APOCALYPSE KEYS
RAE NEDJADI

UNLOCK YOUR HEART OR UNLOCK THE APOCALYPSE

As an **Omen class monster**, you are the only thing capable of holding back the apocalypse. Combat **occult threats** and investigate **supernatural phenomena** alongside your team of supernatural agents working for the shadowy **DIVISION**. But in a world that shuns monsters like you, only your deepest, most heartfelt bonds can grant you the power to stop those who seek to unlock **Doom's Door**.

Inside this book, you'll find:

- **A game of monsters bound by fate, love, and power**. Explore emotional connections, complicated relationships, unpredictable mysteries, larger than life apocalyptical threats, and the brightest hope in the darkest despair.
- An innovative take on the **Powered by the Apocalypse** rules engine.
- **Seven Playbooks**, each with their own destructive abilities and consuming desires.
- **Guidance and support for running the game**, including advice for the Keeper on how to craft your own Apocalypse.
- **Detailed Mysteries for the team to investigate** and plenty of guidance on creating your own.
- **Strategies and safety tools** to ensure everyone at the table enjoys a fun, memorable session.
- **Support and advice** for creating one-shot sessions or full campaigns

The apocalypse draws near. There are **Keys** to find, **Mysteries** to solve, **Doors** to unlock, and ruthless **Harbingers** to battle.

IT'S TIME TO FACE YOUR FEARS OR BECOME FEAR ITSELF!

Apocalypse Keys

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This is a game where people make up stories about wonderful, terrible, impossible, glorious things. All the characters and events portrayed in this work are fictional and reflect the monstrous magic under the surface of our world. Any resemblance to real people is purely coincidental or possibly the result of a temporal hiccup that slipped past DIVISION's defenses. If incursion symptoms persist, black alert protocols will be activated.

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WELCOME TO THE APOCALYPSE

The End is Nigh.

This world is fragile. Things howl at the edges of reality and claws reach out to find a way in. Ancient Doors of Power connect this world to destiny. If **HARBINGERS** of the apocalypse open enough of these doors, the world will end on their terms.

It could be fiery—of blood and bone, a living nightmare.

It could be quiet—of shiver and whisper, a twisted dream.

The world will end, and it will be remade in ways too terrible to contemplate. From the ashes or the shadows, only the Harbingers know what will rise to claim what remains.

But you're not going to let that happen, are you? You've come to love this world, even if it doesn't completely accept you.

You are an agent of **Department of Interdimensional Vigilance and International Security, Interdisciplinary Operations Network** (DIVISION). An organization that combats occult threats, classifies supernatural phenomena, and investigates the encroaching apocalypse. You are part of an elite group with a "unique" set of skills. Only you can hold back the apocalypse, and hold this broken world together.

You are a monster. There are many monsters in the world, but not all of them are as useful to **DIVISION**. Most of them are just trying to live their lives as best as they can. They are not equipped to hold back the end of days. They are not marked by a strange fate. You are Omen-Class monsters. Your power may one day be your undoing, or it may signal our last best hope.

Your power comes at a cost. The darkness has demands of you. If you fulfill too many of these demands and give into the darkness too often, you'll become a Harbinger of the apocalypse. Then only DIVISION and your former friends can stop you.

But if your heart is strong enough to resist and temper the darkness within yourself, your monstrous powers may turn the tides of the apocalypse. You may become the force that finds the light in the dark and defies all odds to save this world.

You have so much power, but what you truly have is this: magic and fear. Healing and hope. It will have to be enough.

What Is Apocalypse Keys?

Apocalypse Keys is a tabletop roleplaying game about monsters holding back the apocalypse. These monsters are agents who work for DIVISION, a mysterious organization dedicated to understanding the occult, taming the supernatural, and protecting the world. A world that is built for the mundane and for humans. A world that tries to pretend monsters are not real.

Apocalypse Keys is a game of emotional connection, complicated relationships, unpredictable mysteries, larger than life apocalyptical threats, and the brightest hope in the darkest despair. You are monsters bound by fate, love, and power.

Apocalypse Keys asks you to play characters who are conflicted and complex, each yearning to connect meaningfully to the monsters and humans around them. They are terrifying and monstrous, but they are also aching and human. To play *Apocalypse Keys* means playing vulnerable characters in a position to hurt and be hurt. The emotional tension of the game lies in the characters attempting to move past that and accept they'll make mistakes while still striving to be better.

Apocalypse Keys is a game of discovery and creation. You will often be asked to answer questions by inventing new truths about the world, and be flexible when new secrets and huge revelations suddenly come into play.

Apocalypse Keys introduces mechanics for how you explore the Mystery, but the truth isn't written in advance—that comes from the ingenuity and cleverness of the players. You are challenged to be imaginative, curious, and open to the process. A game of *Apocalypse Keys* can quickly go into new and exciting directions, and the game trusts that you can collaborate to tell a great story together.

Thematically the game focuses on the following:

- **Forestalling the Apocalypse:** Harbingers of the apocalypse orchestrate horrors from behind the scenes, covering their tracks, and unfolding their plans of terror and destruction. They manipulate monsters and humans to serve their goals and open ancient doors of power. You are all that stands between the Harbingers and this world, between survival and apocalypse.
- **Solving Mysteries:** As Omen-Class agents of DIVISION you must use your unique supernatural powers, contacts, tools, and skills to unearth secrets. You gather clues and study the signs, which are called **Keys of the Apocalypse**. When you are ready to confront the truth, you try to unlock Doom's Door and see what lies on the other side. Can you unlock the door before time runs out?
- **Wrestling with Power:** You are a monster, with great power at your disposal. As an Omen your capacity for destruction and terror far exceeds most other monsters. Such power is tied to something humans and the world can never understand. In this game, when your power overwhelms you and you go too far, you or others will pay the price. The toll of this weighs heavily on your heart.
- **Emotional Entanglements:** You are monsters who fight monsters, and there are very few like you. Fewer still who work with DIVISION. Your relationships mean everything. You create bonds with each other as a means of controlling your powers, making sure you don't go too far. Fight, fall in love, succumb to your emotions, be vulnerable.
- **Your Power Will Likely Lead to Your Ruin:** You are each tied to the demands of darkness, and in turn, you are bound to the terrible fate that awaits you. It may be prophecy, consequence, enemies more powerful than you, or simply the truth of your nature. When you look at a Harbinger of the apocalypse, you know that many of your future paths lead to becoming one of them. The only thing standing between you and despair is your force of will and the positive relationships you have with others. The abyss calls out to you, again and again, awaiting your answer.

Inspirations

Apocalypse Keys is mainly inspired by *Hellboy*, the films and comics, as well as the spin off comic series *B.P.R.D.* that focuses on the other monstrous agents. But this game also leans into the other stories and genres that focus on investigating the strange and weird. Some examples include the comics and films of *Men in Black*, the video game *Unavowed*, the comic *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, the TV series *Penny Dreadful*, the TV series and comic *Doom Patrol*, the interpersonal drama and blockbuster explosions of the original *Marvel*, superhero comics, films and television shows, among others.

While *Apocalypse Keys* has many inspirations, it is wholly its own game that provides a unique creative structure for players to enjoy. It focuses on emotional narratives, monstrous power, and the fear of going too far to save the world.

The Basics

Apocalypse Keys is a tabletop roleplaying game. To play this game everyone takes part in telling a shared story. This story is told from moment to moment, through improvisation and the choices the players make. The rules help you tell a story of power, emotions, mystery, and high stakes.

The game involves rolling dice, choosing options, trading emotional currency, and spending resources. These mechanics introduce interesting constraints for our monstrous characters to navigate.

To play this game you will need 3-5 players, and time to play.

The first time you sit down and play will take 3-5 hours. You'll create your main characters, create your branch of DIVISION together, and introduce the **Mystery** (*The First Session,* page 187). Each game session will take about 2-3 hours.

One of you is the Keeper of the Doors, or the **Keeper**. Everyone else plays a single Omen, an agent of the mysterious organization known as DIVISION.

These monsters are called **Omens** or **PCs (Player Characters)**. The Keeper and the players take turns telling the story, but they have different roles. The Keeper refers to the person who presents the Mystery and facilitates the game. Everyone else at the table is a player who controls a PC who investigates the Mystery. While the Keeper is also playing the game, for the sake of clarity and ease of reference, we'll refer to the Keeper and players separately.

Because the game is driven by the interest and interpretation of the players, the Keeper facilitates a living Mystery that responds to those players. When both the players and Keeper play with creativity and

intuition, the Mystery truly comes alive and becomes a unique story that is tied to the characters.

The Keeper presents the Mystery the PCs must investigate. They craft the antagonists, set the stakes, provide challenges, and describe obstacles. The Keeper also narrates for the supporting characters, be they human, monster, or Harbinger. These supporting characters are also called **NPCs (Non-Player Characters)**.

The players interact with the world, investigate the Mystery, form meaningful bonds, and attempt to drive back the apocalypse. They tell the story alongside the Keeper and help maintain the atmosphere and mystery. The players should also make sure everyone gets a turn in the spotlight, like a TV show with a large cast of characters.

The rules in this book help tell your own unique story of *Apocalypse Keys*. The rules provide inspiration, nudge the intuition, craft compelling scenarios, provide unexpected twists and turns, guide our choices, and tell you when to roll the dice.

Content Note

This game deals with mature themes such as the end of the world, supernatural forces, and the occult. Some concepts lean into experiences that you may find parallel with racism and marginalization. Depending on the elements your game chooses to focus on, the following content may also occur: genocide, cultural genocide, survivor's guilt, unhealthy parental and familial relationships, toxic interpersonal relationships, mind control, emotional manipulation, memory loss, and body horror. You are encouraged to change aspects of the game to improve your enjoyment of the game. But it's also okay to not play this game.

Safety First

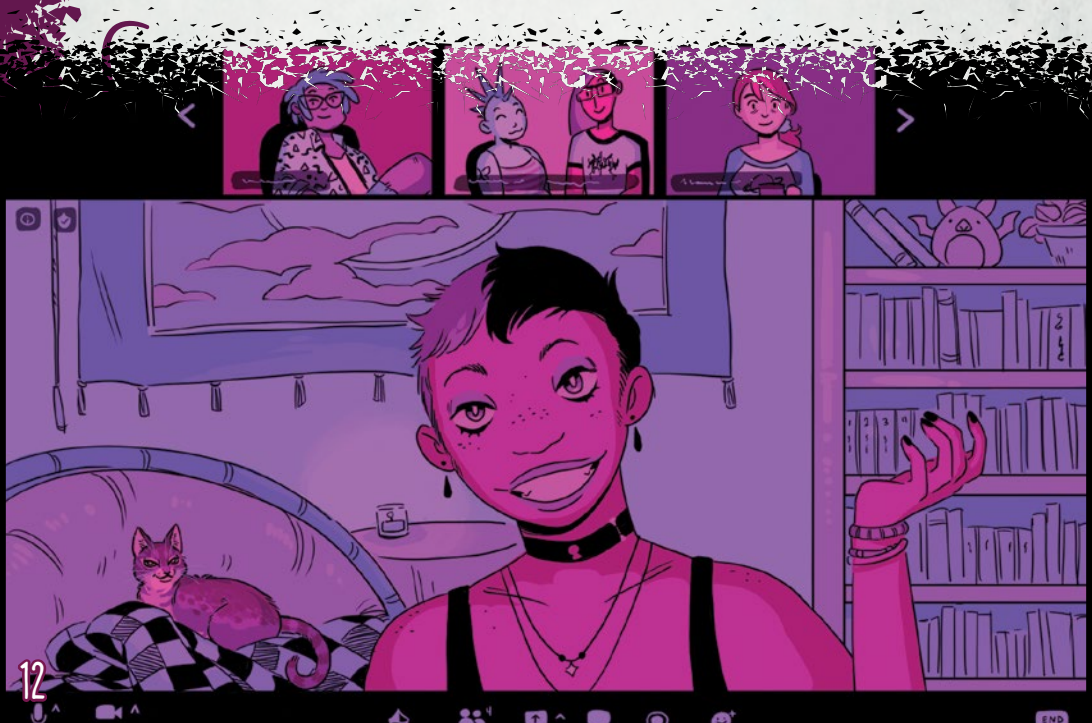
Like most social activities, tabletop roleplaying games fall under a social contract. There is an unspoken agreement that we have all chosen to spend time together to play a game and enjoy ourselves.

Because we all have different life experiences, we can sometimes hurt others even if we didn't mean to. We can unintentionally say or describe something that makes someone else uncomfortable, and it can be hard for others to speak up or even understand what they're feeling.

When you play this game, use safety tools. Safety tools are how we ensure that everyone at the table has fun and feels empowered to contribute. For a horror game like this one, this is especially important.

The Keeper and players all help each other foster a sense of kindness and warmth. Safety tools are a communication tool that aims to help everyone feel comfortable and better express themselves while clearly establishing our boundaries. This makes it easier to support conversation and mutual respect.

Green, Yellow, and Red is a safety tool that was created for you and your group to use when playing *Apocalypse Keys*. While I encourage you to choose the tools best suited to your group, this is the default set we use when playing *Apocalypse Keys*.



Green, Yellow, and Red

Green, Yellow, and Red is a safety tool that uses lists to remind players what subjects and themes we want to see in a game and what subjects and themes should be avoided. The lists can be modified at any time and can be referred to during play.

