with or choose 3 Bonds.** What are 3 key moments in the Drifter's past? Who were they attached to? Who or what changed them for good? The Bonds answer these questions;
- **Come up with or choose your Name.** Why did the Drifter receive their epithet? How did they appear to others? The Name and epithet of the character describe how they choose to appear;
- **Assign 3 additional Organ Slots.** This allows you to reason on the Drifter's personality and mannerisms.
- Talk with the Narrator to define your character's starting equipment;
- ... during **Session 0: come up with your Dream** in accordance with your previous choices;

LISTS AND EXAMPLES

In upcoming pages, you will find lists of examples for each Drifter characteristic. Players can take inspiration from these lists, or even use them to randomize character creation.

Session 0

Always remember that character creation is a collective activity, everyone should be involved! Before they gather the Players and create the Drifters, it's essential for the Narrator to be familiar with the rules regarding **Session 0**. Go to pg. 199 for the full directions.

1 - Name

In a time when surnames were still a rarity reserved only for important or high-born individuals, epithets (as well as nicknames and monikers) were far more commonly used to identify and remember people. This means that your character will also have one such "second name" which, according to the rules, will grant several advantages.

A Name should encapsulate a specific aspect or an extremely characteristic feature of your Drifter, regardless of its positive or negative connotations. It could speak to their personality, their way of life, or represent a detail that makes them unique in the eyes of others, even superficially.

Name Examples:
"Annie Fleeting Shadow", "Cold-hands Greg", "Glutton Gwen", "Eric the Lightless", "-", "Lorenzo the Mouse-catcher" or "Mary the Holy".

On the Drifter Sheet, the Name is tied to 2 Slots.
This means that, whenever the Drifter is about to make a roll in a situation connected to their Name, the Player can activate this attribute to add 2d6 to their roll.

Example:
Anafesto "the Crooked" is a Drifter with a shady past steeped in highway robbery. At some point in the story, he needs to obtain some information and decides to go looking for it in the darkest alleys of Venice. The Narrator grants him use of "the Crooked" because this is one of the situations in which they and the Player agreed it could be relevant.

"UNPLAYABLE" NAMES

The choice of a Name is a chance to give depth and character to your Drifter. Aside from adding very little to your character, names like "the Invincible", "the Flawless", or "the All-knowing", are also too vague to be called into play.

2 - Dream

While impossible, **the Dream is still the main goal every Drifter aspires to reach before the end.**

It's hard to restrict a Drifter's Dream to the simple concept of ambition, or goal. It is something much deeper. We could compare it to a true vocation (in the spiritual meaning of the word), it is a personal calling that constantly reminds Drifters about the path they must take to achieve it.

It is the childish dream of a pauper who yearns for the splendor of a royal crown. It is the obsession of someone who wants to turn iron into gold. It is the need for love of a cripple who spies on lustful nights in the rooms of the palace. It is the oath of a general who wants to regain the honor lost in battle by leading a great army to victory.

The Dream is what pushes Drifters to go on one last, terrifying adventure.

> *Dream Examples:*
> *Becoming a knight, Receiving a true-love's kiss from a prince, Curing my sick daughter, Avenging my father's death, Owning a castle, Leading a squadron of a hundred men, Composing the best ballad of my era.*

While extremely important, the Dream should be kept as the last step of character creation. The reason for this choice is described in Chapter VII, and it ties in with the concept of Effigy, a key element established during Session 0.

THE STRENGTH OF A DREAM

In Chapter V, you will find a rule that brings the supernatural powers of the Dream into play. A Drifter's Dream is the feature Princes from Beyond the Veil fear and envy the most.

3 - Mark

The Mark is like a prophecy tattooed on a Drifter's skin. **It does not predict the future of the bearer, but certainly hints at the horror they will become.**

The interpretation of Marks has recently become a subject of study Beyond the Veil, after it first appeared during the plague, together with the Drifters. What little we know for sure points to the fact that Marks repeat somewhat regularly and take no more than a dozen shapes.

According to the rules, **the Mark encapsulates a list of keywords hinting at how the Drifter is destined to change** when facing monstrosities, curses, and powers unknown. It is like a trail, a source of inspiration for the Player, including new prompts and ideas about how the character could evolve as the Corruption spreads (see Chapter IV).

> *Mark Example:*
> *A Player takes on the role of a Drifter with the Mark of the Hunter, which is tied to these keywords:* ***fetid, vulnerable, inhospitable, rabid, vermilion, hunted****.*
> *This Mark hints at several prompts that can be used to develop the Gifts, which in this case could be tied to instinct, to the hunter-prey dichotomy, or to extreme possessiveness.*

The Players should each choose a Mark from the list you can find in Chapter VI (pg. 173) and assign it to their Drifter. Be aware, you should not have two Drifters with the same Mark in a story. As such, it's best if you make the choice together, so that the Players can share their preferences and find an agreement.

Among the options available to Players, there are also the exclusive Marks included in the Binding Pact.

4 - Organs

Organs are the attributes that represent the basic abilities of a Drifter and are tied to the various ways they can approach obstacles.

They represent more than simple quantifications of their strength, speed, intelligence, or charisma. They are the totality of their skills in a specific context.

A Drifter could perform badly when in the heat of battle, but still have a surprising amount of strength they can call onto when trying to protect someone they care for. They could be extremely sly and cunning when it comes to plotting any type of crime, but be completely unable to apply the same brilliance in other contexts.

Here is a list of Organs, with their applicable fields:

CHOOSING THE APPROACH

Organs are not a list of characteristics, they represent how a character acts. This means that, without the Player's perspective, it will be impossible to determine the Organ called into play for a roll. The Player should describe the actions of their Drifter, and then decide which Organ they are going to use.

Nerve

Used when the Drifter acts out of instinct, when they let out their most basic impulses, when they need to be quick and intuitive, or when the consequences of their actions stop being a factor.

Cerebrum

Used when the Drifter acts after accurate logical reasoning, when they rely on or put in practice something they know, when they plan for long-term benefits, or when they must intervene by relying on pure, cynical rationality and leave out everything else.

Heart

This Organ is used when the Drifter bares their soul and their feelings, when they unite the people around them under the flag of an ideal, when they let sincerity prevail over lies, or when someone they care for is in danger.

Viscera

Used when the Drifter's actions go against human conscience, when the suffering of others becomes a means to their ends, or when they are forced to tarnish their humanity by committing terrible and unforgivable atrocities.

Organ Slots

There are four Organs, each with a number of Slots that goes from 1 to 3.

The first Slot for each Organ is available to all Drifters. The Player **must add 3 Slots** by tracing over the light borders of the box on their sheet with a pen.

Example:
A Player imagines that their Drifter is a reactive individual with quick reflexes and some sensibility. Following this idea, they choose to add 2 Slots to Nerves (for a total of 3), and 1 to Heart (for a total of 2).

ORGANS AND CHARACTERS

If a Player wishes to create a pensive and calculating Drifter, they should focus on Cerebrum.
If they wish to become the soul of the group and protect others, Heart is the best choice.
Finally, by focusing on Viscera, they will have an easy time deceiving and evading.

Nerve

Instinct above all

Cerebrum

Reason at any cost

Blood

Mental and physical conditior

Heart

A life devoted to others

Viscera

A life of self-interest

5 - Blood

Blood is the attribute that represents the mental and physical conditions of a Drifter, also regulating the progress of Corruption.

As previously discussed, Blood Slots are included in the base dice pool of every roll in the game, together with those from an Organ.

Blood always has 3 Slots and one of them is always corrupted.

As the corruption of this attribute increases, it will also influence the fundamental features of a Drifter as they gradually degrade. An in-depth explanation of how this attribute works can be found in Chapter IV.

6 - Bonds

How many times did the memory or picture of a loved one comfort you? How many times, when looking at a special gift, did a smile or tear cross over your face? And how many times do you recall the past, seeing it right in front of your eyes?

These moments are exactly like the Bonds of a Drifter: they tie their hearts to other people, to distant moments, or to symbols that have the inexplicable ability to bring back pure feelings of great power.

Every Drifter has three Bonds.

Each Bond is composed of a subject to which the Drifter is bonded, this might be an object, a person, a moment, or a crucial memory.

> *Bond Examples:*
> *My trusty needle, my wife Anna, the escape, the bandit's mask, Ignazio the inquisitor, the horrors of war, the make-up box, the taste of ash.*

Beneath the subject of the Bond, there is also a keyphrase: a motto, a proverb, or an aphorism that describes in few simple words what the Bond has taught to the Drifter.

Bond Examples:
My trusty needle - "there's nothing I can't mend!", my wife Anna - "the value of a caress", the escape - "it's never too late to start over", the bandit's mask - "strength from being hidden", Ignazio the inquisitor - "an eye for an eye", the horrors of war - "learn to stay detached", the makeup box - "a face for every occasion".

The purpose of Bonds is to help Drifters get through the hardest moments, especially when the situation brings back to their minds moments and life lessons that shaped them.

Each Bond has 2 Slots.
In game, Bonds are used just like Names and Virtues. Whenever the circumstances and context of the story connect with the key-phrase of a Bond, the Player can add 2d6 to their roll.

SIMPLE, OPEN-ENDED CONCEPTS

You can tell a Bond was well constructed when its key-phrase can seamlessly come into play in various situations. "There's always a way out!" will help you escape from a bark-covered Troll, but also find a way out of a compromising situation.

7 - Virtues

Virtues are the portfolio of fields and subjects in which a Drifter is especially well-versed.

They often coincide with adjectives and names of professions, with clichés and abilities, and generally represent a set of talents, learned or innate, that the character can always rely on.

Virtue Examples:
Swordswoman, Merchant, Flatterer, Gentleman, Charmer, Healer, Scholar, Petty thief, Smith, Finagler, Acrobat, Hunter.

Drifters have 3 Virtues, each paired with 1 Slot.

As previously described for Name and Bonds, whenever a Drifter is making a roll for a situation that ties in with one of their Virtues, the Player can add 1d6 to their pool.

Example:
A Drifter has managed to gain admittance to a small council with the Bishop. The meeting is being held to persuade the pontiff to finance a rather risky expedition, but nobody appears to be able to change his mind. The Drifter then tries to do it by calling on his Virtue "Diplomat".

MANAGING CREATIVITY

Players can try to find an infinite array of links between their character and the events in the story. The Narrator should encourage this kind of initiative when the connections are actually relevant and allow different aspects of Drifters to emerge. But forced links that aren't really coherent with the story should never be encouraged.

8 - Starting Equipment

First of all, we need to establish that Memento Mori does not look closely at the objects and equipment every Drifter is carrying. To determine the starting equipment of a character, you'll just have to consider their story, their skills, and the events of their recent past. Considering those, Players and Narrator can easily agree on the starting equipment.

Practical examples

Is the Drifter a young traveling performer and acrobat?

Everyone at the table will assume that the character always carries with them several musical instruments, some coins they panhandled here and there, eccentric clothing, and supplies for the road.

Is the Drifter a former soldier of the papal troops?

Then, everyone at the table can agree that they probably carry one or several swords, some armor, a crucifix, supplies for the road, and some bandages for wounds.

If you think that the role and back-story of your Drifter mean that they own and carry a specific item, then they have it.

Quick Creation of Drifters

If you ever need to quickly come up with a group of Drifters to start playing on the spot, we have included here a list of Names, a list of Virtues, and a list of Bonds.

These lists are designed to speed up the process of character creation, but they can always be used as a source of examples and inspiration for those who choose the "classic" method of character creation.

Randomized Creation

Each list is designed to allow Players to roll if they wish to choose features for their characters at random. The system is fairly simple: each Player rolls a white d6 and a black d6. The result of these dice is compared to the numbers placed beside the listed attributes. Match the first number to the result of your white d6 and the second with the result of the black d6.

Drifter Names

You can quickly choose the Name of a Drifter by rolling 2d6 (see quick creation on page 49).

1-1 Adelaide "*the Pure*"

1-2 Ditrich "*Seacliff*"

1-3 Noreen "*Knot-untangler*"

1-4 Munia "*Graceful Step*"

1-5 Norbert "*Cut-to-the-chase*"

1-6 Yorik "*the Lucky*"

2-1 Argus "*of the Beasts*"

2-2 Isadora "*Raven-eyes*"

2-3 Oldwig "*Placidmind*"

2-4 Sigismond "*Gloomface*"

2-5 Lilith "*the Sharp*"

2-6 Casta "*Southern Wind*"

3-1 Göran "*Peacestealer*"

3-2 César "*the Upstart*"

3-3 Marigold "*Witchfingers*"

3-4 Griselda "*the Wary*"

3-5 Honoria "*Rosethorn*"

3-6 Volkrad "*the Thrower*"

4-1 Odette "*the Slight*"

4-2 Ruggero "*Heart-of-gold*"

4-3 Krista "*Icy Walls*"

4-4 Ludmilla "*Blabbermouth*"

4-5 Rufio "*the Tamer*"

4-6 Ben "*Wide Shoulders*"

5-1 Ermelinde "*Mother-of-many*"

5-2 Thira "*the Indomitable*"

5-3 Ildebrando "*Sharpnosed*"

5-4 Xalvador "*the Peoplelistener*"

5-5 Fredrick "*the Honest*"

5-6 Yvonne "*the Strict*"

6-1 Hector "*Moneycounter*"

6-2 Alphonsine "*Riverleaper*"

6-3 Isaac "*Path-trodder*"

6-4 Ursa "*the Tolerant*"

6-5 Aloisio "*Layabout*"

6-6 Brunhilde "*Burningembers*"

DRIFTER NAMES

Lars “Deadember”
Petrus “Empty-eyes”

Drifter Virtues

You can quickly choose the Virtues of a Drifter by rolling 2d6 (see quick creation on page 49).

1-1 Academic

You are educated, a rarity in these times. You know how to read and write, and also have in-depth notions about classic subjects like mathematics, physics, history, literature, etc.

1-2 Courtier

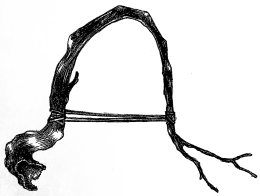
You are or were a member of a wealthy court, which makes you skilled at moving in upper class circles. You know the roles, customs, and habits, and quickly pick up any rumor going around at court.

1-3 Man-at-arms

You went through military training and learned to use most common melee weapons: swords, spears, maces, short blades, etc. You know attack and defense techniques, and can evaluate the fighting style of your opponents.

1-4 Orator

Your eloquence is a formidable weapon, your voice is pleasant and persuasive. When talking to people, you know which buttons to push, and your reasoning is always flawless.



Sometimes to bound is like to curse

1-5 Sailor

You have in-depth knowledge of ships and can certainly find your way around one. You know which lines to pull, can recognize all types of knots, and can orient yourself and navigate using the stars.

1-6 Merchant

You are a skilled negotiator and salesperson. You always know how to get the price you want whether you are buying or selling. You also can evaluate the price, authenticity, and value of items.

2-1 Explorer

You have traveled far and wide your whole life. You can find your bearings with your eyes closed, have extensive geographical knowledge, and can survive for months in hostile environments.

2-2 Apothecary

You have in-depth knowledge of botany and alchemy. You know the medical properties of plants, can prepare healing remedies, potions, compresses, spirits, and even poisons.

2-3 Lockpicker

Opening locks is child's play to you. All you need is a small tool and no door, gate, or lock will be able to resist your velvet touch.

2-4 Natural Leader

You have a gift for leadership. Perhaps it's your posture, the tone of your voice, or simply the look in your eyes, but you know how to make yourself heard, and people tend to trust and follow you.

2-5 Tireless Worker

Your dedication is commendable. Pouring blood, sweat, and tears into your work is normal to you. When you undertake a task, regardless of how tough or strenuous it is, you can grit your teeth and do it.

2-6 Strategist

You probably went through military training, and your notions of strategy and tactics, combined with your endless patience, make you a skilled planner and a formidable opponent.

3-1 Guardian

You kept watch for endless nights, and became a reliable sentinel. It's unlikely you will ever fall asleep when you shouldn't, and your senses aren't impeded by darkness or lack of light.

3-2 Marksman

You have the aim of an exceptional marksman. You can use all types of ranged weapons: bows, slings, crossbows, etc. You can evaluate trajectories, winds, and distance.

3-3 Hunter

You know how to hunt and find food for yourself in all environments. You know how to flush out prey, and how to read footprints and trails. You can build all manner of traps.

3-4 Assassin

Whether it's for money or for necessity, you know the best ways to kill a man. You can be lethal and quiet. Being stealthy and striking by surprise are the skills that make you an infamous cutthroat.

3-5 Fortune-teller or Medium

You were taught how to read palms, how to use cards, tarots, and other divination tools. When you use your talent on someone, you have vague premonitions of their imminent or distant future.

3-6 Diplomat

You have a prestigious role that allowed you to make friends in high places. You're a skilled negotiator and feel at home in the most stately of situations.

THE BERBER WORM-DEVILS

Everything starts with a single bite, not unlike the sting from an insect. The infection quickly grows worse, and the human dies of fever. From their body, a sickly-looking worm will emerge, seemingly innocuous. The animal then burrows inside another sleeping body to lay even more eggs. And when the second human dies, many worms of different species emerge from their corpse. They all crawl away as one, as if they were all tied to each-other, and go on to plague another human, and then another, growing their numbers like an endless wave of fever, delirium, and agony. When the mass of knotted parasites is large and strong enough to devour an entire human being while leaving the skin intact, they can finally become a creature that looks like human. The creature can even live among humans, and speak an unknown tongue made of barks and indecent wails. Stories say that after some time, when their human exuvia is worn-out, the Worms take the way of the desert and allow the wind to tear off the last shreds of human skin. All that is left is a knot of worms, snakes, slugs, centipedes, leeches, caterpillars, larvae, and all other slithering creatures that can come together and knot with each-other to make a bipedal form with muscles, tendons, and flesh. A revolting monster dripping with effluents and drools from every nook and cranny, and with eyes of fire that look like a Djinn's.

4-1 Rascal

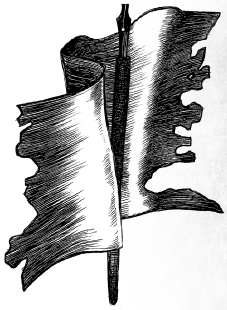
You have moved in seedy circles your whole life, and have accumulated several notorious acquaintances: pickpockets, cutthroats, and rogues of the worst kind. You know street slang and how to move in the slums.

4-2 Falconer

Your inseparable animal companion is useful in many occasions: you trained them to deliver messages, to scan the horizon for incoming threats, to capture small prey, and more.

4-3 Forger

You have a unique talent: you can perfectly mimic any and all handwritings and create exact replicas of any manuscript, document, letter, or diary.



Only few people posses writing material

4-4 Sapper

You are an expert when it comes to crafting small explosive and incendiary devices. You know the recipe for the elusive black powder, for smoke bombs, and for all manners of incendiary substances.

4-5 Jester

Your skill at performing feats of acrobatics, tumbles, and magic tricks is impressive. You're an able minstrel and storyteller, and know how to entertain your audience. You probably worked in a circus, theater, or at court.

4-6 Inventor

Your practical sense is amazing. To you, designing and building strange contraptions and machines is standard practice and a fun hobby. You often use salvaged materials and scraps to assemble your weird inventions.

5-1 Ascetic

You spent a long time away from civilization. A life spent in solitude, contemplating nature, and meditating in silence, taught you how to maintain self-control and dedication, to overcome fear, to withstand pain, and to control your instincts.

5-2 Seducer

You are a charming heart-breaker. You sweep people of the opposite sex off their feet thanks to your pleasant and polished looks, the honeyed sound of your voice, or your strong personality.

5-3 Surgeon

You have studied the best medical and anatomical texts of your time. You can apply bandages and splints, practice phlebotomy, and amputate limbs.

5-4 Undertaker

You have been surrounded by dead people your whole life. You probably worked in a cemetery, and you know everything needed to take care of the dead, to carry out autopsies and cremations, and to dig graves.

5-5 Jailer

Your bad name precedes you: you probably were the executioner for your village, or the prison warden. You know exactly how to elicit dread in others, and know several methods of interrogation and torture.

5-6 Messenger

Your athletic preparation as a rider or runner is unparalleled. Since youth, you've been training and covering long distances on foot or on horseback.

6-1 Smith

You are a skilled blacksmith. You are adept at working iron and other metals, know how to forge weapons, tools, and utensils of all kinds.

6-2 Brawler

You are either a belligerent drunk or just a troublemaker, and often find yourself involved in brawls and fights wherever you go. You always know how to start a fight and where to aim your fists, and the exorbitant amount of alcohol you ingest makes you numb to pain.

6-3 Artist

Your artistic skills are remarkable, and your talent is probably renowned far and wide. You're a famous and sought-after sculptor, painter, or musician, but perhaps you prefer to keep your talents secret.

6-4 Ecclesiastic

You could be a humble monk or an eminent bishop. You have taken the vows and received an ecclesiastical education either due to honest faith or because it was convenient. You are familiar with scriptures and religious rites, can read and write Latin, and know the inner dynamics of the church and clergy.

6-5 Agitator

You could be a religious fanatic or a dissident, either way you're a hothead who finds every possible occasion to rally a crowd and instigate public disorder. You're a provocateur who knows exactly which buttons to push in order to undermine the morals of others.

6-6 Socialite

You're perfectly at ease in sitting rooms and at receptions with illustrious dignitaries. You probably know local stories and rumors and can easily adapt to the fashion and trends of the moment.

A silver arrow can harm even invulnerable creatures

Drifter Bonds

You can quickly choose the Bonds of a Drifter by rolling 2d6 (see quick creation on page 49).

1-1 The hand of the statue

"Fear knowledge, embrace madness"

The moment when you picked up the broken-off hand of the statue and plunged it into the skull of a man changed you forever. It was a moment of pure fury, the culmination of one of your many quarrels. This memory will help you whenever you commit irrational acts, fueled only by instinct or by the heat of the moment.

1-2 My captain

"A course set when all felt lost"

The memory of those summer nights, of the sea breeze, and of the sailing expeditions side by side with Captain Elric, will help you whenever you feel lost, and when you need to find your bearings.

1-3 Years will tell

"More than meets the eye"

The day you discovered the truth about your noble family is a core memory for you. It will manifest whenever you try to look beyond what something looks like or to find evidence to appease your chronic skepticism.

1-4 The key of the mansion

"No door is ever truly locked"

The memory of endless afternoons spent playing hide and seek in the corridors of the mansion when you were a little child still warms your heart. It will emerge whenever you find yourself at a dead-end or facing an obstacle, either physical or metaphorical.

1-5 My son

"Stop at nothing"

Your son was born gravely ill, and after his first years of life, you left him with his other parent to seek a cure. Thinking about him, you can find strength whenever you need to show no pity, and especially when your inhumanity causes you the same pain you felt back then.

1-6 The days at court

"Words cut deeper than knives"

The life at court, the political machinations, and the palace intrigues color the memories of your youth. Those moments will help you whenever you want to use flowery words to wound others, to create animosity, or to provoke a reaction from others.

2-1 The tiny seashell

"The weight of a choice"

The choice to rebel against the repeated raids from Norsemen finally set your village free, but it also led to the death of dozens. This lesson will prove useful whenever you choose to bear the weight of important decisions or try to inspire confidence in others.

2-2 My brother Thomas

"A leap of faith"

One night, you set sail with your brother, hellbent on proving to him that sirens really exist and persuade him that you were not crazy. Unfortunately, a siren did appear and, after a heated argument, your brother fell to your feet while you still clutched a lantern covered in his warm blood. You can recall this memory whenever you defend your unlikely theories, or act in keeping with your delusions.

2-3 My time as a slave

"Patience is my weapon"

You spent eleven years as a slave in the quarries of Northern Africa, and you will never forget that time of your life. These memories will help you whenever you choose to wait, and when you try to bide your time as you gather everything you need to get your chance. Not a moment too soon, nor too late.

2-4 The fixed card

"If life is a game, then I am the cheat"

Your life has always revolved around gambling, day and night. One evening, you made a bet that the black death would never touch you and, in an ironic twist of fate, the first spots appeared soon after. Thanks to this memory, you can find an edge whenever you try to bluff, make a bet against all odds, or when you simply try to raise the stakes.

2-5 The beast

"The smell of fear"

You remember that night, when you had to fight for your life against a big gray wolf in Saxony. Every moment of that night is etched in your memory, how you became even more savage than your opponent. This memory will prove useful whenever you're pushed in a corner and choose the most aggressive solution, or when you want to turn your fear into pure brutality.

2-6 The old battles

"Symbols hold strength"

You were always fascinated by the power of symbols, by how they can bring together people who appear incompatible. Your banner, embroidered with your family crest, was no exception to this during the war. Today, you can use these memories to stand as a symbol and set a fire in the hearts of the people who choose to follow you.

3-1 The rat's tail

"There is always a way out!"

The prisons of Paris are a cruel place, filled with pain, anguished souls, and... rats. Like the rat that wriggled away between two unstable bricks and sparked the plan for your miraculous escape. That memory will always help you when you feel caged, trapped, or forced into a situation with no apparent escape.

3-2 My beloved

"I never keep a promise"

The betrayal of the person who swore to always love you on your wedding night has turned you into a distrustful, sometimes cruel, individual. This memory will emerge whenever you betray others or willingly disappoint expectations for your personal gain.

3-3 The penance

"Beyond the pain of the body"

You don't practice anymore, but the daily mortification of your flesh forged your spirit. You can use what you learned whenever you have to resist temptation of any kind, to withstand terrible pain, or when you try to control your most primal instincts.

3-4 The small aviary

"Locked in, safe"

You remember your tiny nightingale and the endless nights spent watching it fly in its small aviary, both a prison and a fortress. Who knows why, but the feeling you get when you remember that cage is useful whenever you hide your emotions or turn away from anything trying to harm you.

3-5 The teacher

"The strength to stand back up"

When your blade shattered, your knees buckled, and the duel against your despised teacher turned into your greatest defeat. You trained hard, suffered terrible stress and pain year after year, until you finally got your revenge using the same broken blade. Today, thanks to this memory, you know how to use your failures to find new strength in rage and determination.

3-6 The hermitage

"I don't believe in people, I believe in what surrounds them"

During your retreat in the wilderness, a bear tried to hunt and eat you, but a burst of lightning set fire to a nearby tree, and the disastrous fall scared the beast away. You extracted two things from the burned trunk: a wooden amulet and a great lesson. You can use that lesson whenever you place the laws of nature above the laws of man, defending and upholding it.

4-1 The worn ladle

"On low heat"

The taste of human flesh is bitter and disgusting for most people, but to soothe the cries of your starving children, you cooked it with no remorse. The memory of the ladle that stirred the meat will never leave you, and neither will the recipe that, with the right time and care, allowed you to get a decent result. Everything in its time, you know this well.

4-2 My falcon

"Flying is freedom"

Establishing a symbiosis with your falcon is an experience that has changed you forever, and it was also the moment when you realized the freedom of all flying creatures. Today, you mind flies on wings of imagination. This lesson helps you when you need to improvise, to surprise people with your actions, and when you show new horizons to those around you.

4-3 The great quest

"Everything is connected"

After long years spent searching and many sacrifices, you finally managed to reach the goal of your quest: an unreadable parchment scroll with no value. Trying to remain sane, you convinced yourself that you would one day find the meaning behind the scroll, and it would explain everything. Today, you feel energized whenever you build complex theories and convoluted plans in an attempt to change the course of events.

4-4 The gold tooth

"Rotten to the core"

You were a wretch for years. A poor soul who dragged on, haunting taverns and brothels, constantly looking for wine and trouble. The only valuable thing you owned was a gold tooth and even that, unfortunately, fell out during one of your brawls. You decided to swallow it, and were lucky enough to retrieve it soon after, in your own feces. This memory will come to your aid whenever you need to stoop to low and despicable means, or when you would do anything to protect things that appear insignificant.

4-5 The master of ceremonies

"The devil is in the details"

You remember every detail of that wicked ritual, especially the naked bodies of aspiring acolytes, the animal musk of untreated hides, and the opium smoke that poured from a censer. After that night, all big events in your life remain as clear memories, each accompanied with sharp and detailed sensations. Today, you can focus on the details that most people would ignore, and your senses travel on higher planes of perception.

4-6 The illness

"The art of copying"

Drawing is a passion that has followed you since childhood, and when the smallpox outbreak kept you in your bed for days, it was also your greatest companion. Thanks to a small mirror, you started drawing a series of self-portraits, and that was the start of your love for copying, and for everything that appears like something else. This memory helps you whenever you copy things, mimic behaviors and reasonings, or when you try to recreate a situation or déjà vu.

5-1 The deaf horn

"Life is music"

It's something half-way between a memory and a series of coincidences: whenever you act following the rhythm of music or any other rhythm you're hearing, everything seems to go your way. This memory resurfaces whenever you allow yourself to fall into this old pattern, or when you try to find a connection between the rhythm of sounds that surround you and your actions.

5-2 Brother Horace

"A snake in the grass"

When the minister took you from the wayside, it was the day of your rebirth. Unfortunately, he tried to stab you in the back some years later. That was the beginning of a long ordeal for your unstable mental sanity. By calling on that experience, you know the best way to get what you are owed, to turn generosity into cruelty, and to exploit the trust others place in you.

5-3 The recurring dream

"Beauty is everything"

The unfading memory of a dream: a night of passion with a creature of unrivaled beauty, covered only by a long cloak of raven feathers. For months, your every night was brightened by that memorable dream experience, but when it stopped appearing to you, it became an obvious obsession. The dream reminds you of how to get the best out of situations where you exude passion and place beauty above everything else.

5-4 The stone

"Just what I need!"

You carry the stone with you since the day when it literally saved your life, and you never underestimate apparently useless and negligible items. The memory of that fight, of the sound the stone made when striking the thief's temple, helps you whenever you use improvised tools, or when you find new uses to everyday items other would regard as useless.

5-5 My father

"Failure leads to success"

A letter with the signature and seal of your father marked the end of your family, and turned all your feelings toward your parents into shame and disgust. From that day, your life has been completely separated from theirs, a chance for your rebirth. Apparently, bad luck can bring good luck. Thanks to what happened, you learned to exploit catastrophic events and failures caused by other people.

5-6 The street life

"Always in balance"

The life of a street performer is not as jolly as it appears. The need to obsessively seek out laughter in this sad time is like an unbearable weight. Nevertheless, the moments of tension you could create while walking on a tightrope suspended high above the ground were magical. This memory will prove useful whenever you want to defend yourself without taking any side, when you try to maintain a neutral position, and when you try to keep the balance outside and within you.

6-1 The funerary urn

"The euphoria of purification"

When you were younger, you were always attracted to fire, physically drawn to it. You loved burning stakes and bonfires, and you always found a way to toss something into the flames whenever you saw one. Even when they burned your brother, you found a way to smile at the flames. Today, when you revisit that memory, it helps you get rid of things, whenever you feel the need to tidy up your surroundings or to seek refuge in the euphoria of eradication.

6-2 Roland the wise

"They'll have to change their mind!"

The theories of the old wise man from your village often appeared weird and unfounded. Once, when interpreting the patterns of some wind-blown leaves, he announced the coming of a great titan that would destroy the entire village. You chose to believe him that time, and he was the reason why the twister did not sweep you up with everything else. Remembering your mentor will help you when you need to make people believe in things and events that still seem improbable, and when you try to warn simpler minds.

6-3 The poverty

"No-one gets left behind"

They say that a madman's vertebra contains the secret to true love. You can't confirm this saying, much less refute it. However, the years spent among the poor people of Milan allowed you to learn how important bonds, affection, and love truly are. When one of the many mad people died, you picked up one of their vertebrae. That memory helps you whenever you fight to protect those who have nothing, when you feel compassion, and when you serve people in need.

6-4 A HANDFUL OF SOIL

"Pain brings closer"

Returning to your native village was a traumatic event that changed you forever. Before you stood only a handful of abandoned houses, piles of corpses, and cawing crows. The disease had taken every last soul from that land, and simultaneously erased a good chunk of your childhood. You found the strength to pick up just a handful of soil, and you still carry it with you, in a small leather satchel.

Keeping alive the memory of your loved ones helps you to empathize with those who are suffering, to help those who have lost everything, and to push those who'd surrender before this senseless existence.

6-5 THE RAVEN, ASLAN

"Corpses and mud"

When you think of the moment when you met Aslan, the first thing that comes to memory is the creaking of the cart that rolled over the quagmire that once was a road. You were one of the many presumed corpses traveling on that cart to the nearest mass grave.

Aslan glided onto you and, in his search for food, tried to pick off a piece of skin from your arm. Your reaction both made him understand that you were still alive and established a link between you two. Today, when you see him fly in circles above your head, you remember that you can stand back up even when you are literally covered in death and despair.

6-6 THE VIOLENCE

"Free from emotions"

You never knew your parents. In this day and age, that is not really such a tragedy, actually. Your bigger misfortune was being left in the care of your grandmother, a woman who never cared for you at all.

IV. Corruption

In the nightmarish life of Drifters, corruption and plague, power and illness, darkness and deterioration are all inseparable pairs: whenever one grows, so does the other. When the characters become more powerful, their bandages become more saturated with pus, their breath shorter, their memories more clouded, and the thread of their destiny thinner. As such, Corruption is the process through which the forces from Beyond the Veil are reborn as great Gifts and unimaginable powers in the bodies of Drifters. There are no shortcuts, no painless techniques that can grant these blessings. There is only a path to damnation, paved with sacrifice, amnesia, and loss of self.

Compared to other roleplaying game, the rules about Corruption can be seen as somewhat similar to those on character advancement and development. However, in our case, the focus is strongly aimed at the choices Players face with growing corruption. Each of these choices has the power to change the course for the Drifter, and for the story as a whole.

In this chapter, we will deal with several concepts mentioned before. Namely, we will look at:

- **Blood:** A key element in the mechanics of Corruption. Whenever it's fully corrupted, it forces the Player to make crucial choices;
- **Corruption of the Name:** Directions on how to corrupt the Name and the consequences that follow (pg. 78);
- **Corruption of the Organs:** Direction on how to corrupt the Organs and create Stigmata, horrible mutations and manias (pg. 80);
- **Corruption of the Virtues:** Directions on how to corrupt the Virtues and the consequences that follow (pg. 85);
- **Corruption of the Bonds:** Directions on how to corrupt the Bonds and the consequences that follow (pg. 86);
- **Gifts:** Everything you need to know about the creation, development, and use of the Drifters' supernatural powers (pg. 89). You can find a list of possible Gifts on page 94;
- **Stigmata:** The evolution of Stigmata and a list of transformations, curses, and defects ready to use (pg. 99).

Blood

Blood is the core attribute in the management of Corruption.

This attribute is the same for all Drifters, the number of Slots (3, with one of them always corrupted) and mechanics regarding it never change.

What is Blood?

Blood represents and ties two essential concepts: the level of Corruption and the Drifters' mental and physical conditions.

As the body and mind of a character become more tainted, the Corruption will spread ever faster. When a Drifter suffers a trauma or puts their sanity on the line, the Corruption will spread.

On the other hand, a character who remains whole, will be less susceptible to the forces of darkness.

Blood is the marker that represents and regulates this constant tension.

Whenever a Drifter suffers a trauma (regardless of the nature of the trauma), the Blood will be involved. All damage inflicted to a Drifter's mind or body will be represented as one Blood Slot becoming corrupted.

Example:
A Drifter is surrounded by a swarm of Zahnfees who crave human marrow. The creatures attack him, striking repeatedly and causing many deep and painful cuts. With every blow, the Player will be forced to blacken one Blood Slot. Similarly, another Drifter is walking in the corridors of a castle, when they suddenly see a woman completely covered in blood that drags a disemboweled body behind her. The scene is so bloodcurdling that a Player could be forced to blacken some Blood Slots to represent the mental shock suffered by their character.

Suffering traumas is not the only way in which Blood Slots can get corrupted. Other causes of Blood Corruption are:

- Suffering physical or psychological damage;
- Gaining a Dark Success by rolling a 6 on a black die;
- Calling on the power of the Dream (see Chapter V);
- Acting to create an advantage for another character (see Chapter V).

Whenever such an event occurs, the Drifter will suffer one Blood Corruption (from now on abbreviated as BC).

You will find 1BC whenever you must blacken one Blood Slot, 2BC to blacken two, and so on.

A DRIFTER'S DEATH

Unlike what happens in many other games, Blood does not represent the life force or number of wounds a character can sustain. Nor does it represent how close they are to dying, it simply embodies the connection between health and Corruption.
Can Drifters die, then? This peculiarity of the game will be explored in Chapter V.