You'll need a way of writing down answers to some questions, to help guide play. As everyone in the group takes turns answering questions, write down the answers. This makes it easier to refer to later.

- **GREEN: What themes, stories, and ideas are we excited to explore in this game?** This can be as simple as "I'd love to fight a big bad monster every session or so" or "I'd like to explore queer relationships." We can be more specific and bring in media and touchstones that inspire us, or ask for specific narrative arcs for our characters.
- **YELLOW: What themes, stories, and ideas do we want to see less of?** This can mean it's fine in small doses, we want it to happen "off screen," or we will keep details to a minimum. This can sound like, "I'm cool with comic book or blockbuster film violence, but nothing graphic or disturbing. I don't want to focus on gory details or bring it into focus," or "We're okay with lots of Catholic imagery in describing our holy symbol arsenal, but I don't want DIVISION to be an extension of the church or for evangelism to appear in the game."
- **RED: What themes, stories, and ideas will we NOT see at all in the game?** This means the group can be sure that this will never come up, no matter what. In case one of us forgets or makes a mistake, we can use our safety tools to remind each other and remove the content from the game. We can do this by saying something like, "I don't want to see children be harmed in this game, even threat of harm." or "I don't want sexual assault to come up. Sexual content that is consensual is fine, the kind we see on general television that cuts to black immediately."

It can be hard to know everything we want or don't want in our game before we start playing. Because of this, we look at our Green, Yellow, and Red list as a guide we update as we play. Before play, we'll write down our initial choices for each color, in a clear and concise way. But throughout play, we'll encounter the unexpected and we may even discover that our boundaries change. At any moment during play, we can add something to any of these lists, or move something over to the Red zone if we decide we're no longer okay with exploring it. We can update the guide by saying something like, "I realize I'm not okay with gaslighting being a main plot point in the game. I'm going to add it to our Yellow choices."

Agree on a means of checking in throughout the game. Make it a habit to check in during play, during breaks, and after a game. This can look like showing everyone a thumbs up, and waiting for thumbs up in return to make sure everyone is okay with where things are going. This can also sound like, "I know we agreed on no graphical violence, but I'm not sure about body horror. How do we feel about that?" Or "So we seem okay with body horror, but please interrupt me at any time if this is not cool."

Green, Yellow, and Red will help invite topics we're excited to explore and set clear boundaries so we can play confidently and push into thrilling territory. I encourage you to build on and customize this toolset, giving your group exactly the tools they need to feel welcome, safe, and engaged.

For more information on safety tools and their use, the TTRPG Safety Tool Kit *http://bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit* by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk is an excellent resource. Different groups will need a different combination of safety tools. See what works best, and play with an open heart.

STARS & WISHES

To help the Keeper and players best align their desires and intentions, I recommend using **Stars & Wishes**, a tool created by Lu Quade.

To use Stars & Wishes:

- At the end of the session, each player (including the Keeper) gives a ***Star*** to someone. This Star could highlight a cool narrative moment that took your breath away, a delightful bit of roleplay, a description that struck you, anything that gave you joy and excitement. If you have enough time, give several stars!
- Each person then describes a ***Wish*** they have. This is something they'd like to see happen in a future session. It could be a specific event you'd like for your character or someone else's, an NPC you'd like to see more of, an interaction or narrative moment you're hoping for, a move you want to try, and so on.
- The Keeper takes note of these Stars and Wishes, which will guide future sessions. Focusing on the Stars that people enjoyed and bringing more of the same, incorporating Wishes and helping them come true.

Experiment and tweak Stars & Wishes as much as you like, making it work best for your group! A strong feedback tool that celebrates and guides play will lead to an even more fun.

The Core Rules

Making a Move

Apocalypse Keys is a game of mystery, power, and facing the supernatural. The Omen—through their powers of darkness, support from DIVISION, cunning, grit, and compassion—operate and thrive in dangerous situations while hunting down dangerous truths.

The Summoned may use their colossal strength to tear open the entrance to an ancient catacomb, the Hungry may draw the vulnerable into their haunted aura. Omens are monsters with an incredible amount of power, there is no question that the Summoned can break into the catacomb and the Hungry can mesmerize the distracted guard.

When players describe the actions of their PCs, the Keeper describes the effect and continue the conversation. The catacombs lead down deeper into the earth, the guard whispers secrets into the ear of the Hungry, and so on.

There are moments, however, when the outcome is uncertain, the task is clearly dangerous or difficult, or the PCs must draw more deeply into the darkness within to overcome a fearsome threat.

What happens when the Summoned finds a horde of primordial creatures awakening from their deathly slumber? What happens when the guard tears away at their flesh to reveal their monstrosity to the Hungry?

You may be trying to **Grasp Keys** to uncover clues and make sense of the Mystery. Or maybe this is an intimate moment when you **Reveal Your Heart**, and see if your words find their way to another.

When moments of tension like this happen, it's time to pause the conversation and roll dice. This is called **making a move**.

To Do a Thing, Do it

Each move has its own context for when it's activated, this is called the trigger condition. If your character is taking a challenging or dangerous action that matches up with a move trigger, it's time to make that move.

The Keeper can ask, "You're charging at the ash guardian to force them to stop the summoning ritual, it sounds like you're **Unleashing the Dark**. Is that right?" Or a player can call it out directly, "I'm going to tell Opal about how scared I am to lose the last of my soul to the demonic weapon built into my arm. I'm going to **Reveal My Heart**."

If you want to make a specific move, you have to take the relevant action to hit the trigger condition. The two are inseparable. You must reveal your heart and sincerely connect to someone to **Reveal Your Heart**. You must push the limits of their supernatural powers to **Power Through Darkness**. The Hungry must surrender to the hunger within them to use the **Gnawing Edge of Hunger** and feed. To do a thing, do it.

If you say "I want to **Power through Darkness**" the Keeper should ask "Cool, what do you do?" If you say "I'll **Grasp Keys here**" the Keeper should say "That sounds great. How do you do it?"

When a move is triggered, clarify what the character is doing and what the player is hoping to accomplish in the moment. This makes it easier for the other players and the Keeper to play out the moment, trigger the move, and contextualize the results.

Roll the Dice or Decide

Many moves involve rolling dice to find out what happens next. For these moves, the player will first announce how many **Darkness Tokens** they'll spend on a roll. This indicates how much of their supernatural power they'll be drawing from, and how far they're willing to push themselves. But be careful! If you roll too high, you'll go too far and lose control. This means suffering disastrous success and facing the consequences.

Each Darkness Token adds +1 to the roll. A player can spend from zero to three tokens (+0 to +3 to the roll). The player then rolls two six-sided dice and adds their roll to the Darkness Tokens spent (*Darkness Tokens,* page 22).

After the roll, the player decides if they want to spend **Bonds** to change the result by +1 or -1. This allows you to change the outcomes of a move, as your relationships shape your fate (*Bonds,* page 25).

Malika announces they'll spend two Darkness Tokens, this will add a +2 to the roll. They roll the dice and have a 6 and a 3. This adds up to an 11 in total. This means they suffer from a disastrous success, and there are unintended consequences. The player decides to spend a Bond on the roll for a -1, making the final result a 10. A perfect hit with no consequences!

Because the PCs are connected to the world and people around them, it makes it easier to control their power. When a PC runs out of Bonds, it's easier to lose that control.

Some moves, particularly DIVISION and Ruin moves, ask the player to make a choice or answer a question. The outcome is based on their answer.

There Are Always Consequences

Each move has an outcome that moves the conversation forward. You may have overreached and lost control. You may have fallen short or tragedy struck. Or you may have used your powers with perfect precision, finding the light that the dark within holds on to. Regardless of the results, the move happens, and the Keeper describes the consequences.

For moves with rolls involved, the outcome generally depends on your final result:

- **An 8-10 means the Omen has used their powers with precision and control**, achieving what they wanted without being overcome by the darkness. The Keeper is encouraged to offer a narrative opportunity or mechanical benefit. A Harbinger might reveal a flaw, or an Omen gains a Bond. This is called a **PERFECT HIT**.
- **A 7- means the Omen fell short or fate intervened somehow**. Usually, the move will detail what kind of dire situation the PCs find themselves in and the Keeper will take narrative control for a moment. It should be noted that the Omen doesn't necessarily fail at what they were trying to do. They could still succeed, but the consequences could be unexpectedly dire or an unwelcome complication could be revealed. This is called a **MISS**.
- **An 11+ means the Omen went too far, overextending themselves or losing control of their power**. The Omen usually gets what they want but there's a complication, cost, or consequence of some kind. The Keeper can offer a choice—one that will help the player highlight the values, priorities, or hopes of the Omen. This is called a **DISASTROUS SUCCESS**.

The Surge, while exploring the ashes and burned down remains of a school, uses their elemental powers to sift through the rubble and GRASP KEYS. The player rolls and gets a miss. *They find more than they're ready for. An old photo, burnt along the edges, some of the faces blackened shadows. The Surge realizes the picture is their mother and someone else. Is it someone from the cult they ran away from? A long-lost sibling?*

Will the Surge use their powers of darkness to manipulate the ashes on the photo and learn how they come closer to becoming a Harbinger (marking Ruin)? Or will they burn what remains of the photo and turn away from the truth? Either way, they now know their mother and the cult are somehow involved.

It's a Matter of Scale

The Omens in *Apocalypse Keys* have access to great and terrible powers. Whenever they make a move, the situation always changes, but how much it changes is a matter of scale.

Sometimes a move just moves forward to the next action beat. When the Summoned faces a colossal rift monster they can **Power Through Darkness** to force the rift to materialize and provide an opportunity for their allies... and the fight continues!

Other times, the move will be definitive, either ending the current conflict entirely or drastically changing the situation. When the Summoned faces the same colossal physical threat, what happens when they call upon their hellish creator and demand they strike down the threat? After the portals to hell open and the demonic armies overwhelm the rift monster, what terrible promise of love did the Summoned have to offer in exchange for such power?

While a player decides how much narrative control they wish to exert in the scene, the Keeper gauges the scale of the moves as they happen in the game. They use their best judgement, paying attention to intuitive nudges like narrative pacing, dramatic timing, and emotional pay off.

Keepers are encouraged to use their best judgement, but here's some general advice. There will be exceptions to these guidelines, but this should serve the group well during your first few sessions of *Apocalypse Keys*.

BASIC MOVES

Basic moves likely lead to the next moment and will rarely resolve the scene by itself. The result of a basic move should still reveal a revelation or twist in the fiction.

If a series of basic moves have occurred across multiple PCs, it's more likely the result of the basic move will lead to scene resolution or a significant shift in the narrative.

If the Last **Unleashes the Dark** and uses their power of time distortion to stop a Harbinger in their tracks, this may not be enough to overcome the Harbinger completely or do more than create an opportunity for another PC.

But if the Shade had already **Powered Through Darkness** to use their soul machinery to trap the Harbinger's soul temporarily in a spectral pocket watch, this could be enough to sever the Harbinger's connection to their soul and force them into a time loop. At least long enough for the Omens to escape and rescue the innocent from the Harbinger's plans!

Regarding narrative momentum, Keepers should pay special attention to **Grasp Keys** and **Unlock Doom's Door**. These two moves are essential in moving the Mystery forward, and the Mystery is the heart of *Apocalypse Keys*. **Grasp Keys** provides a general guideline and is open to the Keeper's interpretation. **Unlock Doom's Door**, on the other hand provides more guidance in terms of what stakes are involved, but the Keeper's interpretation is still crucial.

PLAYBOOK AND DIVISION MOVES

The playbook and DIVISION moves generally provide moderate to significant shifts in the fiction, raising stakes and increasing the scale of the results. In general, players have the power to activate most moves since the trigger conditions are fairly easy to set off. This means that the players always have the means to create new narrative opportunities, center their character in the fiction, or intimately engage with other characters.

Playbook and DIVISION moves create significant opportunities and introduce new and exciting narrative twists. The Fallen can trigger **You Loved Me Once**, and declare the dangerous cult leader once worshipped them before their fall. The Hungry can trigger **Do Harbingers Dream of Monsters Like Me?**, tearing away at their skin to reveal the slumbering remnants of a Harbinger.

Keepers should be ready to integrate these revelations and have the narrative carry this creative momentum forward. The cult leader, as much as they loved the Fallen, may have become twisted and hollowed by their love. The remnants of the Harbinger may slither away and crawl into the shadows, ready to return later, whole and full of spite.

RUIN MOVES

Ruin moves bring an Omen closer to the possibility of a terrible fate, and lead them down the path of becoming a Harbinger. Because of this, Ruin moves will almost always dramatically shift the fiction and provide the player with significant narrative control.

When this happens, this is always a signal to the Keeper to dramatically increase the stakes and play out the implications of feeding the Harbinger within.

The Found can trigger the Ruin move **Let Sleeping Gods Lie**, and wield cosmic dreams with terrifying accuracy, bringing to life a nightmare. The Surge can call upon their **Dark Patron**, playing into the hands of a Harbinger for the sake of more power.

The Keeper should make these moments feel powerful, and reward the Omen for stepping towards the abyss—while hinting at what will happen when they are swallowed whole.

The Found can strike down the three headed werewolf, infecting them with vicious nightmares. But the Keeper can describe how every mirror in the room cracks, revealing the cosmic horror that opens one terrifying eye among hundreds. The Dark Patron will promise more power than the Surge had asked for, but in exchange they whisper terrible promises to lovingly destroy everyone the Surge will ever love.

Moves Summary

Moves are a tool for continuing the conversation. Always follow the fiction and drama when determining outcomes.

- **To Do a Thing, Do It.** Every move has a trigger. A player describes an action and the move follows from it. If a player wants to make a specific move without describing an action to trigger it, ask *what do you do?* Or, *what does that look like?*
- **Roll the Dice or Decide.** Depending on the move, the results may be based on a roll or a decision the player makes. When rolling, typically you'll roll + Darkness Tokens.
- **There Are Always Consequences.** For good or ill, all moves have consequences that change the situation, the characters, or both. If the action taken would not create a significant change, it's probably not a move, it's just continuing the conversation. That's fine, keep talking until you come to a point where consequences are on the table. Then make a move!

Powers of Darkness

In *Apocalypse Keys*, darkness is the mysterious and unknown that lurks in the shadows. From this place of mystery comes great power and untold potential.

Every PC has access to their powers of darkness. These powers are tied closely to the unique emotional and social aspects of each playbook.

Each monstrous agent of DIVISION has access to supernatural abilities. When a player creates their PC, they decide which powers of darkness their character will wield (*Making Characters,* page 85).

A PC's powers of darkness define how they interact with the world, and shapes the narrative of how they will use other moves. When the Fallen uses their **soul venom** to **Unleash the Dark**, it will look and feel very different from how the Summoned uses their **colossal strength** to **Unleash the Dark**.

When a PC triggers a move like **Unleash the Dark** or **Grasp Keys**, they may decide to do so without using their power of darkness at all. The Summoned may use their **shadow control** to search for a clue in the basement of an abandoned laboratory, or they may choose to call a contact from DIVISION and ask to pull up the original blueprints for the basement. As a player, you decide if your PC will perform a task in a relatively mundane way, or if they'll leverage their powers of darkness to strange and weird effects.

Malika is playing the Marquis, one of the two thousand princelings of the twelve hells, a summoned demon. Malika has chosen two powers of darkness from the Summoned playbook, **emotion amplification** *and* **shadow control**. *In this scene, the Marquis has been ambushed by a group of cunning yakshas protecting their territory.*

Malika (the Marquis): I have a feeling this is a misunderstanding, but the Marquis isn't going to allow their beautiful coat and hair to be ruined. I'm going to try to convince them to stand down.

Keeper: Sure, what does that look like? Will you just try to talk them down, or will you use your powers of darkness?

Malika (the Marquis): Hmmm, I think the Marquis isn't arrogant enough to believe they can talk their way out of this. I do have **emotion amplification**... yeah, I'll use my powers of darkness to search for the calmest yaksha and reach out to them. I want to amplify that emotion.

Keeper: You reach out with your powers of darkness and find one, their golden eyes glow in the fading light. There's a moment of connection between you two as you feel the calm curiosity in their heart. Okay, let's make that roll and see how this turns out!

Darkness Tokens

Darkness Tokens are a form of currency players generate by embodying the emotional themes of their playbook. **Players spend Darkness Tokens before rolling and each token spent adds +1 to the result**.

The Darkness you invest in a roll speaks volumes about your character. How far are they willing to go to ensure they succeed—even if that means going too far?

Each playbook has five ways of gaining Darkness Tokens. Four of these are unique aspects that encourage engaging with the themes and emotional core of each playbook. The more a PC embodies these aspects, the more easily they gain Darkness Tokens.

When an aspect is triggered, the player decides how many tokens they'll gain, between two to four.

How many Darkness Tokens are picked up can be tied to how strongly they embody the aspects, how much they are struggling to control these aspects, or any narrative reasoning that makes sense in the moment.

Carlos is playing Cara, a forensic scientist with a soul claimed by a cursed ancient skeleton, and is now the Shade. Cara has the aspect of gaining Darkness Tokens, "React with cold reason and logic." In this scene, a gorgon is too overcome with grief to be of any real help to the investigation.

Carlos (Cara): All right, we don't don't have time for these hysterics. "Death has claimed your lover and there is no coming back from that. You can sit here and mourn if you like, but in the meantime, we wish to track down this killer. If you can help us, stay. If not, leave."

Cara is ***reacting with cold reason and logic***, instead of comforting the gorgon. They went pretty hard here—Cara could have held back, but they didn't. So, I'll pick up three Darkness Tokens.

If a player triggers more than one way to gain Darkness Tokens at the same time, they decide which trigger is more appropriate for the moment and gains Darkness Tokens from it. A player may trigger the same aspect multiple times in a scene, but doing so will only generate additional Darkness Tokens when the circumstances or characters they are interacting with meaningfully change.

*River is playing Rishi, the once mythical divine creature, the Bakunawa. Struck down by jealous gods, they are now the Fallen. River can pick up Darkness Tokens when Rishi **reacts with spite and arrogance**. Rishi may act in an arrogant manner with the Marquis, goading them and declaring that Rishi is clearly the superior DIVISION agent. River picks up Darkness Tokens. If Rishi provokes the Marquis in a similar way in the same scene, River won't pick up Darkness Tokens again for it.*

The more an Omen attunes to their emotional and social aspects, the more powerful they are. But lean into this too much and your emotions or powers of darkness are no longer under your control.

After a move, if you have 5+ Darkness Tokens, you are Torn Between your monstrous nature and your human heart (*Torn Between,* page 46).

At the start of a new Mystery, PC's Darkness Tokens reset to 0.

What the Darkness Demands of You

The Harbingers of the apocalypse will do anything to usher in the apocalypse, but the true horror is how much they have in common with the monstrous agents of DIVISION. The only difference is that the Harbingers have given themselves completely to the demands of darkness, while the PCs still resist its temptation.

What the Darkness Demands of You represents the narrative guide for the PCs to push and pull against. When a player creates a PC, they choose a playbook. One of the questions they answer is, *"What does the Darkness Demand of You?"* (*Making Characters,* page 85).

Each playbook comes with a list of possible demands. The players choose two from a list of options. From this choice, questions naturally emerge. You don't answer those questions all at once. It's better to explore them as you play out characters, inhabit the world, and create a compelling story together.

For example, the Last has the demand *to awaken the leviathans in space.* Who are these leviathans? Why have they been sleeping and for how long? What will happen when they wake and how does it relate to the apocalypse?

If a player chooses this demand, it means they're excited to explore these questions. They may define what the leviathans are immediately or discover who they are in play, in relation to the investigation. The Keeper could populate the Mystery with evidence of the leviathans, ancient scrolls, witnesses who have dreamt of the leviathans, or a cult that is actively working towards waking the leviathans.

The Keeper can refer to these demands to guide play, create NPCs, complicate the Mystery, and so on. If the Keeper can bring in other aspects of the PC—like their origin or powers of darkness—then so much the better. Players are encouraged to flirt with these temptations, discover how these demands define the character, and defy them.

At the start of each session, the players should examine What the Darkness Demands of You. Is there still a rich amount of tension to explore? Or is this creating a narrative path that the player is no longer interested in? Players should tweak, rewrite, or create completely new demands to better reflect what interests them.

What the Darkness Demands of You offers a guide for the players. What will tempt or influence the monsters they play? What gives them the strength to fight off these demands?

Rishi has the following for What the Darkness Demands of You—to storm heaven and to create dark churches in my name.

Keeper: Do you have an idea for why Rishi would be tempted by these demands? Or do you want to play to find out?

River (Rishi): I like the sound of dark churches in my name, but I'm not sure what that means yet. Maybe we could have a cult that's been worshipping a version of me before my fall? I don't think my character knows about that yet though. What I'm sure about is why my character wants to storm heaven. They used to be the great Bakunawa, swallower of moons and the sea serpent that brought eclipse and darkness.

But I fell in love with a divine enemy, the angel Manav. He told me a secret, that his divine creator was feeding off the energy of my fellow gods, becoming stronger while keeping us weak. I grew angry, and was determined to defeat this god in battle and take heaven from her. But I was betrayed by someone, maybe even Manav, and I fell.

Ruin reflects the Omen's fall into darkness. The more Ruin an Omen accumulates, the greater their access to new moves and the possibility of them becoming a Harbinger greatly increases. What the Darkness Demand of You guides the PC towards more Ruin (*Ruin,* page 32).

Bonds

Bonds represent friendship, rivalry, and influence. Your social connections and history help ground you, guide your actions, and are generally a positive influence. Bonds help you temper and control your supernatural powers. They represent how you support each other in the face of the apocalypse.

If you have a Bond, you can spend it (reduce its number by one) to gain +1 or -1 to your roll. Bonds are spent after making the roll, and multiple Bonds can be spent on a single roll.

Spending Bonds represents leaning on shared memories or how a character helps in the moment. When a Bond is spent, it does not destroy or undermine the relationship.

When a player spends a Bond, they briefly describe a moment or flashback that helps their PC avoid consequences or control their supernatural powers. This moment or flashback can be from an event established or played out previously, or a new revelation. If you spend Bonds with different PCs and NPCs on the same roll, you can create a shared moment with everyone involved, or describe a montage of moments between all the characters.

You gain new Bonds and invigorate old ones when you **Reveal Your Heart** or when another move tells you to. When you gain a Bond, it can represent a new relationship developing, or an invigoration and deepening of an existing one. The Keeper may also reward a player with a Bond if a moment of intimacy or social significance happened between characters. This is especially true for NPCs, the Keeper may speak for them and offer a Bond.

PCs can gain Bonds with What the Darkness Demands of You. This Bond works a little differently from the rest. When a PC spends a Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You, they describe how they are coming closer to becoming a Harbinger. The spent Bond still adds +1 or -1 to the roll, but it represents a moment where the PC comes closer to the edge of the abyss.

This can look like the Summoned pushing themselves and for a moment their skin becomes unbreakable, bringing them closer to the demand of *"to despair as an immortal."* Or the Shade sends out a wave of death energy that for a brief moment shows every ghost haunting the area and aligns with the demand of *"to break the veil between the living and the dead."*

When a PC spends Bonds on other characters and What the Darkness Demands of You, this creates a bittersweet moment, a sharp edge to a beautiful memory, or a hint of a terrible fate in the midst of happiness.

Taylor is playing Tiana, the Surge, who has access to the power of elemental control. Tiana is pushing at the limits of their supernatural abilities to create a prison of water for the dozens of fire demons the group is fighting against.

Keeper: This sounds like you've triggered **Power Through Darkness**. How many Darkness Tokens will you spend on the roll?

Taylor (Tiana): Let's go all out, I'll spend three Darkness Tokens on the roll. Oh no, that's a 13 in total, I'll go too far. I don't want that to happen right now.

Keeper: Do you want to spend Bonds to modify the roll?

Taylor (Tiana): I have three Bonds left... if I spend all three, I can bring the roll down to 10. I have one Bond with the Marquis, and another with Cara. But one of the Bonds is with What the Darkness Demands of You. Okay, I'll describe a flashback that helps me in this moment.

I feel the storm within me—it rages, and it wants me to let go and flood the city. But I close my eyes, and I remember standing in the rain with the Marquis and Cara. We just came back from a mission and I messed up, I messed up so bad. I was expecting disappointment, judgement, but instead we just quietly headed to the bar. I learned how to play a card game for the first time.

The Marquis taught us how to play, and Cara pretended to lose to make me feel better. It rained the whole night. I can't think of the rain without thinking of their warmth. And yet, I know in my heart, when I am forced to destroy all of humanity, I will make sure these two survive no matter what. I spend the Bonds and pull myself back to the moment, letting the storm die in my heart.

PCs start the game with four Bonds. Three Bonds with other PCs, and one with What the Darkness Demands of You (*Making Characters,* page 85).

If a character has three or more Bonds with a PC or NPC, at any time they can erase those three Bonds and mark XP (*Experience and Advancement,* page 30). If they do, they reveal something about the other character (subject to PC and Keeper approval).

Conditions

You live in a world that can never truly accept you. You use your supernatural powers to protect a world that doesn't understand you. The world will suffer if you don't keep yourself in check. The strain on you is great. For some, it is not a question of *if you lose control*, but a matter of *when you will give in*.

Each playbook has four **Conditions**. When you have a Condition marked, you cope with the pressure you are enduring by channelling that emotion. The player decides when a Condition guides, hinders, or dictates their actions and reactions.

Each playbook features a unique set of Conditions that encapsulate the emotional themes of that playbook. Players are encouraged to use these Conditions as creative guidelines as they roleplay their PCs.

When a player is told to mark a Condition by a move, or when the Keeper asks them to, the player chooses which one to mark.

In *Apocalypse Keys*, you do not track the physical harm the characters suffer in terms of physical wounds or hit points. Instead, Conditions track the suffering of these characters as they struggle to control their powers (*Combat and Conditions,* page 185).

All PCs have a shared way of earning Darkness Tokens: *Embody a Condition that affects me*. The more Conditions you accumulate, the more possibilities there are for earning those tokens.

Rishi attempts to **Unleash the Dark** *on a Harbinger, but they roll a 7, a miss!*

Keeper: The aswang smiles, showing their many razor sharp teeth. You realize they know you're lying. Their smile widens and they nod, placing a hand on your own and looking deep into your eyes. They say, "Oh my, Rishi. You truly are a tempting one, aren't you? I could spend all night listening to your lies."

The aswang can read you like an open book, you'll be unable to convince them with a lie for the rest of the scene. Mark a Condition, how does this make you feel?