What if there are no empty Blood Slots?

When all the Blood Slots have been corrupted and a Drifter should suffer another BC, the Player must clear all corrupted Blood Slots accumulated up to that moment.

Then, they must choose one Slot from an Organ, Virtue, Bond, or Name, and blacken it.

This also happens whenever the number of Blood Slots to corrupt exceeds the number of free Blood Slots.

Example:
A character's Blood is completely corrupted. They roll a Dark Success and suffer 1BC, which would force them to blacken another Blood Slot. When this happens, the Player refreshes all corrupted Blood Slots they had accumulated (clearing all but the first Slot) and blackens the Slot of their Virtue "Iron fist".

GOLDEN ICHOR

"Drifters look just like any other mortal, but if you examine them closely, you'll see they shine from within. Their cursed blood that carries the disease to their putrefying organs, also emits a sickening glow. It's like a golden ichor and we, who were born Beyond the Veil, can see it gleam, like the Dream everyone talks about. It's like a tide, that sometimes brings Drifters closer to us, and sometimes pushes them to great distance. Is that not the blood our Princes seek so fervently?"

What if I suffer more than one Blood Corruption?

When this happens you just have to go through the Slots to blacken like this: the first BC leads you to exceed your number of Blood Slots and frees all previously blackened Slots; the remaining BC corrupts the newly refreshed Slots. You might need to repeat this operation several times for truly extreme instances of BC.

Example:
A Drifter with 2 corrupted Blood Slots suffers 3BC because of a terrible blow. This is what the Player must do: the first BC brings the number of black Blood Slots to 3, the second causes the refresh, and the third corrupts the second Blood Slot that was just freed (the first Blood Slot is printed black and can never be cleared). So, the Drifter is back to 2 corrupted Blood Slots, and the Player just has to choose which Slot on their sheet to blacken...

DARKNESS SPINNERS

In the darkest caves and narrowest valleys, there are places that have never seen the light of the sun. Now and then, you might see women, white as bone, emerge from that black land and its eternal shadows. They grasp the rocks with their extremely long fingers, climbing out of their holes, imitating the calls of animals in rut, drawing in prey to feed, night after night, until they finally have the strength to venture under the starry sky to hunt. They always use a bone as a tool, and slowly refine it, until it is as thin and polished as a spindle. When the tool is finally ready, they return to their birth place, in their dark caves, and start to spin. The black material they craft is a vibrant and moist thread that almost feels alive. It can be used to sew together any object or creature, binding things that should live separately, like their capes made of cats, foxes, crows, or martens, all sewn together, all strictly alive. The Spinners are highly sought-after in the world Beyond the Veil, because they have the power to reattach limbs, eyes, tails, wings, and even heads. They are filthy necromancers who merge bodies, create mixtures of living creatures, and hunt to expand their freakish collections.

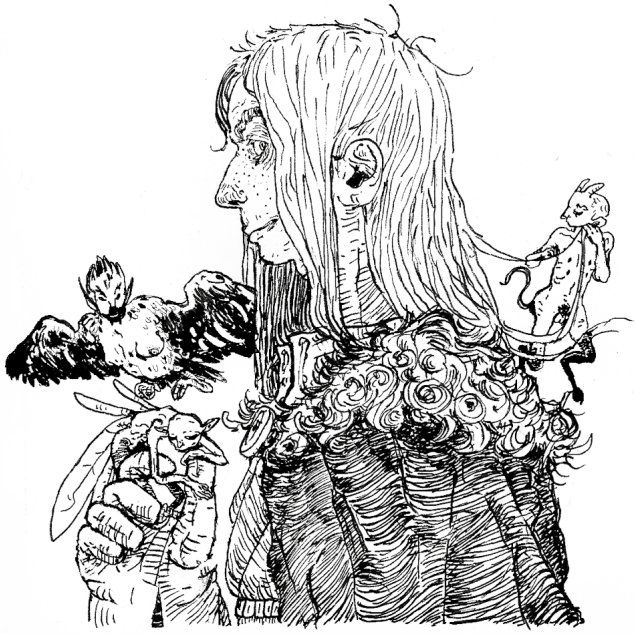
What to Corrupt?

The refresh of corrupted Blood Slots puts the Players in front of a very important decision.

It's a choice that can never be undone in the future. **They must corrupt a Slot corresponding to an Organ, a Virtue, a Bond, or a Name.**

> *Example:*
> *A Player has just refreshed their Blood Corruption after suffering a BC. Now they must choose which Slot to blacken. After a quick reasoning, they choose to blacken a Slot tied to their Virtue "Hunter".*

One by one, the number of black Slots on a Drifter's sheet will continue to grow. How long until their Blood is saturated with corruption again? What will they sacrifice next?



Corrupting the Name

When corrupting the first Slot of the Name, a Player must erase their Drifter's epithet, leaving them with only their first name. Next, they must create the Gift of the Name, which will be a new, dark epithet.

This will be a new distinctive feature of the Drifter, born of a dark memory or a secret wish from Beyond the Veil. Finally, the Player must check off the first box for the evolution of the Gift of the Name.

THE GIFTS
Corrupting the Name, the Bonds, or the Virtues allows Drifters to gain supernatural Gifts. The rules about Gifts will be described starting on page 89.

Example:
A Player chooses to blacken the first Slot of the Name and immediately erases "the Outcast", leaving their Drifter with a simple name "Bredel". Then, they come up with the Gift "the Black Pariah". From this moment forward, that will be the only epithet for their Drifter.

Per the rules, unlocking a Gift of the Name means creating a new epithet by following the rules outlined above. Unlike the initial Name, this new epithet hides a distinctive supernatural power. As usual, this new power should be discussed at the table and approved by the Narrator.

Example:
Bredel "the Black Pariah" is the new Name of a character. "Bredel the Outcast" no longer exists. Player and Narrator agree on the scope of the Gift of the Name, deciding that it will allow the Drifter to dive into darkness, even physically, so long as they are completely alone when doing this.

Losing the Name

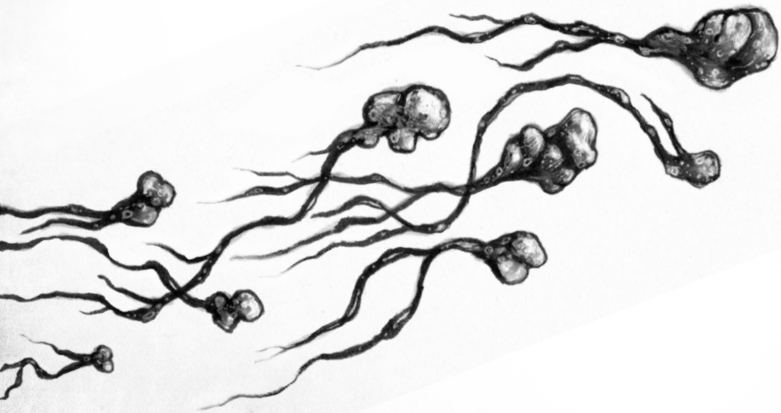
When the second and last Name Slot turns black, the Player must also erase the first name of their character from their Drifter Sheet. From then on, the Drifter will identify solely with the dark epithet of their Gift.

What of my Character's old Name?

The Drifter has completely erased their past name from their memory, as did all Unawares who have known them. Corrupting a Name causes the Drifter to almost completely lose their past identity. People will have a hard time remembering them, they won't recall their old epithet, nor the time they spent together. Their family might even forget they ever existed.

Only the other Drifters who travel with them will remember the character's past identity. If they try to talk with them of and remind them who they were, they might even open brief windows on their past.

At the same time, creatures from Beyond the Veil will find the Drifter easier to recognize, as if they were famous, and a whole new reputation tied to their new name will mysteriously spread within the dark confines of the other world.



Corrupting Organs

Most of the time, corrupting Organ Slots does not lead to special consequences. Players are encouraged to still consider this corruption and use it to build the character of their Drifters, perhaps by describing the physical, moral, or psychological decay caused by the corrupted Organ. However...

The first time an Organ is corrupted to the point that all its assigned Slots are black, the Player must create a Stigma.

To do this, they **trace over the borders of the first circle near the Stigma and mark a box to represent the spread.**

Example:
A Player chooses to corrupt the second and last free Slot of their Cerebrum Organ. This means that they now have to note a new Stigma, an unsettling deformity given to the character by the dark world.

Creating Stigmata

Stigmata appear as simple lesions of the mind or body, but are actually the supernatural consequence of Corruption spreading. They are "divine" marks that brand and exacerbate the precarious conditions of a character, while also hiding small miracles under their macabre appearance and, on rare occasions, manage to repay for the pain they cause.

When creating a Stigma, the first thing a Player needs to do is think of a painful impairment. Any type of deformity, amputation, defacement, or injury can be transformed into a bodily Stigma. On the other hand, manias, phobias, complexes, obsessions, dementia, and extreme fanaticism can all be considered mental Stigmata. There are then Stigmata of a more sinister and supernatural nature, that manifest as inhuman plagues, curses of decay, and monstrous mutations.

STIGMATA EXAMPLES

At the end of this chapter, you will find a list of Stigmata you can use as inspiration to come up with your own. Alternatively, if you like a bit of randomness, you can roll to choose one when you need it for the game. The method is the same as described on pg. 49.

Stigmata Examples:
Skin lesions, excoriations, parasites, distortions of vision, mutations, manias, additional or atrophied limbs, are all perfect examples of grave impairments. But what happens when, one morning, a character wakes up to find that, underneath their right eyelid there is no eye, but a small bird wing? How can a Drifter ignore the fact that all female creatures are suddenly surrounded by a terrible stench and emit only deafening noises instead of words? What is life, when you constantly look at your own shadow in suspicion, certain that it has come alive, and terrified that it might strangle you in your sleep?

After imagining a Stigma, you can then focus on the dark magic that it contains. Stigmata grant limited supernatural powers or temporary effects. Such skills can allow characters to take automatic actions that cannot be measured or enhanced by rolling dice. A Drifter with a Stigma will simply become able to perform a small portent as easily as they can breathe, walk, or blink.

Example:
Making anything appear beautiful, debilitating or killing smaller life forms, gliding through the air for small distances, having visions of someone's past when touching their corpse, controlling swarms of insects, and communicating with animals, are perfect examples of some powers granted by Stigmata.

How does this work?

Aside from their relevance to the story, Stigmata should be actively called into play by the Players.

The power and manifestation of a Stigma should remain in the background until a Player decides to bring it to the forefront. Until then, it is only a macabre feature of the character.

When the Player manifests their Stigma, on the other hand, the deformity is on full display, they should focus on the impairment and keep their terrible conditions at the center of the narration.

THE POWER OF STIGMATA

We recommend you first come up with the negative side of a Stigma. Then, you can focus on a specific aspect of the impairment to develop an opposite power, something that could be regarded as a positive ability. Is the Drifter now covered in burns? Good, this means that from now on, they can create small flames on their hands.

A Player who does this, should bear in mind that the Narrator will have control over the negative consequences that befall a Drifter who decides to unleash their monstrosity or madness. These consequences will be swift and they will have to be dealt with immediately.

Example:
A Drifter has regrettably suffered a Stigma that turned their tongue completely black. The Stigma will go ignored until the Player doesn't choose to intentionally manifest it. But when they choose to manifest it, they will also have to describe a dramatic action that brings this deformity front and center.

STIGMATA CHARGES

The circles that represent the charges of Stigmata are unlocked when an Organ is completely corrupted. For every Organ that reaches complete corruption, the Player can unlock an additional charge.

After manifesting a Stigma and suffering the immediate consequences, **the Player can blacken all active circles beside their Stigma.** These circles represent how many times they can use the power from the Stigma. **Every black circle is a charge and grants a one-time use of the power given by a Stigma. You do not need to roll dice to use the power granted by your Stigma.** The Player states that they want to use the power and it will happen in game.

Example:
The Player controlling the Drifter in the previous example believes that all animals in the village are spies for a Princess of Beyond the Veil. His plan is to eliminate them all using the poisonous power of the Drifter's Stigma, but he has finished all charges, so he must bring his black tongue into play. During a conversation with some villagers, the Player says to the Narrator: "... and this is where I'd want the people I am talking with to notice my Stigma.". The Narrator accepts and describes the consequences of the choice: the villagers become hostile, certain that the Drifter carries a baleful hex. After dealing with the peak of tension, on the first occasion, the Drifter touches the drinking troughs, tainting them without the need to add any poison.

Once the power is used, **the Player then has to clear out one circle representing the used charge of the Stigma.** Once all the circles are empty they will have to manifest their malformation again to "recharge" the Stigma.

THE TRUE ORCS

Few people remember the story of the True Orcs. Those who made their way down from the mountains following the scent of young flesh when hungry. And when they finally found a house with children broke in, devouring the boys on the spot, since they were only good as food. The orcs tore away their little legs and arms as if they insects, or plunged their fangs straight into their soft bellies. When the families were big enough, they saved some of the boys for making stews and roasts later. The girls faced the same fate as the boys, except for those among them who were exceptionally beautiful. Those were kidnapped and wedded to the orcs before the Mountain Prince, the Lord of the Caves. The orcs took the hand of these young maidens, who consented while weeping, thinking that they were otherwise done for. The orcs cut their left hands clean off using big cleavers, and kept them inside magical bags that presever the life of anything put inside them. The little hands never stopped wriggling and trying to escape. And this is why True Orcs used such bags as pillows in their sleep.

Corrupting Virtues

The first time a Virtue is corrupted, two things immediately happen: the Drifter **gains a Gift of the Virtues** and **loses the Virtue** they have corrupted.

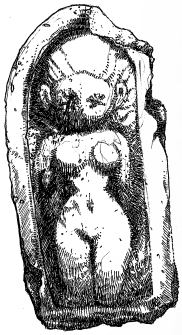
The powers that come from corrupting Virtues are portents with direct and possibly crucial effects. They cannot equal the enormity of the Gifts that come from corrupting Bonds, but are still powers that should not be underestimated.

Example:
Having "Smith" as a Virtue means that the Drifter is an actual smith. This Virtue allows them to shape, build, mend, and forge metal objects. When the character chooses to corrupt this Virtue, they immediately lose these skills. It's as if they never had them. However, they can come up with a Gift of the Virtues that allows them to melt and shape metal with their bare hands, as if it was clay.

After coming up with a power, the Player must note it down in their Sheet and erase the Virtue they have just corrupted. They will no longer be able to use that Virtue in any way. The Player must also mark the first progress box for the Gift.

Whenever a Virtue is corrupted, it gets erased from the Drifter Sheet, and all memories and personal features tied to it are forever gone from the character.

Example:
Upon corrupting their Virtue as a "Soldier", a Drifter forgets their past, the battles they fought, and their training. Their armor will vanish in a cloud of flies, and their sword will get stolen by a Kobold in the mines of Germany, to never be seen again. Once again, Beyond the Veil has claimed payment, the reckoning has come, but it has also left a precious gift...



Some deities have never been forgotten

Corrupting Bonds

Bonds are the attributes that potentially give Drifters their greatest, most striking and forbidden powers while also simultaneously leading them to the most dramatic consequences.

Powers born from corrupting Bonds should be more than impressive, they should be imagined with a certain ability to grow. This means that blackening the first Slot of a Bond should give the Drifter a Gift (with significant power and outreach) that is already relevant while still being in its rougher, less developed form, with much room to grow. This evolution will come as more Bond Slots are corrupted, and the Gift will reach its peak when all Slots have turned black.

> *Example:*
> *A Player decides to corrupt one of their Bonds and creates the Gift "Voice from Beyond the Veil". At first, this Gift grants them the ability to modulate their voice to perfectly mimic any sound of any kind. Blackening more Bond Slots, this Gift will grow, allowing their voice to reach unbelievably far, or travel to specific people whom they have previously met or crossed paths with, even just once.*

This means that when creating a Gift of the Bonds, the Player should already be thinking of powers far greater than those tied to gifts from other attributes. Think of arcane powers with their own rules, rituals, or supernatural creatures, abilities that can help a Drifter cultivate their personal arsenal, but also the dreadful legend that surrounds them.

Red ribbons are woven among the branches to make a wish

Losing a Bond

When the first Slot of a Bond is turned black, the Player is still able to use the attribute as before (with the key-phrase) and can also use the Gift gained from the corruption.

When using the Bond **in its original form, the Player can only add one white d6 to their pool.**

> *Example:*
> *One of the Drifter's Bonds is "The Party Mask", tied to the key-phrase "words can cut deeper than swords". If we follow the reasoning from our previous example, by corrupting the first Slot, the Drifter earns this uncanny ability to imitate voices and noises. At this point, the Drifter can still rely on their Bond (only gaining one white d6 from it) as well as on the new power.*

After the second Slot is also corrupted, the Player will lose all ability to rely on the Bond, and they will have to erase it from their Drifter Sheet.

> *Example:*
> *When the second Slot turns black, the "Party Mask" shatters and all memories it represented will vanish, completely forgotten.*

At What Price?

When the first Bond Slot is corrupted, it marks the beginning of a confusing period for the Drifter, as their memories begin to change. With every detail, person, symbol, and place that gets altered in the character's memory, so too their preconceptions will change, and they will begin to behave like a completely different person.

By corrupting the second Slot, the character completely loses their Bond and all memories tied to it, and substitutes an absurd and dangerous past for it. Even the creatures from Beyond the Veil will have a hard time believing them. The Drifter will make dangerous statements, they will claim forgotten and forbidden titles, they will have no way to avoid the demons from their corrupted memory.

Gifts

Gifts are supernatural powers that blossom, as Drifters gradually sacrifice a part of themselves to Corruption. These blessings can be so powerful, that they transform the blessed into quasi-divine beings, further separating them from humanity.

On the Drifter Sheet there is one Gift for each of the main characteristics of the character: **a Gift of the Name, a Gift of the Bonds, and a Gift of the Virtues.**

As a general rule, the first time a Player blackens a Slot associated with a Name, Bond, or Virtue, they should also come up with a new Gift. Additional black Slots will allow the Gift to grow in the future.

Example:
Due to several BCs, a Player has exceeded their number of Blood Slots. They decide to blacken one Slot from their Bond "the horrors of war - learn to stay detached". This is the first time they corrupt a Bond, so they must come up with a Gift of the Bonds.

Gifts are extraordinary abilities that can take any and all shapes, but not all forms of magic, prodigy and miracles can be considered Gifts. Drifters' Gifts are a set of supernatural abilities that all draw from the same, dark source for inspiration: Beyond the Veil. They are powers tied to suffering, to control, to blood, to seduction, to pain, to secrets, and to atrocities untold. **Concepts we would define as benevolent, protective, admirable, or luminous, will never be included in a Drifter's Gift.**

WHEN TO CREATE A GIFT

Gifts can be created on the fly, when a Player fills in a Slot that triggers Gift creation. Alternatively, the Player can choose to create their Gift later. Everyone at the table can agree on whether to interrupt the story to create a Gift or to set aside time to do it later.

Creating Gifts

The moment when a Player must create a new Gift is an exciting chance to unleash creativity, but it may come with insecurities and doubts. To avoid these situations and in any other occasion when they feel it is needed, the Narrator may use this guided method for Gift creation:

- Remind the Player to read the keywords associated with their Mark. They are always great prompts to inspire when creating Gifts;
- Ask the Player: "To what keyword from your Mark would you connect the attribute you just sacrificed? Why is that?";
- Ask the Player: "What supernatural skill could enhance the keyword you chose?";
- Ask the Player: "What would you call this power? How does it relate to your Drifter?";
- The Narrator should also remind the Player to mark the keyword they have chosen so that they won't use it again for the next Gift.

USING MARKS

A Drifter's Mark is connected to a short list of keywords that act as a useful outline when a Player needs to create new Gifts. The list of Marks is on page 173.

Example:
The Player has corrupted their Bond "the horrors of war - learn to stay detached", a memory that helped the Drifter keep their distance from cruelty and violence. Reading through the keywords of their Mark, they choose the term "Weakness". The Player then decides to transform this skill into a weakness they can instill in other people. Their Gift will be named "Winds of horror" and it will allow them to project terrible visions of war and death into the minds of others.

Once the Gift is created, the Player can choose to later feed its power, causing the Gift to evolve over time. With every additional black Slot in the attribute tied to the Gift, the Gift will grow. This, obviously, will come at a price: a loss of humanity and a growing number of corrupted slots.

Developing powers

Every Gift on the Drifter Sheet comes with a series of square boxes that can be used to mark its development.

Whenever a Player corrupts a Slot tied to a Name, Bond, or Virtue, they must also remember to check off a box for the relevant Gift; beginning with the first to the left and proceeding toward the right.

When they check off a box on the right of a diamond indicator, the Gift will evolve significantly and the Drifter will go through a great change due to the huge level of Corruption they have reached. For the rules regarding how Gifts should evolve, go to the end of this chapter, at pg. 93.

Gift Progress Boxes

Using Gifts

The Gifts from Beyond the Veil become an integral part of the Drifter as soon as they appear. The Drifter can immediately use them and, if it weren't for the initial dismay and bewilderment they cause, they could even do so spontaneously.

As such, Characters can always rely on their powers.

To use one of their Gifts, a Player must make a roll to confront with a set Difficulty.

To use a Gift, **Players roll a pool of d6 calculated by adding up the Slots of an Organ, of Blood, as well as all black Slots in the attribute tied to the Gift.**

As for all other rolls, Players should take care to describe the approach a character takes when using a Gift, so that they can identify the Organ involved.

Example:
A Player chooses to use their Gift of the Bonds "Voice from Beyond the Veil", which allows them to imitate sounds and voices. Hiding between the pews, they decide to imitate the voice of the abbot to scare bystanders into leaving the church. With this described approach, they will have to make the roll using one die for every Slot in Viscera, in Blood, and the black Bond Slots.

Since Gifts come from corrupted Slots, they always add black d6s to the pool. As such, they are a very powerful, but also very dangerous tool, that can lead to more Corruption for the Drifter.

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

In this inhumane age where people cling desperately to their faith, meeting someone who wields terrible powers beyond comprehension can only cause two reactions: fear and violence. Drifters will have to be extremely cautious when choosing to manifest their…

Difficulty and Gifts

The Narrator should never move the bar used to assign a Difficulty to a roll. It is normal for Drifters, with their growing powers, to become able to do things that would be beyond reach for normal humans

Evolving Gifts

As the process of character Corruption continues, all Gifts have the possibility to undergo an important evolution.

Gifts evolve when the player fills in the progress box to the right of the small black indicator. When this happens, the Player and Narrator should renegotiate the limits of the Gift to expand or enhance its power. As usual, people should find the right moment to have this discussion and try to avoid bringing the story to an abrupt halt.

Example:
The Player corrupts the third and last Virtue, and is then forced to erase even the last skill from their sheet. But now they also fill in the third progress box for the Gift of the Virtues, which allows them to agree on a development with the Narrator.

When coming up with the evolution of a Gift, you should avoid simply increasing the power (that's already represented by the growing number of d6s rolled by Players). Usually, the best option is to focus on the gift overcoming its previous limits. Evolved Gifts have less restrictions, can target a wider variety of subjects (sometimes several at a time), surpass their spatial or time-limits, or grow more difficult to spot.

Example:
The Gift of the Virtues of this Drifter is called "Devil step". Before evolving, it allowed the Drifter to perform impossible feats of acrobatics with superhuman agility.
By evolving this Gift, the character can use those feats of acrobatics to move between shadows, using them as windows on reality or passages they can dash and jump through.

After finding an idea for how the power of their Gift should progress, the Player just needs to make note of the evolution on their sheet.

PROGRESS BOXES

Progress boxes are filled whenever the Player chooses to corrupt a Slot tied to the Name, the Bonds, or the Virtues. This will trigger a progression in the Gift tied to the corrupted characteristic.

Drifters Gifts

Here is a list of Gifts ready to use (or use as inspiration for your own). As previously explained, the power level of these gifts is not constant, and is determined on the spot with a dice roll.

MARK OF THE DAWN

Spectral lantern: You can summon one or many will-o-wisps and control their movement. This allows you to shed light distant places, to blind your targets, or to draw them elsewhere.

Primordial shroud: You can exude a cloak of restless smoke and spectral humors. This allows you to conceal your appearance, hide your surroundings, and hover mid-air just above the ground.

Ashen blade: You can create temporary blades made of smoke and ashes. With these blades, you can cut and slash regardless of your training with weapons.

MARK OF THE FERRYMAN

Final breath: You can conserve the last breath of the newly dead. When you then set it free, you can use it to interrogate the dead before it disappears. The voice of the dead still has an echo of their thoughts.

Safe passage: You can bless a journey, crossing, or path. While traveling on it, you use your shadow to hide yourself and your companions, making it hard for others to spot and follow you.

Spiritual protector: You can extend the resilience of Corruption to a healthy Unaware, temporarily preventing their death. Using this Gift repeatedly carries the risk of infecting the target with the plague.

MARK OF THE REAPER

Ashes to Ashes: You can turn parts of your body into dust. They will return to their original state after a short time. This Gift allows you to hide or fit in places too small for your whole body.

Habit and Scythe: You can temporarily manifest a habit of pure darkness or a huge rusty scythe. The habit fills anyone who meets your eyes with dread. The scythe is a striking and brutal weapon.

Funerary poison: You can use a corpse or an open wound to distill a deadly serum that can be used as poison. The properties of this viscous liquid decay quickly.

MARK OF THE HUNTER

Cursed land: You can cause your surroundings to appear darker, hostile, and impervious. You alone are immune to this illusion.

Blood shadow: By drain all blood from a body and use it to create a Spy Imp (pg. 125) who obeys your every command. The creature disappears when killed or when you create another.

Prey scent: For a short period, you can assume monstrous traits or feral features. When in this form, your senses are sharper, and you can track even the faintest of scents.

MARK OF THE LIMITLESS

Corrupted compass: You can physically sense the Veil between the worlds. This allows you to spot Gates and Tears in the Veil, and to recognize Hecatomb Fields on sight.

Summoning of the Parasites: You know a lullaby or whisper that can call Gate Parasites to you. They come to your aid and answer your every question, within the limits of their knowledge.

Impassable line: You can draw a line that no creature from Beyond the Veil can cross or erase easily. However, this barrier offers no protection from their supernatural powers.

MARK OF THE JUDGE

Weighing of souls: You can read the signs of physical, mental, and moral corruption. With a simple look, you can evaluate an individual, sensing their sins and depravation.

Mirror of the past: You can summon an obsidian mirror, black and polished. When aimed at a subject, the mirror will show flashes of their past.

Sentencing: Your voice carries the chilling threat of the law. You can intimidate others, or draw attention to you. More fragile subjects can be paralyzed by your voice.

MARK OF THE-ONES-WHO-CAME-BEFORE

Ungodly presence: You can draw runes to curse a place. Anyone who visits that location will feel terrified and disturbed to their core. Their emotions vary depending on your effectiveness.

Image of the chosen: You can summon and show a symbol of royalty granted upon you by ancient powers. You can use this image to evoke fear or reverence in others.

Indomitable mind: You are crossed by thoughts that don't belong to you and hear incomprehensible whispers. If you focus, you can speak languages you don't know, and can communicate with any creature.

MARK OF THE SHROUD

Insight of truth: You can understand when someone is lying to you. When you try to do this, the area around your nostrils, lips, and teeth turns black as soot.

Holy visage: You can enchant a piece of cloth and place it on a face. Afterward, you can use it as a mask to take on that the appearance of the copied individual. When you enchant a new visage, the old one falls apart.

Secret crasher: You can push your conscience against that of another individual. This allows you to briefly read their thoughts and investigate their secrets.

MARK OF THE FORBEARERS

Protective influence: You can call on the protection of the dead. Their touch covers your body with livid hand-prints. For a short time, you skin becomes as hard as rock.

Ancestral well: You can call to your ancestors and they will rise to help you from the depths of the earth. Their bodies will emerge to hold, hinder, or disarm your opponent.

Ancient memories: You can recall the memories of all those who came before you, learning information on a vast array of topics.

MARK OF THE ELIXIR

Annihilating touch: You don't need weapons to inflict pain onto others. Through your control of Corruption, you can cause preexisting wounds and diseases to grow worse.

Corrupted elixir: You can bless a creature so that they no longer feel pain, exertion, cold, heat, hunger, or thirst. For a short time, you will take on those feelings for them.

Death lament: You can use your voice to join the wails of someone who is wounded, sick, or in pain. With your keening, you can harm your opponents, even at great distance.

MARK OF THE NIGHTMARE

Corrupted union: You can have a short mental conversation with anyone who also has the plague within your line of sight. You can also use this Gift to converse with creatures from Beyond the Veil, but only one at a time.

Nightmare storm: You can influence the weather, summoning an unnatural storm of darkness. Your power allows you to control the lightning in that storm.

Key to the gates: The Nightmare calls to you. You could even reach it, one day. Thanks to this Gift, you can open small portals that allow you to teleport for short distances.

Stigmata

The last topic we need to analyze before concluding this chapter on Corruption, is Stigmata.

As previously mentioned, **Stigmata are deformities that emerge when Organs are Corrupted**. While they cause impairments, they also bestow unique powers onto Drifters.

In the upcoming pages, you'll find a list of 36 Stigmata ready to use. You can either put them in play as they are written, or use them as a source of inspiration for your own.

Evolving Stigmata

The evolution of Stigmata follows the same principle as that of Gifts. Once the third and last progress box is filled, the Player and Narrator choose how the dark power hidden within the scourge plaguing the Drifter should increase.

However, when it comes to Stigmata, their power is not the only thing that grows: the mutation, mania, or curse that represent them also become more serious, and more apparent when manifested. The new expression should have a noticeable influence on the story because, when the Player introduces a description of the horror of their Stigma (to replenish its charges), the Narrator should answer with even more obstructions and outlandish consequences. Using a Stigma, especially an evolved Stigma, should always come with negative consequences for the Drifter, sometimes affecting the whole group.

Drifters Stigmata

You can quickly choose the a new Stigma for a Drifter by rolling 2d6 (using the quick creation process described on page 49).

1-1 Purulent rash

Your face was aggressively disfigured by a contaminated rash, leaving you with no way to hide your disease. The touch of your enchanted hands can make anything appear beautiful. Careful: this effect won't last forever...

1-2 Obsessive kleptomania

You can't help but take any trinket or bauble you can get your hands on. You keep snatching things: while on a stroll, during a chat, as you eat, or when you're trying to focus. Now and then, digging through your overflowing pockets, you find priceless items that you don't remember seeing or picking up.

1-3 Nyctophobia

You fear the night and darkness so much, that you can't fall asleep when alone. The simple thought of being isolated and without a light paralyzes you with terror. In turn, when you can withstand the darkness, you can see perfectly with no light, and can even recognize shades and colors.

1-4 Sublime sadomasochism

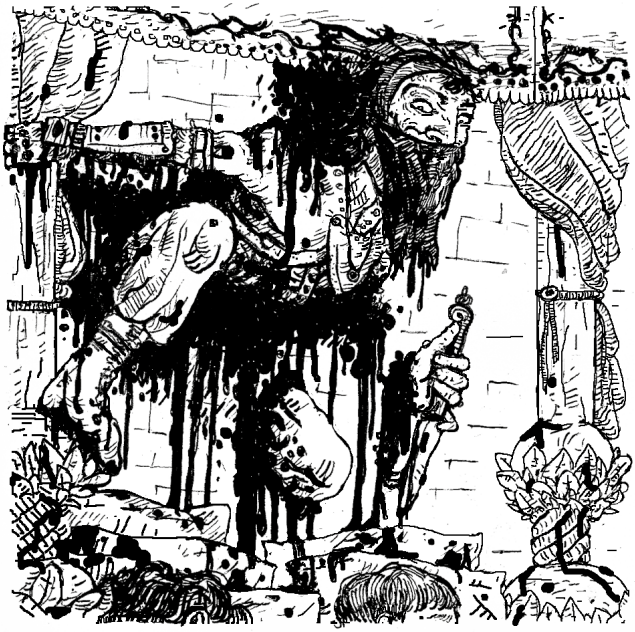
You feel pleasure when inflicting physical or psychological pain on others and yourself. This appetite for pain causes you to act recklessly, obsessively, and perversely. You also refuse help from anyone who tries to alleviate your suffering. However, when a life is about to end before your eyes, you can hold off death for a short time, asking one last question to the unfortunate soul, who will always answer truthfully.

1-5 Necromania

You are fascinated by corpses. You find the coldness and apparent temporal stasis of dead bodies arousing. You admire them so much that, on some occasions, simply looking at them is not enough... But now, when you touch a lifeless body, you have fragmented visions of the past life of the corpse, which sometimes contain useful information about them.

1-6 Hump

You back arches down quickly and painfully, and you find yourself turning into a twisted hunchback. You have become misshapen, a freak, a monster. An innocuous one, but still a monster. But your back has also become a mighty lever and, when you call upon it, it allows you to lift and drag impossible weights for several minutes without feeling tired.



2-1 Schizophrenia

You are now suffering with a chronic psychosis that greatly pollutes your sanity. While you still have rational moments (sometimes eerily sudden ones), your actions are confused, your words a jumble, and you are pestered by auditory hallucinations that form an endless neurotic delirium. Fortunately, even this cloud has a silver lining, as you can now understand the laws of the dark world, the logic, languages, and arcane writings of its inhabitants.

2-2 Partial blindness

Your eyesight is hopelessly weakened by Corruption and a white fog has fallen over your now cloudy eyes. You can now see somewhat clearly only the things closest to you, a few feet away at most, and everything beyond this limit is confused and blurry. You at least have the satisfaction of now being able to darken small and medium sources of light, imposing your own condition on others.

2-3 Ablutomania

In stark contrast with the low hygiene standards of the time, you are tormented by an obsession that forces you to keep yourself neurotically clean. Whenever you touch something, you feel the need to wash, if you walk in lightly unkempt places, you need to clean yourself, and any change in your surrounding triggers this impulse. But be careful: the touch of your hands can leave indelible black marks on any surface, like pitch brush strokes. This can possibly prove useful too, right?

2-4 Rotten teeth

In a matter of seconds, most of your teeth rot and fall off, and your mouth becomes hideous and foul-smelling. However, you realize that you are now able to "break the teeth" of weapons wielded by your opponents, clipping the points or dulling the edges of blades.

2-5 Rat tail

Your first coccygeal vertebra engorges, tearing through your clothes, and turning into a thick tail that looks exactly like a rat's tail. It's difficult to hide, and it causes repulsion in anyone who sees it. However, you realize that your affinity with mice goes beyond appearances: you can speak their language and give them orders as if you were their leader.

2-6 Early aging

Your physical and mental abilities decline unnaturally quickly. Your skin starts to sag, wrinkle, and crease, you are filled with aches, your hearing is impaired, and you often forget what you've said. But now you can influence the people who speak to you, causing them to forget important facts and events that just happened.

3-1 Hypertrichosis

You witness a sudden growth of hair all over your body, making you look just like a beast. Now your scent is so strong that you are unapproachable: people will have a hard time standing near you! In exchange you have developed an extraordinary sense of smell, which allows you to sniff out prey and detect distant scents, exactly like animals do.

3-2 Photosensitivity

Your epidermis has grown sensible even to the faintest ray of sunshine, and you start avoiding open spaces during the day, making sure that every inch of your skin is covered by clothes, rags, or bandages. Being exposed to even faint light can cause you to break out in painful sores and burns. Now and then, when you withstand the pain of sunlight for a few seconds, you can see mystical symbols in the light, like a vision or a dream that points you on the right path and answers your deep questions.

3-3 Broken horns

A set of horrible horns sprout on your head and crack at the base, an indelible mark of your bond with the devil.
It will be hard to hide this new and diabolical feature of yours. One piece of good news: the evil nature of this "gift" can allow you to walk for short stretches without leaving any footprints, and cause everything that leaves your body (blood, hair, saliva, and even severed limbs) to vanish in an instant.

3-4 Ravenous worm

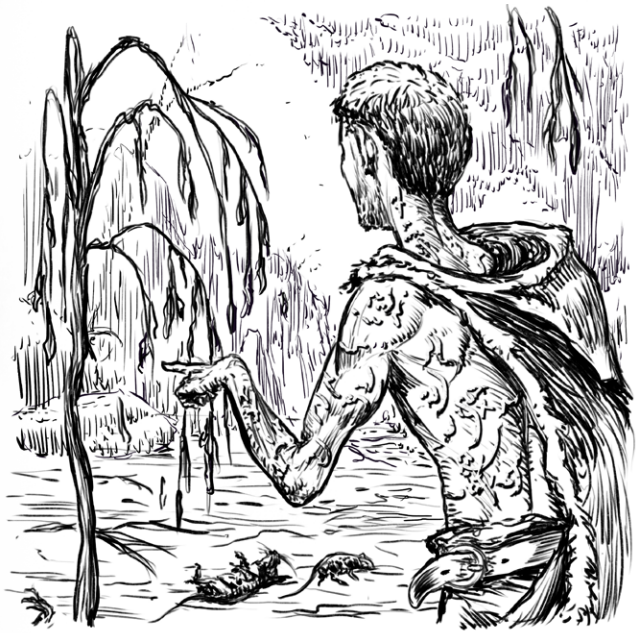
You are burdened by endless hunger, a feeling that harasses you constantly, forcing you to keep eating.
Your endless search for food to satiate your appetite could become a problem, considering the famine of this time and age. But in exchange, you can ingest anything, regardless of whether it's edible, tough, or lethal: things simply vanish in your gullet!

3-5 Ritual flaying

You notice that mysterious scars looking like ritualistic symbols have begun appearing on your body. These scars keep opening up, requiring continuous medication to heal over. The symbols appearing on your body are probably the sign of an ancient curse: you have developed a deadly touch that causes plants to wither, small animals to die, people to fall ill, or their conditions to grow worse.

3-6 Alien eye

You feel a weird itch on the back of your head, and when you go to scratch it, you realize an additional eye has sprouted there. This mutation is completely monstrous and horrible, but simultaneously very useful: from now on, you can see things happening behind you for stretches of time, and you can never be taken by surprise.



4-1 Anthill

You realize that insects are attracted to you, like ants toward honey, like moths to a flame. An unspecified number of bugs comes to cover you, walking all over your body, and making social interactions extremely complicated. But now you can try your luck, scouring your body for an insect that could prove useful in a specific situation. Be careful: collateral effects of your power are absolutely unpredictable and random!

4-2 Lunar magnetism

The moon has begun eerily fascinating you, influencing you on a deep, instinctive level thanks to its magnetism tapping into your subconscious: on cloudless nights, when the moon is at least partially visible, you become catatonic.
If you try to sleep on one of these nights, it's likely that you will have prophetic nightmares, giving you glimpses into the future.

4-3 Snake-like skin

Some parts of your body get inexplicably covered with scales, but the color of your skin is unaffected. This horrible mutation comes with a small advantage at least: your arms become like two snakes, they can move in all directions and act as if they contained no bones at all, and you can even stretch them up to double their usual reach.

4-4 Disembodiment

You are involved in a series of inexplicable events: your shadow has disappeared and no source of light can cause you to project one. When you walk in front of a mirror, you have no reflection, and people sometimes fail to notice you.
In some situations, these three drawbacks can prove actually useful: you are hard to see, and your face is easy to forget.

4-5 Parasite

A horrible fungus has taken root in your body.
It covers wide areas and, if you try to eradicate it, it instantly appears on a different patch of skin. The fungus produces extremely powerful hallucinogenic spores, and you have learned to control their emission. You can release them into the air, but their effect is unpredictable, and they affect you as well as others.

4-6 Black tongue

Your tongue becomes blackish, an absolutely unnatural color, and swells so much that it takes up your entire mouth.
From now on, at absolutely random intervals, the black tongue will influence your words, and your speech will sound incomprehensible and horrifying. But now, your tongue can articulate sentences that overcome common communication channels, allowing you to converse with crazy, desperate, and mentally ill people.

5-1 Dying wing

A small, atrophic wing with no feathers sprouts on your back and causes you endless shooting pains. It can easily be noticed by others, causing indescribable dismay in them: you will often be held up as a monster and abomination.
However, your deformity allows you to glide for short distances and to fall unharmed rom heights that should be fatal.

5-2 Drowned body

Your body bloats suddenly, turning black and blue, like the corpse of a drowned man. You look hideous: like a dead body that has spent a long time in sea water. Your lungs are full of water, which invariably overflows from your mouth, and it seems like they can never be emptied. To make up for it, you have gained the ability to stay underwater for long stretches of time without breathing.

5-3 Sexual organ

You have a monstrous penis, or huge breasts filled with milk and, at night, you are persecuted by Succubi eager for children, or infants hungry for milk. With this curse, you have also developed the ability to immediately recognize when someone is pregnant (even if they aren't showing yet) or infertile, and your touch can miraculously heal infertility.

5-4 Recklessness

You have lost all sense of self-preservation, cannot recognize actions that would cause you harm, and often end up in situations that put you and others at risk.
Inexplicably, when you manage to solve one of the debacles you cause yourself, fate rewards you with small strokes of luck, resulting in unexpected finds, or unforeseen help.

5-5 Plutomania

You develop an obsession with wealth and money.
You crave and yearn for every expensive thing: gold, jewelry, gemstone, and treasures of all kinds. You realize that, together with this mania, you have developed a supernatural skill for creating small illusions that can turn absolutely worthless items into precious artifacts adorned with gems, turn pebbles into gold coins, glass shards into precious diamonds, and so on. Careful: this illusion will only last for minutes!

5-6 Claustrophobia

You develop a phobia of narrow and restricted places. It doesn't matter whether they are small rooms or natural nooks: if you ever end up in a space that limits your movements, you run the risk of passing out or going crazy. In exchange for this, you have developed the ability to break free from any grip, constraint, or rope used to bind you.

6-1 Twisted eyesight

In your eyes, the size of anything you see is distorted, you alternate feeling too small for your surroundings or too big to exist. You will have to coexist with the constant sensation of being a dwarf among giants or a giant among dwarfs. With this mental dysfunction, you have also developed the power of reducing or increasing the size of inanimate objects when you touch them.

6-2 Wandering hand

One of your hands is controlled by a force other than your own intention: it sometimes does unspeakable things which you stand no chance to oppose. You can also infect other people with this curse, sharing your misfortune with a simple handshake. However, the effect will be temporary on others, and vanish after a short time.

6-3 Hypersexuality

You develop a compulsion for sex in all its expressions, so much so that you have become completely dependent on it, and seek sexual interactions with anyone you meet, regardless of their age or gender. You have acquired the ability to change your gender at will: you can be a man or a woman and look however you like, changing your appearance and features to suit your taste. The problem is that this transformation lasts for an unpredictable amount of time, and you won't usually notice when you revert to your original appearance.

6-4 Cannibalism

Food repulses you, and you can no longer eat anything but human flesh: it's not a choice for you, it's a need and you keep needing larger amounts in order to feel satisfied.
Now that you know what people taste like, you can recognize small details in those standing before you, noticing when they are not fully human, or if they are hiding behind an illusion of some kind.

6-5 Albinism

Your skin suddenly loses its natural color, and your eyes turn a pinkish red: you are an albino in all ways, and this characteristic will cause you to be rejected by other people. In exchange for this, you have developed the ability to exert a peculiar influence on the creatures from the dark world: they find you approachable and pleasant, and it won't be hard for you to find friends among them.

6-6 Evidence of holiness

Bleeding wounds appear on your wrists and ankles, requiring frequent bandages to be kept dry. You sometimes cry tears of blood, distressing anyone who sees you. But now you have also developed the supernatural ability to animate holy effigies (statues of angels, portraits of saints, religious icons, etc.). You have no control on what you animate, and the effect will only last for a moment, but it will certainly be profane and blasphemous.

V. Playing as Drifters

In this Chapter, we will examine all mechanics that can be used in a game of Memento Mori. The contents of this chapter should be made clear to all Players because, by bringing into play the game system, the rules influence their choices and the way Drifters interact with the world of the game.

Roll Results

When the Narrator decides its time to make a roll and establishes the Difficulty to pass, the ball goes to the Player. Their first job is to narrate how their character approaches the situation, so that they can determine which Organ will be called into play, and add up how many d6s they will have to roll. After rolling all d6s, they will also have to tally up their Successes.

DIFFICULTIES SUMMED UP

Difficulty 1: Demanding action.
Difficulty 2: Complex action.
Difficulty 3: Extremely complex action.
Difficulty 4: Almost impossible action.
Difficulty 5+: Action beyond reach.

Successes

Each d6 that rolls a score equal to or above the Threshold is a Success. (the Threshold is usually 5).

Each **black d6** that rolls a score of **6** is considered a **Dark Success**, which is worth as much as 3 normal Successes and deals 1BC.

Each **black d6** that rolls a score of **1** is considered a **Dark Failure** and erases one Success scored with another d6.

After all Successes have been added up, you can see if the roll was successful. Let us consider all possibilities:

- **If the number of Successes is lower than the Difficulty, the roll has failed.** The Drifter does not overcome the obstacle and the situation gets worse: the threat grows, the Drifter has caught the attention of someone, the item they were competing for is lost, their psychophysical conditions worsen;
- **If the number of Successes is higher than the Difficulty, the roll has succeeded.** The Drifter has fully reached their goal;
- **If the number of Successes is equal to the Difficulty, the roll has succeeded but the Drifter will have to pay a small price.** The Drifter overcomes the obstacle, but puts themselves in more danger, leaves some tracks behind, or creates hardships for an ally.

Someone still reads runes in secret

The person responsible for narrating the consequences of a roll also changes depending on the result and the Narrator is not necessarily in the lead.

- If the roll has failed, **the Narrator will describe what happens to the Drifter to everyone at the table**;
- If the roll has succeeded, **the Player will describe how the Drifter has overcome the challenge to everyone at the table**;
- If the roll has succeeded at a cost, **the Player will describe how the Drifter has overcome the challenge and discuss with the Narrator about the price to pay**.

Success Threshold

The Success Threshold, also simply called Threshold, is the minimum score a player needs to roll on a d6 to gain a Success.

If, by rolling a d6, the Player gets a result equal to or greater than the Threshold, then they have scored a Success. The standard Threshold for rolls in this game is 5.

Threshold Penalties and Bonuses

Bonuses and Maluses to the Threshold are crucial tools in the hands of the Narrator. Their main purpose is giving the Narrator a way to influence Players' rolls by adding an element to their advantage or detriment. As such, Bonuses and Penalties represent temporary situations (physical, psychological, or circumstantial) that the Player must juggle to their advantage.

Threshold Bonus Example:
A Drifter is standing at the foot of the bed where the handsome heir of Baron Darcy de Knayth is sleeping. They are there to kidnap him. The Player takes the word and states they want to quickly grab the boy by blocking his hands and covering his mouth. This happens automatically, but the boy immediately starts struggling against their grip, and the Narrator asks the Player to make a roll. Given the circumstances and the fact that the boy has just woken up and is not completely awake, the Narrator grants a Threshold Bonus.

Threshold Penalty Example:
The Drifters have sneaked into an ancient and dangerous sabbath with many supernatural creatures. Their objective, the Bramble Witch, is right in front of them. They decide to wait for the right moment to strike, but this forces them to stay there, watch the ritual, and breathe in the smokes and vapors that fill the air. As soon as they go to pick up the dice to make their move, the Narrator reveals to them that the noxious hallucinogenic fumes will inflict a Threshold Penalty to the roll.

How does this work?

Threshold Bonuses lower the Threshold by 1, Penalties increase it by 1.

The Narrator can always apply as many Bonuses and Penalties as they wish, but **the Threshold can never go below 2 or above 6**.

On some occasions, Bonuses and Penalties can occur simultaneously. When this happens, you just have to add them all up to know the new Threshold.

Example:
If the Narrator applies a Bonus and a Penalty of equal value, in the end, the Threshold will remain the same. But if the Narrator applies 2 Bonuses and 1 Penalty, it means the situation is still in the Players' favor, and the Threshold goes down by 1.

Positioning in the Fiction

When playing Memento Mori, as with a number of other role-playing games, it's important for the Players to be aware of their characters' role and position in the story. **The positioning of a character is like a snapshot that represents their collocation, their actions, and how those interact with other characters they share the scene with.**

When used, the rules described in upcoming pages influence the positioning of the characters in the story. Following these rules, the Players can collocate their Drifters in generic "favorable", "unfavorable", "cooperating", or "risky" situations. But these terms run the risk of being seen as empty labels, if they are not accompanied by descriptions that position them in the context of the story. **Players should always describe** (or remember) **how their position in the story has changed**, so that they can appropriately justify the obtained bonuses and penalties.

Calling on the Dream

In some situations, the protagonists of our stories can't possibly accept failure. Moments that decide the fate of their adventure, when the powers of Beyond the Veil reach unimaginable levels, exploding in flashes of inconceivable power.

These are the junctures when Drifters can tap into the source of their purest power: the yearning for their Dream.

Players can call on this power only once in each gaming session.

This ability can only be activated after rolling d6s, regardless of the result the dice led to. It allows a Player to overturn the result by influencing the result of white d6s.

By calling on the Dream, all d6s that did not roll a Success are turned into Successes. For every d6 transformed this way, the Drifter suffers 1BC.

> *Example:*
> *A Player just rolled the dice, and they are now staring at a failing result. But that roll will decide the outcome of a crucial action that could change the fate of the game. They then decide to summon their Dream, turning 3d6 (a 3, a 2, and a 4) into as many Successes (any result above the Threshold). This huge abuse of power will cost them 3BC, but grant them the success they need.*

When they call upon their Dream Drifters are usually facing great but conquerable challenges (as it would be meaningless to employ this rule when there is no chance to meet the Difficulty of the roll).

When calling on their Dream, it's important for the Player in the spotlight to add plenty of details to emphasize their triumph. After all, they managed to obtain this success thanks to their determination and the ever-living hope in their great Dream.

THE MAIDENS OF THE WOODS

If Nymphs are fresh and joyous, Silphs are indomitable and light, and Undines are seductive and fatal, Vily can be all those things combined. Born of the souls of maidens who die from heartache after being jilted at the altar or after the death of their children, these creatures appear like tempting wood spirits, immune to disease, age, exorcisms, and profane weapons. They are as enchanting and light as birds, they can speak with all creatures of creation, with the hearts of mountains, the fearless treetops, and even with minor deities tied to Places. They are dangerous, as they never avoid charming anyone who looks at them, and only rarely grant the gift of flight to the subjects of their spell. Many stories tell of legendary heroes who, thanks to a Vila, were granted passage through inaccessible locations by flying in the night sky. «Look up, traveler. Swim in the air as you would in the dark water of a lake. Dive into the sky and catch the stars, small gems that glimmer in the deep. Drown in the clouds. Nobody can stop you, they are yours. You are free.» They say this is what a Vila whispered to a human who struck a deal with her. And so he could fly over the lands of the kingdom and find his way home. A happy ending, at first glance... Unfortunately, from that day and until his death, the human would never love anyone as much as he loved her on that one night.

Fighting

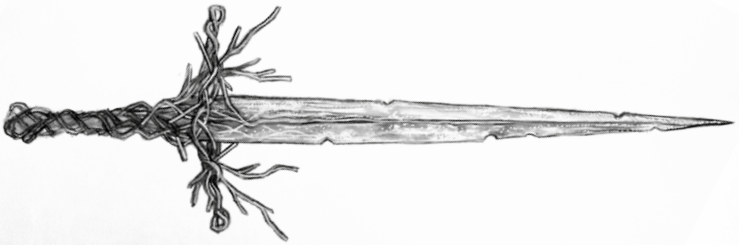
In Memento Mori there is no difference between action scenes and other scenes. Fights, much like other hectic situations, should not interrupt the pace of the game.

The process of narration continues just as before: the Narrator asks Players to make rolls when creatures or other characters in the game act against the Drifters, and Players can trigger rolls by taking actions that have an uncertain outcome given the stress of the situation.

There is no need to establish a specific order for actions during combat. The Narrator should simply manage the conversation with Players by following logic and staying coherent with the flow of actions in the scene.

> *Example:*
> *The Drifters are running away from a group of guards on horseback after being caught while trying to exhume some bodies in the royal cemetery. After several unsuccessful attempts to escape, the Narrator speaks up: "Time is up! You've been too slow and they have caught up with you, as soon as they are in reach, they begin striking!" The guards attack. From now on, the Narrator will alternate between the two sides of the squabble, describing the guards' actions and asking for the Drifters'. Different situations could also call for a more flexible order of actions or give the Drifters several consecutive chances.*

Up next, we will describe some simple guidelines you should follow when building and managing conflicts.



Approach Takes Priority

During combat it's especially important for Players to describe the actions of the Drifters in detail to allow for the game mechanics to work best. For example: "I follow them", "I block them", "I threaten them", or "I attack" and "I parry" are statements with no pathos, that don't allow us to visualize the moment fully.

Players should use the narrative freedom to describe their actions as a tool which allows them to leverage their best attributes by calling them into play in different ways.

Example:
A Drifter is facing an Accadian Ghoul. All around them, the villagers are running away in terror. It's the Player's turn, and they state: "I grab a villager, drag him toward the monster and throw him in front of it when I am close enough. The Ghoul immediately focuses on the closest prey, giving me a chance to attack it. I use Viscera!" On top of being appropriate and fun, this description tells us about how ruthless and cold-hearted the Drifter is being.

Exchanging Blows

Assaulting or choosing to attack a target (even if you are not doing so at close range) is bound to expose both sides to some risk. **When you attack someone, you aren't simply striking at them, you are also subjecting yourself to their counterattack.** Similarly, being attacked gives you a chance to repel your opponent and strike back. **This process is called an exchange of blows**, and it is the basic rule for combat.

Players will always have to meet the Difficulty, whether they are attacking or defending against an attack. The result of their roll will determine who lands the blow.

Some creatures can only be harmed by a stone blade

Damage and Hit Points

Much like for all other actions, the Narrator is called to objectively determine the skill and danger level of an opponent and thus establish their **Difficulty**.

If the Player rolls a number of Successes greater than the Difficulty, they deal a number of Hit Points (HP in short) **equal to the positive differential**.

Example:
The Player tries to defend against an enemy attack, makes their roll, and scores 4 Successes. They easily overcome the Difficulty level, which was 2. As such, on top of avoiding damage, they will also deal 2HP!

If the Player rolls a number of Successes less than the Difficulty, they suffer a number of BC equal to the negative differential.

Example:
The Player charges in, but they only roll one Success. As we established that the Difficulty is 2, this means the enemy lands a counterattack and deals 1 BC.

If the Player rolls a number of Successes equal to the Difficulty, they deal 1HP but must pay a price. They could create an advantageous situation for their opponent, they could lose sight of the target, or they could suffer 1BC.

Example:
The Player is targeted by a blow from an opponent and, when rolling the dice, scores a number of successes equal to the Difficulty. They deal 1HP to the monster but must pay a small price. The Drifter bumps into a torch, which falls to the ground and starts a small fire.

An opponent is defeated when its HP are down to 0. The Player who deals the last blow is free to choose whether they want to spare their opponent, kill them, or make them harmless. Simply put, they are free to do with the opponent as they please.

NOT ONLY COUNTERATTACKS

The Narrator and Players are free to come up with any type of expedient to justify even the strangest exchanges of blows. For example, a Drifter who attacks a Harpy from a distance and fails the roll could suffer BC not directly because of the creature, but because of some winged horrors that swarm around him.

Creating Advantage

The rule for creating advantage manages all actions a Player described which are intended to give an edge to their ally or allies.

Blocking a Wilderness Devil will make them more vulnerable, throwing ash on a Lamia will temporarily impair its invisibility, and shining a light in a cave full of Alû will leave them blind and scrambling.

As such, creating an advantage is a heroic and dangerous action that can be taken without rolling dice. The Player simply describes how their Drifter exposes themselves to danger to make other characters' actions easier, and states that they are creating an advantage.

In game terms, creating advantage is an action that sets up the field for a Threshold Bonus. The Drifter who takes advantage of this situation with their next action, can rely on the Bonus.

However, actions taken to create an advantage come at a cost: the Drifter always suffers 1BC. This price represents the sacrifice, the commitment, and the risk taken by the Drifter to help their companions.

A VERSATILE RULE

The rule for creating advantage can be used in almost every situation, including outside of combat. Drifters are always free to act to help their companions and give them a better chance at succeeding in an arduous feat.

Example:
In the stables of a local lord, the Drifters are fighting against a group of cultists devoted to Prince Hagazi, Silent Scream, Mother of Horrors. A Player decides to set some horses free and goad them into a gallop straight through the exit from which the enemies are entering. They state that they are doing this to create an advantage for their companions.
Another Player decides to make the best out of the situation and describes how their Drifter jumps into the fray, using the running animals as cover to surprise the enemy. For this dangerous action, they can rely on a Threshold Bonus granted by the character who helped.

Equipment and items

As you already know, in this game we don't really care about managing and controlling Drifters' equipment. These seem like negligible factors when compared to the powers and miracles of Beyond the Veil.

This means that, as far as the rules are concerned, it makes no difference whether a character attacks with a sword or with their fists. Obviously, a Drifter's equipment is crucial when you need to imagine the appearance of your character and it helps you understand what they can rely on during the story.

Why is equipment "almost" important?

The Narrator can always choose to place especially relevant items at any place in their story. After all, the magic of Beyond the Veil can easily permeate inanimate objects, especially crafted artifacts. This is why Forged Spirits and cursed vestiges are common occurrences. When Drifters come in contact with these items, they immediately recognize the power they contain and it only takes a couple uses for them to understand their potential.

The Narrator is free to choose how to manage these magical items, or abominable items, as they are commonly called: they can either grant a Threshold Bonus, have constant effects and limited uses, like adding a d6 in set circumstances or in exchange of BC. They should choose the option that best suits the tone and features they want for their story.

> *Example:*
> *When slain, a Spirit of the Wild Hunt can grant the Drifters one of their secret bone weapons (you can learn more about this and similar secrets in Codex Gigas). These magical bones have the power to change shape and turn into a regular weapon up to seven times larger than itself, however, at the end of the fight, they will crumble into dust.*
> *Considering how ephemeral these effects are, the Narrator can establish that the weapon will grant an additional d6 (always black) for the length of the fight.*

Opponents and Threats

Here is a short list of opponents that Drifters may face during their adventures.

VILLAGER • Diff. 1 - HP 3

An Unaware like many who is not used to combat. Poorer people are often malnourished and debilitated. In such cases, the HP of villagers could even fall to 2.

CITY GUARD • Diff. 1 - HP 4

A vigilant and armed Unaware, trained to watch over the streets of a town and always keep their eyes open.

KNIGHT • Diff . 1 - HP 5

An Unaware clad in armor who protects the realm and follows a code of honor. When in a group and on horseback, their Diff. rises to 3.

WAR VETERAN • Diff. 2 - HP 4

An Unaware who survived a war, and was forged in the heat of battle. When at the head of a group of guards or knights, he grants them 1 additional HP.

CROOK • Diff. 1 - HP 4

An Unaware outlaw, sketchy and with a penchant for subterfuge. Skilled at hiding to lay in ambush, or at disguising themselves as someone else.

ASSASSIN • Diff. 2 - HP 3

An Unaware who earns money for their talent as a spy, killer, and infiltrator. They are hard to spot and, when taking a victim by surprise, always impose a Disadvantage.

ALLEGED WITCH • Diff. 2 - HP 3

An Unaware woman who obtained mild supernatural gifts thanks to a deal with a creature from Beyond the Veil. She could have one Drifter Gift (pg. 94).

RESTLESS SPIRIT • Diff. 2 - HP 4

The tormented and dangerous ghost of an Unaware. It can move through objects. Attacks against it made with common weapons always have a Disadvantage.

PLAGUE SPECTER • Diff. 3 - HP 3

This spectral shadow vaguely resembles an Unaware dead from the plague. When fighting near diseased people, mass graves, and Hecatomb Fields, its Diff. rises to 4.

RESURRECTED FRIAR • Diff. 3 - HP 4

An Unaware friar brought back to life through necromancy. Its presence is impossible to sense unless he decides to manifest.

POSSESSED UNAWARE • Diff. 1 - HP 4

An Unaware possessed by a creature from Beyond the Veil. The Diff. can rise to 2 if the mortal body consumed by possession is nearing its death.

INCOMPLETE • Diff. 4 - HP 4

A Drifter who was completely overcome by Corruption. A terrifying opponent who can wield a Drifter Gift (pg. 94)

SPY IMP • Diff. 1 - HP 3

A small creature working for a Host or someone much more powerful than itself. It's a messenger, a spy, a scout, and a flying thief.

BEAST FROM BEYOND THE VEIL • Diff. 4 - HP 7

A mighty creature from Beyond the Veil only guided by feral predatory instincts. It grows more fierce as it gets wounded.

SPECTRAL HOUND • Diff. 2 - HP 5

A mastiff sent to hunt someone with orders to drag it to its master. It has a sixth sense that allows them to find Gates.

SHAPESHIFTER • Diff. 3 - HP 5

A creature from Beyond the Veil who can appear as an Unaware. When choosing to use their real strength in combat, they temporarily lose their human appearance.

End of a Drifter

Sometimes, Corruption consumes Drifters before they can manage to reach the end of their story or catch a glimpse of their Dream. When this happens, everything that made them human vanishes, leaving behind a foul creature made of pure Nightmares.

When a Drifter blackens the last Organ Slot or the last Slot tied to Name, Bonds, and Virtues, they have reached their end.

When this happens, the Narrator should bring the story to a halt and describe how the Drifter's transformation reaches its peak, turning them into a member of the Hosts from Beyond the Veil.

> *Example:*
> *These are the final moments of the adventure, and a Drifter has blackened all Organ Slots but one, they have a single white Slot in Heart. Their corruption has reached an unsustainable level, they make another roll and, because they are now rolling many black d6s, they score yet another Dark Success. Their Blood fills up with corruption. The last Slot turns black.*
> *The Narrator stops the flow of actions and, together with the Player, describes the Drifter's end. In their last moments of humanity, the character regains all memories of their past and whispers "I'm sorry, sweet sister..." before ultimately transforming into an abomination. What will the other Drifters do, when faced with such a monster?*

The end of a Drifter is something Players can always try to avoid. Corruption is a process, it can be slowed down by using less corrupted attributes or by refraining from using Gifts. As such, it is crucial for all Players to realize that this is a possibility and it's best if this is made clear when the adventure begins.

However, the tension that comes from rising levels of Corruption might, sooner or later, bring to light different aspects of a Drifter, allowing Players to slowly realize the price they have to pay, session after session.

THE PEAT BOG NYMPH

Her body is so black, that it stains anything it touches. She leaves her dark imprint on the coat of grazing animals, on windows and doors, or on the skin of people, and nothing will ever erase that mark. She carries the same reddish black of deep peat, and exudes the same smell. Fortunately, she is rarely seen outside of the bogs, where she usually stands guard over lost treasures, the bodies of animals, of simple men, and of great kings. The latter are her favorite, and she will darken their skin, tissues, and insides, preserving them for eternity in exchange for their nourishment. Indeed, the Nymph will suck away their bones, turning them into a white sugary nectar with the mere touch of her lips. The bodies conserve a shape similar to when they were alive, but they turn black in the process. And that's when she tenderly lies with them, decomposing into foul fumes, and filling the empty recesses of their bodies. Thanks to these armors of black flesh, she can abandon her bog to search for a better one, or for more abandoned bodies nearby. It's not unusual to see pitch black corpses, still wearing golden crowns on their heads and golden medallions on their chests, as they steal corpses off of battlefields and drag them to the nearest bog.

VI. On the Nature of the Cosmos

The historical setting of Memento Mori is home to threats that originate from the horrors of European folklore, the dark fairy tales, and the pagan superstitions of the Middle Ages. Otherworldly creatures, cursed relics, and dark entities, these are all real and dangerous. They are always one step away from being discovered by Unawares, and ready to wash away with blood all traces of themselves.

This chapter will explore the reality that lies beyond the Veil and define its points of contact with the Unaware world. The relationship between the worlds lies at the heart of this setting, because Drifters are the only ones who can freely access both worlds, becoming the epicenter of supernatural conflicts, quests, and subterfuges.

Aside from a description of the nature of landscapes and creatures of this dangerous land, you will also find an overview of the great events that shaped it over centuries. These should offer the Narrator prompts to involve the Players in a story that touches on the dilemmas and hard choices Drifter need to face.

Beyond the Veil

Beyond everything human beings believe they know, there is an invisible world, also known as the Subtle Realm, the Ephemeral Land, or the Gray Realm. This world lies "Beyond the Veil" of common human perceptions. Picture the veil as a metaphysical and almost illusory border, able to both divide the worlds and hide the passageways that lead from one to the next. In truth, these are two parallel dimensions, and they coexist and coincide without actually overlapping.

For example: a common man, an Unaware, is kneeling in their bedroom saying nightly prayers. In the same place, on the other side of the Veil, there is a dark cave filled with slithering creatures of the night who wait for the sunset, when they can fly out on the hunt. Beneath a trapdoor in the floor of the man's room, there's a secret passage decorated with ancient seals of power, through which some can access the world Beyond the Veil. However, the Unaware cannot see the trap door and, even if he were to fall right through it, he still couldn't cross the Veil to reach the world beyond. The two realities are separate, and the events in each of them are completely unrelated. However, if a Drifter, who belongs to both worlds, were to ever find that trapdoor, they could actually reach the cave and the complex maze of infested tunnels located in the same spot as the house of the Unaware man.

Two connected worlds

The world Beyond the Veil, also simply Beyond the Veil, is a dark reflection for the real world. It's a physical world, ruled by laws that appear similar to those governing the world of humans, and at the same time, a supernatural dimension that mystically shapes and is shaped by stories and folklore. Indeed, it's ascertained that myths, legends, fairy tales, and superstitions of the human world always have a flesh and blood equivalent Beyond the Veil. If one were to think anthropocentrically, they could suppose that these creatures are actually born of the very nightmares of humans, but it's objectively more likely that the forays into our world of such monstrous creatures, gradually, and through the ages, contributed to creating anecdotes and stories.

In the end, this resulted in folklore that pretty closely mimics their appearance, habits, and dark appetites. It's obviously impossible to establish with certainty what existed first, and what relationship connects the creator of the myth and the myth itself. Either way, the monsters exist, and they are closer than humans think.

Hunting for Gates

The supernatural creatures that inhabit this world are powerful spirits, and they often harbor ill intentions. Many such creatures are aware of the Unaware world, and they would love to feed on the sweet flesh of their children, drink the darkest desires of murderers, and unleash the penchant for depravation of people in power. However, their ability to access this world is restricted to specific circumstances by inescapable laws of magic connected with superstitions, stories, and myths. For example: among the other creatures in the aforementioned cave, there is a Fury of the High Skies, a relentless predator. In accordance with the stories, she only shows herself when someone kills a blood relative under the new moon. When this happens, she can perceive it, abandon her lair, and slither toward the dark well at the end of the cave, emerging from the trapdoor in the bedroom of the Unaware man. She chooses not to show herself to the man, appearing like a shadow of dark smoke as she emerges from under his bed, and leaves through the window. The terrified man follows the shape with his eyes, seeing a giant she-devil suspended in the distant sky, with huge raptor-like wings sprouting from her temples.

It's possible to store memories inside a crystal

He will believe himself to be mistaken, to have dreamed the shape, or he may run to the village priest to confess and be blessed. But the Fury has gained access to this world, where she will have until the end of the new moon to find the person who spilled the blood of their relative and feed on their flesh. Just as it happens in stories about Furies. When her time runs out, she will have to return to the world Beyond the Veil by crossing the closest opening, pulled by a force that moves her body and bends her will. She will have no other choice but to return. Only the most powerful or crazed creatures, and those renegade against their world, can resist for longer periods in the mortal world.

Geography

The world Beyond the Veil presents like a heavy layer of smoke superimposed on the world we know. And in this layer, everything is dark and covered in fog, ash, and crumbling rubble. It's a landscape contaminated by the powers of the night seen in the goriest folk tales, which include faithful descriptions of stones, trees, and streams.

While Beyond the Veil is not connected to the mortal world, it should be imagined as a close fit with it. The distances and time should be equal on either side of the Veil. And this dark world does have some sort of stability, some weird geography. There are paths, rocky deserts, grim forests, and rank bodies of water. All manner of inhospitable environments exist here, and they are far worse than usually imagined or described, rife with mortal dangers that would dissuade even the most expert adventurers. It's an entire world, with diversified climate and varied habitats, one that incarnates the dark and lethal shadow of our world. For example, in the same place where there's a lush garden in the known world, Beyond the Veil you would find a rocky desert populated by reptiles that only lay eggs in freshly killed corpses of large mammals. Not really the best environment to travel to or be thrust into.

A twisted branch left on the Black Lake shores

In the Depth

This reality grows increasingly different from our own in regions located further away from Gate. Drifters are among the few creatures who can cross the threshold between worlds and explore both. Indeed, in Beyond the Veil there is one cardinal direction, and all local creatures can perceive it, it's called "depth", and it indicates how close you are to the heart of a Host, the exclusive domain of a type of creatures. You can travel on inner roads while always staying in the superficial areas of this world, but if you just take the right turn, a secret shortcut, a forbidden path through the mountains, and walk for a few days, you will reach an unknown and incomprehensible world.

Life-forms grow increasingly more alien, while the weather conditions and temperature, light, and colors, start to turn inhospitable and veer toward the unbearable. The poetic description of places of eternal torment, mad punishments, and terrible infernal landscapes are not too far from the deeper areas of Beyond the Veil.

Those lands are the theater of terrible events, and home to the most dangerous creatures. The lair of the Hosts, the court where the most noble and powerful spirits reside, the forgotten vaults that keep their treasures and sacrificial victims. These pleasant places are also home to the Prince who controls the entire Host, and to their many favorites and counselors.

One-way Paths

Drifters usually do everything in their power to avoid traveling on the paths that lead to the deeper layers of this world. There is little that can draw a human being in that direction, considering how hard life is, even in the most superficial layers of Beyond the Veil. There are rare stories about such journeys, many of which are little more than pretexts to describe how depraved some Drifters become as they venture deeper into the dark world and lose their sanity and the bond to their Dream. When this happens, they end up becoming Incompletes, one of the most dangerous supernatural creatures in existence.

Ruins and Locations of Ages Past

The world that Drifters can explore promises them power, answers, and benefits, sometimes even salvation.

The deadly destiny that befalls all plague victims is as absolute in the Unaware world as it is relative in the dark world Drifters discover. However, a human from the middle ages will often feel disoriented here, with no landmarks in sight. For example, they will often stumble into ruins from unknown fallen civilizations. Architectures unfamiliar to anyone from the old continent, abandoned temples with huge effigies of ancient gods, mounds that hide intricate mazes, and castles built using materials no human could ever shape. While the desolate landscapes of the two worlds can sometimes appear similar, Beyond the Veil there are ruins from alien cultures of distant times, but there is also no evidence of more evolved forms of civilization. Most often, you'll find the Waterside Scalies living in something that looks like a village on stilts from the bronze age, or a community of Satyrs from the Mountains who inhabit half-crumbling buildings shaped like truncated cones, similar to Sardinian nuraghe. There are similar places everywhere. They belong to eras that greatly predate the Middle Ages and, regardless of their geographical origin, are scattered all over.

It almost seems like the forgotten places of the Unaware world, the ones that get forsaken and are seen as cursed, reappear Beyond the Veil. Additional proof that it is a physical world, but also a reflection of everything shunned by humans.

Gates and Tears in the Veil

When the passages are stable and their position and size do not change, they are called Gates. The nature of such openings is mysterious, but appears to be tied to the dark powers that, in ancient times, tried to bring the People from Beyond the Veil into the Unaware world. There are portals, still active since that time, scattered all over the old continent and around the Mediterranean Sea.

The Unaware cannot see these Gates, even though they sometimes appear like forgotten doors, hidden trapdoors, cracks in the rock, shadowy spots among the trees, forsaken wells, caves hidden behind waterfalls, and secret passages behind cascading vines. The Unaware can walk by them frequently, sometimes build houses around them, but they will still ignore them. Drifters sense nearby Gates like an ominous feeling.

There are drafts of supernatural energies blowing through them, tickling at their corruption and instigating their powers to a rough awakening. Finding a Gate and stepping through it is easy enough for Drifters, but they do not have the power to seal or close such passages.

Tears in the Veil

The nature of Tears in the Veil is completely different. To visualize them, you must picture the Veil like an extremely thin gauze-like fabric, a delicate barrier between the worlds. Here and there, this barrier can tear, only to regenerate after a short time. The Veil rips, flaps, and flutters, billowing with cosmic winds, and allowing the two realities to come into contact. Where this happens, a Drifter can see the other side even before stepping through the rip. If the Gates are like fixed doors, Tears are windows between the worlds which never remain in the same place for long. Near to the location of new Tears in the Veil, you can usually find a great concentration of supernatural fauna and a scarcity of humans.