River (Rishi): You know, I initially thought I'd be ***Raging*** about this, but I think they're turning me on instead. I rather like this aswang, what an interesting puzzle they are. I'm going to mark ***Lustful***.

Breaking Point

When you mark your fourth Condition, you reach your **Breaking Point**. Your emotions overwhelm you and you lose control.

When you do so, read the unique description of your Breaking Point out loud. Follow the instructions and work with the Keeper and the others to play out this scene. This is a big moment!

During this scene, you cannot mark or choose an option to mark a Condition. At the end of the scene, clear all Conditions and mark Ruin once. You have let out all the pent up emotions and they no longer control you, but you inch closer to your ruin in the process. Once you accumulate five Ruin, you'll trigger a Ruin Advance (*Ruin Advances,* page 82).

Playing out the Breaking Point may take only a moment or two, or it could play out an entire scene. It's best to decide in the moment what feels best in play as the story unfolds.

Ann is playing Astra, a refugee from a destroyed planet. As the Last, they have marked all four Conditions and have reached their Breaking Point.

Keeper: Okay, Ann, can you read out loud the description of your Breaking Point?

Ann (Astra): All right, here we go. "You've barely been able to keep the grief and anger at bay. It rises in you now and you feel time wither away as you relive the trauma and heartbreak. Your guilt turns you into a weapon. Describe how you will make everyone and everything around you pay for what happened to your people, and how you go too far. The Keeper will tell you how the faintest hope surfaces before you destroy it, and who walks away to perpetuate this cycle of violence and pain."

Keeper: What will you do to make everyone pay for what happened to your people?

Ann (Astra): So, I just got thrown into the side of this building by one of the fire demons that escaped Tiana's water prison, right? I think this is when we find out that Astra is traumatized by fire. It was a great fire that burned most of their planet. I don't see the fire demon anymore, I'm back on my home planet and I'm watching everything burn. I scream, and I lose control of my dimensional phasing power. I tear through time and space and bring the fires here. I will burn everything down and there's nothing anyone can do about it!

Well, at least, that's my traumatized response, but I'm hoping someone else steps in to help!

Keeper: That sounds intense, I love how we've learned something essential about Astra's past. Okay, as a result of your dimensional phasing, the fire is a sickly bright green, and everyone's shadows twist and turn in response. The fire consumes everything in its path.

Let's see, I'll describe the faintest hope and what happens next. As the fire burns, your powers shift and spike, and for a moment the most beautiful flowers and trees of your home planet cover everything, growing quickly, covering the steel and stone in vines and neon colors. But the fire destroys everything, and it all turns to ash, never to be recovered again.

But a set of fiery flowers fall upon Lily, the dead human agent of DIVISION. Your power, the flowers, the fire, it's all crashing together within her and creating something new, angry, and terrified. You see her slowly come back to life, eyes wild and unseeing, before she flees into the night.

Clearing Conditions

The Omens of DIVISION have been working together long enough to know that finding moments of reprieve or connection are essential. To clear Conditions that are affecting a character, there are several moves that can do so.

All PCs may choose to trigger the move **Reveal Your Heart**, which will create a moment of sincere connection. Choosing the option "Clear one Condition" will immediately clear it, meaning you will unmark it and are no longer affected by the emotion.

In addition, many moves also offer the opportunity to clear Conditions, such as **the Forbidden Archives**, **My Anointed One**, **You Loved Me Once**, among others.

At the start of a new Mystery, all PCs unmark their Conditions.

Experience and Advancement

The monsters of DIVISION learn and grow over time, unlocking new ways of using their supernatural powers. A character marks **experience (XP)** whenever a move tells them to. There is also an opportunity to earn XP at the end of every session (*End of Session,* page 164).

When a character has earned 8 XP in total, they can take an **Advance** and reset their XP to zero. The list of Advances is found near the XP track on the character sheet. Once an Advance is taken, it is marked, and can't be taken again.

Each playbook has several options for an Advance.

If you are playing 1-4 sessions, see *Advancement in a Shorter Game,* page 354.

Take a New Playbook Move

You can choose any new move from your own playbook. To better suit your character, you may rewrite the premise of the move.

Someone playing the Surge may look at **My Little Monster**, and instead state that the move applies to the talented demon who works as a butler for the family, and rename the move to **My Faithful Servant** instead. The move will still functionally work the same, but the narrative has been adjusted to fit better.

Take a New DIVISION Move

DIVISION moves are not tied to any single playbook. Instead, they represent the resources and unique qualities of DIVISION (*DIVISION Moves,* page 60).

When picking a DIVISION move, try to choose one that hasn't been picked by another player for their PC. If you do end up choosing a DIVISION move someone else has, work that out narratively with the other player. If you both have **Fae Liaison**, is it the fae who loves and helps the both of you? When tension does this cause? How do the fae feel about your Liaison working closely with two agents from DIVISION?

Take a Move from Another Playbook

You can choose most moves from another playbook, except for each playbook's starting move. For example, no one else can be as telepathic as the Found, and only the Fallen can so easily create new worshippers.

If a move from another playbook sounds like fun but relates to the central themes of that playbook, you may rewrite the premise or reword triggers to better suit your own character.

If your character does not communicate telepathically, you may take the Found's **You Are Not Alone** and change it to only work if you can speak out loud to the character you are helping. Or you may connect to a power of darkness you have instead of telepathy, such as the **dimensional phasing** of the Last or the **cosmic energy** of the Surge.

Describe a New Way to Gain Darkness Tokens

This adds a sixth way for you to gain Darkness Tokens. This can follow the same format as one of the other ones (feel a certain way, react a certain way, ask someone something), but it can also be unique. Work with the Keeper to see what feels most natural to your character. This new trigger works the same, earning you 2-4 Darkness Tokens each time.

Take a New Power of Darkness from Your Playbook

Choose any new power of darkness from your playbook. You may narratively tweak any of the moves to better fit the idea of your character. The Summoned may decide to take **emotion amplification**, and instead change it into **emotion dampening**, or **emotional empathy**. As always, the powers of darkness are open to interpretation whenever you use them (*Making Characters,* page 85).

Change Your Playbook

Changing your playbook is a way to explore new themes and narrative arcs for your character. If you feel that your origin, powers of darkness, and themes are no longer something that affects your character, changing playbooks is also an excellent Advance to take.

The Surge struggles with their immense powers more than the other monsters. At one point in the story, this may no longer feel true to the character. The player may decide that there have been hints that their character was Summoned from another dimension, and they may switch to that playbook instead. Or they may decide that they want to reveal that their character was a fallen god, explaining the immense powers they had.

The Keeper and the player should work out how any new revelations will come up in play. Perhaps there will be a moment when the Surge touches a mystical object, uncovering a forgotten memory that reveals their centuries as a god. When this happens, switch over to the new playbook.

You may keep any powers and moves that still make sense for the character and leave behind the rest. It's important to note that your Ruin track will follow you and will not reset. If you have taken 3 Ruin Advances, take note in your new playbook. If it makes sense to change out Ruin Advances, do so. If you must permanently mark a Condition, choose which Conditions are permanently marked in your new playbook.

Ruin

Ruin is a means of tracking how close a PC is to becoming a Harbinger of the apocalypse. Not all monsters have this possible fate hanging over their heads, but most monsters don't bear the immense power the PCs have.

As a result of a move, a player may be asked to mark **Ruin**. Players may also mark Ruin during the **End of Session** move (page 164). When all five boxes of Ruin are marked, the player describes a glimpse into a possible harrowing future as a Harbinger, and then takes a Ruin Advance. If they ever accumulate nine Ruin Advances, they become a Harbinger of the apocalypse (*Ruin Advances,* page 82).

Keys of the Apocalypse

The Omens will spend most of their time investigating mysteries and undermining the Harbingers of the apocalypse. The main way PCs do this is by uncovering **Keys**.

Keys help piece together the Mystery and reveal what sinister plans have begun to unfold. They are clues, discoveries, moments, and slivers of truth.

When an Omen attempts to uncover a Key, they **Grasp Keys** (page 49). No one Key will solve the entire Mystery, but together they help the PCs build a working theory.

When an Omen uncovers a Key, the Keeper writes it down. This way, the players can always keep track of and refer to the Keys collected thus far.

Carlos is playing Cara, the Shade. Cara has broken into a morgue to search for Keys of the apocalypse. They announce they are using their power of darkness to gather information. Cara will **LET THE DEAD SPEAK** *and awaken the bodies here, and see what they have to say. Carlos is* **GRASPING KEYS***, and they will spend three Darkness Tokens on the roll.*

Carlos (Cara): From inside my containment suit, what remains of my soul glows a bright red. The skeleton my soul is chained to burns an incandescent white, and the tips of my metal gauntlets open up. I release some of the ectoplasmic vapor of my soul. The vapour gently opens up one of the morgue lockers, and you can hear the body gasp as the remnants of their soul stirs. Okay, let's see how the roll goes!

Carlos rolls a 9 in total, and the Keeper looks at her notes for the Mystery and decides which Key to share. She sees one, "a walkman playing a lullaby, gentle lyrics that grow darker the longer it plays" and recontextualizes it for the scene.

Keeper: A raspy voice comes from the body, it's a bright and cheerful voice, but death has given it a hollow edge. They say, "I heard the song, and I recognized it. A lullaby, but where was it coming from? I followed the sound into the dark, and I found the walkman, drowned in water, but it was playing the song..."

One of the metal drawers starts rattling and slowly opens itself. There's a click of the old walkman as it plays back the cassette, and you hear the sweet and gentle lullaby. But it slowly fades and the sound of screaming from under the water drowns out the song.

Carlos (Cara): Oooookay, I know I'm like a ghost and all that, but I am seriously freaked out. I release the body and pull my ectoplasm back into my suit, does that stop the music?

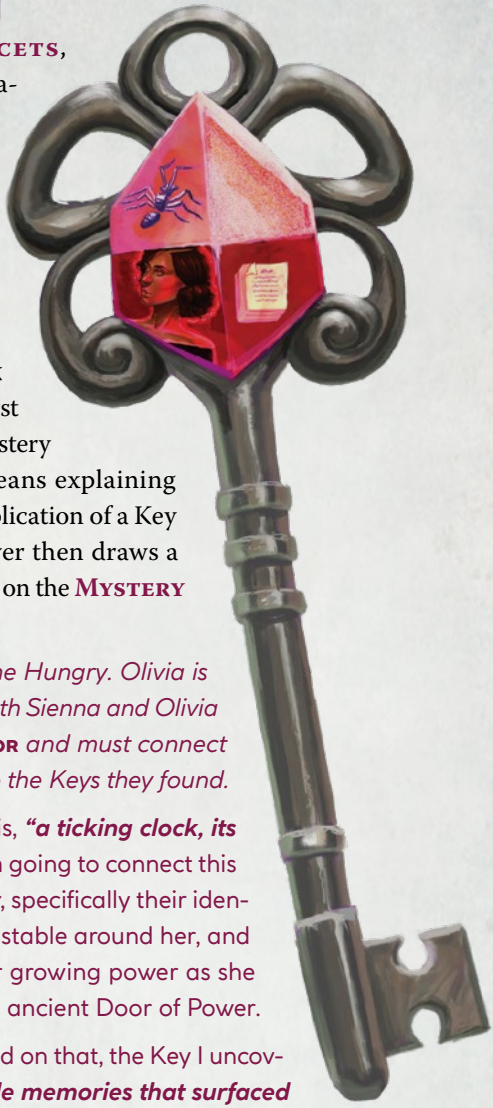
Keeper: Yup! As soon as you release the body, the walkman clicks and falls silent. The drawer slowly closes itself.

The Keeper picks up the Mystery Map and writes down the Key that Cara found. She writes down, "A walkman that plays a creepy lullaby. It led one of the victims to their death."

Facets of the Mystery

Each Mystery has its **Facets**, dimensions of the investigation that the PCs must keep in mind when searching for Doom's Door and making sense of the Harbinger's plans (*Facets,* page 200).

When the players are ready to attempt to **Unlock Doom's Door**, they must first connect each Facet of the Mystery to a Key (page 55). This means explaining the meaning, context, or implication of a Key through the Facet. The player then draws a line from the Facet to the Key on the **Mystery Map** (page 35).



Sienna is playing Scarlet, the Hungry. Olivia is playing Opal, the Found. Both Sienna and Olivia are **Unlocking Doom's Door** *and must connect the Facets of the Mystery to the Keys they found.*

Sienna (Scarlet): The Key is, ***"a ticking clock, its hands move in reverse."*** I'm going to connect this to the facet, ***The Harbinger***, specifically their identity. It's Jen Fable, time is unstable around her, and the clock is evidence of her growing power as she gets closer to unlocking the ancient Door of Power.

Olivia (Opal): I want to build on that, the Key I uncovered earlier was the ***"double memories that surfaced in my mind, one true and one false."*** The two Jens in my memories are so different from one another. In one she was head of DIVISION, in the other she's the clerk that she is now. But what if the one with her as the head of DIVISION wasn't false per se? I'm connecting this Key to the ***Door of Power***. I think the door is an alternate timeline, a past and future that could have been, if Jen hadn't been consumed by the parasitic library we're in. If Jen can unlock the door and claim the power from that timeline, she can finally escape the library and come home... but she'll be an ascended Harbinger, drawing the apocalypse closer.