Hecatomb

In places where a bloody event of any kind has led to the sudden death of a vast group of Unawares, Beyond the Veil becomes closer to the mortal world, permeating it. The Veil, soaked in the blood of human sacrifices, sometimes shrinks, making it so that, in a small area, there is no difference between the two realities. **A Hecatomb Field –** also known as a locus horridus or locus terribilis – could be a ghost village that fell victim to a massacre at the hands of barbarian pillagers, the clearing where a mass human sacrifice took place, the mass grave behind a plague hospital, or a narrow valley where two rival clans wiped each-other out. It's any place of sickness or tragedy, one only remembered in stories steeped in blood and death, populated by the sounds of screams from those who suffered untold pain, and centered around the violent deaths that happened there. Previous stories of that place lose all importance, from now on, it will forever be remembered for the massacre that took place there. Drifters who happen to cross such places can instantly perceive the dark nature that defines them. There, the spirits of the dead are trapped in the mortal world like ghosts, and they are always visible. Often, they appear like nothing more than trembling shadows, foggy shapes, or wisps of lights, but if the living ascribe more relevance to these places, the ghosts grow more defined.

Tormented spirits

Usually, when a Drifter addresses one of these spirits, they immediately gain the ability to speak. This obviously doesn't imply that they are always well intentioned or good. Many spirits come from the place of the massacre, but others travel to it, even from very far, to find refuge from their endless torment in the Hecatomb Fields. These ghosts are more than the souls of the dead, they have something that ties them to reality like a curse and an obsession: torment, vengeance, unfinished business they never managed to deal with while living. Their only hope to reach the afterlife – something that couldn't be further from Beyond the Veil and which nobody knows anything about – is to beseech for help others, who have yet to leave the land of the living but already reek of death.

If a Drifter fulfills the request of a spirit, they will be compensated before the spirit ascends to the other state of existence, and transported to anywhere in the world Beyond the Veil. These "Virgils" of sorts are the most efficient way to travel Beyond the Veil, as no place is unreachable to the dead. This means that, when they turn cruel due to Corruption and crazed to reach their Dream, many Drifters become the cause of huge massacres just so they can create a Hecatomb field and seal a deal with a ghost.

The Antechamber

Being a Drifter means having access to a source of raw, uncontrollable power. Often, due to their inexperience in managing such power, Drifters can release terrifying supernatural phenomena. Their magic gets out of hand, unleashing horrors onto the world around them like a divine scourge. When these violent manifestations run rampant, there's the remote chance that they can summon a place of pure madness, one that belongs neither to the Unaware world nor to Beyond the Veil. In an instant, the Drifter and anyone close to them, both allies and foes, will be catapulted into a small dream-like realm and vanish from the world where they stood just before.

The Antechamber almost always appears like an impossible maze, where the laws of physics are unstable, and spatial paradoxes are commonplace. Just imagine a nightmare drawn by Escher, where reality is continuously fragmented into puzzle pieces, revealing endless optical illusions, fake distances, and misleading perspectives. This place of pure folly is not empty of life. In the same moment as it gets summoned by the Drifter, it populates with figures from their past, manifestations of their fears, and their most guarded secrets. Depending on what inhabits the Drifter's mind, this maze will appear like an abandoned mine, a fairytale castle with hundreds of rooms, an old creepy manor, or a huge monastery. The appearance of the place is irrelevant when confronted with what it holds. Every memory, idea, doubt, and conflict in the mind of the subject that created it will be represented through dream-like symbols. This is for all intents and purposes a mind palace, but the information it contains is only apparently easy to consult. The subconscious and the most intimate and sacred secrets of the person will be hidden in locked dungeons, narrow oubliettes guarded by sinister keepers, or impenetrable treasure vaults.

To escape from this trap of the mind, people usually need to solve an enigma tied to what looms darkest in the mind of the host. The test could call for people to find their most painful memory in a huge flooded basement filled with chained-up chests, or to spot the only subject in a huge fresco on the ball room who is a stranger. In the first example, characters will have to find a way to locate the right chest and open the lock even if the host cannot swim, while in the second, they will have to fight the intruder in the Antechamber, as they will take shape and attack them with weapons represented in the fresco. Anything can happen in the Antechamber, so long as it is a symbolic representation of a trauma, fear, or anxiety of the protagonist.

The Nightmare Realm

The Antechamber is an abstract place, an ever-changing dream, a vision that can only be manifested by Drifters.

This phenomenon has elicited great curiosity among the students of dark magic in the world Beyond the Veil. There is no other creature who can spontaneously summon such a space. **Drifters weren't even seen as creatures of great power, before this peculiarity caught the attention of powerful entities.** Because the Antechamber is an ephemeral and temporary space, but it is also a secret atrium that leads to other places.

Some even claim that it can be used to reach a legendary dimension, a world beyond all worlds, a place known of only by Princes, mystics, visionaries, and the forgotten clerics of The-Ones-Who-Came-Before. The places where The-Ones-Who-Came-Before allegedly sought refuge at the dusk of their time. There is no description of the **Nightmare Realm**, also known as the Nightmare. It's a legendary dimension and everyone imagines and describes it differently.

It is the Valhalla of corruption, the endless torment, the all-consuming darkness. Anyone could come up with a new description or image of the Nightmare, and they will probably all be right. Because The Nightmare is everything. Everything the Unaware have ever been afraid of, mixed with everything creatures from Beyond the Veil have ever wished for.

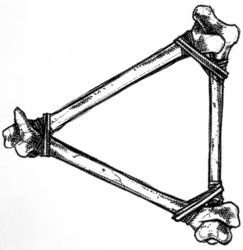
Creatures Beyond the Veil

Monsters are real, nightmares live and breathe. So long as they exist in the world Beyond the Veil, they are names whispered in terror, legends feared by all, and warning tales for children. But when they step through the border, they become real and visible to everyone, even the Unaware. These are terrible threats that can kill, torture, possess, and subjugate humans. Anyone who wields supernatural powers is somehow connected to these creatures. There are no good powers, white magic, or angelic forces. Anything that subverts the laws of nature, even things that appear miraculous or simply beneficial, is the work of a creature from Beyond the Veil, or of someone who gained power from that dark world. There is no other kind of inhuman creature outside of those who originate in that dark, deceitful, and dangerous realm. Up next, a list of creatures that retraces the mythos of Beyond the Veil and its hierarchy.

CODEX GIGAS

Beyond the Veil is a parallel reality that embodies several aspects of European lore from the Middle Ages.
You can find more than 40 different creatures, plant species, and minerals from this body of lore catalogued in Codex Gigas.

The-Ones-Who-Came-Before



Bone Triangle for conjurations

No man or woman has ever heard their names. When they inhabited the wild and grim gardens of existence, there was no living creature to utter their names. Only the most ancient spirits of ash, earth, and stone really know who this title refers to. But when the land remembers their steps, new earthquakes arise. When the sky remembers their voices, stars fall in a desperate attempt to flee into darkness. Everything in existence rebels at the idea of their memory, preferring to die rather than recall the Ancients, **The-Ones-Who-Came-Before**, the Winds of Dearth, the Sighs of Ruin, the Howls of Chaos, the Storms of Delirium, and the Abhorrent Unions.

In contrast, **all creatures inhabiting Beyond the Veil have always lived in the shadow of the ruthless legends about these absent gods**. They are terrified by any sinister hint of their survival, and avoid ever speaking about the origins of the dark world. Only the Princes tell of the Beginnings, during their holy eulogies.

Allegedly, something catastrophic happened between them, and some of them fell, unable to either die or stand back up. So, their flesh detached and became black earth, their boiling blood flowed into lakes, rivers, and waterfalls. The bones that protruded from their lifeless bodies built entire mountain ranges. Their teeth, nails, and remaining fragments became stones, some of them rare and precious. The humors of their eyes of glede filled the burning hearts of volcanoes. And the fallen hair of their heads, beards, and brows grew into cursed forests and all magical and poisonous herbs. In the cold northern regions, they say the hollowed-out cranium of the greatest of them turned into the celestial vault, while the skulls of the others turned into the skies of smaller realms of nightmare and suffering. Their brains scattered through the craniums and gave rise to storm clouds that winds can never disperse.

These are the stories, but the only things we know about them stem from the words of Princes who, as rulers and messiahs, have a bond with these ancient entities.

The Princes

Those who do not bow before their thrones calling them Princes, prefer using expressions such as "Lords of the Hosts" or "Good Masters", even though the latter is seen as inappropriate flattery among creatures of Beyond the Veil.

There is no denying that they are the most powerful creatures in the dark world. As successors of The-Ones-Who-Came-Before, the Princes are depicted in cave paintings near the sea like giants, as tall as castles, surrounded or sometimes inhabited by a myriad of low-ranking vermin. These Masters boast a connection to the Ancients, drawing to them crowds of like-minded creatures. Devils, large and small, spend time fighting each-other in an attempt to earn their praise and survive. As such, they are the Princes of abstract Courts, not of physical places. They lead groups of creatures who share similar powers, drives, purposes, and needs, but who don't necessarily inhabit a single region.

For millennia, they have been the only authorities in Beyond the Veil. Each Prince interprets omens and scans the darkness to receive visions from The-Ones-Who-Came-Before. There are even some Princes who claim to be the child of one of them, blood of the legendary, departed blood.

This could be true, or it could actually be a phenomenon akin to religious idolatry. The cult of terror toward more powerful creatures is the only thing that keeps the dark world going. There is no other law, and no other way to band together creatures so devoid of morality, honor, and virtues.

The only need that low-ranking creatures of any and all kinds share, is the need to survive and nourish their instincts. The Princes rule over creatures with a specific vice, protect those who indulge specific appetites, and sponsor specific lifestyles. And so, they are surrounded, served, and respected. They are the embodiment of dark power and use smaller depraved powers as their banners. However, the Princes are no longer the giants depicted by primordial creatures, and their transformation happened at a very precise moment in time.

The Ritual of the Year 1000

They say that, as the first millennium after the birth of Christ approached its end, Christians were overcome with fear for the end of the world. While the mass hysteria was born of a debatable interpretation of a passage in St. John's Apocalypse, the civilized world held its breath, awaiting the coming of the Antichrist and the subsequent return of the Messiah, the beginning of the end times.

The Sires of the world Beyond the Veil stoked their terror, distilled their folly, and extracted an Elixir from that mixture. And they were preparing to delight in that Elixir in their first symposium, when they were to all meet for the first time. In an already famous lagoon on the Mediterranean Sea, the Venetian lagoon, they summoned dozens upon dozens of stones as big as islands. On them, they carved their own thrones, and the celebration began under the celestial vault. And from island to island, they passed around the Elixir distilled from the fear of the end of the world, each taking a sip. But a part of the precious liquid was stolen.

The Conspiracy and the First Drifter

A smaller circle of Princes conspired in secret to hand it over to a Drifter. He was a mortal, whose destiny was marked by a deadly plague, whose Dream of discovery knew no equal at the time. He was told by a disguised figure to find a new land and anoint it with the holy water that was being entrusted to him. He was Leif Erikson, a Christian of Icelandic origins, the nephew of the man who had discovered and colonized Iceland itself. He left for Greenland, following the stories from Bjarni Herjólfsson, the man who claimed to have spotted a fertile and unexplored land in the far West. Leif bought the same ship he had used on his previous expedition, hired a crew of thirty-five men, and left to seek out the new land. When he reached North America, he set foot on a new land, one that no other human from his half of the world had ever seen before. Blessing the name of the angels who had invested him with such a quest, he poured the phial in honor of everything he, as a naive man of faith, believed to be holy.

The birth of the Pentarchy

The result was instantaneous. Once poured on that unsullied land, the contents of the phial caused the magic of the world to quake. And on the other side of the ocean, the symposium banquet that had lingered for several lunar cycles, reached its climax. The secret ritual of the five conspiring Princes could begin. The beautiful location of the symposium lit up with spectral flames that climbed to the sky like spires, disintegrating in a thousand sparks against dark clouds. The ensuing rain of dark fire consumed everything, pouring onto all guests and on the Princes themselves. And as this happened, the elixir poured in the new continent was poisoning everything. The seeds of genocide, sickness, and betrayal were scattered, the vice that leads to ruin. The trees began to lie to the natives that knew how to communicate with them. The still waters sickened them to the point they began quenching their thirst with wine. Carnal contacts with white people transmitted nameless diseases and gave birth to abominations that died quickly, taking the mother with them. On one hand, the tragedy fed a flaming ritual, on the other, it still had no end in sight. On the coast of Venice, the occasional drunkard would swear to have seen the lights of the dead, dancing on the unknown burning islands on the outskirts of the lagoon.

When the flames finally left room to the fog, the same fog that still fills the lagoon, new figures emerged, unlike anything ever seen Beyond the Veil. They looked like human children, but there was none like the others. They were big enough to do all kind of works in the fields, but not big enough to proficiently wield a sword. One was white and hairless, as polished as a bone picked clean by the sea. One had skin that looked old, had sparse gray hair, and looked prematurely aged. One was black like soot, as if they had just escaped a blaze. And one was the most beautiful and sweet girl ever seen. There were dozens of them, some pretty, some disfigured and unsettling. Some of them were covered in insects, like corpses left to rot in the sun, and others left a scented trail of flower crowns and fermenting fruit. When one of them finally spoke up, they were guided atop a rocky pulpit, as it was the smallest, but also the most beautiful of them all. And with solemn voice it said:

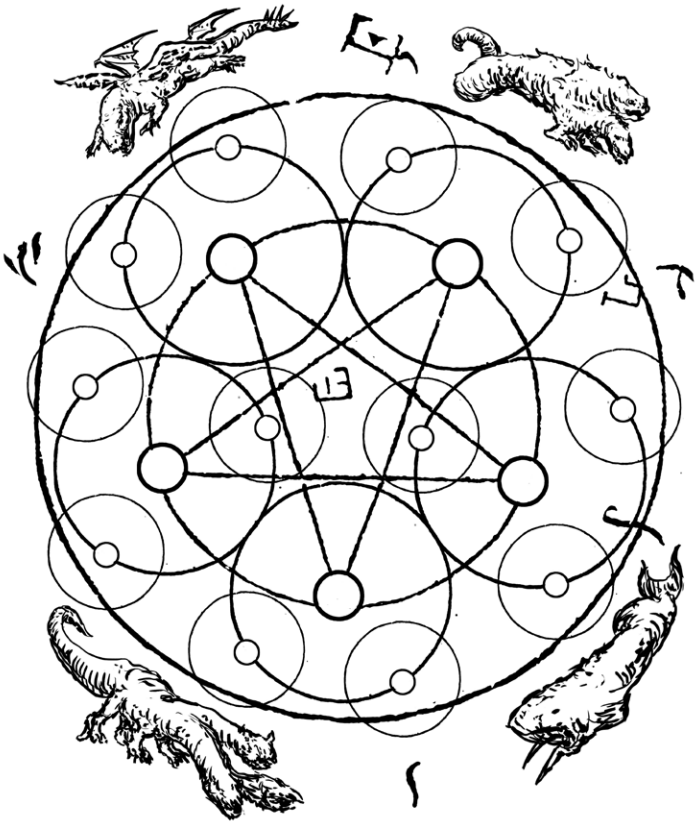
"Behold your Princes, now the Upheaval is complete. The arson at the End of the Emerged World, The Ekpyrosis, has renewed us in appearance and in the marvels within out power.

The general conflagration, the concussio mundi, marks the end of an era. The Dark Centuries of mortals end, and the world is revealed. The Drifters, carriers of Dreams, will be the instrument of our Endeavor on the world. This is the beginning of the Age of the Subtle Dominion of our world on theirs. Let us quench the hearth in each home and the bonfires in each encampment, ours is the Endless Night."

When all the survivors rejoiced, shouting and clapping with their hands, feet, wings, and tails, many Princes left. They dispersed in all directions, returning to their real thrones to begin the endeavor they had planned for. Only five of them, perhaps the most determined, but also the best known and most feared, set off together, bonded by secret shared goals that slithered in their gazes. And that is why they have been since known as "The Pentarchy", or "The Grey Star" in reference to some symbols and codes carved on stone steles.

The Five Princes and the Great Hosts

Here are the descriptions of the five Princes and the Hosts that follow them. They include names from several human mythologies, as well as contemporary geographical references. We recommend you take inspiration from this, but also adapt the names and origins to the flavor of the story you intend to tell.



His Highness Heka The Flaming Hand, He who eternally roams the night, Keeper of the secrets of the Winds of Dearth.

He rules over the Directions and Wayside Devils typical of Thrace and Anatolia but at home in every region, the Anglo-Saxon Crossroad Keepers, the Krampuses from the Alps, the Irish Peat Bog Nymphs, the entire Eternal Dance of Saturnalia in central Italy, the Breton Jan-gant-ytan, the Celtic Kelpies and all Scandinavian Deceptive Steeds, the Greek Empusai, the Khamsin and other Saharan Wind Specters, the Summit Protectors of Mount Taurus in Cappadocia, the Water Panthers in the unknown West, the English Will-o'-the-wisps and all spirit fires, the Northern Bridge Trolls, the Welsh Cŵn Annwn and other hell-hounds like Norse Gramrs and British Black Shucks.

He appears like a young boy, dressed in rags and covered in soot. Any living creature touched by him will be unable to wash away his black imprint. Nobody can look at his feet, he leaves no footprints, and his shadow looks like a multi-headed dog.

His Highness Prince Sauin The Blood Gatherer, He who holds the Red Jar, The Slithering Sire, Keeper of the secrets of the Abhorrent Unions.

He rules over the devils of orgiastic rites from Magna Graecia, the Succubi and Incubi that besieged monasteries in central Italy, all sexual demons who lead Sabbath, the Alû from Mesopotamia, the Hungarian Liderc, the Germanic Alps and all Balkan spirits of fertile fog, the Xibalba bats from the new continent, the Berber worm-devils of fever, the Germanic Mares, the Vampires from the entire old continent, the Hebraic Harpies of Naamah and all dancers of Agrat bat Mahlat, the Sirens of the Mediterranean Sea and Britain, the half-blood Cambions born of demonic unions, the Egyptian Qarinah, the bride and laboring demons from Russia, the Greek Arachnymphs, and the Turkish Al Basty.

He appears like a naked red-haired young boy, with a terracotta jar under his arm, and disproportionately large sex organs. He constantly releases the most pleasant scent ever imagined, and his body is beaded with sweat. His shadow looks like a thrashing knot of snakes.

Her Highness Maav The Honey Tongue, She who allows, Dispenser of Wealth, Keeper of the secrets of the Storms of Delirium.

She rules over the Solomonic Lying Spirits, the Pixies and the entire Little Folk of Celts and Norsemen, the fickle Scottish Spriggans, the Germanic mine Kobolds, all Goblins of all shapes and sizes, the Chimeras from all lands bathed by the Mediterranean Sea, the Indian Manticores, the Dryads from cursed forests in Thessaly, the Shqiptari Harpies, the British Wyverns, the Satyrs from Mount Othrys, the Sumerian Griffins, the cave Basilisks, the Hircocervi from Thrace, and the Assyrian Ash Sphynxes. All smaller creatures that appear innocent but are actually poisonous, evil, and bloodthirsty answer to her.

She appears like the most beautiful little girl to ever exist, only covered by a thin, always pristine, nightgown. Her hair and gown dance in the air as if they were constantly suspended under water. She has a charming smile for everyone. Her shadow is a swarm of moths.

His Highness Phanos The Hunger Mane, He who never gives back. Lord of the Skin-changers, and Keeper of the secrets of the Howls of Chaos.

He rules over the devils of wild lands, the Lycanthropes of Central Asia, the Se'irim from Chaldea, the humans in animal skins and the animals in human skins, the Akkadian Devourers, the Black Goats of the Alps, the Dragons of the Old Continent, the Saxonic Orcs who hunger for children, the invisible cats of ancient Persia, the Western Livestock Fellers, the Lusitanian Hellmouths, the Furies of the High Skies, the Alukah of Mesopotamia, the Accadian Ghouls and all un-dead who feed on the living, the Wendigo and all other patrons of cannibalism, and all Spirits of the Wild Hunt in northern, central, and western Europe.

He appears like a young boy completely covered in thick brown fur. On his back and face, the fur is darker in color and bristly to the touch, while on his belly, it's soft and light, almost hay-colored. His golden eyes peek out from behind tufts of fur, and his shadow looks like an ever-changing animal, at least three times as large as him.

Their Highness Hagazi The Silent Scream, Mother of Horrors. Keeper of the secrets of the Sighs of Ruin.

They rule over the Abyss devils, the Hydras from Argelia, the Waterside Scaly Folk, the Deep Walkers, the Norwegian Krakens, the Sea Serpents of the northern seas, the Leviathans of Darkness from Babylon, the Mirror People, the Doppelgangers, the Jewish Golems, the Dark Spinners from narrow valleys, the Silence Mantas, the Bohemian Forged Guards, the night Lemurs of Rome, the Tuareg Sidereal Specters, the Hags, the Irish Banshees, the Astral Ephemera of Aurora Borealis, the Midwives of the Pits, the Lamiae from Libya, and the British Bogeyman.

They appear like a boy so beautiful that he could be a girl or vice-versa. Their entire body is as white as bone, without any hair, down, or imperfections. Their nails are slightly sharp, their eyes wet with tears, and their lips blue. Their shadow appears like a torn spiderweb waving in strong winds.

The People of Beyond the Veil

The creatures gifted with enough self-awareness to be considered individuals and to organize in a form of "society" belong to a "people". If the Hosts are like large tribes composed of extremely different creatures, a people is composed of creatures who are similar in appearance, power, or traits. Usually, these populous races fill in a set role in their local community. For example, in a narrow valley in the mountains, the Dark Spinners keep away the sun during winter months, the Summit Protectors feed on the screams of people they pushed into a crevasse, and the forest Hags barter clandestine abortions in exchange for the tender flesh of the unborn. The People of Beyond the Veil actually live in the other world, but sometimes, under specific circumstances, can manifest in the human world. The Dark Spinners can be found working in mountain caves during the longest night of the year and on all nights of the new moon, the Summit Protectors only appear to travelers who stray from the path at night, and the Hags can only be found in the heart of bewitched forests if you know their name, handed down from mother to daughter in terror. Each People has their own traditions and customs, derived from local folklore and subject to rituals and superstitions with deep roots in the hearts of humans.

These beliefs can invite entities on this side of reality, making mortals out of spirits who would otherwise be nothing but grim fairy tales.

While each People is different, there are some frequently recurring traits in their legends. Usually, these creatures have extremely long lives, spanning centuries or even millennia in human years. The most powerful tend to isolate themselves and haunt a set place, establishing their legend in the human world and carefully cultivating it during their sparse moments in the mortal world. The less powerful of them are low-level goons who live in the shadow of the former, endlessly roaming, often changing allegiance, wasting their existence as they flee from threats and hope to fight tooth and nail for their life. A hope that always ends up disappointed, since they are usually the first to die.

A goal shared by all People, is their mission to deliver Drifters to their Prince, since everyone knows that Princes covet making pacts with them, and bestow lavish rewards to anyone who answers in this tacit call. Nobody knows the Princes' real reason, and they rarely stop long enough to consider the possible motives behind this interest. However, when sharing a meal or sitting together in conviviality, they all tell stories of the treasures, rewards, and occult favors dispensed by Princes when a Drifter it taken to their presence. So why even ask questions? The People of Beyond the Veil possibly hold most of the pieces needed to explain the complex plan that is transpiring, as they know the Hosts, the Princes, and the Drifters.

The Beasts

These are monsters, there's no other way to call them. They are often akin to huge chimaeras composed of parts from different animals, sometimes anthropomorphous, but not really human-looking. They are different from the People because of their primitive nature, focused on their primal needs and brutal satisfaction. They have no affiliation, tradition, or culture. On top of being monstrous creatures, Beasts are fierce predators, often gifted with dangerous natural weapons. Beasts are great, powerful, and terrifying horrors, and Princes still favor them despite their obvious inability to take part in Sabbaths, courts, and holy orgies. The younger specimens are often as large as tigers, but when mature, they can even reach the size of a young elephant, or even a mammoth. They are common everywhere Beyond the Veil, and rarely get a chance to venture into the mortal world. Beasts are often too terrible to be imagined and called into the human world through their legends, so they live far away, and mostly feed on creatures from the dark realm where they roam. And yet, sometimes their simple minds can be manipulated by clever and powerful members of the Hosts. As such, sometimes intelligent demons personally feed a beast in order to turn it into their own private killer, or favor the spread of a species in their region as a way to keep other demons at bay. Beasts can be exploited in many different ways, you just need to give them what they need. They don't want anything from Drifters, but they are still a common encounter when roaming their hunting grounds Beyond the Veil.

Exiles

Exiles are all those members of the People from Beyond the Veil who have abandoned their realm to establish themselves in the mortal world, among the Unaware. Few would actually take such action, and even fewer want it enough to sacrifice the best part of their nature to live in a world of paranoia, persecutions, and stakes. Indeed, those who can leave the dark realm from whence they came, often do so after greatly wronging a Prince, or making a huge number of enemies in every corner. Sometimes they have no other choice, nobody they can rely on, and they waste away day after day, forgotten together with their legend. There are even some who abandon their previous life due to a fatal attraction for the Unaware, and those who feel some perverted love for the Unaware. Needless to say, there are some who only temporarily leave Beyond the Veil to chase after a sworn enemy who chose to flee from them.

Regardless of their reason, Exiles are supernatural beings who have left their Host behind, turning their back on Princes and the cult of The-Ones-Who-Came-Before. Their power is maimed, their body deformed by their sacrifice, and they will learn first-hand just how difficult it can be to backtrack and make amends for their choice. The Exiles who survive the first, critical, phase, usually learn how to hide their nature reasonably well, and they find cunning, or sometimes even wise, ways to use their remaining powers. Their presence in the Unaware world is no longer bound to lunar phases, months of the year, or country superstitions. This freedom is why Exiles are possibly the most dangerous supernatural creatures out there. Sometimes it's impossible to understand whether the now "Exile" used to be a minor member of a Host or a former Prince who forsook their entire Host. Exiles are extremely interested in Drifters, sometimes using them as couriers or messengers to reach contacts from their previous life. Other times, they involve Drifters in their political schemes, or in outlandish machinations about dynasties.

Forged Spirits

Some exceptional supernatural events can force a member of a Host into eternal material confinement in the Unaware world. Arcane bonds imposed by powerful creatures of darkness, exile imposed by a Prince, and ancient forge rites based on True Names are all primordial forms of exorcism that can sublimate a creature into a subtle material, which can in turn be trapped into an item and make it magical. Cursed, obviously, but still gifted with remarkable powers. This is why there are some rare items, scattered in the mortal world, that contain a Giant and can grant the strength of ten men, or jewels that, since they act as a Siren's prison, can charm onlookers. The talents of the trapped creature will influence the power granted and the price exacted. Anyone can use the power of a Forged Spirit, but the entity acting as the source of that power is too strong for any human being. Little by little, it will corrupt their spirit, pushing them to act according to the creature's wishes, allowing them to ultimately take over. Often, this metamorphosis requires for the human to merge with the item, either by hiding it within their flesh, braiding it in their hair, or ingesting it in some form. Drifters, like any other individual, can sometimes come in contact with these treasures, but they can also put up a stronger resistance to their influence. They can use their Dream as a shield from the Forged Spirit's pandering, and use their power for short periods of time. For many centuries, the only rules to take advantage of these cursed treasures was to never, ever bring them Beyond the Veil, to the home they long for, as once there, the trapped spirits will free themselves instantly. It's really important to still bear in mind that these objects of power are actually all sentient creatures, gifted with their own will as well as their own vague idea of the future. Some Forged Spirits can even make their own long-term plans and, use their influence to implant bad advice and tormented dreams into their carrier in order to bend their will. They are dangerous because of everything they promise and allow to gain.

The Gate Parasites

If we imagine the world Beyond the Veil like a dark sea crossed by currents of dark magic and populated by monsters described in a thousand and more legends, then the foreshore is populated and possibly made out of a single type of minor creatures. Gate Parasites are like sea foam on the waves, and they inhabit the spaces where two realities meet. They appear like black, ill-formed fetuses, somewhat akin to human or mammal fetuses. Covered in a blackish mucus, they wheeze and cough at random intervals, as if they were trying to expel some placenta trapped in their lungs. While nobody knows anything about their nature, they can sometimes articulate sounds and even sentences. Communication is tiring for them, even painful sometimes, but since they live so close to the Unaware world, they have learned the language and are eager to converse. This usually happens when an individual is impaired enough to catch glimpses of the supernatural world. Needless to say, Drifters are their favorite conversation partners, and Parasites are even known to call Drifters "saviors", seeing them as some kind of benefactors. They often claim some form of relation with people who can perceive Beyond the Veil while still belonging to the mortal world. According to a legend, the Gate Parasites are all the children Drifters will never conceive because of the illness that plagues their bodies, or they were born out of a human sacrifice performed by a heroic group of Drifters in the distant past. In many stories, sick people who have yet to realize their own nature and curse are introduced to the world Beyond the Veil by Parasites. Certainly, one needs to be willing to talk with a black fetus who looks like they're on the brink of death and who keeps crawling and retching fluids. But if you can appreciate such conversation, you could even learn precious information.

To unveil wha is hidden between the line of an illuminated codex

Supernatural Fauna

Just as men can be influenced by the forces from invisible worlds, many animals can also end up being contaminated. The most exposed species and races appear in many superstitions, used as bugbears or admonishments, deadly omens, or harbingers of disease. It's also rather unlikely for an animal that is not known for their supernatural powers to somehow gain them. It can happen, but it's usually by chance. In contrast, ravens, cats, wolves, rats, spiders, goats, and snakes are often named or represented as cooperating with demonic forces. As such, a goat kid can be born with two heads and survive. A fully black cat can hide a third eye, always closed, on their chest. A raven, white as milk, can emit sounds like a newborn's wail instead of their cawing. These are common animals, who probably have no developed intelligence, nor the power to communicate with humans, but they still have something extra. Some of them can perform miracles, others are only magical when someone eats their flesh. The magic hiding in this kind of fauna is mild, but undeniably present, and this makes them a second type of creatures – together with Drifters – who live in-between two worlds and can survive in both.

Incompletes

Sometimes an old rag will join a whirlwind of dry leaves in a circular dance. Sometimes the storm wind feels saturated with dark dust, burnt smell, and sparks borrowed from who-knows-where. That's when Gate Parasites retreat into the cracks between worlds; Exiles grumble, close their windows, and lock their doors; enchanted weapons grow cold and beaded with freezing dew; and all animals seem to vanish from sight. And those are the short times when Incompletes appear. At a first glance, they look like scarecrows made of garbage, but there is still something human within them. Their tormented bodies have no skin, and are covered in every lost, broken, and unwanted thing. You'll often find them covered in twigs that have fallen from kindling, feathers from barnyard animals, excrement and trash, old and worn-out vestments, broken crucifixes, butcher hooks, nails, and ash. Everything sprouting from their purulent-yet-living flesh. Long ago, these de-fleshed men and women, now covered in refuse, used to be Drifters. Now, they have lost their Dream, and have been fully corrupted by Beyond the Veil. They sold every last strip of their skin to buy years of freedom, but their body still keeps decaying, horribly disfigured and incapable of truly dying. Their essence allows them to keep living in both realities, but nothing gives them greater satisfaction than seeing a Drifter lose their Dream forever. Perhaps because some of them wish to steal that Dream for themselves, or because that is one of the few emotions they can still feel.

The Other Side of the Veil

A concept that could be less than immediate to communicate in your stories set in the world Beyond the Veil, is the relationship between supernatural creatures and the passage of time. Human mortality pushes most people to obsess about time constantly, thus leading most humans to reflect about their past, to fret about their present, and to try making plans for the near and distant future. Time is the motor that pushes mortals to evolve, to strive for better living conditions for themselves, to create new things and build monuments that will last over time. The People of Beyond the Veil, the vast majority of the creatures who inhabit that world, have the potential to live far longer than humans do. While they usually only manage to live for a handful of years before meeting a violent end, they are theoretically long-lived enough that they feel immortal. The lack of transience in their life, of an imminent end looming on the horizon, of the inexorable passage of time, makes it so these creatures mostly focus on the present. They adapt to any situation with extreme ease, they do not establish attachments with things or places, and live time only as a narrative, a sequence of events.

Twenty identical winters where nothing happens are not twenty years, but "several winters" or "many winters" if the creature felt especially bored during the time. However, Beyond the Veil, nobody would dream of counting them, as twenty, twenty-five, or thirty winters are all the same, so long as nothing relevant happens. Even the rare individuals in the higher ranks of the Hosts who can make long-term plans, never structure their plans and machinations in years, decades, or centuries. An Ash Sphynx could spend hundreds of years waiting for the hero who swore to defeat it, only to later realize that he died of old age mere decades after his initial, feeble oath. This means that they will hardly leave a trace of themselves, nor do they wish to. For example, a Sidereal Specter could remodel a valley in the desert, turning it into a fragile and beautiful mirror-city that reflects the starry night sky, but which is unlikely to ever be inhabited, or to stay inhabited for long.

People without history

Over the span of a few years after that huge show of power, the city will transform, like everything Beyond the Veil, into a pile of ruins. Proof that nothing in that world is destined to last, everything is a manifestation of corruption and decay.
Additionally, keeping track of time could prove difficult for Drifters who choose to travel Beyond the Veil without a guide. While time Beyond the Veil still flows at the same rhythm it keeps in the Unaware world, there is no organized succession of seasons, and no organized stars that can be used to calculate distances while traveling. There could be endless nights alternating with long dawns that devolve into brief sunsets, without ever having real days. The stars are extremely distant and hard to see through the dark clouds and red moons that appear on the horizon, only to disappear soon after. This all contributes to making time perception extremely confused, nigh impossible, for Drifters. After all, a nightmare could last a few seconds, but appear to have lasted much longer.

The Great Plan of the Five

The History hiding behind the Pentarchy, also known as the Grey Star, is the biggest power play of Beyond the Veil. Five Princes, among the most powerful ever known, were the first to meet and address the topic. Two of their peers, the two remaining members of **the Eptagram** consecrated to The-Ones-Who-Came-Before, had just vanished. It was the time of the Plague of Justinian, and Drifters were becoming a common occurrence. If the alchemy of elements could lead a human being to become a Drifter, they did. And with Drifters came the first great manifestations of powers, known as the "divine plagues" among the oblivious Unaware. At first, the Princes were delighted by this phenomenon, but they didn't really care much about what happened outside of their world. At least not until they found the body of one of them, and first discovered word of the disappearance of another. Then, and only then, did they begin to really pay attention.

The body of **Her Highness Neniri the Prohibitive Prayer, She who reveals**, bore clear signs of combat. She had been brutally killed, but perhaps, for the first time, it was not another Prince who spelled her doom. Was this the work of a conspiracy within the Hosts? Of a group of Drifters, as some claimed? Had they really become that powerful? And what had happened to the last member of the Eptagram? Each of them send out their Hosts in search of **His Highness Akelari the Small King, He who burns with water and washes with fire**. Not long after, they were informed that the two Princes had shared secret plans, and the Princess was not defeated during a duel in the Unaware world, where her body was actually found, but in a different place, alien to everything and everyone. One of the few realms where the power of creatures from Beyond the Veil was limited. Everything began with the discovery of the Antechamber, a place of the Drifters.

His Highness Highnesses Heka The Flaming Hand stated so: *"Our sister Neniri abandoned the path and was caught off-guard while walking a new one. I still feel her desire to reach somewhere else burn in the air. She followed a Grey Star, an omen of Splendor, in a Foreign House."*

His Highness Prince Sauin The Blood Gatherer, He who holds the Red Jar, immediately added: *"Our brother Akelari had purposely stoked her insatiable curiosity. He had revealed to her a place unknown to us all. He tempted her, leveraging her weakness. Our brother Akelari was always good at such things."*

Her Highness Maav The Honey Tongue, She who allows, answered to the Princes with joy in her voice: *"He was concealing from us a discovery revealed by his work, and I can feel his deceit around us, like a perfume! A duplicitous poisoner, that's who Akelari was! Neniri paid the price, but he is the one who left on this mysterious journey!"*

His Highness Phanos The Hunger Mane, He who never gives back growled: *"We cannot be betrayed. What he now has, I also want to own."*

Their Highness Hagazi The Silent Scream, Mother of Horrors, was the last to speak. They rarely did, as nobody else made a sound when they spoke: "Quiet. Far away from everything, a land of eternal delight was gifted to us. It belongs to The-Ones-Who-Came-Before. Everything that is, and everything that is not, exists there for our sole benefit. There, we shall find peace for our senses, death for our desires. For there is nothing we more ardently desire, even though we do not know it yet. Akelari, brother and traitor, has claimed it for himself alone. He wants to be the Little King of the Nightmare."

And thus, the plan to follow in the footsteps of the lost Prince, who had probably already reached the dark paradise described by Hagazi was born. They later revealed to have heard whispers from many creatures who could explore the void, the silence and the yet unknown spaces at their behest. The only ones to hold a connection with this unknown realm are the Drifters.

Thus, the seven became five, and the five created the ritual to renew their bodies with a more human appearance, one that could win over Drifters and slyly gain from them the key to the Nightmare dimension. From then, the five Princes stand above the others, concentrating the largest Hosts of all, unleashing them in all directions to seek Drifters strong enough to involve in their plots. Their goal is simple: finding these humans on the brink of death and taking them to the limit of their power, so as to open the Antechamber. Pushing them to use their dark gifts recklessly, pitting them against lethal threats that can elicit horror and homicidal desires in them, embroiling them in the darkest corruption and exploiting their Dreams, their fear of imminent death, and their deepest weaknesses. This is the secret plan of the Princes. All this, without ever revealing to their Hosts the truth on their final destination: the Nightmare dimension. Only the five members of the Pentarchy know the truth about the disappearance of Akelari, and nobody dares involve anyone else in this plot.

This is why the stories of your characters often deal with extremely powerful entities from Beyond the Veil, and sometimes even with the Princes themselves, but their goals are rarely clear. The Princes wish to be present when a Drifter loses control over their power, perhaps so that they can finally leave behind both the Unaware world and Beyond the Veil. To finally leave for a place that allegedly belongs to The-Ones-Who-Came-Before.

But did His Highness Akelari really reach the Nightmare Realm? Did he really sacrifice his sister Neniri to do this?

The Cult of The-Ones-Who-Came-Before

As previously mentioned, The-Ones-Who-Came-Before are entities from a time so ancient that no faithful description of them survives, assuming that they really existed and are more than myths from the dark religion of Beyond the Veil. The Princes still maintain that they receive visions, dreams, whispers, and omens from these antediluvian entities. The names used to remember them coincide with their sacred practices and symbols used to summon them in the imagination of the People of Beyond the Veil. While everyone knows that many more existed, the five listed below are the Ancients with whom the Princes in the Pentarchy are bonded:

Winds of Dearth

This Ancient is represented as three dog heads devouring each-other. It presides over Ways, Directions, Locations, Crossroads, Distances, Heights, Paths, and Chases. Blue and black chalcedony, torches, footprints, hounds, sandals, gibbets, and military memorials are sacred to it. The dreams sent to its Herald, Heka, often center on the theme of travel. They say that there once was nothing that Winds of Dearth could not find.

Sighs of Ruin

This Ancient is represented as a winged serpent eating its tail. It presides over Void, Dark, Loss, Horror, Falling Stars, Silence, Vigil, Dirges, and Prophecies. Red jasper, mirrors, seashells, the bones of sea creatures, reptile scales, the night seas, glass, votive statues, and silver jewelry are sacred to it. The dreams it sends to Hagazi are mostly abstract, quick flashes where past, present, and future mingle in horrible visions. They say that Sighs of Ruin came from the realm of the dead and didn't belong to any world.

Howls of Chaos

This Ancient is represented as an open eye crowned with a circle of teeth. It presides over Hunger, Transformations, Brutality, Survival, Cannibalism, Torture, and Bestiality. Gastroliths and bezoars, teeth and fangs, horns, hair braids, bone weapons, viscera, sickles, and whips are sacred to it. The dreams it sends to Phanos are feverish scenes of violence, where the act of carnal unions, of eating, and of taking life all mingle together. They say there was no creature who did not feel like prey before Howls of Chaos.

Storms of Delirium

This Ancient is represented like a six-winged butterfly. It presides over Lies, Illusions, Madness, Betrayals, Chrysalis, Celebrations, Charms, and Oaths. Ember, poisons, lightning, moths, wine, poetry, and flowering trees are sacred to it. The dreams it sends to Maav are beautiful utopias that crash, wondrous empires falling to dust, and lovers that fiercely love and betray each-other. They say that everything and anything Storms of Delirium ever touched became wonderful and then decayed soon after.

Abhorrent Unions

This Ancient is represented like a star made of weaving limbs. It presides over Blood, Humors, Sex, Wounds, Procreation, Contamination, Dance, and Songs. Rubies, half-bloods, snakes, pomegranates, nests, and the eggs of all animals are sacred to it. The dreams it sends to its Herald Sauin almost exclusively center on temptation, corruption, and birth. They say that in ancient times, Abhorrent Unions were in constant expansion, their numbers ever-growing, increasingly unstoppable.

And so it happens that a Hag, subject to Hagazi, honors the Sighs of Ruin who will keep leading the corpses of her enemies to the beach in her cave by the sea. Adorned with fish bones and sacred jewels, she sacrifices the infants she kidnaps by drowning them in the black still waters of her secret cove, praying that their death may bring many more to die at sea.

This type of worship is widespread, but not really codified as rites and teachings. Very few temples exist, and the People of Beyond the Veil mostly live their relationship with the Ancients as a series of daily gestures, personal rituals, and bloody sacrifices. However, nobody dares to claim that they are actually in contact with these entities or speaking for them. Their only official Heralds are the Princes, who claimed the title for themselves, and only they can bestow titles and roles within the cult onto others. Unfortunately, some claim that this is not how things truly work. The-Ones-Who-Came-Before are absolute entities, so vast that they cannot be compared to the personified gods of humans. It's unlike them to have favorites, unique heralds tasked with dispensing their teachings. Some say that they touch the dreams of many creatures from Beyond the Veil, even the lowest. Their resounding messages emerge from the depths of eternal night, like the beating heart of a time that no longer is, but that keeps influencing the present. They are the light of stars that died millennia ago. They speak to creatures akin to them who have the strength to withstand their words.

The Mark

When a Drifter reaches a high enough level of Corruption that they forget, even just for an instant, that they are human, and feel drunk on the pleasure of power, that marks the beginning of a process called, in diaries of past Drifters, the Dark Revival. The individual begins to perceive the world around them as relating to Beyond the Veil. They gain a better understanding of its forces, creatures, and borders. Using powers, corrupting themselves, and letting go are all actions that unlock a new point of view on nature and their goals. The Dream is placed at the center of this world of supernatural feelings and impressions, mostly composed of horrible sensations and tormented visions. The Drifter could be on the verge of death, but the fire of events blinds them and the siren call of magic deafens them. They find a new spot on their skin, perfectly symmetric, like an ink blot. This is not just another sign of their disease, even if it may appear like it. It's an unholy mark, just like the signs that, many years later, the inquisitors would fruitlessly search for on the bodies of witches. Something unnatural hides in that mark. If you look at it for long, it appears to pulse and writhe.

After previous outbreaks of the plagues, there are still some rumors about Marks. They say that, depending on the shape of the spot, the dark world has assigned you a set role, a destiny, a position in its perverted natural order. Nobody knows where these beliefs about the Marks originated, but there are Exiles – creatures from Beyond the Veil who live in the human world – who know how to interpret them.

Mark of the Dawn

You can see the rare glimpses of light that cross the darkness of this world. You don't know what creates them, but these small flames appear to you like sparks of rebirth. You can see these vital pulses as the reason for your corrupted life. You can protect them, control them, or destroy them. Perhaps, there truly is hope, in the end.

Keywords: **Regenerating, Radiant, Archaic, Pulsing, Bright, Warm.**

Mark of the Ferryman

While you know very little about the world of spirits, magic, and devils, you are going to be a guide for the others. In a world where water devours memories, shadows flay flesh, and lies betray you when you least expect it, you are unshakable. Proceed with caution, you can't protect yourself from those you try to save.

Keywords: **Initiatory, Salvific, Necromantic, Sepulchral, Solitary, Transient.**

Mark of the Reaper

What's the value of a human life? To you, it keeps decreasing. This will be a long journey, and it will leave parts of you untouched that you had given up on. But you will learn that the life of an Unaware, of hundreds of them, really doesn't matter. You will risk ending up alone in this world, but you will learn how to stop suffering.

Keywords: **Cold, Sacrificial, Apathetic, Impassive, Relentless, Dark.**

Mark of the Hunter

You grasp the signs, learn to recognize the tracks, smell the mere presence of prey in the air they have breathed. It won't matter which weapon you wield, who follows you, nor what resources or environments surround you. When you reach the doors to Beyond the Veil, half of you still remains in the Unaware world with one goal: the hunt.

Keywords: **Fetid, Vulnerable, Inhospitable, Rabid, Vermilion, Hunted.**

Mark of the Limitless

When you were reborn as a Drifter, free from the chains of the human world, you reached beyond its boundaries. You rejoice, because Beyond the Veil will grant you an abundance of gifts. But you fear the future, as few will look at you, a fleeting and elusive creature, with trust.

Keywords: **Chaotic, Elusive, Quick, Rebellious, Stormy, Unbridled.**

Mark of the Judge

The world of Beyond the Veil, like the Afterlife people know so little about, is home to illustrious judges who can weigh hearts, read souls, and interpret the signs of depravation. You are destined to learn these secret arts, climbing the steps of the Law one at a time. But remember that you will be judged yourself one day.

Keywords: **Lawful, Punitive, Cosmic, Glacial, Scholarly, Unchanging.**

Mark of The-Ones-Who-Came-Before

You were born to curve the name of the Princes. You will prove wrong their proclamations, too polluted with cravings from modern times. You feel that they are wrong, that their Dreams are lies. If you embrace darkness, you will receive the true revelations, you will become the chosen of The-Ones-Who-Came-Before.

Keywords: **Primordial, Unholy, Dispersant, Nostalgic, Visionary, Trascendental.**

Mark of the Shroud

Your corruption brings signs of secrets and revelations. You will discover the smell of lies and the stink of truth. You are destined to make your way through intrigues, unveiling mysteries that were better kept secret. Beware those who would use you as a light in the dark to pursue their own goals.

Keywords: **Deceptive, Hidden, Dark, Revealing, Brave, Ambiguous.**

Mark of the Forbearers

Someone awaits you beyond life. Nobody knows anything about the last home of the dead, but some spirits remain trapped mid-way on their journey, gathering in the Hecatomb fields. Those who wait for you there will be willing to help you, turning you into a messenger between the living and the dead.

Keywords: **Spectral, Macabre, Dreadful, Medianic, Narrow, Liminal.**

Mark of the Elixir

The end is essential, and this is true for all things. Nothing can have a real meaning, without an end. This revelation is now yours. You are the recipe for the Elixir. The compassionate remedy coming to put an end to everything. You are the reduction to nothing, the end of suffering, you are annihilation.

Keywords: **Miraculous, Alchemical, Empty, Compassionate, Annihilating, Deep.**

Mark of the Nightmare

The Unaware world is like a house that has grown too small for you, Beyond the Veil is a vast garden you will grow bored of. There is only one gate, and it is becoming interesting, almost irresistible. It leads to the Antechamber, to the palace of your memory. It's where your destiny awaits.

Keywords: **Intricate, Distressing, Mystical, Uncharted, Prophet, Onirical.**

THE TRUTH OF A LIAR SPIRIT

Surrounded by an abominable stench, the Manzazuu always summons the same devil: the "liar spirit". He knows it, and knows what to expect from that creature. Perhaps he fears all other creatures, even though he knows the Names of all devils. The Manzazuu can open a door between the worlds, lifting the Veil that separates them and luring them to him. But his creature, the one he usually calls, must be grabbed by force. The magic of the Manzazuu is primeval and hard to control. It comes from ancient tablets consumed by time. He knows how to grab the horrible monster by its hind legs and hold it upside-down for a while, unfazed by its thrashing. That is the most crucial moment, the Manzazuu needs to get dangerously close to the creature's teeth, claws, and hook-like scales. He needs to quickly open its chest, ignoring the screams and spasms caused by pain. He needs to pull out its intestines with his bare hands. The spirit clearly won't die due to such wounds, but it can be immobilized forever when tied up with its own guts. This is why the Manzazuu needs to gut the creature and use its insides. He ties up its neck and limbs with tight knots, preventing any movement. And then the spirit offers truthful answers to his every question. The liar reveals any secret in order to regain its precious freedom and be returned to Beyond the Veil.

Drifters across History

Human beings can never be naturally gifted with supernatural powers. Every mystical perception, miracle skill, illusory art, or terrible curse, is somehow connected to the world Beyond the Veil. Most mortal humans are Unaware of the existence of the supernatural world. Those who claim to have magical or mystical abilities are either knowingly lying or falling to their auto-suggestion, probably fueled by fanaticism and ignorance. After all, this story is set in the Middle Ages, a time where scientific knowledge is not established or widespread among the lower classes. Popular culture is a strange mixture of traditions, rumors, half-remembered Sunday sermons, and the rare dash of common sense and practical experience. The level of literacy is low, and education is almost completely entrusted to religious institutions. While the first universities are being born, the world still hasn't seen much secular secondary education. This means that magic is part of everyday life. It's a valid explanation, a scapegoat, but also a real threat people need to avert, like sin or sickness. It can clasp the heart, body, and mind of human beings, and nobody is enlightened enough to feel like magic is "impossible". Everyone in the family has an anecdote about a curse, hex, or even a possession.

But over the course of history, there have been some human beings who were actually able to wield magic. How is this possible? Simple enough. Their magic is always derived from a connection to the world Beyond the Veil. It doesn't matter whether it was born of a cursed treasure, a power granted through an unholy pact with a creature, or the fact that a supernatural creature was simply nearby when the power appeared. These rare cases often lead, sooner or later, to a tragic end. Power-hungry men turn completely mad, devoured by paranoia and terror at the thought that the creatures they made a pact with could hunt them down.

Some are convinced that they have made a deal with the devil and forever lost their soul. Nevertheless, it's only thanks to these rare individuals that we have any knowledge about supernatural creatures, their powers, and their tendencies. And it's thanks to less-than unaware humans that we find such information written in diaries, decorating walls, crammed in grimoires and bestiaries.

Among these, more or less truthful, records of the world Beyond the Veil, there are mentions of Drifters. Some also called them Travelers or Gatewalkers when referring to their power to cross the Veil, but they are usually only described as people possessed by devils in the time before their death, when the spirit is weak. Texts that describe this condition with lucidity are so rare that there is only one, dating back to the 7th century and written by an unknown author, to have ever been transcribed by monks and adapted so as to be accessible. Here is an excerpt from it.

"The Last Companion is a silky caress. If the man's heart holds a proud Dream so strong, that his shadow grows large, then she will show mercy toward him. And if in the shadows thus born, the Nightmare of all ruin will live, then she will be intrigued by him. But if on top of Dream and Nightmare, the man will carry three Secrets of unknown depth, then she will grant him a gift. With no modesty, she will lift the veil of life so ruthlessly placed before the mortal eyes of every child. She will untie the string that hold his eyes closed, awakening him from the living sleep. In her embrace, the vile man shall then know Truth, Horror, and Corruption. From them, and perhaps them alone, can he receive the elixir of Dream, the medicine of Nightmare, and the tormented banquet of Secrets. No longer Unaware, now a Drifter."

Drifters and Unawares

As previously mentioned, Drifters become Drifters because the veil lifts from their eyes due to their closeness to death. To them, the end always appears as a great pandemic, but the plague was the only pandemic to create a significant number of Drifters. First came the Plague of Justinian, which spread in the territories of the Byzantine Empire and reached its peak in Constantinople, around the middle of 500 AD. Then, over the next centuries, it surfaced again and again in waves until around 750 AD, never equaling its initial virulence. Most accredited estimates count 25 million victims, but some claim that the total reached one hundred million. The plague resurfaced in Europe much later, precisely in 1347. Human contagion was observed to be mostly caused by fleas that had also bitten rats, or by rats biting humans. Fleas, and head lice to a smaller degree, allowed the bubonic plague to spread between humans. However, it is still unclear how the plague could spread between humans so quickly while reaping such a huge number of victims.

The disease has a violent onset after an incubation period lasting merely days. Its symptoms are fever, persistent headaches, great weakness, several sleep disorders, nausea, photo-sensitivity, pain in the extremities, vomiting, and delirium. These are followed by pustules at the site of the infected flea bite, when the lymph nodes become inflamed and swell, creating one or several boils.

As the infection makes its way through the organism, the cardiovascular deficiency grows worse, causing a terrible necrosis that usually begins at the extremities and then spreads throughout the entire body. Then come further complications and inner bleeding. Needless to say, this is the moment when death knocks on the door of the Unaware.

The transformation into Drifters, on the other hand, usually happens after the first symptoms are spotted. The body is still strong, even if conditions worsen day by day. However, as physical health declines, something seems to awaken on a deeper level. The individual begins being tormented by their Dream. They can see it fulfilled, feel like they now have a chance to reach it, and are certain that all the signs point to it irrefutably becoming reality. Everyone experiences this transitional period slightly differently, some allow themselves to surrender to their supernatural nature, and some hold firmly onto their humanity.

This causes their relatives to grow worried about them, their neighbors to develop the first suspicions, the parish priest to hear worrying rumors about their mood swings during confessions. It's important to remember that, in the middle ages, any sign of eccentricity or excessive freedom was seen as a sign of the Devil. Everyone frowns upon deviants, even good-natured ones.

And while these emotional outbursts are happening and strange thoughts emerge in the Drifter's mind, the first signs of moral corruption appear, formalizing their affinity with both worlds. That's when the Unaware who were close to them can no longer ignore their new sinister nature. The Drifter can obviously try to keep their disease hidden, if they are in the early stages, but their appearance will hint at something grim. The madness starts slowly digging into them, chipping away at their humanity.

When the dark revival process begins, that is, when the "Mark" first appears on the Drifter's skin, everyone can feel that there is something wrong about them. Both physically and behaviorally, something in them has changed. Nobody can yet claim to know what (unless the transformation has already begun targeting the individual's body), but everybody feels it. Some animals grow restless when they're close, children often suddenly burst into tears, and even parents can feel an indescribable weight on their chest.

VII. Leading the Game

This chapter is mostly aimed at Narrators. On top of the tools needed to prepare an adventure, it's crucial for Narrators to have a strong grasp on the themes, atmosphere, and best practices to run the game.

To make these topics easier to understand, we have divided this chapter into 3 sections:

- The first describes safety tools, core themes, and the pillars of the game;
- The second goes in depth on the procedure to follow for game sessions;
- The third part focuses on how to prepare for an adventure.

Playing Safely

Before the game begins, especially with role-playing games like Memento Mori, the Players usually believe that they have no limits, that they can deal with any situation or theme. However, it is likely that some of them would still need to establish some boundaries. After all, it is absolutely normal for people to feel uneasy when dealing with touchy subjects, or to prefer avoiding going into detail about certain situations.

In such cases, the group can choose to set some rules on the topics that won't be tolerated. For example, you could choose to exclude extremely gory or sexually explicit content. Alternatively, you can also choose that there are topics you wish to handle without going into detail. In either case, it's important for all people involved to feel like their choices and their boundaries are respected, so that the game environment remains safe and pleasant.

A good practice for Narrators is to make sure that, at each session, all Players are comfortable with the story and themes you are dealing with. Some Players may not realize their own boundaries before the fact, and this is why it's best to periodically check that no boundaries were crossed during the game.

Lines and Veils

GOING FURTHER

As an alternative or addition to the tool of lines and veils, you can also use a simplified variant of the Script Change Tool created by Brie Sheldon. When something happens during the game, one of the Players can use the following sentence: "This is too much, even for Drifters". This will signal that the Player has accepted the event can happen in the world of the game, but they don't want it described or delved into. By foregoing the details of the triggering event, the game can proceed as normal.

The concept of lines and veils was first introduced by Ron Edwards for his role-playing game Sex and Sorcery.

Before or during the game, a Player can declare they want to "draw a line" on a touchy subject or a series of situations that make them uncomfortable. Drawing a line, in other words, means asking everyone involved to not bring a specific element in the game. Once this request is made, the Narrator is responsible for making sure that all participants respect it. This tool is especially useful during the preparatory stages of the game, but don't hesitate to call upon it even in later stages of the adventure.

Alternatively, a Players can declare they want to "draw a veil" over a specific situation. Drawing a veil over something means that the element can be discussed, but the Player is asking the discussion not to be explicit or central to the scene. These topics can be included in the events of the story, but should remain "behind the scenes" and not described in detail.

Example:
Before your adventure begins, during Session 0 (see pg. 199), a Player decides to "draw a line" on all scenes that could involve torture and excruciation, especially when perpetrated against innocent animals. Everyone gladly agrees to their request, and the Narrator knows that this kind of events should never be part of the adventure.

Example:
During the second game session, the Narrator is about to describe a scene during which a group of Arachnymphs is trying to lay with some Unawares in order to generate stronger offspring. While not being overly shaken by the described events, one of the Players would rather avoid going into details about this situation and asks to "draw a veil over it". The Narrator accepts the request, and the story resumes at the end of the terrible ritual.

Themes and Pillars

Memento Mori is a multifaceted, unpredictable game. Over its publishing history, it brought up themes and reflections that, at the time of its inception, were not as clear as they are today. In this chapter, these ideas are summed up and divided in two groups: **themes and pillars**.

The themes encompass all topics and objectives we try to include in our gaming experience. This short list should be read out loud before the beginning of the adventure, so that everyone involved is aware of what they are about to dive into.

The pillars, on the other hand, are a list of principles that are most important for Narrators, but can also be shared with Players. **They are a useful reference when creating the game atmosphere and tailoring the story.** When the Narrator doesn't know how to describe a specific situation, or feels like they strayed off theme, they can find the answers to their doubts by re-reading the pillars.

Themes

If, after reading the list of themes, everyone is enthusiastic at the prospect to start playing, it means Memento Mori is the right game for you.

Identity and humanity

What makes us who we are? What memory, bond, or part of ourselves is essential to call ourselves humans?

The nature of evil

Does the end justify the means? How much does morality matter when your life is ending? Who are the real monsters?

Thirst for power

Is power a blessing you should welcome or a temptation you should resist? Is the hero someone who can't be corrupted? Is the hero someone who pursues their quest at all costs?

Identity and humanity. As the characters lose themselves and are reborn, the Players will have several chances to ponder questions about what their alter ego really cares about. Corruption will allow them to overwrite the Drifter's psyche, personality, and their perception of their past.

The nature of evil. The concepts of good and evil are part of the moral sphere that changes depending on the individual. A system of ethical rules and social contracts that could crumble when facing the fragility of life. This game creates the needed conditions for people to leave behind these restrictions and try to understand what evil truly means to them.

Thirst for power. The forces of Beyond the Veil flow freely through Drifters who, in a short time, can grow to feel almost all-powerful. Memento Mori challenges Players to confront this power, to accept it, and to take part in it. However, there is always a price to pay, even when the power is granting you access to a goal that used to seem so distant.

Pillars

As previously mentioned, the pillars are crucial ingredients that should always be included in stories for Memento Mori. In other words, they point the Narrator to what they should or shouldn't draw attention to during game sessions.

The Unaware world is dirty and desperate

The somber atmosphere, famine, and complete lack of hope in the future left a mark on the five dark years that Drifters live through. Everything, the high courts and the humble villages, the cultivated fields and the great castles, are nothing but a shadow of what they used to be. Every surface is dirty and dusty, every street is covered in mud, the sun seldom peeks through the clouds, and the common folk has surrendered to the constant pain and misery.

Death is everywhere: it hangs from old gnarly trees, it piles into mass graves, and burns on great pyres that billow with smoke, a nauseating smell that has grown ever more familiar.

The world Beyond the Veil is nebulous and cruel

The world on the other side of the Veil has no fixed geography, and nobody has ever been able to draw precise borders there. It's an ever-changing world that seems to wear a new skin whenever a group of Drifters crosses the frontier.

As such, defining or imagining the totality of the world Beyond the Veil is not important, you should focus on describing details of the locations involved in the adventure. Where will the Drifters go on their journey? At the perverted court of a Prince? In the hunting grounds of a Beast? To the desolate villages of the People of Beyond the Veil?

The Unaware world is dominated by superstitions, stories, and witchcraft

For the people of the XIV century, magic is a terribly serious concept. While the sciences were advancing in leaps and bounds, the culture at the time was still rooted in ancient traditions, local legends, and popular stories. The visions or tales of a supernatural event were treated as fact and never looked at with skepticism or detachment: everyone was extremely respectful and fearful of anything that fell outside of the laws of Nature.

Beyond the Veil is folklore and vice versa

Beyond the Veil is a huge container filled with beliefs, traditions, and mythological creatures originating in European medieval folklore. To coexist in the same world, these characters have organized themselves according to new laws and hierarchies, but they still have the same traditional and literary roots. Often, going on an adventure in Memento Mori is the perfect time to explore the darkest, most corrupted version of these legends from our past.

Drifters are rare and sought-after

The birth of a group of Drifters is such a rare event, that it is regarded like a sign foretelling great change. There is a reason why great Princes and powerful Hosts of Beyond the Veil take such an interest in the last days of these people.

Drifters represent a huge opportunity for those creatures: they can become messengers to be sent "on the other side", champions that can be exploited to eliminate the competition, and, for those who know about this great secret, the key to the coveted realm of the Nightmare.

Among Princes, servants, and Beasts with no master

The society of Beyond the Veil isn't really organized. It resembles something like a distorted feudal structure, where the only law is the survival of the fittest, mostly embodied by the huge power wielded by Princes. And Princes actually have their own plans and goals, which are driven forward by the Hosts they control. Much like aristocracies in the Unaware world, the Princes of Beyond the Veil compete with each-other, either directly or indirectly, trying to increase their power, influence, and ego.

But Princes do not have the widespread control they claim to have. Far from their bored eyes, there is an abundance of Beasts and uncontrolled Hosts who swore fealty only to their primordial instincts, to blood and chaos.

Candles made of corpse grease are vey powerful

Beyond the Veil is a place of miracles and opportunities

If they were given a choice, Drifters would probably love to forgo the chance of traveling toward the depths of Beyond the Veil. However, those gloomy landscapes and terrible dangers also hide many unexpected opportunities. These desolate lands are home to treasures, spells, rituals, and relics of untold value, just like the ones we hear about in legends of old.

The Drifters know that the world Beyond the Veil is horrible and threatening, they feel it, but as the story progresses, they could start seeing it in a different light. Somewhere, hidden in the depths, they could even find something or someone who could change their previously doomed fate.

The Narrator

If you are familiar with role-playing games, you could picture the role of our Narrator to be similar to those required in other games. After all, the Narrator in Memento Mori prepares an adventure, describes the world of the game, and embodies the challenges faced by characters. In the dialog established between everyone at the table, the Narrator is responsible for describing what Drifters hear and see, with interpreting other characters in the story (not the Players').

However, in Memento Mori, the Narrator does not follow a set and rigid outline of events, they create opportunities for Players to make important decisions that shape the story. Player involvement is crucial to weave a tighter thread that surrounds the stories of all protagonists.

In this chapter, we will list a series of techniques and tools to explain how and when to give control of the story to Players, and how much the actions of Drifters should influence the Narrator's choices.

Duties of the Narrator

Unlike Players, the Narrator has a series of duties they must fulfill during the game. These duties should not appear like an overwhelming list of requirements, but like a series of bullet-points to make the Narrator's job easier, helping them focus on the most important aspects of the experience.

What are the duties of the Narrator?

- **Describing the world of the game;**
- **Setting up a flexible adventure;**
- **Defining the Difficulty of Challenges;**
- **Underlining the dramatic fate of Drifters.**

Describing the world of the game

The Narrator, as the name suggests, is responsible for narrating the events of the Drifters' story. The most evocative way to do this is to act as the senses of the characters by describing the world of the game as they see it, hear it, and smell it. The sensory details you linger on can radically change the story. The sound of a blade dragged on the floor, the rancid smell of a body being embalmed, the bright light of a candle burning a few inches from your face; these are all extremely valid suggestions to include in your narration.

Playing the part of the Unawares and the creatures of Beyond the Veil is also an important part of the game experience. Each character needs to appear alive, have a coherent personality, and above all, they need to have a goal they want to reach, even a trivial one.

Setting up a flexible adventure

After Session 0 has taken place (as described in upcoming paragraphs), the Narrator is tasked with preparing the adventure. As previously said, this is a rough outline that will allow the Narrator and Players to have full freedom in their approach to the game. It's important for the Narrator to never betray this flexibility, and they should learn to play with it, without preparing too much.

The procedures and tips included to prepare and lead an adventure for Memento Mori are illustrated in the final section of this chapter.

Defining the Difficulty of Challenges

The Narrator is tasked with setting the Difficulty of each roll and communicating it to Players, who in turn roll the dice.

And even before setting a numeric value for the Difficulty, they should understand when rolling the dice is necessary and when it isn't. This means that the Narrator always needs to evaluate the consequences that could follow actions stated by Players. **If the result of a dice roll could potentially change the story or the situation of a Drifter, then the roll should happen**, otherwise, the situation should be resolved in the normal exchange between Players and Narrator.

Underlining the dramatic fate of Drifters

The spotlight of the story should always be focused on the characters and their journey to perdition. The Narrator should always remind Players to add details that will describe the inner reasoning behind their choices, especially when Corruption is involved. Describing the thoughts, regrets, pain, and pleasure that these choices will bring to Drifters is an important shared experience that everyone should work toward.

Good practices for Narrators

While Players have to deal with game rules and mechanics (which are often connected with their characters), the Narrator follows set procedures mostly aimed at driving the session forward and managing the dialog at the table. **The combination of these good practices should ensure an ideal experience that best represents the spirit and rules of the game.**

Listen to the Players' ideas

The Players will keep coming up with new theories, often comparing notes about what happens in the story. Through the Players' reasoning, the Narrator can unlock many new ideas.

Those ideas can be a great source of inspiration for concepts to bring into the story and elements to stoke Players' expectations. On top of that, they can lighten the load resting on the Narrator's shoulders, asking the Players to describe what is happening to Drifters. The Players' answers will suggest how the situation could develop.

How do you think you'll get over the castle walls? Which servant of the Prince has the information you need, in your opinion? Why do you think the Saint's candle is hidden there? Who do you hope to meet under the hanging tree?

Stay aware of pillars and duties

This might sound like an obvious tip, but it's really not. Always keeping the list of pillars and duties nearby should help the Narrator focus on the cornerstones of the gaming experience. The pillars are especially useful when you need to bring new elements into the story, when you need to answer to Player stimuli and choices, and when you portray the characters and creatures in the world of the game.

Talk to Drifters, not to Players

This good habit, handed down and shared by many in the role-playing community, is essential to focus the Players' attention on the story. Talking to Drifters doesn't allow the conversation to stray out of the game, and reminds everybody of the role they are playing.

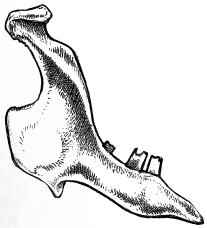
Never say "no"

When Players state an action that seems too risky or even foolish, it's best if the Narrator doesn't refuse the proposition on the spot. It's much more interesting if you open up to the possibility, making it clear to everyone that there are huge risks.

In other words, the Narrator should allow Drifters to take huge risks and make unheard of actions, provided that they are aware of the terrible consequences they could face.

Come up with problems, not solutions

During the adventure creation process, the Narrator should define Challenges and Threats that the group could face. At this point of the game, it's crucial for the Narrator to not plan for ways to overcome the obstacles they are creating. This will put the Players in front of situations without an immediate solution, which will require them to find a reasoned solution. This will encourage them to ask questions, to seek out information and details to overcome the Challenge. Answering Players' questions and curiosity will become a precious tool to come up with new ideas to use in every context.



Certain animal's jaws are very powerful talismans

Be mindful of the rhythm

In Memento Mori, there are several mechanics that will stop the story, asking everyone to pay attention to something else. This happens most often when Corruption increases and new Gifts are created.

When this happens, the Players are free to choose whether to push back the actions required by the rules to proceed with no interruption. For example, they could choose to not bring the combat scene to a halt to define the new Gift or Stigma and to postpone the operation. Other people could feel like they need to follow the evolution of the Drifters exactly as it happens, even during especially dramatic moments of the story.

Ask the reason why

The Players' hands are forced by Corruption into making choices that will have a huge impact on their characters. When this happens, it's best if the Narrator asks them to explain the reasoning behind their choices.

It's very important to ponder the thought-process, emotions, regrets, and rage hiding behind the Drifters' sacrifices. These moments of communion represent the perfect chance for everyone to relive the past of their character and understand their ordeals.

Play with tension and make horror explode

Despite the abhorrent visions we described before, the horror that surrounds Drifters doesn't always manifest at full power. It most often hides behind apparently normal people, ordinary situations, and every-day items.

At regular intervals, the Narrator should try to heighten tension around an apparently normal situation, pushing the story toward the border between plausible and unbelievable. When they feel like finally bringing the horror and inhumanity of the world to the forefront, they can simply have it explode, calling on information and images from the volume you are now holding.

Session 0

For an adventure in Memento Mori to start, everyone involved needs to come together for a preparatory game session.

This preliminary session is called "Session 0".

The meeting, which involves everyone who will participate in the game, has four main goals:

- Ensuring each person involved has all the information needed to imagine the context of the story and relate to their Drifter in a coherent fashion;
- Creating the Drifters who the Players will portray;
- Coming up with a shared definition for important elements of the adventure's context;
- Allowing the Narrator to collect all needed ingredients to come up with an adventure.

It's important to specify that **Session 0 is a compulsory moment for the game, not an optional one.** The reason for this is simple: the prompts created during this session **will become the foundations on top of which the Narrator will build the adventure**. Actually, the Narrator should prepare nothing before coming to this first meeting. During Session 0, **the Narrator's job is simply to facilitate the operations involving the Players**, encouraging them to share their own ideas and helping inexperienced players understand the game system and setting.

The phases

Session 0 is a series of activities organized in 4 distinct phases and aimed at the Players. The Narrator will simply have to present them in order.

The four phases are:

- Introducing the world of the game;
- Binding Pact;
- Creating the Drifters;
- Final touches.

FROM HISTORICAL SETTING TO DARK FANTASY

If the Narrator wishes to emphasize the feeling of discovery, they can initially "hide" the folkloric and supernatural elements of the game setting from the Players. This will allow them to cast the Players in an apparently realistic and historical context, only to gradually unveil the darker and more fantastic elements.

Phase 1- Introducing the world of the game

To introduce the world of the game to the Players, the Narrator can read aloud, or summarize in their own words, the paragraphs "Europe at the time of the Black Death" and "Beyond the Veil" from Chapter I. Later, they have to describe the core themes of Memento Mori to the Players and, if they deem it relevant, share the pillars of the game with them. It's essential for this shared moment to result in an open discussion so everyone's expectations and goals can align.

Before heading over to the next phase, the Narrator must also describe the security tools proposed in this chapter. Everyone should understand how these tools work and be aware that, at any moment, they can stop to discuss the experience, listen to the others' needs, and take additional measures to ensure the best game experience.

Phase 2 - Binding Pact

The goal of this phase is to fill in the Binding Pact. This sheet is shared with the entire group, and it includes some fundamental information on the group and their context. On top of this, the choices made in this phase will influence Drifter creation and have a big impact on the adventure the Narrator will set up.

The Binding Pact is structured as such: the first part is a brief description of the game setting that sheds light on its most important features, the second part is a list of questions that Players need to answer, while the third can be used to take note of the Marks of the Drifters involved in the adventure.

Following the order on the sheet, the Narrator asks questions to all Players. The Players can make use of the pre-written answers by ticking one of the boxes or give their own original answer and ask for the Narrator's opinion on it.

Our recommendation is to keep your answers as brief and to the point as possible, avoid adding details and information beyond what's requested (the pre-written answers are a good example of what you need in this phase).

The first three questions on the list focus on the Drifters from a general point of view, while the others focus on the Omen. **The Omen is a crucial element that brings the Drifters together and introduces them to the adventure.** This topic will be examined later in this chapter, in the section dedicated to adventure creation (pg. 210).

THE GROUP AHEAD OF THE INDIVIDUAL

This phase is mostly aimed at defining what the group will be, to then help with character creation. Once the Binding Pact is filled in, it will be much easier for Players to reason within clear boundaries instead of feeling like they must start from scratch.