THE MYSTERY MAP

DIVISION BRIEFING
The important facts and what the Omens are tasked to do

THE PARASITIC LIBRARY

PLAYERS' MYSTERY MAP

QUICK FACTS

COMPLEXITY
4

CONTENT WARNINGS
Memory Loss

TIME & PLACE
DIVISION HQ Basement, date unknown

CONTACT

NAME & TITLE
Marcus Finch
Assistant Archivist

PRONOUNS
he/they

IMPRESSIONS
Wry and dry humor
Nervous hand wringing
Unkempt bookishness

OMEN-CLASS MONSTERS, a rogue interdimensional spatial-entity has attached itself to DIVISION HQ. Designated the "Parasitic Library," the entity has begun siphoning off valuable intel from the archives leaving voids in DIVISION's key records relating to already contained Doors of the apocalypse. HARBINGER-CLASS MONSTER involvement is suspected behind this security breach. Should whoever brought the Library to DIVISION recover the siphoned information from within the Library, they will be armed with the knowledge needed to unlock those Doors. Find out who or what led the Library here and dislodge it from DIVISION before these apocalypses have a chance to be unleashed and the Harbinger claims ASCENSION.

NOTES

We need to figure out what, or WHO, that secret creature is.
Former DIVISION agent? Weakened harbinger?

Images of the door: is it the young woman or the book made of flesh she was holding that's the door?

Looking up the code next session (opal has lead)

UNCOVERED KEYS

When you write down a Key, also make note of its context.

ink stains (and omg foot and handprints on the wall and shelves!!!) is this evidence of secret creature hiding in the parasitic library?

old microfiche reader w/ images of what the door could be

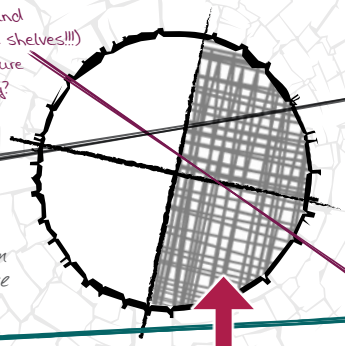
ticking clock, hands moving in reverse

double memories surfaced in my mind, one true one false

A- RINGING PHONE WITH A DIRE MESSAGE
(IRREVOCABLE TRUTH — JEN FABLE'S FUTURE SELF CALLED, THREATENING US)

(what about that weird code she kept repeating?)

THE DOOMSDAY CLOCK



FACETS

As you develop a theory, draw lines to make connections between the Keys and these Facets.

- The Harbinger
- The Door of Power
- The identity of who brought the Library to DIVISION
- The secrets locked within the Library

UNCOVERED KEYS
The clues to help you reach the Door (page 201)

THE DOOMSDAY CLOCK
Time is running out, Omens! (page 210)

FACETS
The essential aspects of the Mystery (page 200)

Doom's Door

The Harbingers are seeking out ancient **Doors of Power**. When a door is opened, the forbidden flows through. Each door changes the area or souls around it irrevocably. Some doors reveal forbidden knowledge or untold power. Other doors release terrible evils or ancient curses.

Many of our myths and legends center around these doors and how they can change the world. We all know of the veil between dreams and reality and tall tales of humans who have stumbled past a door to find the world of the fae. Each culture has stories of what separates mortals from the realms of gods. Perhaps one of the most well-known doors is one of the smallest—Pandora's Box. When it was opened, it unleashed a power the world was not ready for.

These ancient doors exist across time and space, but accessing and opening them requires complex rituals and careful plans. No two doors will open the exact same way, but the monstrous agents of DIVISION may discover a common thread that ties all of them together. However, there may be no pattern to the madness, and the PCs must simply do their best to outpace and outwit the Harbingers.

In other words, the PCs must do all they can to get to the Door of Power first. Once they are able to unlock it, they must decide what they do with what waits beyond the door. Destroy it, contain it, change it, bring it back to DIVISION, whatever it takes.

But if a Harbinger makes it to the door first? Then the PCs must reckon with the terrible aftermath.

The Basic Moves

OUR DOOM SPRINGS ETERNAL
OUR DEFIANCE IGNITES THE STORM
IT IS THE END OF DAYS

All PCs have access to the basic moves. These moves focus on what a monstrous agent of DIVISION will be doing as they investigate, interact with other characters, and learn more about the mystery.

The basic moves in *Apocalypse Keys* are:

- **Unleash the Dark:** Use your powers of darkness to manipulate, intimidate, or harm another
- **Power Through Darkness:** Defy the limits of your supernatural powers
- **Reveal Your Heart:** Reach out to someone and be vulnerable
- **Torn Between:** Choose between giving into your monstrous nature or hold on to your humanity that is denied to you
- **Grasp Keys:** Uncover a Key and come closer to solving the Mystery
- **Unlock Doom's Door:** Declare the nature of the ancient Door of Power and act against the Harbinger

Unleash the Dark

When you unleash the dark within you to enforce your will on someone (physically, socially, or emotionally), spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 you wield the darkness with control and ease, choose two:

- Get past their defenses and inflict a Condition
- Get what you want from them
- Avoid reprisals, harm, or cost
- Gain the upper hand, for now
- Expose a weakness or flaw
- Confuse them for some time

ON AN 11+ your control falters and you go too far. Choose one, but the Keeper describes an unintended consequence.

ON A 7- you have greatly underestimated them, the Keeper will describe the desperate position you find yourself in.

Omen-class monsters from DIVISION will often have to force, manipulate, or violently engage with someone else. **Unleash the Dark** covers three means of confrontation: physical, social, and emotional. As long as you are trying to force someone powerful to do something they don't want to do, you'll have to **Unleash the Dark** on them.

This is a perfect opportunity to utilize your powers of darkness if you choose to. The Summoned might use their **colossal strength** to tear a door off its hinges and slam it on the ground, intimidating an opponent who won't give in. The Fallen might use their **fae glamour** to take on a shape and demeanor more pleasing to their target, offering lies and charm to get what they want.

If an NPC is willing to go along with the PCs, or if they can't resist the physical, social, or emotional pressure, this move is not triggered. Instead, the Keeper describes how the NPC gives into the pressure. Usually this means the NPCs will offer information or act in the way the PC was pressuring them to.

Most significant characters in the game will have Conditions, just like the PCs. One way to render someone harmless is to inflict enough Conditions to render them helpless or push them over the edge (*Combat and Conditions,* page 185). However, this is not the only way, a PC may use other options to de-escalate, convince, or manipulate their opponent into standing down and giving way.

If a player wants to inflict Conditions on an NPC who is not putting up resistance, clarify what the player wants to achieve. If it can be achieved without violence or **Unleashing the Dark**, then it happens.

If a player or PC wants to officially take out a compliant NPC from the scene or even kill them, it's best to talk about that briefly and how it supports the story thus far. If it makes sense for the fiction, and more importantly, leads the story into interesting directions for everyone in the group, then the player just describes how the NPC is taken out or killed.

Bear in mind that hurting a character in this way, especially one incapable of resisting or one that is already complying with the PCs, is an inherently cruel act. The Keeper may decide a PC should mark a Condition or Ruin to reflect this violence.

Olivia is playing Opal, a fae creature who was found in an abandoned research facility. As the Found, Opal can use **TELEPATHY** *and* **MIND BLASTS**. *Opal is confronting a human soldier who refuses to cooperate. The soldier is threatening to force DIVISION out of the investigation.*

Olivia (Opal): Il'm going to use my telepathy to reach into his mind and speak directly to him. I'll say, "Mr. Avila, I think you may have misunderstood us. This is not open to negotiation. You'll give us access to those pretty confidential files of yours, and then you'll leave." And to let him know I mean business I'll use a **MIND BLAST** to tear apart the wall behind me.

I want to intimidate this soldier into telling me everything they know. Should I roll **UNLEASH THE DARK** to see if it happens?

Keeper: No, the soldier has seen many things, but they're still just a human. In fact, I'll say that they recognize you for what you are—there have been whispers in the military about the fae experiments and the living weapons it created. Mr. Avila's mind opens up to you, and you can sense his fears and despair. In a few moments he relents, screaming he'll tell you everything they know.

In another example, Astra, the Last, is facing a Harbinger on their own. They're the only thing holding back an immense werewolf with several heads and dozens of eyes.

Ann (Astra): I'll use my **TIME DISTORTION**. I want to slow down the Harbinger and force her to deal with me so she can't get to the town. The air crackles with energy and time slows down all around us, golden cracks forming around me. I'm hoping I can move in and get in a few good hits and get her to back off!

Keeper: It sounds like you're trying to enforce your will on her physically. Let's **UNLEASH THE DARK**.

Ann (Astra): I want to make sure this works, I'll invest three Darkness Tokens on this... good thing I did. I rolled an 8 in total! I get to choose two options.

I want to weaken the werewolf, so I'll get past her defenses and inflict a Condition. As time fractures around me, I get in a dozen solid punches, using my combat training. For my second option, I'll confuse her for some time. I need to keep her distracted so the other agents have a chance to set up the ritual in the town square.

Keeper: Are you okay with not choosing to avoid reprisals, harm, or cost? It's likely you'll have to take a Condition or a similar consequence as you hold off the werewolf.

Ann (Astra): Yeah, I'm sure, I need to weaken her and hold her here.

Keeper: Time shatters around you and slows down. The werewolf's body splits open, the sound of bone and flesh filling the air, her howl echoing through the rainforest. As the werewolf weakens she becomes desperate, and she takes on a more alien form.

The Harbinger turns to look at you, her jaws snap open and she growls, "When my master asked me to hunt down your kind when they fled to Earth, it was a pleasure. I made sure to save you, the most powerful, for last." Mark a Condition, how does that make you feel?

Power Through Darkness

When you push the limits of your supernatural powers, straining to do the extraordinary or avert imminent danger, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 you use your powers with great precision and effect, changing the situation before you. Additionally, the Keeper may offer you reprieve, a golden opportunity, or a Bond with someone.

ON AN 11+ you are on the edge of disaster. Choose one: mark a Condition to exert better control of your powers, or let the Keeper tell you how the situation is not under your control.

ON A 7- the Keeper will offer you something connected to What the Darkness Demands of You. Whether or not you take it, prepare for the worst.

The Omens of DIVISION have great powers of darkness at their disposal, but they may have to push themselves to achieve what they want. If a PC wants to do something that isn't covered by another move, **Power Through Darkness** is a good choice. This move can also be used as a reaction if the PC wants to avoid a dangerous situation or protect what's important.

Power Through Darkness is not meant to trigger in every dangerous situation or possibility of failure. The Omens are experienced, capable, and incredibly powerful. Instead, **Power Through Darkness** is triggered when an Omen truly pushes beyond their limitations. Remember that you're playing powerful characters—you are capable of stunning feats before reaching your limits.

If the Surge wants to blast through the wall with bolts of lightning, they can just do it. If the Found wants to reach out telepathically to feel the surface thoughts of those around them, they can tune in and do so without rolling. If the Last wants to fly through the air quickly to gain a better position, it happens. If the Summoned wants to leap from a subway platform onto an upcoming train, they use their colossal strength and just do it. The PCs are larger-than-life characters—their supernatural powers are meant to easily get past ordinary obstacles or pick up basic information.

The Rule of Cool can be called upon here. This means that you don't have to worry too much about the laws of reality or a sense of groundedness. *Apocalypse Keys* is a game that thrives on spectacle, wonder, and awesomeness. PCs shouldn't have to roll to use their supernatural powers unless there is something important at stake.

If the Surge wants to use their lightning to power up an entire city without overloading the power grid, they can be asked to roll **Power Through Darkness**. If the Found wants to reach out telepathically to force a giant rampaging monster to slumber, they'll roll for it, or maybe **Unleash the Dark** on them. If the Last wants to push past their limited time manipulation and create a portal to a different timeline without tearing apart dimensions, they'll definitely roll to **Power Through Darkness**. If a Harbinger is waiting on that runaway train, then the Keeper may ask for a roll to make sure the Summoned avoids an ambush.

A character can't use their powers of darkness to prevent or interrupt the mechanical consequences of a move. If the Summoned takes a Condition as a result of **Unleashing the Dark**, another player cannot intervene to stop that from happening.

The Keeper will often clearly set up a dangerous situation and give the PCs a chance to prevent the worst from happening. A shapeshifter will sneak up behind a human investigator, their skin rippling to steal a new identity. A building will creak and groan as the magical wards begin to weaken and buckle. A portal will begin to tear through time and space itself as a tentacle slowly pushes its way through. This is the perfect time for the monstrous agents to **Power Through Darkness** and protect what's important—if they don't have another move that can change the odds in their favor.

It's important to remember that many of the playbook moves will help the PCs create advantageous situations, creating new opportunities.

This is especially true for Ruin moves. Players should still feel free to use **Power Through Darkness** if they like, but encourage them to use their own playbook moves in creative ways.

The Fallen can use their fear manipulation to distract the shapeshifter, but they could also use the playbook move **You Loved Me Once** to change the situation, establishing the shapeshifter used to worship them and see what happens next in the move. The Last can use the Ruin move, **A Tower of Isolation**, to mark Ruin and immediately have a spellbook on hand that will strengthen the magical wards.

The Omens have tracked down the Harbinger behind it all, and a violent confrontation has broken out on a building roof. In the ensuing chaos, the building begins to collapse, trapping several innocent bystanders.