Up next, some of our tips on how Narrators can help Players answer questions from the Binding Pact.

1. The Drifters go on a quest across regions of Europe affected by the plague outbreak of the XIV century. But where specifically?

The goal of this question is to position the Drifters in a generic geographical and cultural context. This question is important because it tickles everyone's creativity by establishing the first images of locations, cities, landscapes, and cultures.

The answer doesn't need to be detailed or historically accurate, far from it. Everyone involved just needs to find a location that they can easily picture, even if relying on stereotypes: will they opt for the decadent streets of Constantinople? The dark canals of Venice? Or the battlefields of Britannia?

ANSWERING TOGETHER

In this phase, everyone is working together to fill in the Binding Pact. It's crucial for the Narrator to play two simultaneous roles: speeding up the process and being an active participant. First of all, they must facilitate the dialog between all participants and ensure that the answers are truly shared. Secondly, they must actively take part in the discussion by suggesting ideas, without placing their opinion before those of the other people.

2. The Drifters all belong to a group with shared objectives. What is their group?

The answer to this question allows everyone involved to choose the situation of origin of their characters and imagine what brought the group together. It is the first step in drawing a shared outline of the characters and a prompt for several clear archetypes.

Before answering this question, the Players should ask themselves: What could be the members of... a band of deserters? Who would be in an expedition of fake pilgrims? And in a gang of thugs?

3. The Drifters are keepers of a great secret. What is this secret?

It's true, the Drifters don't even have a face yet, and we know very little about them as people. But this answer will begin to define their bond, which is conditioned by a shady secret from their past. They were involved in a terribly serious event, and they cannot speak about it to anyone else. A secret like this should ensure strong tensions within the group. If, on one side, it could create conflicts and suspicions, it could also represent the reason why the group sticks together.

4. Before the beginning of the adventure, all Drifters shared an Omen. What was the name of the event it foretold?

The goal of this question is to establish a name for the event predicted by the Omen. You don't need to describe the Omen or picture the nature of the event, who will take part in it, or why it's so important to the group (the Narrator will define these elements at a later time). You just need to establish the name of this event, brainstorming for inspiration and relying on the prompts given in pre-written answers.

5. The Omen mentions a location where the event will take place. What is this location?

The same recommendations given for previous questions also apply to this one. You don't need to add details on the Omen or location described here. A simple direct answer to the question should be enough, it's just another piece of information that will be added to what was established before.

6. The Omen left 5 key symbolic concepts, also known as Effigies, in the minds of the Drifters. What are these symbols?

This last question requires some creative effort on behalf of everyone involved. The goal of the question is to find five suggestive words that are somehow inspired by previous answers. The concepts and images that emerge from this should represent different aspects of the group of Drifters that is taking shape.

In some cases, concepts without a direct connection with what was previously discussed can work, so long as they can still tie in with the shared imagery created by the group.

A good way to create some variety in these five words is to try to list one item, one feeling, one sound, one environmental element, and a mysterious entity. Another option could be to come up with an Effigy relating to each of the previous answers on the Binding Pact, looking for shared symbols and meanings.

By answering these questions, everyone can get ready for the next phase of Session 0.

EFFIGIES

The group has reached the last question. Rereading all previous answers, they begin discussing which terms could summarize everything they have come up with together about this new group of Drifters.

They choose the word "poison" because it's a terrible connection with their secret.
Thinking about the places where they will travel, they choose to lock in the word "mud".

Their shared objective immediately suggests the word "betrayal", but the event foretold in the Omen can be represented by the word "birth".

Finally, thinking about the feeling they experienced throughout this creative phase, they conclude that the word "liturgies" is the perfect conclusion for their list of Effigies.

Phase 3 - Creating the Drifters

At this point, the Players must create their Drifters, keeping in mind all the answers they marked on the Binding Pact and the relationships established there. The Narrator should remind Players that the Dream of each character is the last element to define in this creative process. Players should reach the point of creating the Dreams only when Drifters are almost fully formed.

KEY CONCEPTS

Effigies are five key concepts that will play a pivotal role in creating the Drifter's adventure. The Narrator should remind Players that this choice can really change the shape of the story they will experience. As such, it's important for them to choose Effigies that can sum up and add to the other answers on the Binding Pact. Effigies will be used by Players when creating their Drifters' Dreams and become a powerful tool that will help the Narrator shape the story.

The Drifters' Dream

The nature of the Dream and its importance for characters in Memento Mori is a topic we have already addressed (pg. 41). In this phase, we will simply explain the procedure that should help Players define this final element of their characters.

First of all, it's important for all Dreams to be somehow tied to the Effigies defined in the previous phase. This will ensure that the aspirations of Drifters tie in to the story and converge toward the core concepts of the plot. Once again, the connection between Dream and Effigy doesn't need to be explicit, but they can use metaphorical and symbolical references as their basis.

> *Example:*
> *Using the Effigies from the previous example as basis, a Player decides to build their Drifter's Dream around the word "poison". After all, their character is a scholar with a dramatic past, plagued with an obsessive thirst for knowledge. So they develop the Dream of one day crafting the perfect poison, undetectable and iwith no antidote. Perhaps one day, someone will be able to surpass their level and recognize the product of their genius.*

Once the Dream is defined, it needs to be added in the last empty space on the Drifter Sheet (and you can also note the Effigy it is tied to).

If one or more Players are finding it hard to create the Dream of their Drifters through the Effigies, you can even go back and change them, so as to make the process easier.

Indeed, at the end of character creation, everyone involved could have new ideas of better synonyms that could substitute for the Effigies established while filling in the Binding Pact.

When all Players have finished character creation, you can move on to the final phase of Session 0.

Phase 4 - Final touches

To complete and enrich Session 0, the Narrator can ask some questions to the Players and take personal notes about their answers. This information will not go into the Binding Pact or Drifter Sheet, but it can simply be used as further inspiration for their upcoming tasks.

This is a great chance for Players too, as they can clarify aspects of their Drifters and further establish the inner mechanics of their group.

The Narrator can ask questions both to individual Players and to the group as a whole:

- What is the relationship between your Drifters? Are some relationships deeper than others?
- Before chasing the Omen, what was the goal of the Drifters?
- Were the Drifters part of an organization? What is it called? What is their goal?
- Are the Drifters wanted? Do they have known antagonists?
- After the first symptoms of the disease appeared, the Drifters noticed some sinister changes around them. What were these changes?

Building the Story

The stories that involve Drifters are shorter in length. Due to the nature of the protagonists, the game is designed to give its best in the span of 5-7 sessions, each lasting around 3 hours. This is an approximate time-frame, and it may vary depending on the group, but it should suggest the span of time this game experience should cover.

Where to Begin

Adventures are never built up from nothing, and they are always connected to the characters.

When the Narrator prepares an adventure, they should begin with the information gathered during Session 0. They already have a starting context, several elements that connect the Drifters, and a mysterious event on the horizon (foretold by the Omen). On top of these elements, they also have the Effigies, symbols they can put in relation with what was established and use as inspiration throughout the preparation.

Anatomy of an Adventure

In the last chapter of this corebook, you will find an adventure titled "Burning Sky", created by following this outline.

Each adventure created for Memento Mori is built using the following elements:

- 1 - Omen;
- 2 - Dispute;
- 3 - Factions;
- 4 - Milestones and Challenges;
- 5 - Locations, NPCs, and Horrors.

1 - Omen

The Omen is the driving force that sets off the events and pushes Drifters on their adventure. Think of it as a spark that, in spite of their imminent death, rekindles the characters' Dreams and gives them the strength to fight.

In a more practical sense, the Omen is a prophetic phrase that reaches each Drifter separately, pointing them to their initial goal. As a result, **all adventures in Memento Mori begin with a group of Drifters traveling on the path indicated by an Omen**.

2 - Dispute

If a group of Drifters is going on a journey, it is always because somewhere, in the Unaware world or Beyond the Veil, a Dispute has started.

The Dispute is the triggering cause for a conflict between two or more Factions. The instigator could be a Prince from Beyond the Veil who wishes to intrude in human affairs, or the crazy request of a King who lost his mind, it could be the theft of an ancient vestige from Beyond the Veil, or the rediscovery of a lost miracle. Simply said, **it is the conflict at the root of the story and only the Drifters can solve it**.

3 - Factions

Factions represent competing forces involved in the events of the story. They don't need to be directly part of the Dispute, but they each have their own goals and interests that will have an impact on the Drifters. Characters will have to get used to dealing with Factions, choosing whether to cooperate with them or go against them, directly or indirectly.

4 - Milestones and Challenges

The story prepared by the Narrator is a series of situations that challenge the Drifters on their increasingly dangerous and disturbing journey. It's like the sketch of an open outline that becomes more detailed only at certain points. The key elements for this flexible story are Milestones and Challenges.

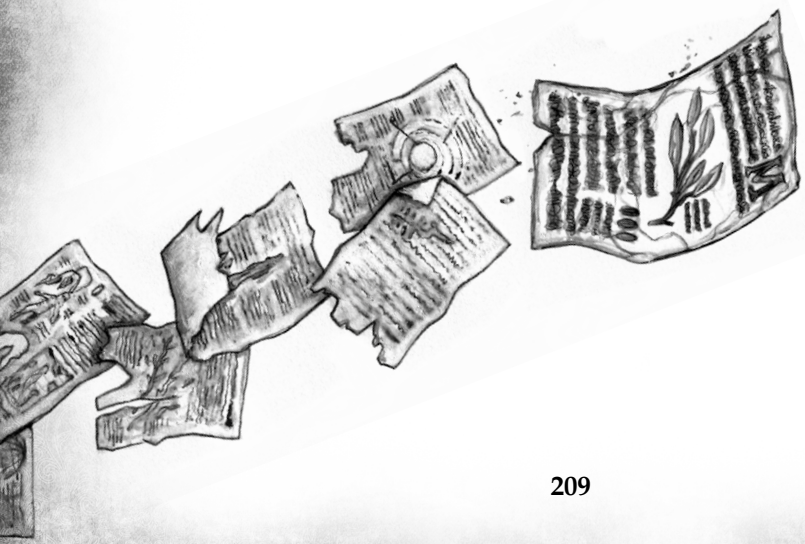
Milestones are crucial moments in the story that the Narrator establishes before the adventure even begins. They are nodes at which the Drifters will find new information regarding the Dispute or contribute to steer its evolution directly.

Challenges are risky situations located between Milestones. By overcoming these Challenges, the Drifters will have a chance to reach key objectives and move the story forward.

5 - Locations, NPCs, Horrors, and Threats

Challenges are set in one or more **Locations**, populated with **Non-Player Characters** (called NPCs for short), or haunted by Horrors and Threats.

Locations, NPCs, Horrors, and Threats are simply lists of ideas that should be prepared to allow the Narrator to shape the Challenge on the fly. This way, the Narrator will simply need to follow the Players on their explorations, enriching the experience with ideas taken from those lists.



Weaving the Omen

PERSONAL OR GROUP VISION?

The Omen doesn't need to reach all Drifters at the same time. The Narrator is free to choose a different moment and location for the Omen to reach each character (provided they all happen before the adventure begins).

The Omen is the first element of the adventure a Narrator should establish. **It appears to Drifters right before the beginning of their adventure, and could be a fleeting vision, a whisper in the wind, an apparition, or an epiphany.** It's not as clear as a prophecy, and more closely resembles a cryptic message with strong ties to the Drifters. **The Omen indicates a way to make the Dream come true**, and the Drifters never doubt this fact.

The contents of the Omen, while still lacking detail, are decided at least in part during Session 0. The Narrator should re-read the answers on the Binding Pact (especially points 4, 5, and 6), revise the Effigies and mull over what the Omen will look like.

> *Example:*
> *On the Binding Pact, the answers to questions about the Omen point to the fact that "the birth of the impure" will soon take place in a mysterious location known as "the sunken ruins". The Effigies chosen by Players are: "poison", "birth", "betrayal", "mud", and "liturgy". Starting from this information, the Narrator prepares to weave the Omen.*

The Omen is defined by two crucial components: the message and the context.

The content of the message will include the name and location of the mysterious event that is about to happen. It can be delivered during a mystical vision, as whispers in a dream, or reach characters in unreal circumstances, like a sign from fate.

The message in the Omen should clearly communicate three pieces of information: **the name of the supernatural event** (as defined in Session 0), **the location of the event** (as defined in Session 0), and **a connection to the Drifters' Dreams**.

Example:
The Narrator looks at the Binding Pact and imagines a female voice whispering a message that sounds like this "Seek the path to the Dream in the sunken ruins where the birth of the impure will occur".

Once the message is established, it's time to work on the context.

The Omen is an experience that strikes the Drifters to their core, awakening their Dreams. As such, it's crucial for the Narrator to choose images and symbols that have strong ties with their Dreams. To do this, the Omen must be placed in a context that touches each and every Effigy. We could also say, that the premonition described by the Narrator is simply a dream-like representation of the symbolical forms defined during Session 0.

Example:
The Narrator imagines the Drifters gathered around a bonfire, looking at the dancing flames.
Hidden amid the warm tones of the fire, the sudden image of a newborn crying inconsolably appears [Effigy "birth"]. Two hands hold the child while others draw unknown symbols on their body, as if it was being included in a strange ritual [Effigy "liturgy"]. Suddenly, the arms holding the baby turn into two snakes, and constrict the poor thing, biting at their face and belly with their fangs [Effigies "betrayal" and "poison"]. The vision suddenly ends when the bonfire gets extinguished, plummeting into a thick layer of slough that now expands under the Drifters' camp [Effigy "mud"]. The Characters barely have time to realize what's happening as a female voice starts whispering in their minds "Seek the path to the Dream in the sunken ruins where the birth of the impure will occur".

The description of the Omen sets the beginning of the adventure.

A SIMPLE MESSAGE

A good way to create an Omen with an effective message is to use this standard formula and fill in the blanks with information from the Binding Pact.

Setting up the Dispute

The Dispute is the inciting incident that creates the premises for the adventure. This event is usually born out of conflict, competition, necessity, or revenge. As such, it is born out of some kind of contrast between individuals or entities from either Beyond the Veil or the Unaware world. Additionally, the tension is also connected to the physical or supernatural limitation that prevent someone from reaching a goal beyond their abilities or across the Veil. **This means that the only ones who can determine the result of a Dispute are the Drifters** who, in order to reach their Dreams, are willing to travel between the worlds and interact with these conflicts as protagonists.

ACTORS AT PLAY

We recommend limiting the number of Factions, as having too many factions in a game with such a short timeframe leaves little time to explore their motives. The ideal number of Factions in a Memento Mori adventure is three or less, four at a maximum.

Building the Dispute is a fundamental step in creating an adventure, as it lays the foundation upon which the entire story will develop. When the Narrator begins to approach the Dispute, they can always rely on the ideas gathered during Session 0 and much more.

To get the most out of this information, here is a list of question the Narrator can answer to build the Dispute:

- Is the Dispute a conflict that originates Beyond the Veil or in the Unaware world?
- Which entity or entities from Beyond the Veil are involved in the Dispute?
- Is the Dispute connected to a desire for dominance, revenge, ownership, payback, or destruction?
- What does the person or creature that set off the Dispute want? What are they willing to sacrifice to obtain it?
- Is the Dispute a known conflict or is it happening in secret?

- Why are the Drifters' skills key to this conflict? Who could exploit them?
- The Omen describes a mysterious event. How is it connected to the Dispute?

Example:
The Dispute originates in the Unaware world.
A Siren named Themisia was cast out from her school and fled from Beyond the Veil, she traveled upstream in a river until she reached the swampy lands of a small human fiefdom. There, she seduced the Count of the land with her charming voice, and joined with him in a perverted and deceitful love story. Their relationship went on for months with the muddy swamp as its backdrop, until the Count suddenly managed to break free of the charm binding him to Themisia and locked himself in the highest rooms of his castle. The Siren, who has been carrying the Count's child for quite some time, is weak, vulnerable, and full of anger. Her chance encounter with a group of Drifters could turn the tables and allow her to achieve what she really wants: revenge.

A solid Dispute should always include: **one key event that sets off the conflict, one or several involved subjects with a set objective, and a reason why the Drifters are instrumental to solving the problem**.

The Dispute represents a problem that could have started days, months, years, or even centuries before the Drifters were born. **This means that, at least at first, the behind the scenes of the Dispute are completely unknown to the characters.** They will have to keep venturing into the unknown to understand the scheme they have been dragged into.

Lining up Factions

The creation of the Dispute could allow you to find the main actors of your story. This is the moment when you can start diving into the topic, outlining their goals and describing the sides of the conflict.

Factions are groups of individuals or entities that take active part in the Dispute, and weave their destinies with those of the Drifters.

You can think of Factions as famous and powerful castes in the Unaware world, or like power circles from Beyond the Veil. In truth, they can take on a multitude of forms: Factions can be Hosts from Beyond the Veil, covens of witches, packs of beasts, religious orders, monstrous families, or rebel companies. **Factions are not defined by their size or power, but by their role in the Dispute.** By defining this final feature, the Narrator should have a clear picture of the Factions in play, and of how they are likely to act.

ONE INDIVIDUAL, ONE FACTION

It's normal to come up with Factions composed of a single individual. When this is the case, it's important to focus on the reason why they are so close to the Dispute and on how they will come into contact with Drifters.

As before with the Dispute, here is a list of questions that can help the Narrator outline the Factions of their adventure:

- What are the Factions involved in the Dispute? What are their goals? Are they in conflict with each-other?
- Do Drifters represent an obstacle or an opportunity for the Factions?
- Is the Dispute connected to a desire for dominance, revenge, ownership, payback, or destruction?
- What could each Faction offer to the Drifters? How could they lead them closer to their Dreams?
- Does the Faction have a leader? Why are they important to the story?
- Does the Faction know about the secret shared by the Drifters? How could they exploit it?

- Does the Faction have a weak-spot or vulnerability? How could Drifters learn about it?
- Are the Factions aware of the subject of the Omen? Do they intend to intervene in this event?

Example:
Continuing the process described in previous examples, the Narrator pictures three main Factions.

On one side there is Themisia's Faction, composed of the swamp creatures under her control. Their goal is to kill the Count and avenge the humiliating refusal she had to suffer. They want to find out how the Unaware managed to break the spell binding him to her.
The Siren's weak spot is the "impure" child she is bearing, and the fact she feels vulnerable as a consequence.

The Count represents the second Faction. While he can rely on many men and resources, he has decided to not use any of them so as to not reveal the secret behind his unspeakable relationship with Themisia (only one other "person" is aware of this secret). His goal is to avoid the Siren's wrath. His weak spot is his constant need for pleasure, either carnal or of a different nature, which he can't live without.

The last Faction is represented by a mysterious traveler that recently took up residence in the Count's court, quickly becoming his personal counselor. He is a Wayside Devil (see Codex Gigas pg. "Wayside Devil" a pagina 196) who, sensing the co-occurring supernatural events, became part of the Count's entourage. Once that happened, he made a pact with the man and broke the spell binding him to Themisia. The Devil's only goal is to cash in on the reward promised by the Count and, if possible, strike more deals, hopefully with the Drifters. His weak spots are his greed, and his uncontrollable need to see his victims fail.

Each Faction should always include: **a description of the members or leader, a set goal, a weak spot, and a reason to be interested in the Drifters**.

Aside from the main Factions, the Narrator can also imagine lesser Factions, which could have no connection to the Dispute. In this case, it's important to understand their importance to the Drifters and how they can contribute to the story:

- Are there any Factions outside of the Dispute?
- The Faction is drawn to the Drifters. Why? What could they gain by cooperating with Drifters or destroying them?
- What does this Faction think about the Dispute? If they learned about the Dispute, would their goal or approach change?

Example:
On the outskirts of the swamp there is a smaller community of people who live in the castle's shadow, forgotten by all. This community of rejects is deeply connected to lost rituals and traditions, and constitutes an additional Faction, outside of the Dispute.
These Unawares see the characters as enlightened beings who can help them get closer to the powers they worship. If the Drifters choose to help them, the swamp people could lead their group inside the castle walls on a secret path. The weak spot of this Faction is their secrecy: if the existence of this community is revealed, they could be hunted as witches.

Establishing Milestones

Every story has its turning points, moments that influence every action the characters take after that. **Milestones represent exactly these crucial nodes, when Drifters gain new revelations about the Dispute.**

The best way to describe Milestones is by comparing them with pivotal scenes in movies, the kind that surprises watchers by revealing new information that they could only imagine before. Just like in movies, **Milestones await Drifters in set locations and at set moments in their adventure** and change the story for good. This doesn't mean that the events of these situations are controlled or predetermined by the Narrator. Actually, the events that unfold during a Milestone are always in the hands of the Players, even though there are some narrative boundaries set during the creation of the adventure.

Milestones are scenes that Drifters go through at set times and in set locations in the story, and they reveal new information regarding the Dispute and Factions at play.

Example:
The Drifters make their way to the lair of the sand Satyrs from Beyond the Veil (see Codex Gigas pg. 164), where they finally learn the location of the "Black blade". - In the ruins of a small village near Bamberg, the Drifters find the remains of the famous warlord abandoned where the King's men betrayed him. - Deep in the damp countryside that surrounds London, the Drifters make contact with the spirits on a Hecatomb Field and receive a warning about the entities they are about to awake.

Not every ingredient needs to be minced, Fury's nerves, for example, release hate and violence

There is no right number of Milestones for a story, and no rule for how often you should have one. Narrators are free to choose when they feel appropriate, and each adventure could have a different number of them. However, we suggest you try the following procedure, as it works for most cases and can prove useful to first-time Narrators.

To help the Narrator, here are 3 short lists of questions that can guide them to new ideas depending on where the Milestones is located within the adventure.

The first list focuses on the starting Milestone, which coincides with the revelation included in the Omen. The second list offers a series of questions dedicated to the central developments of the story. Finally, the third list focuses on the final Milestone, the de-facto conclusion of the adventure.

Beginner friendly Milestones

The premise is that each game session should end with players reaching a Milestones. The Narrator should first of all plan for the total number of sessions, which should come easy given the structure of the game. After all, Memento Mori is a game that works best with 5, 6, or 7 game sessions per story. If we suppose that the Narrator is preparing an adventure that will last 6 sessions, they need to find 6 Milestones.

Following this reasoning, they can have a regular structure that gives rhythm to the story, much like what we see in TV-series. The “episode” finale usually falls at a turning point or after a new discovery, so that the public will eagerly wait for the next episode.

The First Milestone

In the moment when the Omen is established during Session 0, the Players have implicitly set the scene they will inhabit and act on once they reach the first Milestone in their adventure. This means that the group will certainly reach "that place" to experience the consequences of "that event". **At the end of this first Milestone, it's crucial that the Drifters discover something important that will definitely place them into the thick of the Dispute.**

Here is a short list of questions to help the Narrator come up with the first Milestone:

- The Omen points to a mysterious place. On which side of the Veil is it located? How would you describe it?
- Who is on the scene? Will someone make their entrance at a later time?
- Why does the event foreboded by the Omen attract the Drifters? Which elements of this scene connect with their Dreams?
- What aspect of the Dispute will be revealed in the event foretold by the Omen?
- Which Factions come in contact with Drifters during this event? Why?
- In this location, are there threats or dangers awaiting the Drifters?
- At the end of this Milestone, what is the Drifters' new goal?

Example:
The "birth of the impure" in the "sunken ruins" is the moment when Themisia gives birth to the child she conceived with the Count.
The "sunken ruins" are an ancient pile of rubble hidden in a distant corner of the swamp. There, the characters will witness a destabilizing scene and see an inhuman creature give birth before being involved in a surreal dialog with the same creature. Themisia will only disclose a fragment of the Dispute, painting herself as the abandoned mother and forgoing to mention details that could put her in a bad light. She will ask Drifters to avenge her by bringing to her the Count's heart. In exchange, she will reveal to them the secret to fulfill their Dreams before the disease runs its course.
The scene is extremely disturbing but also suggestive: the newborn held in the Siren's arm, the ruins sinking in the swamp, and the strange creatures that slither under the water surface perfectly mirror the vision of the Omen. Could this really be the beginning of their journey to fulfilling the Dream?

Turning Points and Developments

After the first Milestone, you need to set the Milestones that will punctuate the story until its conclusion. As previously said, every Milestone reveals or changes the Dispute by pushing the Drifters toward a resolution. **The central Milestones need to describe these developments and prepare the characters, Factions, and everyone involved in the story for the grand finale.**

The list proposed to guide the Narrator through this phase should be approached differently than the ones you found before. The Narrator should choose only one question from the list, and use the answer to build an entire Milestone (to put it differently, by answering all upcoming questions you can develop enough Milestones to structure an entire adventure). This method should allow the Milestones to focus on a topic and unveil the Dispute one fragment at a time.

Here is a short list of questions to help the Narrator come up with the central Milestones:

- A Faction seeks the help of the Drifters to resolve the Dispute. Where and when does this happen? Which details about the Dispute are revealed? What is offered to the Drifters?
- A previously ignored Faction makes contact with the Drifters. What do they reveal to the characters? What do they want in exchange?
- A Faction bursts onto the scene, marking a new development in the Dispute. Where and when do they join the action? What will happen if they are helped or hindered?
- A Faction betrays or attacks the Drifters. What do the characters learn during the battle? Why did the Faction try to kill them?
- A Faction is exposed or surprised with suspicious behavior. What information on the Dispute were they keeping from the Drifters?
- The Drifters learn about a new side of the Dispute that changes their position on the matter. What do they learn? How do they learn it?

Example:
The Drifters make their way to the Count's private rooms after facing countless perils. However, the person sitting on the ruler's chair is not the Count, but an eerie character who appears extraneous to the court. The Wayside Devil had been observing the Drifters' moves for quite some time, and he hid the Count in a safe location, which he won't reveal unless he gets something precious in exchange.
Faced with the situation, the Drifters can realize who broke Themisia's spell, and can start to sense something rotten in her relationship with the Count.

The final Milestone

MILESTONES AND CHALLENGES

The structure of Milestones and Challenges ensures that Drifters are always involved in either kind of phase in the story. When they are not facing a Milestone, they are necessarily dealing with the risks of a Challenge, or vice versa. From a temporal point of view, Challengers are longer than Milestones, and they cover most of the game time.

For all intents and purposes, this specific Milestone represents the final scene of the adventure. This is the Drifters' last chance to resolve the Dispute and gain what they fought so hard for. One way or another, they will finally have a chance to decide the fate of the conflict, concluding their arc of corruption and transformation.

Here is a short list of questions to help the Narrator come up with the final Milestone:

- Where will the last Milestone of the adventure be set? Who will be present for the scene?
- Will this final Milestone be characterized by a clash between Factions? By one last plot twist? By a suggestive meeting?
- Can one last plot twist turn the tables for the Dispute? Or do the Drifters have a clear path to their goal?
- Up to this point, the main force moving Drifters has always been their Dream. Will the characters gain the means to reach it? Will they have someone's help? Or will they learn that they were deceived all along?
- During this scene, will the Drifters have a moment to think about everything they had to sacrifice on this adventure? Will someone or something remind them about their past and bonds?

Example:
The last Milestone is set where everything began, among the sunken ruins in the swamp. However, the situation is much different now than it was in the beginning: Themisia is hiding in the murky waters with her baby, while the Wayside Devil (in raven form) and the swamp folk look at the scene from their hiding spot among the marsh vegetation.

The Drifters have a chance to hand over the Count's heart to the Siren, but they do not expect the swamp folk's incoming ambush. The Unaweres were also manipulated by the Wayside Devil and intend to capture Themisia and her child to sacrifice them in one of their ancestral rituals. The Drifters will have to find a way to gain their reward from the Siren and survive this battle.

Setting up Challenges

Challenges are situations that involve obstacles, dangers, or trials that Drifters need to overcome in order to reach the next Challenge or Milestone. Challenges are more fluid than Milestones, in these phases of the adventure, Players and Narrator are free to explore the events.

To imagine what will happen during a Challenge, you just need to answer questions like: "Which obstacles stop the Drifters from stealing the relic in the cathedral?", "What dangers will they have to face while descending into the dark gorge?", or "What horrors await the Drifters beyond the Gate they are about to cross?".

As such, Challenges are risky situations separating the Drifters from an Objective. They do not bring revelations about the Dispute, bur hold all those moments that will define the character's path on a terrifying journey with no return.

> *Example:*
> *The Drifters just stepped through a Gate and the corrupted world Beyond the Veil lies before them. They came here following the swamp folk's indications to find another Gate. This passage will bring them back to the Unaware world, to a place within the castle walls. Their goal is to find the Gate while surviving the dangers of the Ephemeral Land.*

A Challenge should always include: **an Objective, at least one Location, several NPCs the Drifters can interact with, and some Threats to stand in their way**.

Objective of the Challenges

The Objective is what Drifters need to reach to conclude the Challenge. This aspect shouldn't necessarily be disclosed to the Players, since it is usually pretty implicit in the context of the story.

Example:
Finding the Gate was proving harder than expected. A wall of greenish smoke flooded the dying woods, making the search almost impossible. The Drifters decide to reach a raised area to get a better vantage point on the situation, but once there, they are stalked by a pack of Spectral Hounds (see Codex Gigas pg. 168). Who sent them here? Why are they coming for the Drifters? Unfortunately, they have no time to answer such questions. A few moments later, while running, the Drifters spot a bottomless well in the distance, exactly as the swamp folk had described: their objective is almost within reach.

"And now? What do we need to do?"

If the Players can't find an answer to the question, it means that there is something wrong with the current Challenge. Perhaps the context doesn't include points of interest, they cannot find clues or traces to follow, or the last Milestone did not point to a specific enough objective for the Drifters, making the next Challenges less interesting.

Challenge Objectives should help the Narrator make sure that the story always has goals that are clearly useful to the characters.

Example:
The group has recently overcome two Challenges. First, they managed to pass into Beyond the Veil by reaching the Gate described by the swamp folk, and then, once inside the castle, they quietly made their way to the Count's rooms, where they hope to finally meet the regent.
Here, too, the Objectives of the Challenges helped guide the group to the moment where an extremely important Milestone will take place.

The way Challenges develop should never be established by the Narrator, nor should their length, number of obstacles, or dangers be set. A series of dangers and situations stand between the Drifters and their Objectives, and the Narrator should only come up with rough ideas while setting up the adventure. They can only understand which to use and how to use them during the game.

Locations, NPCs, Horrors, and Threats

Every Challenge can develop in one or more locations, and is usually populated by several individuals. Additionally, as is usually true for the Drifters' journey, it is filled with dangers, horrors, and dark temptations lurking in the shadows. All these elements, outlined and ready to be tossed into the story, should be organized in three lists during Challenge creation.

Holy crosses are weapons that would be better to hide

Example:
The Drifters have finally arrived in the Count's castle through a Gate. Once back in the Unaware world, they climb out of a small dry well located near the stables. The Objective of the Challenge is simple: "Reach the Count".
The Locations of the Challenge are: "The Count's stables - lightly guarded, often used by clandestine couples in search of some privacy", "The kitchen and servants' rooms - these places are disregarded by the Count's guards, but home to rumors that make their way throughout the castle", "The upper floors - swarming with guards who are on edge due to the Count's paranoia; some of them have been noticing strange things since the gray traveler arrived at the castle", "The Wayside Devil's room - protected by hand-picked and corrupted guards, this room is practically empty and it could contain hints about the guest's true nature".

The purpose of the lists is to just gather the most interesting elements of the context of the Challenge. The only things that deserve to be mentioned here are mysterious locations, suspicious individuals, disturbing horrors, and fearsome threats, everything ordinary can be summed up in a brief description and be included in the Challenge's context.

Locations

Here is a list of simple tips to help the Narrator identify the Locations of a Challenge:

- Set the Challenge in a wide enough area to include several interest points;
- Prepare a list of brief descriptions of the Locations, summing up known information about them;
- Connect the Locations to folklore, sordid traditions, and stories the Unawares use to identify them;
- Locations Beyond the Veil are always harsh, trackless, and impassable. By their own nature, they represent a danger that shouldn't be underestimated;
- Allow Players to explore freely, and find the best moment to introduce a location from your list by paying attention to the game;
- There is always someone who can reveal where a Location is set, especially when it's dark and secret. Don't give this someone a face, choose who they are when the time feels right;

NPCs

Here is a list of simple tips to help the Narrator identify the NPCs of a Challenge:

- Prepare a list of characters or ambiguous entities, include their virtues and dark sides;
- Focus on NPCs that defend the status quo and on others who secretly fight against it because they are isolated or mocked by the community;
- Define a simple goal for each NPC, make them act in accordance to this goal whenever Drifters hinder them or take their side;
- NPCs are always well informed and always have something that can prove useful to Drifters;
- Each NPC can become an ally or a dangerous opponent.

Summary of an adventure

The average Memento Mori adventure lasts between 5 and 7 game sessions.

The Narrator prepares the adventure after coordinating Session 0, referencing the filled-in Drifter Sheets and Binding Pact.

Starting with the information from Session 0, they create the Omen, Dispute, and Factions. Then they move on to structuring the adventure proper.

To begin their draft, they establish the Milestones. The first Milestone is the event foretold by the Omen, while the next Milestones develop the plot, taking Players toward the resolution of the Dispute.

In-between Milestones, the Narrator adds in Challenges to put Drifters through problematic situations. Each Challenge is composed of an Objective that characters need to reach and some lists of ideas to help define the context.

Horrors and Threats

Here is a list of tips to help the Narrator come up with Horrors and Threats that can appear during the Challenge:

- Each Challenge usually hides a terrifying, monstrous, or destabilizing element. Especially where you wouldn't expect it;
- Monsters and aberrations from Beyond the Veil are not the only Threats, the Unaware can sometimes be more terrifying than monsters;
- Horrors are violent, disgusting, or exaggerated displays, but they often hide in small details that escape the perception of most people;
- Threats prefer a violent and aggressive approach, but on some occasions, characters could establish contact and try to negotiate with them;
- Horrors elicit dismay and fear, but they can also hold mysteries to explore. Don't over-analyze them, if the Players want to learn more about them, use them to introduce new NPCs, set off Threats, or reward Drifters with precious information;
- Threats always have a Difficulty level, a number of HP, and an objective.

THREATS AND VALUES

When setting up Threats, its good practice to note down the Difficulty level and HP for each opponent the Drifters may face. In the Bestiarium of Codex Gigas, you can find dozens of examples the Narrator may use as Threats.

biagini

The True Ending

We left this final revelation for the very end of this chapter because we wanted to entrust one final secret for the Narrator: the True Ending.

The True Ending is a separate phase of the game, independent from the story experienced by players. It's the final act of the game experience, where we look at the epilogue of each Drifter, sometimes going far beyond the events of the adventure. Because the structure of Memento Mori is designed to encourage Players to confront this final moment. They will be forced to take stock of their mutations, consider the weight of their choices, and regret (or be thankful for) the sacrifices they made before the end.

Reaching the Dream

As soon as the adventure ends, the Narrator announces the beginning of the True Ending, starting off this game phase.

The True Ending is divided into two phases: The Ascent and the Epilogue.

The first phase is optional, and it hinges on the events of the adventure, while the second is always necessary.

We have finally reached the question that determines the structure of the True Ending: **did the Drifters fulfill their Dream during the adventure?**

If the Dream was achieved, clearly the Narrator had set up a story that could lead to that eventuality. This means that the Players personally went through the exciting success of their Dream, and **they can move directly to the phase described in the paragraph "The Epilogue"** (pg. 240).

If the Dream was not fulfilled, then they need to find out how and if through "the Ascent", the phase described in the next paragraphs. However, the Epilogue is a mandatory step and should always be confronted as the very last step.

THE LAST SESSION

The Narrator should remember that the True Ending is a game phase that can take quite some time. Our experience has taught us that the finale of an adventure should always happen about half-way through the time of the last game session.

The Ascent

While their superhuman and alienating journey has just ended, the Drifters feel like the flame that guides them has not yet been quenched. The power that disfigured them and devoured every last shred of their humanity is now trying to suffocate every last ember of that fire. The curse of the plague won't be satisfied until it can see the Drifters fall or rise before their Dream. **The goal of the Ascent is to describe the dramatic fate of each Drifter's Dream.**

In the moment when the Ascent begins, the Players must take turns narrating a **Scene about their character**.

Narrating the Scenes

The Scenes are short stories that describe three noteworthy events on the path each Drifter takes after the end of their adventure, on their way to achieving their Dream.

Through these stories, every Player is coming up with challenges and events that will lead their character to their ultimate goal, with no limits or rules. Because nobody but the Player can decide what will happen during a Scene. The only indication is that **it must always lead to a conflict with an uncertain outcome**. In other words, the Scenes are short stories that describe each Drifter's progress from their starting point to a final conflict where they will have to face a relevant obstacle.

LISTENING AND INTERACTING

When a Player narrates, the others have no power on their story, but they can make themselves available if the protagonist needs ideas or prompts to help them overcome a creative block. After all, this phase of the game is based on everyone's creativity and their ability to imagine an ending for their characters.

Taking turns to narrate the Scenes is important as it gives a sense of progression to the stories while keeping everyone on the edge of their seat, as each story progresses one step at the time, and only after the final Scene is over will they get a full picture about the destiny of each Drifter.

Example:
A Player is about to narrate the first Scene in their Ascent: "The adventure in Galway is over and now, mere hours after learning about the Ashen Lady's deceit, I decided to leave my dying companions behind. My Dream of establishing a cult based on myself is still too far away, I must act quickly. I decide to reach one of the Gates we discovered during our adventure and cross it without further ado. My initial goal is to capture an important member of a Host, interrogate them, and force them to lead me to their Prince. What do you think about this as my first Scene?" Everyone else approves, and a Player suggests which Host to use for the story, tying in to a creature they met during their adventure.

If a noose has taken a life, it becomes an infallible yoke

When all Players have narrated their first Scene, they go back to the first and proceed in order for the second Scene. And when the second round is over, everyone moves on to the third and final one.

Practical Tips

Before starting the Player starts narrating a Scene, the Narrator should always support them by sharing these practical tips with them:

- **Before describing the Scene, the Player should always set the scene for their character's starting point.** Only after the scene is set can they gather ideas about how the Scene will develop;
- **Every Scene should finish with an important conflict** that could take the Drifter closer to their goal or push them even further away;
- **The first Scene is extremely important, it connects the adventure's finale to the beginning of the Ascent**. It illustrates both the Drifters parting ways and the first phase of their journey to possibly achieving their own Dream;
- **The second Scene takes the Drifter toward a critical phase and on the path to the grand finale.** In this Scene, a big conflict needs to emerge, a terrible danger or a distressing revelation that threatens to completely shatter the character's hopes;
- **The third and final Scene takes the Drifter within an inch of their Dream.** The story should exasperate the process of evolution and corruption of the character, taking them to the final challenge that separates them from their goal;
- **The Ascent is a journey each Drifter must face alone.**

At the end of each Scene, the Player must make a dice roll that will help establish the Drifter's situation on their Ascent. On top of determining whether the Drifter has successfully overcome the challenge in the Scene, the roll also points to their conditions on the rest of the journey (more on this roll in upcoming paragraphs).

Example:
Tying in with the previous example this is how the Player concludes their Scene: "I meet with the Prince. The atmosphere is tense because we're both well aware of the risks that could come with a situation like this. The Prince has no intention of granting me even more power, but he sees me as a chance to achieve great profit. He challenges me, commanding me to tear away the skin of my face with my bare hands. He will only agree to help me after seeing this mad show of will." The Player is about to roll the pool of d6 to solve the Scene.

Closing a scene:

Every Player begins the Ascent with 18d6.

These d6 represent all the Slots on their Drifter Sheet (with the exclusion of the Blood Slots). Obviously, the color of each d6 should coincide with the level of Slot Corruption reached by the character at the end of their adventure. If you do not have enough dice, it could be useful to just note down the total number of dice and the results on a sheet of paper.

At the end of each Scene, the Player can choose which and how many d6 to roll when facing their personal challenge. Like for any other roll, the result will need to be compared to a Difficulty (more on this later). **The rolled d6 will be removed from the pool that can be used to tackle the following Scenes in the Ascent.** The Players always decides how many d6 to roll, but **they must roll at least 4 each Scene**.

The Difficulty of the roll is always the same, depending on the Scene at hand: **it's set to Difficulty 4 for the first Scene, 5 for the second, and 6 for the third.**

Example:
The roll connected to the first Scene has Difficulty 4. The Player evaluates the dice at their disposal and chooses to roll 3d6 white and 2d6 black. Fortunately, they gain a Dark Success with a black d6 and a Success with another d6, thus succeeding in the challenge. They put aside all d6 they have just rolled, as they can no longer be used during the Ascent. They now have 13d6 left.

Developing a Scene

Regardless of the result of their roll, the Drifter always continues on the path to their Dream.

However, the result of the roll will change the development of following Scenes. If they succeed, the story resumes from an advantageous position, coloring the Player's narration with optimism. If they fail, on the other hand, the Drifter sill overcomes the challenge, but can also see the first signs of decay appear, and their path looms darker and harder. To represent this, **when a roll during the Ascent fails, the Difficulty of the roll for the next Scene increases by 1**.

Example:
The Player had a successful roll and so their Scene concludes with their Drifter literally tearing off their face without even flinching. This is a horrifying scene that destabilizes and intimidates the Prince and everyone in his court. For a moment, he no longer feels like the worst monster in the room.

Example:
The Player failed their roll. Their character tears off their face and falls to their knees, totally overcome by pain and madness. The entire court is laughing at them, while some smaller winged demons fly closer to mock them and pick at the shreds of their skin on the floor. This looks like the end of their journey, until suddenly, when the Prince is about to order that the Drifter be dragged away, they stand back up saying: "I am not done here. You wanted my face? You have it. Now give me what I want!"

A sudarium is an imprint, a map and a record of death

The last Scene

The third and last roll does not advance the story, but it leads everyone to its conclusion, revealing the outcome of the Ascent.

At the end of this Scene, the Players pick all remaining d6 and face one final obstacle and their very last dice roll.

Success and failure on this roll open up two different scenarios:

- **If the Drifter surpasses the Difficulty, their Dream becomes reality.** The Player will finally be able to narrate their character's new position, describing its epic decadence in full;
- **Failing this roll will open up a gate to the Nightmare dimension.** This disaster will bring a huge wave of catastrophe onto the Unaware world, and it could even allow some entities from Beyond the Veil to reach their sought-after promised land, the Nightmare. The Dream will be lost forever, and the Dream will go through the most painful and horrific experience of their life. Catching even a glimpse of the borders of the Nightmare is a vision that goes beyond human imagination, shattering the mind

THE TRUE CHARM OF DRIFTERS

Few creatures in the world are aware of this, but legends about Drifters being able to access a passage to the Nightmare dimension are quickly spreading through Beyond the Veil. On page 140, we explain how this legend is fully and completely true.

The Epilogue

This phase in the True Ending begins after the Players have resolved the Ascent, or right after an adventure has concluded with the characters achieving their Dream.

The goal of the Epilogue is to discover if plague and Corruption will overcome the characters. It will help us understand whether their life can go on for longer, if they can enjoy the Dream they achieved, or if they will fall to Beyond the Veil and be forever cursed.

Characters who failed their final roll in the Ascent and looked out onto the Nightmare cannot take part in the Epilogue. Their fate was sealed at the end of that phase.

To complete the Epilogue, each Player must make two rolls.

Survival

The first roll in the Epilogue determines whether the character managed to survive the disease and if they will have a chance to build a new life for themselves.

This is how the roll works: the Player gathers all 7d6 connected to their Organ Slots (white or black, depending on their Corruption)**, and must overcome a Difficulty equal to the number of black d6 included in their roll.**

Succeeding in this roll will allow the Drifter to win their fight against the plague, while failing will bring about their inevitable end.

> *Example:*
> *The Player gathers the 7d6 connected to their Organ Slots: 2d6 black and 5d6 white. During their adventure, they shielded these attributes from Corruption, a choice that could now pay off. They have two black d6, so the Difficulty of the roll is 2. They roll all d6 and score 4 Successes. The challenge is won, so their character will survive the plague.*

Resisting the darkness

The second roll evaluates how determined the Drifter is, and how strong the bonds that keep them human are. At the end of their journey toward their Dream, there is still a high chance for them to fall prey to Corruption.

The Player must gather all d6 connected to the Slots for Bonds and Virtues and, just like before, make a roll with Difficulty equal to the number of black d6 in their pool.

If they overcome the Difficulty, the Drifter defeats the Corruption and preserves what's left of their humanity. If they fail, their humanity is forfeit, causing them to transform into a creature from Beyond the Veil. They could become one of the Exiles who inhabit the Unaware world, join one of the Hosts who serve this or that Prince, or face the worst possible fate and devolve into an Incomplete.

Example:
The Player gathers the 9d6 connected to the Slots for Bonds and Virtues: 6d6 black and 3d6 white. The choice to protect their Organs inevitably caused the character to focus Corruption on these attributes. The Difficulty of the roll is 6, meaning they will need 6 Successes to avoid facing an ominous fate.
The roll is quite unlucky, scoring 2 Dark Failures, and falling short of the Difficulty. Their character couldn't withstand the weight of Corruption and turned into a dark Beast destined to roam the timeless lands beyond the Veil.

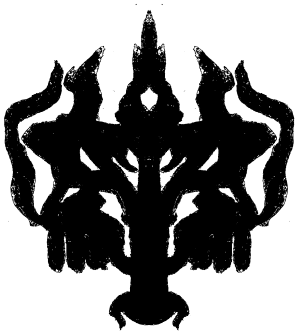
Connecting the dots

The story that closes the Epilogue, and the True Ending will bring together all elements of the story up to this point.

The Players will have a chance to briefly describe their character's Dream, whether they achieved or barely missed it, how they spent the days before their death or the long years to come, and how they triumphed over Corruption or fell before it.

Thus, the result of rolls made during the True Ending come together for one last creative exercise that brings the story of each Drifter to a close.

> *Example:*
> *The Player finished their True Ending: their character reached their Dream after a moving Ascent, survived the plague, but lost themselves into Corruption.*
> *This is their finale of their story: "As you know, I achieved my Dream. I extorted a cursed artifact from the dark Prince that allowed me to subjugate several Unawares and establish my cult. The ecstasy that came after I reached my ultimate goal even managed to heal me completely, cleansing my body from the terrifying symptoms of the plague. Nevertheless, the Corruption never stopped advancing and in the span of a few short months, it devoured my humanity, making me lose touch with reality. Today, I no longer know who I am and have no memory of my past. I am just a Beast of Beyond the Veil, roaming the land in search of the only things that still hold value to me: blood and flesh."*



VIII. Burning Sky

With your bags packed and ready, your mind goes back to everything you are leaving behind while your eyes linger on the mirror, studying your reflection, a cruel reminder of the Curse's Mark that was placed upon you. This is usually how a Drifter's last adventure begins.

Since ***Burning Sky*** is a pre-made adventure, **it comes with pre-defined context, Omen, Effigies, and characters**. **As such, you won't need to fill in the Binding Pact**, but the Narrator will need to introduce all information about the context and characters to the Players.

From now on, unless explicitly stated, we will address the Narrator directly. The next few paragraphs contain truths and revelations that the Players will have to discover while playing.

Initial Context

This adventure is based on the mysterious events taking place in a simple village that has apparently escaped the merciless eye of the plague. Ludford is a small village deep in the Black Forest that lies at the heart of Europe, it was built around an old abbey that has seen better days.

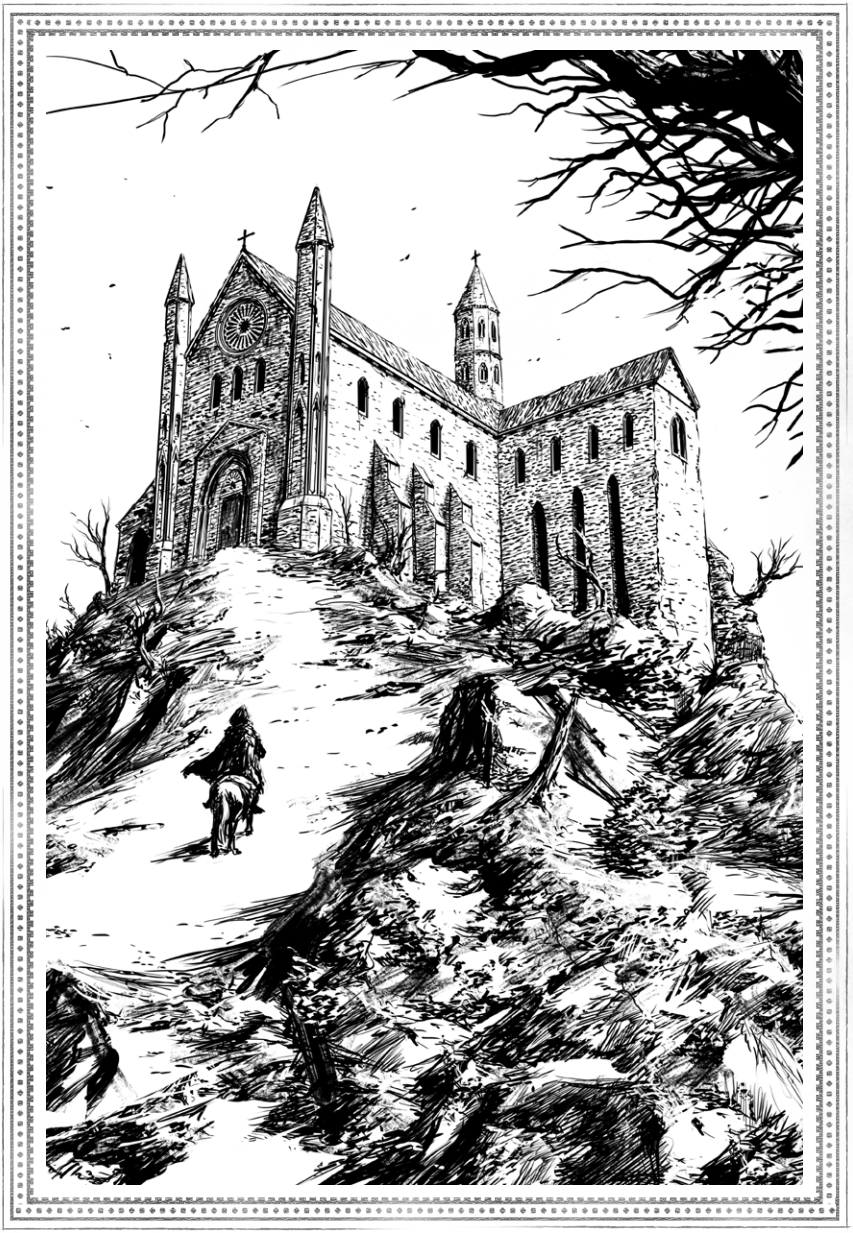
The monks at the abbey and the villagers are openly in conflict. Beneath this superficial tension, we find two opposing factions that look at different sources of hope for their salvation. While the monks see lights, receive dreams, and stumble into visions of a Savior who promises to punish the faithless and superstitious; the villagers are convinced that the Lady of the Woods is protecting them from the plague, blessing the newborns and helping those who are about to pass on. Regardless of the different beliefs held by each Faction, one thing is certain: in Ludford, nobody contracts the plague.

The Lady of the Woods is a mysterious presence that has always lived deep within the forest, in a small cottage hidden from the village. The peaceful situation changed abruptly when the monks from the abbey turned their attentions to her, declaring her an evil that must be eradicated. When the story begins, their search has apparently hit a wall: the Lady has abandoned her abode and the villagers refuse to cooperate with the monks to help them find her. This refusal has strengthened the holy men's belief that the people of Ludford are protecting the "witch" with everything they have.

Why would a group of Drifters come to interfere with this scenario?

The answer is partly hidden in the Omen they have received: *"Seek the doors to the Dream in the words of the Lady of the Woods. The burning sky awaits you".*

This sentence is enough to stoke the characters' ambitions and push them to travel to the nearby village of Ludford. Additionally, each of them has a pre-existing connection with the Lady of the Woods, which means they are connected to the challenge they have to face.



The Drifters

The four characters in this story come from the same small community and have known each other for a while, although just superficially. After they receive the Omen and realize they have fallen ill, they stumble onto each-other on the road to Ludford, apparently by chance. But their meeting is no coincidence, and the odd feeling that their destinies might be interwoven is now turning into certainty.

Ryia "the Raven" - the healer

Dream: Finding a cure for the plague.
Mark: Mark of the Shroud (keywords: revelations, burial, darkness, veil, tremors, incense, devotion).
Connection: "Ryia is a healer who lost everyone she held dear to the plague. Now that she has also fallen sick, she sees the miracle of this small village like a strange sign of destiny. Could this disease actually be defeated?"

Petrus "Empty-eyes" - the ruffian

Dream: Feeling motherly love, at least once.
Mark: Mark of the Reaper (keywords: suffering, pity, mirrors, cold, humanity, silence, oblivion).
Connection: "Petrus had a terrible childhood that left his memory completely shattered. Still, lost in the shards of memories, he is convinced that he once had a mother, who cared for him in the woods near Ludford. Could he be the son of the Lady of the Woods?"

Warren "Ghostfoot" - the pilgrim

Dream: Prove his faith beyond all doubt.
Mark: Mark of the Ferryman (keywords: ghosts, token, betrayal, false guide, memories, storms, determination).
Connection: "Warren has a bond with the old abbey he went to many years ago. The idea of a miracle that protects people from the plague happening right in front of his eyes is very alluring to him. Could this be God's work manifesting to him?"

Lars "Deadember" - former soldier

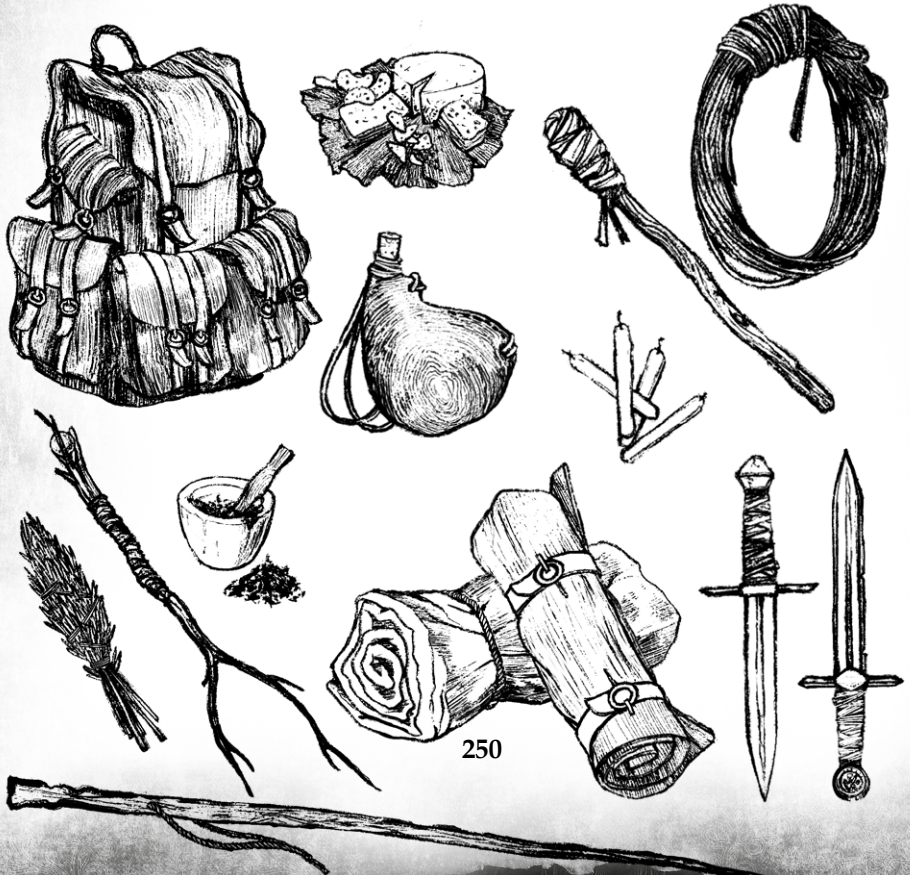
Dream: Meeting the only woman he has ever loved once again.
Mark: Mark of the Hunter (keywords: smells, footprints, possession, fury, tension, trail, breath).
Connection: "Lars is looking for the only woman he has ever loved: she was a maiden with red hair, who lived in-between reality and illusion, in the woods near the village of Ludford. Perhaps she was the Lady of the Woods?"

Adventure Summary

Burning Sky is a perfect story for people who play Memento Mori for the first time, but it's deliberately incomplete. The adventure includes the structure of the first three game sessions and includes some directions to help Narrators come up with subsequent sessions on their own.

The story proposed here starts in a crumbling, dirty, and unsettling context, that is still ordinary, something familiar to the Drifters. Soon enough, the events will turn to the surreal, pushing the group to a new understanding of the world around them and of the changes they are experiencing.

After a first phase set in the Unaware world, the story proceeds Beyond the Veil and focuses on the real conflict that is reeling the Drifters in.



Session One

Session one begins with the characters arriving in Ludford and ends with their confrontation with the Lady of the Woods:

- **Omen and Introduction.** To begin, the Narrator asks the Players to choose which Drifter they will play, describes the contents of the Omen, and introduces the context of the adventure (see upcoming paragraphs);
- **Challenge 1 - The Lady's Hideout.** The gaming session is in full swing; the Drifters arrive in the village and learn of the conflict between the monks and the villagers. The Drifters understand that the Lady of the Woods is the cause of the conflict and begin their own search for the woman;
- **Challenge 2 - The Guardians of the Lair.** The information found in the village leads the Drifters to the true hideout of the Hag: a cave dug deep within the earth like the lair of a large animal. The group has to deal with some guardians who protect the lair;
- **Challenge 3 - The Search for Answers.** The Hag's lair is a disgusting and primordial place, filled with disquieting truths. Before meeting the mistress of the house, the Drifters will have to face the horrors hidden in the tunnels between worlds;
- **Milestone - The Clash.** The Drifters meet the Hag and are faced with a crucial choice in order to obtain the answers they seek. At the end of this scene, they step through the Veil for the first time and lay eyes on the Burning Sky.

HELP AND TIPS

Beside the Challenges and Milestones in session one, we have added a series of practical tips for the Narrator, as a way to help them in the first leg of the journey.

Session Two

After crossing the Gate, the characters need to explore the lands Beyond the Veil in search of answers about the Burning Sky and the Hag's prophecy. The Milestone at the end of the first session reveals a fragment of the plan that has put this entire story in motion;

- **Challenge 1 - The Acid Woods.** Standing between the Drifters and their goal there's a perverted forest scattered with clouds of gas and noxious vapors. The first step toward the atmospheric phenomenon is to cross this inhospitable place;

- **Challenge 2 - The Shadows' village.** The Drifters reach a gloomy village of Shadows nestled among the rotting trees of the forest and surrounded by thick fog. Here, they can finally find useful information, seek out allies, or draw dangerous attentions;

- **Challenge 3 - The Beast.** The Shadows' village is attacked by the Hydra that had been looking for its inhabitants for a long time. The clash is beyond the Drifters' reach, but if they face it with courage, it could lead to interesting results;

- **Milestone - The Astral Globe.** Almost by chance, the Drifters spot a group of Prince Mertseeker's envoys carrying an Astral Globe toward the ruins of the ancient floating castle. A Prince of Beyond the Veil is officially part of this story, and he sent an important cargo toward the Burning Sky.

Session Three

In this session, we will go through the many dangers scattered on the Drifters' path toward the place where the Burning Sky appears to be born:

- **Challenge 1 - The Harpies' Cliffs.** Leaving the Acid Woods behind, the group starts to climb the steep cliff fraught with pitfalls;
- **Challenge 2 - The Suspended Ruins.** It will take a major effort and a good dose of ingenuity to find a way to reach the flying castle and its cursed rooms;
- **Challenge 3 - The Prison of Memory.** The fortress is an ancient structure, probably built in a distant age of glorious darkness and sorcery. The Drifters have a chance to explore the rooms, but if they do, they will have to face a harsh inner challenge, set off by the magic of the place cruelly digging through their past;
- **Milestone - The Forbidden Ritual.** The Drifters reach the top of the castle to find a group of three Ephemera in the middle of an ancient ritual. There, they have a chance to interact with the Ephemera and learn the truth hiding behind the Burning Sky, and what Prince Mertseeker is really after.

The Omen

The Omen for this story is:

"Seek the doors to the Dream in the words of the Lady of the Woods. The burning sky awaits you".

Later on, you will find a suggestion on how to insert it in the first sentences of the gaming session.

The Dispute

The conflict behind this story began many years before the Drifters' journey to Ludford, in a place that is both far and nearby. On the other side of the Gates scattered within the forest surrounding the village, there are the lands of decay. It's a vast rotting forest dotted with jagged and barren hills that break the monotony of this gloomy and rundown landscape. The lands of decay have always been part of the domain of Prince Mertseeker, Lord of Painful Waits and of Time-bending Anguish.

For centuries, maybe even millennia, the Prince has been telling his Hosts about a time when they will leave their home and travel to more hospitable lands near the yielding layers of the Veil. After all, the gangs of sadistic monsters crave nothing more than a chance to get closer to the Unaware world, eager to play with the lives of mortals, even if just for a while. The false promises of the Prince have managed to keep his Hosts at bay for a very long time, but he never intended to leave his lands behind, as the region is the source of his relevance and status among the powers of Beyond the Veil.

Recently, however, the stability of his court has been threatened, and he can no longer ignore the requests of his Hosts. By promising an ancient artifact as a reward, Mertseeker hired a group of Astral Ephemera (see Codex Gigas pg. 44) asking them to carry out a forbidden ritual to open a laceration in the Veil and loose the bonds on his Hosts for an entire day. However, the ritual requires a great amount of power in either superimposed reality.

Three-forked wands are considered uncontrollable by many

This is why one of the three Ephemera has been dealing with the monks in Ludford's old abbey and the Lady of the Woods. By killing the Hag, they will remove the only obstacle to the forbidden ritual, thus appeasing Prince Mertseeker.

Factions

The Hag

The Lady of the Woods has spun several tales about herself, weaving a net of power that allows her to remain in the Unaware world. When the plague epidemic started, she increased her power over the people of Ludford by granting them protection from the disease. The price for this favor is as steep as it is secret. In truth, after the epidemic began, so did a series of mysterious disappearances, and children keep going missing.

The Hag has two main goals: keeping the status quo and finding a way to return to Beyond the Veil. The first pretty much coincides with her survival, the creature has now become dependent on the people of Ludford, she cannot allow the village to be destroyed or afford to move away from it. The return to Beyond the Veil is a possibility all Hags are denied. This has always been the case. But when the Drifters appear, the Hag sees an opportunity form before her eyes.

The Monks

Father Harris has recently begun having dreams of strange lights. These flashes foretell the coming of a holy fire that will burn the sinners and the faithless. One by one, all the monks in the abbey have begun having the same dreams, growing more and more united in their crusade against the Lady of the Woods.

Bound by the power of the Ephemera that controls them, the monks intend to kill the Lady of the Woods. They are even willing to mistreat the villagers to extract information, and would never allow anyone inside their abbey.

Prince Mertseeker

When this story moves to the Ephemeral Land, the name of His Majesty Mertseeker of the Cold Spires, He who torments in Silence, Lord of Painful Waits and of Time-bending Anguish starts echoing through the story. It's the name of the Prince who rules over the lands of decay "on the other side" of Ludford.

The monarch hired a group of Astral Ephemera to open a passage to the Unaware world and break the arcane bonds on the Hosts who pass through it. Thanks to this portal, he will grant to his monstrous subjects a whole day and night of freedom, and a chance to unload their darkest perversions on mortals. The one sure thing is that the Prince has no intention of keeping to the agreement made with the Ephemera and, when the time is right, he will try to take them out in order to avoid losing the Astral Globe he promised as a reward.

His goal is to at least maintain control over his unruly Hosts, regardless of the price. His weak spot lies in the sadistic curiosity that compels him to play with his victims for longer than needed.

Astral Ephemera

The three Ephemera who came to the Court of Prince Mertseeker are part of a congregation called "The Upturned Well". They come from a distant region of Beyond the Veil known as "the Iridescence", ruled by Her Majesty Dajali, the False Prophet, Lady of Awaited Destinies that Never Come.

Their goal, which they pursue with detached zeal, is to open a gash in the Veil to allow Mertseeker's Hosts to pour into the Unaware world for one day and one night. All this, in order to gain the Astral Globe that the Prince promised to them and bring it back to their Lady.

While Dumuthar and Yazidanash weaken the Veil from the top of the floating castle, Aaradvithara ventured into the Unaware world to set the stage on the other side of reality. Aaradvithara is trying to kill the Hag who, with her mere presence, is stopping the Ephemera's magic from working efficiently on both sides of the Veil.

The Prince's Hosts

Harpies, Lemurs, Lamiae, Succubi, and Empusai are only some of the creatures in Prince Mertseeker's Hosts. Since ancient times, they have showed some loyalty to their Prince, and his recent promise to travel beyond the Veil brought unity throughout the ranks.

However, there are some fringes who oppose Prince Mertseeker's domain. Among them will emerge the "Broken Wings", maimed Harpies who live in the heart of the cliff. There, in a dark maze of narrow tunnels, they have found the "First Stone", an item dating back to the time when the floating manor, the Prince's former home, was built. The First Stone has the power to influence the magic within the castle where the Ephemera are carrying out the ritual. The Broken Wings will do anything to ruin the Prince's plan, avenging the cruel punishment he inflicted on them centuries ago.

Session One

Initial Briefing

During this phase, the Narrator is tasked with introducing the setting and explaining the rules that the Players will need to portray their characters during the game.

To begin, the Narrator can read aloud (or summarize in their own words) the paragraphs "**Europe at the time of the Black Death**" and "**Beyond the Veil**" from Chapter I.

Then, the Narrator presents to the Players the Drifters they can portray for this adventure. In this phase, the Narrator should give a detailed description of the main features of each Drifter, so that the Players can get to know their characters and familiarize themselves with the core concepts of the game. This could also be a good moment to introduce the basic rules of the game, which will then be discussed in detail when they become relevant as the story progresses.

BONDS AND BACKGROUNDS

The past of these four Drifters is not completely written.
In Memento Mori, we use Bonds to define three pivotal moments from the life of the character. After the characters have been assigned, the Narrator can ask the Players to ponder their Drifter's Bonds for a while. If someone feels like it, they can also try to trace a rough outline of the Drifter's past using their Bonds.

Introduction

The gaming session begins as soon as the Narrator tells the Players about the Omen.

Usually, the Narrator should prepare a specific Omen for each adventure, but for this Quickstart, we have come up with a short paragraph that ties in with the aforementioned Omen.

The Narrator should summarize or read to the Players this vision, describing an event from the past, that happened shortly before this story. Every Drifter has this vision separately, in a different context from the others, but all members of the group see and feel the same things:

"Suddenly, a bright light appears and rushes over everything. As you lift your eyes in amazement, you see an ethereal figure floating before you. It's the silhouette of a woman enshrouded with fog, she has hair like spun silver and two stars where her eyes should be. Her voice sounds sweet and reassuring. She speaks of a prophecy, of a Lady of the Woods, and of a door to your Dream. The burning sky awaits you, she says. There is a place, where you will finally find an answer to all your questions. You can't fully grasp the meaning of this vision, but know it is important. Actually, each of you is convinced that this is your only path to safety.

And so, with one last glimmer of hope, you set off to search for the Lady of the Woods, your only clue to a way to escape the suffering that consumes you."

Then, the tale of the Narrator turns to the Drifters.

The characters are traveling to Ludford and, after walking for one day, they are finally reaching their destination. Guided by the Narrator, the Players can use this moment on the road to introduce their characters. It's important for them to describe their physical appearance as well as the aspects of their personality that are evident at first glance.

FROM HISTORICAL SETTING TO DARK FANTASY

If the Narrator wishes to emphasize the feeling of discovery, they can initially "hide" the folkloric and supernatural elements of the game setting from the Players. This will allow them to cast the Players in an apparently realistic and historical context, only to gradually unveil the darker and more fantastic elements.

The Narrator can then proceed to read this introductory paragraph or summarize it in their own words:

"On the road, as you reach Ludford, you immediately realize that this village has been forsaken by God. Some of you have been here before, and nothing has apparently changed since then. It is located deep within a valley and surrounded by a thick and dark forest. The hamlet is composed of a few dozen homes built in stone and wood and inhabited by wretched farmers who barely get by.

The only building worthy of note is the abbey, which towers over the valley from a hilltop. It is a large and ancient stone building that was once the center of all activities in the village. Today, it is home to a small group of monks who lead a life of poverty, privation, and prayer.

Despite the general misery, the people of Ludford have been apparently blessed with a miracle unique to this village: nobody is sick. While the plague spreads everywhere, nobody in Ludford has been infected. This is also confirmed by many other details you have noticed as you approached the village: there is no mass grave, no smoldering pyre, and no death knell resounding in the air.

Perhaps the rumors about the Lady of the Woods are true. Legends even describe her as a mysterious figure who has always protected the villagers of Ludford from her home, deep within the forest. Then there are the stories about children vanishing under mysterious circumstances.

With this information in mind, you look over the desolated village, and venture in. You soon stumble onto a rather boisterous scene. A group of monks from the abbey is addressing the villagers in the main square. They are looking for the Lady of the Woods, and appear to have less than friendly intentions. The villagers listen in silence and show no sign of being willing to help or cooperate."

With this introduction, the scene is set for everyone to face the first of three Challenges that make up this short adventure.

Challenge 1 - The Lady's Hideout

Objective:
The Omen is clear: the Drifters must find the Lady of the Woods and this scene gives them a chance to learn where she is hiding. But only a few people among the villagers know this information.

Initial Context:
As described, the Drifters arrive in Ludford in the middle of a tense situation that can easily turn to the worst. Father Harris, together with some monks and a handful of armed men who work for the abbey, are standing in the middle of the muddy square, surrounded by villagers.

The monks are making one last attempt to persuade the villagers to cooperate, asking them repeatedly to reveal the hiding place of the Lady of the Woods. But for every time their questions go unanswered, their expressions grow harder, barely masking their nearly grotesque rage and fervor.

The hiding place of the Lady of the Woods is known only to a few loyal villagers, who aren't even necessarily there to hear the admonition of the monks.

The Hag is holed up in a lair dug deep into the ground of the forest, and has shared the location of this hideout with only a few people in Ludford. It won't be easy for the Drifters to retrieve this information now, with the rising tension.

TIPS FOR THE NARRATOR

You don't need to decide who knows about the Hag's location before the fact. Follow the Players' actions and listen to their theories.

Create some obstacles for the Drifters by using the Threats and tensions within the village.

Make them work for it. Only give out information to the Players after they have gone through the hardships of Horrors and Threats.

Use this first Challenge as a chance to introduce the basic rules of the game. Put the Drifters' skills to the test and remind the Players that their failures can have consequences, sometimes dangerous ones.

Ryia and Warren should be intrigued by the situation in this village. Ask questions of the Players who are portraying them to probe their understanding of the events.

LOCATIONS:

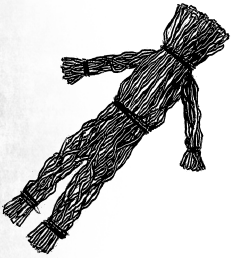
This Challenge is set in the village of Ludford and in the nearby area:

- The houses in the village are squalid and crumbling. Exploring some unattended basements, there are small altars to the Lady of the Woods;
- The square is flooded by a sea of mud that never appears to dry out. A gnarly barren oak stands in the middle of the space. In front of it, there is a block used for executions;
- The abandoned house of the Lady of the Woods is an old cabin located near the village. Inside, there is everything you'd expect to find in a witch's home, but perhaps a clue is hiding in the chaos;
- Someone is hiding beneath the walls of the old abbey, clearly trying to avoid being seen;
- A stone's throw away from the village, in the forest, there is a clearing with an ancient stone circle. The villagers avoid this place under instructions from the Lady of the Woods.

NPCs:

The important Non-Player Characters for this Challenge are:

- Father Harris, the dreamer. He is the spiritual and de-facto leader of the monks from the abbey. Harris is blinded by his new mistress and completely focused on his quest, but he'd be happy to find new supporters;
- Old Beth, the village elder, is one of the most respected figures in the local community;
- The Brederic twins, two boys who are treated as outcasts. This allows them to go mostly unseen, even when they do more unsavory business;
- Rand the deserter is a soldier on the run who has found refuge in the village. He quickly became a pillar of the community thanks to his charisma and poise.



OPPONENTS AND COMBAT

All Threats that can become an actual danger for the Drifters usually come with an indication of their Difficulty and Hit Points.