Rishi has used their cracked divinity to turn some innocents into new worshippers and has given them the command to escape and help others. But the building will give way any minute and crash into the busy street below. Tiana has a plan.

Taylor (Tiana): I'm going to use my **Elemental Control** to use the elements to stabilize the building. Like fire to melt and reform the metal, water to cool it down quickly, and air to push everything into a more stable position, just all at once.

Keeper: This definitely sounds like you're pushing the limits of your powers here. Let's see you **Power Through Darkness**. What does it look like?

Taylor (Tiana): My eyes glow brightly, and the holy symbols I wear crack as I allow my power to overwhelm me. I let out a huge scream as I try to push myself as hard as I can while retaining control. My glasses shatter as lightning fills the sky.

I don't have Darkness Tokens, so I won't be adding anything to the roll... but I got an 11! I went too far... I'll spend a Bond with my mother. I start seeing brief flashes of her as she prepares me for the ritual sacrifice. She whispers, "You will be strong enough to destroy this wretched world and bring about the new age. You'll be strong in a way that your sister wasn't." I'm spending the Bond at a -1 to bring me down to a 10.

Keeper: Perfect! Tell me what happens next, what do we see?

Taylor (Tiana): The power pours out of me, and bright, glowing tears stream from my eyes. Because I almost went too far, the elements engulf the entire building for a moment, like it's about to tear it apart, but then it stabilizes. The fire, air, wind, and water all come together to change the building just enough to hold it together.

Keeper: Excellent! As you do so, you hear a familiar voice from below, "Little one, is that you?" When you look down, you see it's your long-lost sister—she's trying to find a way past the crowd to get a better look at you. I'm offering you a Bond with your sister since she was one of the innocents you just saved

Taylor (Tiana): The power leaves me abruptly and I manage to catch myself in time, floating down to the ground. I rush over to my sister and hug her, and I break down crying. I can't believe it's her.

Reveal Your Heart

When you reveal your heart and try to sincerely connect to someone, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 your heart reaches theirs, choose one. If they are a PC and they choose to deepen the connection further, they choose one too.

- You grow closer, gain one Bond on them
- They soothe your heart, clear one Condition
- They taught you something important, mark XP
- They gave you hope, clear one mark of Ruin

ON AN 11+ you have a moment of closeness but also weakness. Ask each other, "How do I scare you at this moment?" After you both answer, you each choose one:

- Tell them how fearful you have become of them, on a scale from 0 to 4. That becomes the number of Darkness Tokens that they now have.
- Gain a Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You.

ON A 7- something interrupts or undermines the moment—a dire warning, consequence, or an aspect of the Mystery itself. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.

The world may be ending and our ruin may hang over our heads, but we have each other. The Omens must learn that opening up and making sincere connections are essential to surviving the end of days.

To trigger this move, a PC must reveal their heart in words or actions, and may be as explicit or as subtle as they like. It can be a confession, a plea for help, a personal revelation. It can look like clenched fists, a single tear, a whisper of an apology. It can look like wide open arms offering a hug, a moment to cry it all out, words carefully chosen with the hope they could change everything.

When you **Reveal Your Heart** you can only hope to grow closer by being vulnerable and revealing that vulnerability in a clear way. What that looks like is up to the player. In the same vein, how the other person responds to this vulnerability is up to that other character. How you respond to such sincerity is always a choice.

What's important is that the moment is sincere and heartfelt. **Revealing Your Heart** can take an entire scene to play out, or it can be done in the heat of a moment right before taking on a Harbinger or rushing into a burning building.

Sometimes when characters try to reach out to each other, things can get complicated. Players roll to see if they can find a moment of emotional intimacy, or if something will undermine it.

The moment could go wrong and someone misunderstands things terribly, a revelation could unearth a painful suppressed memory, or a Harbinger could suddenly appear just when you were about to kiss!

A PC can also use this move on an NPC. The move resolves as normal, and the NPC can choose to reveal their heart in turn and clear a Condition if they have one marked.

Astra is lost in their memories, harrowed by how the current investigation has revealed shocking truths about their people. Opal can understand this, having just learned terrible things about their past in the last scene.

Olivia (Opal): I walk up to you and place a hand on your shoulder. I tell you I know this is a lot to take in, and if there's anything I can do, I'm here for you.

Ann (Astra): I reach out and touch your hand, and I say in a soft voice, "You remind me of Sidra, my dearest love. You're kind and generous, like she was."

Olivia (Opal): I'll hold your hand in mine and say, "I can't replace Sidra, but I do care about you a great deal."

Keeper: This sounds like one of you was **Revealing Your Heart**. Opal, it feels like you reached out first to sincerely connect to the Astra.

Olivia (Opal): Yeah, and I think I'm falling in love. I want to be special like Sidra was. I'll use three Darkness Tokens here—my telepathic powers are reaching out to reveal my growing feelings.

Okay, I'll roll. That's a total of 8! I'll clear one mark of Ruin—I think falling in love with you will help me turn away from a terrible fate.

Ann (Astra): I have an opportunity to deepen the connection further. As your growing feelings reach me, my eyes grow sad and dark. I'll squeeze your hand and come in close to whisper, "I barely survived losing Sidra, but I can't ever lose you. I'll protect you, no matter what." And then I'll gain another Bond with you.

Torn Between

When you are torn between your monstrous nature and your human heart, or **when you are tempted by What the Darkness Demands of You**, make a choice:

- Let your monstrous nature show and describe the damage your outburst causes, mark one Ruin.
- Describe how you diminish your power and conform to the pressures of humanity and lose all Darkness Tokens.
- Spend a Bond with someone. Describe how they, directly or inadvertently, help you regain control.

Despite your status as an agent of DIVISION, most of the world will only see what they want to see. A monster. An Omen, who is only a step away from becoming a Harbinger themselves.

Many will fear you, while others will begrudgingly accept your help—only because they have no other choice. Some humans will accept you for who you are, but this is not the norm. Even the most well-meaning human cannot help but struggle to connect to you in a meaningful way.

Among other monsters, your status as a DIVISION agent will make them uneasy or distrustful. Many monsters see DIVISION as an organization that exploits its monstrous agents. Monsters whisper about how the powerful humans who control DIVISION have their own agenda. Most monsters of the world will never be on the same scale of power as an Omen-class, and it's difficult to trust someone so dangerous. Only monsters who pursue the ancient doors of power, the Harbingers, wield the same amount of power.

This means that you will often deal with forceful emotional turmoil and pressure from your past, responsibilities, and relationships. The mission at hand and What the Darkness Demands of You, will often be at odds. To protect the world and humans, you will often have to hurt monsters and those like you.

The trigger of this move, **when you are torn between your monstrous nature and your human heart**, is meant to find natural points of tension in the moment. What is your monstrous nature? What is your human heart? The truth is that you're not very different from the humans you protect, but the world won't accept that. You never asked to be a monster, and being who you are does not make you monstrous, but you are not like them.

Another trigger is **when you are tempted by What the Darkness Demands of You**. This is a reminder that you wish to be tempted by what you chose during character creation, and what you can change at the start of every session (*Making Characters*, page 85, and *The Second Session Onwards*, page 190).

The Keeper may offer a temptation that aligns with What the Darkness Demands of You, or a player may offer it themselves. Whatever the case, this move only triggers if the PC is truly tempted. A player may always say that this is not the case, and the move does not trigger.

The last move trigger is when a PC has five or more Darkness Tokens after a move. If a PC picks up a lot of Darkness Tokens but immediately spends them on a move, this move does not trigger. This represents how a PC is encouraged to lean into their power, but they must keep themselves in check. This means a player can choose when they end a move with 5 or more Darkness Tokens, indicating that they want to trigger Torn Between and explore this tension.

When a PC is **Torn Between**, they must make a choice. Unlike the rest of the basic moves, the player does not have to make a roll. This is not something that is left to fate.

A PC must choose if they will have an outburst, causing damage or even hurting someone in the process, bringing them closer to their Ruin. If they diminish their power and describe how they conform instead, they don't destroy anything or hurt anyone, but lose all their Darkness Tokens. Finally, a PC may choose to spend a Bond with someone. The person does not have to be on the scene. It is often our relationships that help us center ourselves, find the eye of the storm, and have a moment of clarity.

If **Torn Between** was triggered by having five or more Darkness Tokens after a move, and the PC let their monstrous nature show or spend a Bond with someone, they would still have five or more tokens.

When this happens, the player and the Keeper play out and support this ongoing tension, and the game moves to the next narrative point. What does it look like when the PC looks like they'll explode at any moment? How will this tension affect others? Torn Between only triggers again if the PC has five or more Darkness Tokens after *their next* move.

Rishi stands in what remains of a crumbling church. A violent cult has been dealt with and only the cultist leader remains.

River (Rishi): I'm going to **Unleash the Dark** on him. I'll wrap him in the coils of my body and ready my **soul venom**. We need to end this here, and find the Harbinger responsible for all of this.

Keeper: Before you do that, you notice the cult leader's eyes widen and his mouth trembles. He surrenders to your coils and whispers, "I have worshipped a false god, you are what the prophecies have spoken of. It is you, cast down from heaven, that we will make rise again and take your rightful place above all others. Allow me to serve you, and together we will build an army that will threaten god and her heaven."

River (Rishi): Wait, is he offering to build dark churches in my name?

Keeper: Indeed, you feel the pull of What the Darkness Demands of You. What do you do?

River (Rishi): Oh, this is really tempting...before this mission I would have ignored someone like this, but this cult business is really getting to me. I think I'm **Torn Between**.

Keeper: As you feel the temptation fill you, for a moment you see flashes of what could be. Beautifully glittering churches, warriors rising from crashing waves, each one covered in divine scales. Together, you storm the very gates of heaven.

River (Rishi): Ah, hitting my second demand! Okay, I'm definitely **Torn Between**. I'll make a choice. For a moment, you see my eyes glow with a terrible brightness, filling up the entire church with a light that could rival the sun. My shadow lengthens and splits behind me, and the great celestial sea serpent I once was grins with its many teeth. I'm going to mark Ruin here, I'm letting my monstrous nature show. I tell him, "Rise, Master Loren. You will be the first of many who will rise with me."

Keeper: What damage does your outburst cause?

River (Rishi): I was thinking I'd destroy the church, but maybe something more interesting would be the poor cult leader himself. I pull him closer and place my hand on his cheek. The **soul venom** leaks from my hand and his form will completely change. He is wearing the scaled armor I saw in my vision, and his skin is now as cold as the depths of the ocean and his humanity begins to drain away. The church around us reflects that now, dark and scaled.

Keeper: What do you think of his features changing, just ever so slightly, to look more like Manav, the angel who betrayed you? Perhaps over time he'll look more and more like Manav?

River (Rishi): Yes, his blonde hair turns black, and his face subtly changes in shape. But when he smiles at me, it's the exact same loving smile Manav used to give me. I feel my heart break in response, but I'm so happy to see him.

Grasp Keys

When you search for a clue, investigate the signs of the apocalypse, or use your powers of darkness to gather information, describe how you are doing so. Spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

On an 8-10 you uncover a Key, the Keeper will tell you what it is.

On an 11+ you uncover a Key, but there's a significant complication, cost, or fall out, the Keeper will tell you what it is.

On a 7- you find more than you were ready for. You may choose to mark Ruin to uncover a Key, but in doing so, the Keeper will reveal how you come closer to becoming a Harbinger.

DIVISION sends its agents on missions to investigate Mysteries and hold back the coming apocalypse. The main way players can move the story forward and unravel the Mystery is by **Grasping Keys**. Keys are clues, revelations, and discoveries that move the Mystery towards its climax. With every Key, the PCs come closer to understanding what the ancient Door of Power is in the area, and what the Harbinger is doing to open the door.

Grasp Keys has some obvious triggers. Search for a clue, investigate the signs of the apocalypse, or use your powers of darkness to gather information. However, the move does not insist on specific methods—players are encouraged to interpret this any way they wish that makes sense for their characters.

The Found may use their powers of telepathy to study an area, picking up on the strongest emotions and thoughts that remain. The Summoned may fight off an ancient kraken and punch it in a weak spot to reveal glowing sigils that hint at who is controlling the sea creature. The Fallen may track down an old contact at a dive bar, and use god-like charm or threats to gain information about the Harbinger.

Players should be creative, using their deduction skills and powers of darkness in whatever way feels fun and interesting. A player can have a specific idea for what kind of information they are hoping to find, but it's not necessary to trigger this move. A player may simply announce their Omen is seeing what they'll discover, and that's enough to roll to uncover a Key.

A player may describe the investigative actions their PC is taking, and the Keeper should clarify if the PC means to **Grasp Keys**. If a player is trying to discover basic information or searching for context, the Keeper should provide the information without triggering the move (*Information Flows Freely in Apocalypse Keys,* page 52). If the player is attempting to uncover a Key and move the Mystery forward, then the Omen now **Grasps Keys**.

Sienna (Scarlet): I think the fae detective knows more than she's willing to share with us. There must be some connection between her and the redacted files. I'm going to use my powers of darkness, **TRANSFIGURATION THROUGH PAIN**, and change into a snake and slither after her.

Keeper: Do you want to **GRASP KEYS** here, or are you just following her to see where she leads you next?

Depending on Sienna's intentions, the scene could unfold in different ways:

If Sienna wants to Grasp Keys...

Sienna (Scarlet): Yeah, I definitely think she's connected to the Mystery somehow, and I need to know if we can trust her. I'm going to keep an eye on her and hopefully uncover a Key. I'm spending two Darkness Tokens on the roll.

If Sienna wants more context...

Sienna (Scarlet): Hmmm, I'm not sure yet. How about I follow her first? She might get me another lead, and I'll try **GRASPING KEYS** then.

When the player announces their intention or when it feels like their actions may trigger **GRASP KEYS**, this is a good time for the Keeper to look at their Mystery Codex. A Mystery Codex is a guide for the Mystery the Keeper is facilitating for the players. *Apocalypse Keys* comes with some prepared Mysteries, and Keepers can change any part of the Mystery to better suit the PCs and players. However, the Keeper is free to write their own Mystery (*The Anatomy of a Mystery*, page 193. *Craft Your Own Apocalypse*, page 328).

The Keeper refers to the list of Keys they have from the Mystery Codex, and chooses or creates one while thinking about how to contextualize it to the situation (*Keys of the Apocalypse,* page 201). Once a PC uncovers a Key, the Keeper writes it down on the Mystery Map. The Keeper should write down the contextualized version of the Key.

For example, for the Key *"evidence of false memories*, the Keeper contextualizes it and writes down *"Derek's memories have been tampered with, he has false memories related to the incident"*.

A player may be tempted to repeatedly trigger the **GRASP KEYS** move to gain every scrap of information they can. Remember that a Keeper should provide basic information, or immediate details related to the Keys the Omens have access to. Should an Omen wish to dig deeper, they have other ways to gain more context and hidden information. They could talk to an expert, use their supernatural powers, confront an antagonist, and so on. This will lead to other moves and more opportunities to uncover Keys.

When a PC rolls a miss when they **Grasp Keys**, they come across something they weren't ready for. This could be a disturbing prophecy that is impossible to decipher, a clever ambush, or something that interrupts the investigation.

Even on a miss, though, uncovering a Key is possible. The player may choose to mark Ruin to uncover a Key, but the Keeper will reveal how the PC comes closer to becoming a Harbinger. The Keeper can interpret this by describing how the Key is intimately connected with What the Darkness Demands of the PC. Or the Keeper could hint at how this Key, and indeed the Mystery, could lead the PC towards becoming a Harbinger.

Marking Ruin as a result of this move can be interpreted in multiple ways. Players can describe how they lean into What the Darkness Demands of You in order to uncover the Key. Or they could use an aspect of their powers that are forbidden or too dangerous. The Keeper could offer the Key, but hint at how the Harbinger's plan centers around the player's character.

If a player decides to not mark Ruin and lets go of their chance to uncover a Key, the Keeper refers to their Keeper moves and describes what happens next.

The Mystery can only be truly solved by **Unlocking Doom's Door**. You can only attempt to track down the door of ancient power and stop the Harbinger once you have uncovered enough Keys to do so. These doors are what the PCs are hoping to get to first, before the Harbingers successfully open it and claim its power (*Doom's Door,* page 36).

The more complex and dangerous a Mystery is, the more Keys players need to uncover before they can track down the ancient Door of Power and attempt to unlock it. A simple Mystery might be solved with 4 Keys, while a world-spanning conspiracy might require as many as 12.

It is possible to face complications, or even failure, when you **Unlock Doom's Door**. In the event of a miss, PCs can try to **Unlock Doom's Door** again, once they have dealt with the consequences and have changed the situation.

Once it's safe to attempt to **Unlock Doom's Door**, they can try again. However, each failure means ticking the Doomsday Clock. If the PCs run out of time and the Doomsday Clock reaches its last tick, the PCs can no longer attempt to **Unlock Doom's Door** (*Unlock Doom's Door,* page 55).

INFORMATION FLOWS FREELY IN APOCALYPSE KEYS

Apocalypse Keys assumes that when the players or PCs want to have a better understanding of the situation, characters, and the setting, the Keeper shares this information freely. PCs trying to pick up basic information does not trigger **Grasp Keys**.

The Omens are remarkable characters. Their supernatural powers, nature, and origins provide exceptional insight. There is nothing interesting that can happen if the characters barely know anything and need to trigger a move to learn basic information. **Grasp Keys** is a move for uncovering Keys and understanding the Mystery at hand, not for revealing information that can be easily discovered.

In addition, the Keeper should be generous in what falls under basic information. Keep in mind what the Omens would know and what their experience would have taught them. The Fallen is knowledgeable about divine beings, the Shade has a deep understanding of necromancy, and so on.

Some examples:

- **The environment:** What do the PCs sense and perceive around them? What sights, sounds, smells, and other sensations paint the scene? What do their supernatural senses pick up?
- **Social cues:** How is the NPC responding to the PCs? Do the Omens suspect someone is lying to them, or that they believe in what they're saying?
- **The history of the world:** How do the PCs recognize the cave markings and the deities depicted in them? What do DIVISION files have on the Factions in the city?

Anything the PCs don't know, any sudden revelations and unwelcome truths, can be described as a result of another move, especially on a miss (*Keeper Moves*, page 175).

The Marquis is fighting off a small army of aswang. The aswang have shapeshifted into hulking dog-like creatures, the shadows of the forest's magic pouring off their bodies.

Malika (the Marquis): What do I know about the aswang? Are they always this violent and confrontational?

Keeper: You know aswang don't normally attack like this. They have a code that only allows them to attack in order to defend themselves or others. I'll tell you this, you have the Power of Darkness of **EMOTION AMPLIFICATION**, and you can tell their emotions are being controlled by an outside force. Someone is manipulating them.

Malika (the Marquis): I could **UNLEASH THE DARK**, but I don't want to hurt them. I'm worried that if I have a disastrous success or miss that they could get hurt. I'd rather hurt the person who's doing this to them.

Keeper: Do you want to try figuring out who's controlling them? You could **GRASP KEYS** while fighting off the aswang?

Malika (the Marquis): Yeah, I am trying to figure out what's going on here. I use my power of **SHADOW CONTROL** to fight defensively—I teleport through their shadows to avoid their attacks and blind them with darkness. I'm buying time, hoping I'll catch something that hints at who's in control. I don't have many Darkness Tokens on me, I'll use the one I have left and roll. Oh no, that's a five total!

Keeper: Ooof, this is what happens next. As you weave in and out of the shadows, more aswang appear. You're completely surrounded! There's one that's colossal compared to the rest, their massive head brushing against the top of the trees. Their eyes glow a bloody red. So, I'll offer you a choice, you can deal with this situation as it is, or you can mark Ruin and uncover a Key anyway.

Malika (the Marquis): I'm going to mark Ruin and get that Key! I don't have any ideas for how to tie this into my Ruin or What the Darkness Demands, so I'm game for whatever you have in mind.

The Keeper takes a look at her Mystery Codex. She chooses the Key, "A broken crown of a Harbinger, created with love and spite." She changes an aspect of this Key, to better reflect the flash forward Malika described right before they took a Ruin Advance.

Keeper: The other aswang cower before the huge one, and they all revert to their human looking forms. They're shivering in the dark, terrified. The colossal aswang keeps their form and moves closer to you, you realize they have something in their jaws. They drop it at your feet, and it's a crown made of black roses, dripping blood.

They bow before you and say, "We recognize the betrothed of the Manananggal Queen, we will prepare this world as he demands. Together, you will destroy the world and reshape it."

Malika (the Marquis): Oh no, the Manananggal Queen is controlling the aswang!

Keeper: The aswang all melt away into the shadows. Before the large one leaves, still in their monstrous canine form, you spot a collar made of gold and jewels, the same one your father made for the Manananggal Queen.

So let me write down the Key here. *"The Manananggal Queen is controlling the aswang, and it is all out of love for you."* Does that align with your character's Ruin?

Malika (the Marquis): Yeah, it's great! I have a horrible feeling that everything terrible that is happening here is my fault. I think I'm going to have to trigger **Torn Between**. I'm torn between being the monster that loves the Manananggal Queen and the human heart that needs to stay focused on the mission.

Keeper: All right, let's see how you deal with the revelation!

Unlock Doom's Door

When you are ready to declare what the door is and how to unlock it, say what you believe it to be. Connect the Keys to the Facets of the Mystery, revealing the Harbinger. Roll, and add the number of connected Keys minus the Mystery's complexity. This roll is not affected by Darkness Tokens, Bonds, or any other move.

On an 8-10 you have tracked down Doom's Door. You know exactly where it is and how to unlock it. In addition, the Keeper will present an opportunity to protect what matters most, take down the Harbinger, or otherwise drive back the apocalypse.

On an 11+ you reach the door moments after the Harbinger has unlocked it. They've begun to harness the power on the other side of the door, but there is still time to stop them. The Keeper will tell you what sacrifice or risk you will need to endure to interrupt their ascension.

On a 7- the door remains hidden, the theory was the wrong one. Every PC marks one Ruin. In addition, precious time is lost, and the Doomsday Clock ticks forward. If this fills the Doomsday Clock, the Harbinger has claimed the power of the door, and the PCs will face the worst possible circumstances.

DIVISION sends its agents to investigate mysteries and do whatever is necessary to disrupt the plans of the Harbingers. Every mission's climax begins when the PCs have figured out the truth and confront the Harbinger. The PCs must deal with whatever waits behind the ancient Door of Power.

In *Apocalypse Keys*, the Keeper does not prepare a single truth for the Mystery. There is no outline for where the Keys are and where to uncover them. There is no specific ancient Door of Power that is described and what it will reveal when it is unlocked.

While the Keeper may have fascinating ideas springing to mind, and will always offer Keys with intriguing details, the players don't have to figure out what the Keeper believes is going on or the truth of the door. Instead, players are encouraged to look at the Keys gathered so far and discern the truth for themselves.

At the beginning of each mission, the Keeper will clearly state the complexity of the Mystery. An easier Mystery will have a complexity of 4, while a truly difficult Mystery that endangers most of the world will have a complexity of 12. An Omen can declare at any time when they're ready to try to solve the Mystery. They do this by **Unlocking Doom's Door**. The more Keys the PCs have uncovered, the easier it will be to have the correct theory and **Unlock Doom's Door**.

Everyone at the table should collaborate and make suggestions about what the ancient Door of Power is, and how to unlock it. Narratively, the Omens might discuss their trail of clues extensively back at DIVISION headquarters, or one Omen might suddenly have a *eureka* moment while in the field and silently leap into action. But either way, at the table, these ideas should always be discussed and explored collaboratively between all players.

When accounting for each Key and coming up with a theory, the players must connect each uncovered Key to a Facet of the Mystery (page 215). The Facets of the Mystery are a guide to the pertinent truths and contexts of the Mystery, and the theory should take them into account.

A Key can only be connected to a single facet, but any number of Keys can be connected to a single facet. A theory is incomplete if any Facet remains unconnected to a Key.

The players can take turns, choosing an uncovered Key and connecting them to a Facet—building their part of the theory. Alternatively, you could have each player connect the Key they uncovered to a Facet. Make sure everyone has a turn at building the theory, no one player should dominate the conversation and connect most of the Keys.

When a theory is formed and all the Facets have been connected to the Keys, it's time for one player to pick up the dice and roll. The player who first announced the attempt to **Unlock Doom's Door**, will be the one to make the roll.

This roll works a little differently than it does for other basic moves. Darkness Tokens and Bonds cannot be spent, and no other move can affect the results. Instead, roll the dice, add the number of Keys the group has uncovered, and subtract the Mystery's complexity.

For example, the players are about to declare what the door is and how to unlock it. Together, the PCs have uncovered 9 Keys and have gone over everything they learned, piecing it all together and connecting each Key to the Facets of the Mystery. With a Mystery complexity of 8, the player knows they add a +1 to the roll. This comes down to 9 Keys, subtracting the Mystery complexity of 8.

In this example, if the player rolled a total of 9, their theory is correct and they have tracked down the ancient Door of Power. This may mean the PCs get to the door before the Harbinger has, or maybe they arrive just in time to challenge the Harbinger and sabotage a diabolical ritual. The PCs may even know something essential that the Harbinger doesn't, perhaps another way to unlock the door or a fatal flaw in the Harbinger's plans. The PCs are in a good position to unlock the door for themselves and decide what to do with whatever lies on the other side.

If the player rolled a total of an 11 instead, their theory is correct, but the Harbinger beats them to the door. The door is unlocked, and the Harbinger is in the middle of taking the power for themselves. The door could transform the Harbinger into something more dangerous, or there could be an ancient eldritch god on the other side–reaching out across the stars. The PCs still have a chance to confront the Harbinger and deal with whatever is beyond the door, but they're in a difficult position.

If the player rolled a 5 instead, the theory was wrong and all PCs mark one Ruin. The PCs follow their leads and find no door, and the Doomsday Clock ticks forward. They will have to deal with the complications or revelations of the Doomsday Clock tick. Once the PCs have dealt with that, they must decide if they're going to **Grasp Keys** and investigate further, or if they want to try coming up with a new theory and attempt to **Unlock Doom's Door** again.

If ticking the Doomsday Clock fills it, the worst-case scenario happens. The Harbinger has unlocked the door, claimed all of its power, and is about to wreak havoc. The PCs must do what they can in the face of such dire circumstances. The Harbinger has taken the power for themselves and is now transforming every innocent into terrifying abominations that will attack other nearby towns. Or the ancient eldritch god has awakened, and comes through the door, their massive tentacles wrapping around city buildings and snapping them in two. The PCs are in a truly desperate position.