Horrors and Threats:

The conflict between the villagers and the monks can explode at any moment, but it is not the only danger the Drifters should be wary of:

- The armed men who work for Harris unsheathe their weapons and begin sweeping the place, with or without the villagers' consent (Diff.2 - 3HP);
- Not all the villagers side with the Lady of the Woods. Some of them are secretly acting on behalf of father Harris (Diff1 - 2HP);
- Keeping eyes and ears well open, the characters can catch a faint whisper or glimmer following the monks;
- Hanging from some trees in the forest, there are dead ravens with their beaks torn off;
- Hidden somewhere, there is the empty skin of a woman with red hair. It is clearly blood-curdling, but wearable.

Challenge 2 - The Guardians of the Lair

Objective:
The objective of this Challenge is reaching the Hag's lair and getting past the guardians that defend it.

Initial Context:
The Drifters have learned the location of the new hideout of the Lady of the Woods. Meanwhile, the tension between the two Factions has risen to critical levels. The Drifters are walking on a precarious thread over the depths of violence, fanaticism, and hopes of deliverance.

The group must reach the Hag's lair located deep within the forest, where the trees grow twisted and the senses are deceived by a thousand visions, whispers, and mind tricks. This won't be easy, but the answers they are looking for are now within reach, deep beneath the earth.

Locations:
This Challenge is set in the forest surrounding Ludford. These are some interesting locations to explore:

- The stumpyard is a field of felled trees constantly shrouded with fog. It's easy to get lost here, and every shadow in the fog looks like something else;
- Not far from the Hag's lair, there is a small ravine the Drifters cannot avoid crossing unless they are willing to lose a lot of time. The rock walls are covered in many small holes that can barely fit a human wrist;
- As they get closer to the Hag's hideout, the terrain becomes increasingly covered in roots.

NPCs:

The important Non-Player Characters for this Challenge are:

- The Brederic Twins follow the group and keep an eye on them, it's suspicious.

Horrors and Threats:

This Challenge is especially focused on Threats, many of which are guardians who protect the hideout. Here is a list:

- The wild animals defend the Hag's lair and behave strangely. Most of them look like normal wolves, but begin behaving more and more like humans as they perceive more danger (Diff.2 - 4HP);
- Father Harris' henchmen are everywhere;
- The paths in the forest always lead back to the starting point;
- Some children sneak quietly among the bushes, only to vanish as soon as they step behind the trunk of a tree;
- On rare occasions, the forest almost feels sentient. Someone can try to establish contact.

TIPS FOR THE NARRATOR

You should present obstacles, Horrors, and Threats, but try not to think about a solution to them. Let the Players ask their questions on the Locations, NPCs, and Horrors and allow them to find the solution.

Combat is a very generous source of BC. Use these Challenges to experiment with Corruption mechanics, with the Exchange of Blows, and with Gift creation.

Make Gift creation a shared experience for everyone at the table. Everyone can suggest ideas for the evolution of Drifters.

Challenge 3 - The Search For Answers

Objective:
Once inside the lair, the Drifters must find the Lady of the Woods.

Initial Context:
The entrance is hidden by some gnarly roots that grow all around the opening. The area is covered in ruddy moss and mushrooms as white as bone. The tunnel diving deep beneath the earth is narrow and cramped. Characters must crouch down and venture in one at a time. After several yards, the tunnel opens up into a system of larger caves, seemingly natural in origin, and branches into many other tunnels that go even deeper. These dark chambers with roots on the ceiling and the many tunnels that open in front of the Drifters hide disturbing secrets, clues to the true nature of the Hag.

The characters must take yet another leap of faith to reach the objective they all seek.

Locations:
The locations of this Challenge are interesting places inside the underground hideout. Here is a list:

- A tunnel leads to a small underground stream used by the Hag to wash out and bless her poppets;
- In one of the larger caves there are three children. They are the recently lost children from Ludford;
- The walls of a cave are covered in a web of thick and knotted roots. Someone carved recent local history all over them;
- In the deepest room of the lair, there's the Hag's "bedroom". It's a disgusting place, full of refuse, corpses, bone ornaments, and excrement.

NPCs:

The important Non-Player Characters for this Challenge are:

- The children in the Hag's lair are called Hans, Ada, and Greta. They are dirty, and have empty stares on their faces. It looks as if they have been stripped of any semblance of will. The Hag uses them to carry out chores.

Horrors and Threats:

This last Challenge should focus on the Horrors you use to keep a high level of tension and disgust. Here is a list:

- The ever-present roots appear to be controlled by someone and are able to move and stretch;
- The tunnels feel like they have a life of their own, they keep changing direction and destination;
- In the tunnels there is a constant sound of labored breathing, as of someone watching over the Drifters;
- One last guardian, ever loyal to the Hag, is canvassing the lair like a hungry shadow. It's an old wolf with little fur and many scars. His face is almost completely human (Diff.3 - 5HP);

TIPS FOR THE NARRATOR

The Hag's lair is a horrific place caught between two realities. This Challenge is the perfect occasion to have Drifters face terrifying supernatural phenomena;

To keep tensions high, try to add more and more disquieting details as the Drifters dive deeper. Disorient them, separate them, surround them, put their physical and mental resilience to the test;

Always hint at the fact that the tunnels appear inhabited;

Not all Horrors in a Challenge need a clear explanation. Some of them simply appear and then pass on;

Let the Hag make her entrance when tensions have risen to their peak. Or do the opposite, and bring her in when the Players least expect it.

Milestone - The Confrontation

Revelation:

The "Burning Sky" is a rare meteorological phenomenon, but it is not something that happens in the Unaware world: it exists in the world Beyond the Veil. If the characters manage to reach it, they have a chance to make their Dream come true.

The Gate to Beyond the Veil is located at the bottom of the underground stream. Clearly, only the Hag is in possession of this information.

Context:
The Hag finally shows herself to the Drifters. She is a robust creature, grotesque and monstrous. She clearly does not belong to this world.

She hunches down to fit beneath the unstable ceiling of her lair and instantly shows interest in the Drifters. Her mannerism, if one manages to look beyond the monstrous body, is charming and polite.

> *"Welcome, Drifters. I hoped to be better prepared for our meeting, but I only knew it would happen... I didn't know when. You see, I am being harassed. I have been practically a recluse... and I found solace in divination. That is when I saw you. There, among the raven entrails and hare bones my children brought to me.*

You might be confused, tormented by many questions. Luckily for you, I am the Lady of the Woods. I am here to give you the answers you've been looking for..."

First of all, the Lady of the Woods is curious about the Drifters conditions, it's quite rare to see a whole group of them. She asks them about how they feel, how they have been dealing with Corruption, or whether they like their new Gifts. After a while, she tries to make a deal with them.

The Drifters need the Hag, and she needs them in turn: she will show them the way to the "Burning Sky" and, in exchange, they will help her complete a ritual. It is an ancient spell that allows a creature that has been banished from Beyond the Veil to return there without alerting the Hosts or Princes.

When the Hag offers this pact, the choice is up to the Players.

This is certainly not their only option, they can also force the Hag to speak in other ways, but that might not be as easy as it looks.

The end of this scene is also the moment when the Drifters first discover the Milestone and can proceed to the Gate located beneath the underground stream.

Slipping down with the running water, the characters soon end up diving into a deep basin located in a large, dark cave. Up to here, everything looks as if they are still in the Unaware world. Only when looking for a way out, after spending several minutes exploring the cave, do they finally realize that they are now in the world Beyond the Veil.

The Narrator can now conclude the gaming session by reading this:

> *"You find the exit of the cave and finally reach the surface. You are standing on the slope of a hill. You are surrounded by a strange and alien landscape. All around you, as far as the eye can see, there are marshy plains and gray woods. The skeletal trees stand out against a steely sky. The distant horizon is constantly interrupted by jagged shadows of distant cities in ruin, with crumbling walls and tumbledown towers. The air is thick and filled with odors beyond recognition. Something smells like burning wood, like sulfur, and decomposing meat.*
> *You have no doubt that this is your first glimpse into the parallel universe the Hag has described. And suddenly an amazing "natural" show begins. In the sky above the horizon, something that looks like an aurora borealis flares up, burning with colors. It's as if the sky has gone up in flames. The landscape has become both awe-inspiring and unsettling. Your faces are basked in the light of this bizarre sky blaze, making your expression clear to everyone around you.*
> *Standing in front of the Burning Sky, you feel small, frail, and lost. You have no idea of what this dark world has in store for you, with its magic and power, but you feel ready to explore it nonetheless. It is now or never".*

THE HAG ❖ DIFF 3 - HP 9

The possible combat with the Hag will be very taxing.
The witch can dive into the earth and emerge behind the Drifters. She also controls the roots and can choose to call for her last guardian. The characters will have to find a good strategy and call on their Gifts to win.

Session Two

Challenge 1 - The Acid Woods

Objective:

After overcoming their initial disorientation, the Drifters will have to move toward the Burning Sky whirling above a distant cliff. To do this, they will have to venture into the forest that lies before them and hope to cross it without further complications.

Initial Context:

Before the Drifters' eyes, the acid forest expands like a creaking realm enveloped in dense miasmas that linger among the empty tree trunks and contorted branches. In the suffocating clearings and among the gnarly roots of century-old trees, there are pools of acid that look like boiling wounds. These pools exude heavy vapors that burn the eyes and irritate the respiratory tract.

In the distance, still too far away and beyond the boundaries of the forest, stand the ruins of a castle. They float in the air, a little way above the top of a jagged and steep cliff, where none of the now suffocating vegetation seems to grow.

The unnatural and fetid forest the Drifters are standing in will make for a harsh crossing, but only by exploring this inhospitable region will they gain the answers they are seeking.

Hollow roots are perfect hiding spots

LOCATIONS:

Here are the most important places of interest the Drifters can meet while exploring the Acid Woods:

- The acid pools almost completely cover the ground beneath the woods, and in some places they are dense enough to become a marsh. One of these marshlands is special: there seems to be a Unicorn trapped in-between the corrosive pools. At the Unicorn's feet, there is a newborn foal (see Codex Gigas pg. 184);
- Standing in the heart of the forest there is a giant hollowed-out tree that is home to a small community of Goblins and members of the little folk (see Codex Gigas pg. 92). Its roots dug deep underground, creating a surprisingly vast maze of tunnels and caves;
- Hiding among the noxious smoke, there is a small mooring with several rudimentary boats. The boats are made from a wood that can't be corroded, and they are ideal vessels for these acid marshes;
- Some ruins covered in invasive vegetation dive deep within the soft belly of the forest. By searching through them, characters can find pictures of the Unaware world and more or less explicit references to a village that could be Ludford.

NPCs:

The important Non-Player Characters for this Challenge are:

- The Gate Parasites (see pg. 159) could make their first appearance during this Challenge. They always care for the destiny of Drifters, and are interested in the unique innocent creatures from Beyond the Veil, like Unicorn foals;

- Moptop, Calico, and Mitah are important personalities in the little folk community that inhabits the great hollow tree. They know many secrets about this forest: the location of the Shadows' village, the Beast that roams the forest, the forgotten ruins, and more. They are very curious about Drifters.

Horrors and Threats:

The Acid Woods are a morass of dangers and pitfalls that can put the whole group to the test:

- The adult Unicorn is mad and irascible, on top of physically attacking its victims, it can lead them to madness, or drive them to suicide (Diff.3 - HP8, Codex Gigas pg. 184). It must be approached with great caution;
- The creatures of the Little Folk are not aggressive, but can make the crossing an unpleasant experience if ignored or flat-out rejected. These creatures have varying features, and they become more dangerous if they feel animosity toward the Drifters (Diff.1-3 - HP4-7, Codex Gigas pg. 92);
- Falling in an acid pool could cause great damage, and on top of that, the fumes exuded by the acid drop visibility to just a few yards;
- Now and then, loud roars can be heard in the distance, terrifying Drifters and others;
- At regular intervals, the Drifters can find the decomposing bodies of Shadows tied to the tree trunks. They look like they were prepared to draw the attention of a large predator.

Challenge 2 - The Shadows' village

Objective:

Going beyond appearances, Characters can find individuals in the Shadows' village who know much more than expected. The Drifters have a unique chance to get directions to reach the other side of the woods and get closer to the Burning Sky.

Initial Context:

Thanks to a chance event or to the information gathered beforehand, the Characters reach a village nestled in the heart of the forest. The run-down settlement was built inside the skeletal remains of a monstrous creature as large as the whole village. The acid consumed most of the huge carcass, and the bones were polished and decorated with paint and braided ropes. The village is inhabited by Shadows, humanoid creatures with empty eyes, warped by the brutality of life in the Ephemeral Land. The Shadows live in a constant state of fear and terror, desperately clinging to their prayers to their dark and primordial gods.

While distressing, the Shadows' village can hold several surprises and supply important information for the next leg of the Drifters' journey.

LOCATIONS:
This Challenge is set in the Shadows' village and surrounding areas. These are the locations of interest:

- Among the jaws of the huge skull, the Shadows built a small temple in honor of some ancient gods. It is said that, by making a blood sacrifice, anything can be "blessed" here;
- The Shadows always hide something in the hollowed-out trees: emergency supplies, tools, messages, and even maps. However, sticking one's hand inside these hollows can prove far from pleasant;
- The Shadows are terrified of Prince Mertseeker, but not all of them. In some of the hovels, there are well-hidden portraits of the monarch;
- On the trees around the village, the Shadows built huts which they use as observation points. On those platforms, away from prying eyes and ears, hallucinogenic substances and information are traded;
- Even trying to look beyond the tree branches, it is nearly impossible to see through the fogs that rise from the swamp. It's impossible to find one's bearings in such conditions.

NPCs:
All Non-Player Characters in this Challenge could know a path to cross the forest. The NPCs are:

- Urh is not a leader and never wished to be, however, the villagers follow their direction and value their experiences. As with all other Shadows, their main goal is survival, but they dream of one day getting revenge on the Beast that roams the forest;

- Sog is a Shadow who foments the traffics going down in the tree huts. They will try to draw in Drifters to make a trade with them;

- In one of the wooden huts is hiding Yannick, a Drifter who has been roaming Beyond the Veil for years and has lost all hopes and bonds with his past. He dreamed of one day getting his own castle, but Corruption has almost eroded that memory too. Yannick could join the group or, if ignored, could turn into an Incomplete (pg. 161) and return as a Threat in upcoming sessions of the adventure.

Horrors and Threats:

This Challenge isn't really centered on Threat, but there should be no shortage of Horrors to stoke the feeling of anguish and desperation:

- The Shadows mostly work during the day: they seek out food, pray, and lay down among the huge bones that protect their village. But at night, there are strange noises coming from the small temple;
- Now and then, the village is flooded with the thick fog that rises from the acid pools. When this happens, one could easily move unseen or vanish into thin air;
- Sick and wounded Shadows from the village live in isolated huts, abandoned to themselves. Some of them try to return to the village with their last energies, but they never find a warm welcome;
- The trees can grow and tangle with surprising speed, sometimes visibly fast.

Challenge 3 - The Beast

Objective:
In this scene, the only thing that matters is surviving. Will Drifters fight the Beast or run into the forest?

Initial Context:
While the characters are investigating, or in an apparent moment of calm, a horrible threat quickly approaches the village. The creature making its way through the trees is a howling knot of flesh. It has no head nor tail, only a multitude of fiercely hungry and constantly hissing mouths. It looks like an army of monsters cruelly melted together. The Hydra, also known as "the Beast", burst into the village crashing the bones of the huge carcass and devouring anyone in its path. It was driven mad by hunger and the din of its jaws clamping down is even more deafening than its roar. If the Drifters choose to face it, they will meet quite a challenge, and if they try to run away through the forest, they'll have to prepare for a grueling chase.

Locations:
This Challenge does not include any new Location other than the ones described previously, but proposes additional information that can make for an interesting scene:

- Some of the huge bones that line the borders of the village stand considerably tall and can be climbed to get the high ground;
- The tree huts are connected here and there with wooden walkways that allow people to move above ground;
- Near the village, there are several acid pools, and there is also no shortage of gas clouds that Drifters can exploit in creative ways.

NPCs:

The important Non-Player Characters for this Challenge are:

- Urh and Yannick are the only NPCs who could possibly join the battle, but only if the Drifters choose to face the Beast themselves. In that case, they can grant Threshold Bonuses to the characters by cooperating with them;
- Urh could reward the Drifters if they defeat the Beast. In his house, there is a hidden magical object that used to belong to his family before they were massacred by the Hydra.

Horrors and Threats:

This Challenge is based on a single Threat, which will keep Drifters busy either fighting head-on or fleeing at top speed:

- The Hydra attacking the village and Drifters is a terrifying creature that could cause several BC to an inexperienced group (Diff.5 - HP12, Codex Gigas pg. 108). However, the monster can be defeated, either with the help of Urh or Yannick, or by exploiting its weakness to fire;
- In order to flee from the Hydra, the characters must find strategies to slow it down, disorient it, or draw it to a well-devised trap;
- The Hydra can easily be lured toward the Drifters, especially by someone who knows its instincts and bear a grudge for the characters.

Milestone - The Astral Globe

Revelation:
After surviving the Hydra and leaving the heart of the forest behind, the Drifters spot two envoys of Prince Mertseeker as they carry an important cargo. Nobody can know it now, but the great glass jar they carry contains an Astral Globe, the item promised as a reward to the Astral Ephemera hired by the Prince.

Context:
The fight against the Beast is barely over, or narrowly avoided. When the Drifters look beyond the tree branches, they can witness a unique event: two unpleasant-looking flying creatures dart above their heads while carrying a glass jar that emits a dark glow. They are two misshapen, ungraceful, and filthy Harpies. The woman faces merged with bodies of night raptors make for an even more eerie view. The glass jar bears clear markings with the seal of Prince Mertseeker. It's unclear whether the seals were used in an attempt to strike fear, or to underline the importance of the carried load. What's certain is that the Harpies are flying toward the floating castle atop the cliff looming in the distance. The Burning Sky appears to originate precisely from that fortress.

An NPC or one of the Shadows standing near the Drifters could shout:

"The Prince's envoys! Hide!"

Stealing the Astral Globe is a difficult feat, but it's not impossible: it requires swiftness, speed, and a way to intercept the Harpies mid-flight. If the Drifters succeed in this endeavor, this could open up interesting scenarios for the next sessions of the adventure.

During the encounter, the remaining Shadows are forced to rebuild a new village or to go back to their old life: hiding in the shade of a filthy ravine, relatively safe.

Session Three

Challenge 1 - The Harpies' Cliffs

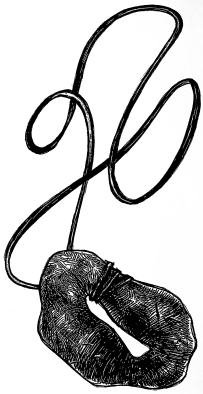
Objective:
After they leave the Acid Woods, the Drifters just need to climb the cliff that leads to the floating castle.

Initial Context:
The cliff looms above the tree-tops, like a wall of rough, sharp stone. It's a rocky complex made of crumbling walls, caves, screes, and raised paths that challenge the laws of physics. The Drifters are forced to walk these paths, bravely looking over howling gray gorges. Alternatively, they can venture into the damp caves tunneling through the mountain in a rock maze, hoping to find a path to the top.

While the skies above the area are patrolled by Harpies working for Prince Mertseeker, the dark tunnels hide a second group of creatures of the same species who are conspiring against the monarch. This subterranean group call themselves "the Broken Wings", and they are determined to protect an invaluable secret regarding the magic that suspends the castle.

Locations:
This Challenge unfolds in separate Locations, distant from one another, which can be explored while climbing to the top of the cliff:

- The paths that lead to the top of the cliff stand on dizzying precipices, narrow and exposed. It's dangerously easy for someone to lose their balance and plummet into the void;
- At the bottom of a dark gorge, hidden between two rocky walls, there is a hidey-hole with stacks of items and rewards granted by Prince Mertseeker;
- A few steps before the top, there's a lake of clean water, as clear as a mirror, which reflects the colors and light in the red sky. Anyone who submerges their face in the water, even just to try and drink, will discover a window to the Unaware world hiding beneath the surface. This is not a Gate, but a simple observation point facing "on the other side";
- In the tunnels, the path to climb toward the top of the cliff leads through increasingly dark and dangerous caves;
- In the heart of the mountain, there is an underground temple containing a huge block of stone. They say this is "the first stone of the castle", and that whoever controls it can influence the magic holding the fortress mid-air.



Through the holes of certain stones one can see the invisible

NPCs:

The important Non-Player Characters for this Challenge are:

- Melikea is one of the Harpies in the Broken Wings. Unlike her sisters, she sees the Drifters as an opportunity to strengthen their plot against Mertseeker. As such, she will try to protect the Drifters from other aggressive Harpies and to persuade them to hinder the Prince's plans.

Horrors and Threats:
The Threats and Horrors in this Challenge will accompany the Drifters without fail, and they can come into play at any moment:

- The Harpies are usually extremely aggressive against anyone who invades their territory (Diff.2 - HP5, Codex Gigas pg. 100). They rarely choose to converse with anyone, but in rare cases, they can opt for a more diplomatic approach;
- Among the paths, gorges, and tunnels, there are echoes of shrill cackles and hissing whistling that increase the feeling of unease of the location;
- From the depths of the tunnels comes a deep and cacophonic voice. The words are beyond comprehension, but they unmistakably come from the "First Stone" guarded by the Broken Wings. The Harpies found this block of chained stone when they first came to hide in the underground tunnels to avoid Prince Mertseeker's wrath. The First Stone is connected to the magic that permeates the castle, and it can significantly influence it;
- Near the top of the cliff, the laws of nature seem to turn on their head. Most notably, gravity slightly loosens its grip, and it's not hard to see small pebbles or other inanimate objects in mid-air;
- Groups of Harpies circle like hawks over some huge piles of corpses and decomposing remains. Among the bodies there are some Shadows and Harpies with no wings.

Challenge 2 - The Suspended Ruins

Objective:
How can the characters sneak into a fortress that isn't even standing on the ground? This will be the main obstacle the Drifters need to face in order to reach the floating castle.

Initial Context:
The floating castle stands mid-air in the void just off the edge of the cliff and over the characters' heads, motionless and paradoxical. It doesn't appear to be flying due to a successful spell nor thanks to an arcane defense system. This is made clear by the gutted foundation scattered mid-air, leaving the lower levels open and floor-less.

The atmosphere that surrounds the fortress elicits a difficult and conflicting array of emotions. There's an aura of surprise, unease, and distress that comes from the lower rooms opening on the void, from the tall towers whipped by the wind, and from the torn banners with Prince Mertseeker's seal. The castle looks like a call-back to heroes from classic stories. It's an enigma that challenges the laws of nature and the determination of the Drifters.

Locations:
This Challenge is set on the hundred or so yards that separate the Drifters standing atop the cliff from the lower levels of the castle. Here are some points of interest:

- The ruins that used to be the foundations of the castle are scattered mid-air, as if they were immortalized in the act of exploding. The largest conglomerates could hold the weight of several people, but they are pretty far from one-another;
- Among the floating debris, there is a partially destroyed statue portraying Prince Mertseeker;
- Amid the debris, locked mid-air by the same magic that suspends the castle there are several chests filled with supplies and tools. They could contain

something the Drifters can use.

NPCs:

This Challenge does not involve additional NPCs other than the ones previously described who might have chosen to travel with the characters.

Horrors and Threats:

This is a short Challenge, but it still comes with potentially lethal obstacles and Threats:

- The force of gravity seems to be weaker here, and this is very clear to Drifters, who suddenly feel much lighter. Nevertheless, a fall from such height still represents a lethal danger;
- Debris can suddenly crumble and fall at any moment, even with the lowered gravity conditions;
- There are not many Harpies here, but they still continuously patrol the area surrounding the floating fortress;
- Even from here, the Drifters can hear a voice from the depths of the tunnels. It feels as if it's pushing them to enter the castle.

Challenge 3 - The Prison of Memory

Objective:
Reaching the top floor of the tower is the final effort on the Drifters' path to uncovering the truth behind the ritual of the Ephemeras.

Initial Context:
While ruined and in a miserable state, the castle is still imposing. It's crumbling structure exudes an eerie and unsettling aura, as if there were dark secrets hiding in its stony heart. The halls are silent and empty, but they hint at a once sumptuous mansion. Each room has an eerie feature, and all the doors seem to have been left ajar. After walking through a door, the Drifter are suddenly plunged into a dream-like world where the private memories of each of them become realistic and disquieting visions. Each step across those never-locked halls bring back traumas they have long tried to avoid. These experiences are a sadistic trial the Prince decided to force on anyone who visits his castle. Because this fortress indeed used to be Mertseeker's palace, and it still faithfully represents the Prince's reign of terror, manipulation, and quiet torture.

The main tower, now a crumbling ruin, stands lopsided above the manor, and it's the point where the colorful aurora seems to converge in spiral of red light. That's where the Ephemera are performing their ritual.

Each stick is meant for a different road

Locations:

This Challenge is set in the floating castle and it's based on exploring its rooms:

- As previously mentioned, each room in the manor appears in its real form only for a short instant before plunging the visitors into a dream-like dimension made of memories and unprocessed traumas. Whenever the characters reach an important room, the Narrator should build an illusory location based on the Bonds and traumas of one of the characters. This scene should include an obstacle they need to overcome or a simple goal to reach in order for Players to leave the vision and return to the exploration of the castle;
- Hallways, passageways, and closets seem unaffected by the curse that plagues the other rooms, and they can be crossed without much problem;
- The tall tower is located above the main wing of the manor and, considering its heavily damaged structure, appears to be kept standing by magic alone.

NPCs:

The important Non-Player Characters for this Challenge are:

- The fortress is almost completely deserted, but in the corridors and abandoned halls, there are whispers, sounds of distant steps, and glimpses of ghosts from times long gone. The Drifters could find a way to speak with these entities that used to belong to the Prince's court.

Horrors and Threats:
These are the Threats and Horrors in the floating castle:

- The spirits that haunt the castle will ignore the Drifters, who can in turn try to follow them or listen in to their conversations. By doing this, they can hear anecdotes about Mertseeker's past and learn about his penchant for betrayal and sadism;
- A ghost, perhaps a former lover of the Prince, could reveal that Mertseeker intends to betray the Ephemera. The ghost will encourage the Drifters to enter into one of the castle's bedrooms, luring them with this revelation, and trapping them into a perverted nightmare;
- A couple of specters could be reminiscing about the day when Mertseeker punished the Broken Wings with an endless curse and removed their ability to fly;
- The dream-like worlds that open when entering a room are populated by figures from the Drifter's minds and hearts. Everything is turned into an even darker, grosser, and more painful nightmare;
- Facing the "rooms" of the castle is a chance for the group to bond over their traumas. This could generate interesting exchanges between Drifters who talk about what they felt and saw in those moments.

Milestone - The Forbidden Ritual

Revelation:
Dumuthar and Yazidanash, two of the Ephemera, know most of Prince Mertseeker's plan. They could share them with the Drifters, but only if forced or if they have a strong motive to do so. Whether this happens or not depends on the choices of the characters and on where they choose to stand in this crucial moment of the story.

Context:
The Ephemera are flying in mid-air, their flowing clothes and long hair appear to be floating as if submerged in ethereal waters. Their bodies appear to dance to the rhythm of celestial energy, focused on a liturgy lost to time.

While the Ephemera are carrying out their ritual, the surrounding reality appears to shake, rippling now and then like the water of a lake. The sorcery they are invoking expands through the air, turning the sky above them into a paralyzing sight. The aurora borealis the Drifters have been following since they first arrived Beyond the Veil materializes, shedding light through darkness in a spectrum of reds and golds.

In the dark splendor of this phenomenon, the cosmic energy fuses with gestures and whispers scattered to the wind. The two Ephemera appear to stand in the center of an opening that will soon spread, a bridge between Beyond the Veil and the Unaware world.

How Will It End?

The conclusion of this scene makes it clear that the Players' decisions will shape what should happen in the upcoming game sessions. This story could still proceed with several chapters before reaching its conclusion, but everything hinges on what side the Characters stand on.

At this point in the story, the Drifters could tip the scale that will decide the fate of the Dispute. The real question you should ask is: who will manage to get the support of the characters? What will they offer? Power? Wealth? A way to reach their Dreams?

As a general rule, and trying to nor oversimplify the situation, the most likely development will see the Drifters foiling the plans of the Prince and Ephemera. This means that they will take a clear stance against Mertseeker, moving toward a final confrontation and an epic last battle. This is not an impossible goal to reach, and it can be further fueled by a confrontation with the Ephemera.

There is also a chance that the Drifters will reveal the Prince's true intentions to the Ephemera, thus creating a mutually-beneficial alliance with the creatures.

The final game sessions are in your hands. Good luck, and may Beyond the Veil have mercy on you.

Name: Lars "Deadember"

Your Name and an epithet that represents you

Gift of the Name:

Which new identity will emerge after you sacrifice your Name? ☐ • ☐

Dream: Meeting the only woman he has ever loved once again.

Your greatest ambition

Mark: Mark of the Hunter

FETID, VULNERABLE, INHOSPITABLE, RABID, VERMILION, HUNTED

Nerve

Instincts above all

Cerebrum

Reason at any cost

Blood

Mental and physical conditions

Heart

A life devoted to others

Viscera

A life of self-interest

Stigmata:

Which monstrous trait makes its way in your body or mind? ☐ ☐ • ☐

Bonds

The old wound	"Eye for an eye"
Your most precious memories	Key-phrase
The lady of the woods	"The power of illusions"
The memories of war	"Surrounded by corpses and mud"

Gift of the Bonds:

Which new desire will emerge from the ruins of your Bonds? ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ • ☐ ☐

Virtues

Man-at-arms

Things you are skilled at

Reassuring

Veteran

Gift of the Virtues:

Which new instinct surfaces when your Virtues disappear? ☐ ☐ • ☐

Equipment: Mace, worn soldier clothes, bandages, travel supplies

Name: Petrus “Empty-Eyes”

Your Name and an epithet that represents you

Gift of the Name:

Which new identity will emerge after you sacrifice your Name? ☐ • ☐

Dream: Feeling motherly love, at least once.

Your greatest ambition

Mark: Mark of the Reaper

COLD, SACRIFICIAL, APATHETIC, IMPASSIVE, RELENTLESS, DARK

Nerve

Instincts above all

Cerebrum

Reason at any cost

Blood

Mental and physical conditions

Heart

A life devoted to others

Viscera

A life of self-interest

Stigmata:

Which monstrous trait makes its way in your body or mind? ☐ ☐ • ☐

Bonds

The loaded dice	Your most precious memories	“I have an ace up my sleeve” Key-phrase
The forgotten mother		“Watch your back”
The violence suffered		“Free from emotions”

Gift of the Bonds:

Which new desire will emerge from the ruins of your Bonds? ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ • ☐ ☐

Virtues

Rascal

Things you are skilled at

Acrobat

Impassive

Gift of the Virtues:

Which new instinct surfaces when your Virtues disappear? ☐ ☐ • ☐

Equipment: Sharp dagger, rogue’s clothes, pouch, bandages, travel accessories

Name: Ryia “the Raven”

Your Name and an epithet that represents you

Gift of the Name:

Which new identity will emerge after you sacrifice your Name? ☐ • ☐

Dream: Finding a cure for the plague.

Your greatest ambition

Mark: Marchio del sudario

DECEPTIVE, HIDDEN, DARK, REVEALING, BRAVE, AMBIGUOUS

Nerve

Instincts above all

Cerebrum

Reason at any cost

Blood

Mental and physical conditions

Heart

A life devoted to others

Viscera

A life of self-interest

Stigmata:

Which monstrous trait makes its way in your body or mind? ☐ ☐ • ☐

Bonds

The fragrant branch	“It will not be affected”
Your most precious memories	Key-phrase
The raven, Aslan	“The devil is in the details”
The grief	“Pain brings closer”

Gift of the Bonds:

Which new desire will emerge from the ruins of your Bonds? ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ • ☐ ☐

Virtues

Apothecary

Things you are skilled at

Alert

Skillful hands

Gift of the Virtues:

Which new instinct surfaces when your Virtues disappear? ☐ ☐ • ☐

Equipment: Sickle, worn clothes, bag of ingredients, bandages, travel supplies

Name: Warren "Ghostfoot"

Your Name and an epithet that represents you

Gift of the Name:

Which new identity will emerge after you sacrifice your Name? ☐ • ☐

Dream: Prove his faith beyond all doubt.

Your greatest ambition

Mark: Mark of the Ferryman

INITIATORY, SALVIFIC, NECROMANTIC, SEPULCHRAL, SOLITARY, TRANSIENT

Nerve

Instincts above all

Cerebrum

Reason at any cost

Blood

Mental and physical conditions

Heart

A life devoted to others

Viscera

A life of self-interest

Stigmata:

Which monstrous trait makes its way in your body or mind? ☐ ☐ • ☐

Bonds

The forbidden tome — "An inconceivable discovery"

Your most precious memories — Key-phrase

The lack of a brother — "I'll manage on my own"

The Abbey in the woods — "There's no rush"

Gift of the Bonds:

Which new desire will emerge from the ruins of your Bonds? ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ • ☐ ☐

Virtues

Traditions and Folklore

Things you are skilled at

Diplomatic

Inquiring

Gift of the Virtues:

Which new instinct surfaces when your Virtues disappear? ☐ ☐ • ☐

Equipment: Old Bible, short sword, monk's robes, bandages, Travel supplies

Name:

Your Name and an epithet that represents you

Gift of the Name:

Which new identity will emerge after you sacrifice your Name?

Dream:

Your greatest ambition

Mark:

The sign placed on you by the curse

Nerve

Instinct above all

Cerebrum

Reason at any cost

Blood

Mental and physical conditions

Heart

A life devoted to others

Viscera

A life of self-interest

Bonds

Your most precious memories

Key-phrase

Gift of the Bonds:

Which new desire will emerge from the ruins of your Bonds?

Virtues

Things you are skilled at

Gift of the Virtues:

Which new instinct surfaces when your Virtues disappear?

Stigmata:

Which monstrous trait makes its way in your body or mind?

Equipment and notes:

The Last Quest

The characters who come together in this Binding will only have an Omen to guide them. The places they visit are already torn asunder by pestilence, impoverished by famine, and rendered unrecognizable by war. They are different people from different walks of life, brought together by coincidence and by their lethal destiny. Going on an adventure with this Binding Pact means confronting the ghosts of your past, surrounded by the horrors of a world that teeters toward the end. It's the beginning of the dangerous journey for their Dream.

Thematic references

- Hooves in the mud, stacks of corpses, scampering rats, the emaciated faces of the living, the heedless prayers in dark alleys, and the death knell of bells;
- Deliverance and resolution await further ahead on your journey. Those who stop will be lost;
- Miracle cures, traveler's amulets, ambushes, crossroads, and tireless pursuers.

1. The Drifters go on a quest across regions affected by the plague outbreak of the XIV century. But where specifically?

- ☐ In the plague-ridden villages of northern Italy;
- ☐ In rural areas of the Archduchy of Austria;
- ☐ On a path across the Scottish peat bogs;
- ☐ In the barren regions around Constantinople;

Other: _____

2. The Drifters all belong to a group with shared objectives. What is their group?

- ☐ The last survivors of a mercantile expedition;
- ☐ Gallows dirt who just escaped from prison;
- ☐ The armed escort of an important or learned individual;
- ☐ A family trying to outrun the horrors of the disease;

Other: _____

3. The Drifters are keepers of a great secret. What is this secret?

- ☐ They saved a disturbing child from a mass grave;
- ☐ They are pretending to be someone they're not;
- ☐ They abandoned a companion, and now have nightmares about them;
- ☐ They carry a cursed item and are obsessed with it;

Other: _____

4. Before the beginning of the adventure, all Drifters shared an Omen. What was the name of the event it foretold?

- ☐ The End of Days;
- ☐ The Door of Spirits;
- ☐ The Weighing of Souls;
- ☐ The Pit of Judgment;

Other: _____

5. The Omen mentions a location where the event will take place. What is this location?

- ☐ An abandoned inn;
- ☐ A maze beneath the city;
- ☐ The bottom of a rocky canyon;
- ☐ The clearing of the primordial obelisk;

Other: _____

6. The Omen left 5 key symbolic concepts, also known as Effigies, in the minds of the Drifters. What are these symbols?

_____

Drifter Marks

1: _____

Keywords: _____

2: _____

Keywords: _____

3: _____

Keywords: _____

4: _____

Keywords: _____

5: _____

Keywords: _____