Olivia suggests it's time to attempt to **Unlock Doom's Door**. *River and Carlos agree, and the group take turns connecting a Facet to each Key.*

Olivia (Opal): The Key I uncovered earlier was, *"a dream trapped in a mirror, repeating endlessly."* I'm connecting this to the Door of Power. The door is a dimension that only exists in dreams, and a part of it is caught in this mirror.

Carlos (Cara): Cool! I'll build on that since there's another Key here, *"a shattered amulet, weakly burning sigils along its surface."* I'm connecting this to the Door of Power too, specifically how to unlock it. I think the Harbinger has to collect these amulets to gain access to the dream dimension, and has to destroy each one as they're used up. We're just lucky we found this one, but there are more out there!

Rishi (River): So, we have a dream dimension, and amulets to access it... I'm going to connect this Key, *"The remnants of a shapeshifter, snake-like and discarded."* This explains who the Harbinger is. Let me roleplay this for a moment!

"My dear Opal, I was wondering when you'd admit this to yourself. But it's obvious, isn't it? The Harbinger is your dear Yarin, that local high school teacher you have a crush on. He's a shapeshifter, but not just any shapeshifter. I believe he's a weakened god of dreams, hoping to reclaim his power."

Olivia (Opal): River! Are you seriously coming after my crush like this! I both love and hate this idea.

Keeper: Well, what about the night janitor? She's been following Yarin around, and she creeped out the Rishi earlier during the Mystery.

Olivia (Opal): You know what, I think I will go with Yarin, so in case this theory is true, the idea of me having a crush on someone who ended up being a Harbinger will be so heartbreaking and interesting to play out.

The players finish connecting the rest of the Facets to the uncovered Keys, taking turns to create a theory. Olivia rolls the dice. The complexity of the Mystery is 6, and the players have uncovered 8 Keys together. Olivia adds 2 to the roll. Olivia rolls the dice, and it's a 12 in total! That means the Harbinger has already unlocked the door, and the Keeper will introduce a complication of some kind.

Carlos (Cara): The Harbinger has beaten us to the door!

Keeper: Opal, as you hold the mirror, it shatters in your hand. The dream comes undone and violently leaks out into the world. You hear Yarin's voice, but it sounds so much more vast and deep. It echoes inside your heart and he says, "I was hoping you would find me, my beloved. Are you ready to dream with me? Will you join me and leave this world behind?"

When you open your eyes, you find yourself next to Yarin. He's dressed in the finest clothing, and under his mesmerizing gaze your own wings and clothes become shining and beautiful. He takes your hand and leads you towards a paradise of the most vibrant colors. Everyone else, you see Opal was standing there one moment...and they're suddenly gone.

River (Rishi): We have to track down Opal! And they're the only one who can access dreams, where Yarin is!

Keeper: You know Yarin has just started drawing in the divine energy from the ancient Door of Power. You have a narrow window of time before he reclaims his divinity and hastens the apocalypse. What do you do?

DIVISION MOVES

THEY CHAIN US IN THE DARK
WE ARE TOOLS IN THEIR HANDS
THERE IS NO OTHER WAY

DIVISION is an organization dedicated to studying the mysteries and strangeness of the world, and harnessing its power. DIVISION stands between the world and the end of all things. Its resources and personnel can be of use to the PCs.

Some DIVISION moves ask you to roll with something other than Darkness Tokens. Access to DIVISION resources means other sources of power are available to you. Those moves are **Fae Liaison** (page 63), **the Peacemaker** (page 74), **Holy Symbol Arsenal** (page 69), and **Psychic Invokers** (page 77). However, you can still use Bonds to modify the results of the roll as normal.

Unlike other moves, DIVISION moves have three questions attached to them.

When a player takes one of these DIVISION moves through an Advance or at character creation, they become the authority on these questions, though other players may provide suggestions if prompted.

The player must answer at least one of these questions when they choose the move. Answering these questions helps DIVISION come alive, providing color and depth to everyone's idea of DIVISION. These answers often create more NPCs to interact with and reflect the goals and truths of DIVISION.

If a player picks up a DIVISION move in the middle of a scene and uses it immediately, they can briefly answer one question if it's pertinent to the moment. If not, they can wait until the end of the scene or session to answer any of the questions.

If it sounds fun and interesting to the table, the Keeper may set up a quick flashback scene to help flesh out the answers before returning to the present time and investigation.

In the middle of a session, Malika marks their 8th XP, and they take an Advance. They decide to take a DIVISION move they've had their eyes on, **Monster Celebrity**.

Keeper: Very cool! Do you want to answer any of the questions connected to being a **Monster Celebrity**, or do you want to save that for the end of the session?

Malika (the Marquis): I think it may come up in the next scene—I'll at least answer one of the questions now and we can save another one for the end of the session. I'll answer, **What must you hide about yourself from the public at all costs?**

I think the public thinks my golden clockwork arm is super cool, and it is gorgeous! But they can never know it's a demonic weapon, and if I ever use it, it'll turn into a gun that draws upon every soul in the vicinity, destroying them and remaking them into bullets.

Keeper: Very cool! So which fan do you suspect is close to learning about your secret?

The Summoned: Oooh, juicy! There's a photographer I work with regularly, and there's something about the photos that hint at what my arm really is and what it's capable of.

Dream Future Review Protocols

For as long as you remember, you've had strange and prophetic dreams. DIVISION suspects that you were once a time traveller in an alternate reality, but you have lost the ability to move through time. DIVISION has the equipment and personnel available to help record and analyze useful information from the dreams, often leading to breakthroughs during an investigation. When you take this move, answer at least one of the following questions:

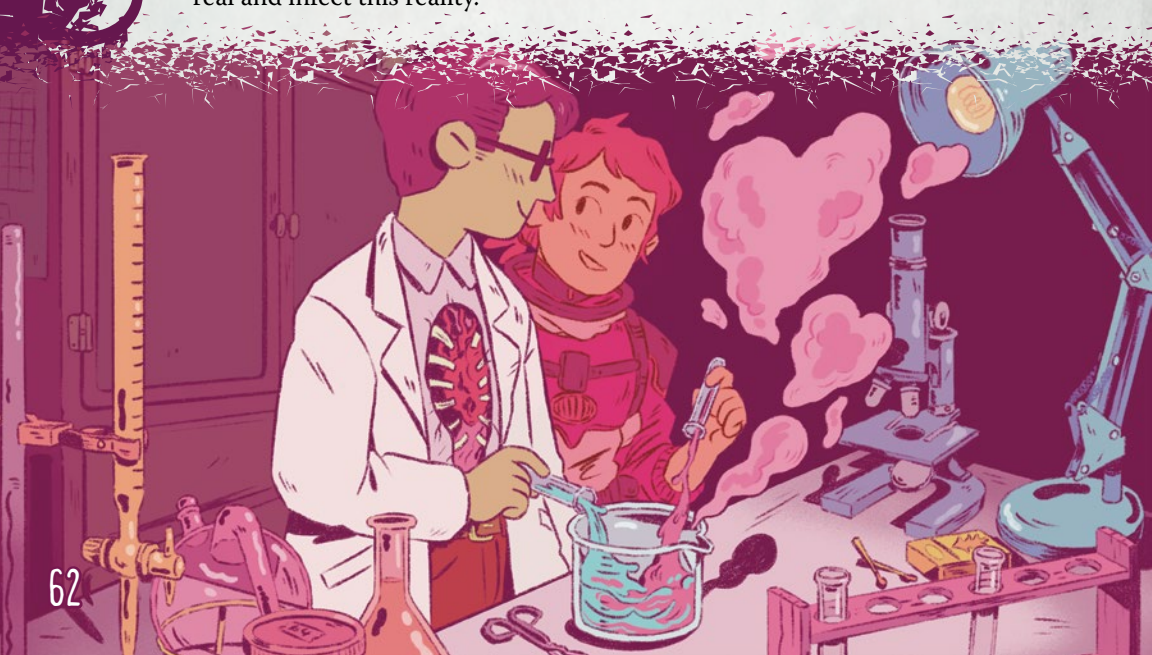
- *What recurring elements are present in every dream you have?*
- *Who or what only exists in your dreams? And what do they want from you?*
- *Why are you worried about the dreams stopping one day?*

At the start of each session, tell the Keeper what kind of dreams you have. Spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 the experts are able to parse your dreams effectively, and you uncover a Key. In addition, the Keeper describes someone who features prominently in the dream, gain a Bond with them.

ON AN 11+ the experts reveal a living nightmare hiding within your subconscious, but you uncover a Key. The Keeper describes the nightmare you catch a glimpse of before it escapes into the real world. Declare an irrevocable truth about the Mystery that you learn from the nightmare. Rewrite or add a Facet of the Mystery that reflects this.

ON A 7- you dream of a broken future that was erased from the timeline by a future you that no longer exists. The Keeper describes the dream and the harrowing future. A part of that future will become real and infect this reality.



Fae Liaison

DIVISION formed an uneasy alliance with one of the royal courts of the fae, and you were assigned to work with a liaison. They are now invested in your fate, for better or for worse.

When you take this move, answer at least one of the following questions:

- *Who is this fae, and why do they love you?*
- *How did they permanently complicate your life in a misguided attempt to help you?*
- *How did they help you understand What the Darkness Demands of You?*

When you call upon the Fae Liaison for help, tell the Keeper how large a favor you're offering the fae in exchange, on a scale of 1-3. The Keeper will describe a fae creature and its power with an intensity equal to the scale of the favor. Roll, and add the level of favor you promised.

ON AN 8-10 the fae recognizes you as one beloved and chosen by fae magic. Choose a number of actions equal to the scale of the favor you promised. In addition, gain one Bond with your fae liaison.

- The fae reaches out and uses their magic to recolor your memories. Clear one Condition.
- The fae creates a temporary magical disguise for you and one other, describe what it is.
- The fae offers a glimpse into the dreams of someone you care for, gain one Bond with them.
- The fae will give you one weapon, item, or secret that will help you face your next challenge.

ON AN 11+ the Harbinger within you responds to the fae's magic, and awakens for a moment. Choose a number of actions equal to the scale of the favor you promised. In addition, gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You.

- Force the fae to absorb all nearby magic and give it to you. Clear one Condition.
- Force the fae to swear their loyalty to you, for now. Gain one Bond with them.
- Compel the fae to help you work towards What the Darkness Demands of You. Mark 1XP.
- Demand that the fae peer into the future and describe how you may gain more power for yourself. Mark 1 Ruin.

ON A 7- something terrifying and sinister takes notice of the fae and their magic, and they come to claim their prize. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.

Using Fae Liaison

This move creates an NPC for DIVISION and the PC to interact with—the Fae Liaison. When an Omen activates this move, they're connecting to the Fae Liaison. The Liaison may summon a fae creature to assist, or assist the Omen directly.

Note on the favor to the fae: Instead of spending Darkness Tokens on the roll, the player instead offers on a scale (1-3) of how large a favor they promise to the fae. No specific vows or promises have to be made, though the Fae Liaison may ask for something specific in the moment.

For example, if a PC sets their scale of favor at 1, they add +1 to the roll. If the PC sets the scale of favor at 3, they add +3 to the roll.

Before the roll is made, the Keeper describes the fae creature summoned with power equal to the scale of the favor promised. This fae creature can instead be the fae liaison themselves, perhaps granted more power by the fae court for this moment. The Keeper is encouraged to call upon the same fae creatures, creating a regular cast of fae characters who work with DIVISION.

The following serves as a guide for what manner of fae is summoned based on the scale of favor:

1. **A minor player in the fae court.** A trickster, a humble servant, a mortal recently turned fae.
2. **A fairly powerful player in the fae court.** A fae noble, a renowned hero of the fae realm, a fae of beauty and power.
3. **A truly powerful aristocrat in the fae court.** A fae royal, an invincible fae warrior, a leader of true and meaningful power.

When playing out the results, the number of actions the fae grants the PC is equal to the scale of favor. If the PC sets their scale of favor at 1, they choose 1 action from the list. If they set it at 3, they choose 3 actions.

The result of the roll determines if the PC can avoid awakening the Harbinger within them. The options of the 8-10 result indicate the fae working with the PC to support their investigation. On an 11+, the Harbinger within the PC awakens for a moment, and they force the fae to comply.

Narratively, once a favor is promised a PC cannot deny what the Fae Liaison asks for. Player and Keeper are encouraged to work out what the nature of the favor is, and what the player is comfortable playing out—even if narratively their character may feel beholden to the Fae Liaison.

When a player takes this move, they work with the Keeper to declare what the nature of the fae is in this world. Players are encouraged to bring in their own culture and perspective of the fae and do not need to adhere to the Western concept of faeries. For example, many Asian countries have their own perspective of the fae that can be drawn upon when using this move.

On a miss, it's up to the Keeper if the Fae still holds the Omen to the favor promised, and if the PC receives at least some of the help they were hoping for.

The Forbidden Archives

DIVISION has within its facilities a maze of libraries and tomes bursting with knowledge. You found a section of the library that very few know about. Some books are so dangerous, they are bound by chains and spell-tech. When you take this move, answer at least one of the following questions:

- *Who is the Head Librarian and what esoteric rule do they demand everyone follows?*
- *What creature lies waiting in the restricted and forbidden archives?*
- *Which book have you read, against DIVISION's strict orders?*

When you reveal that you brought one of the forbidden books with you, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

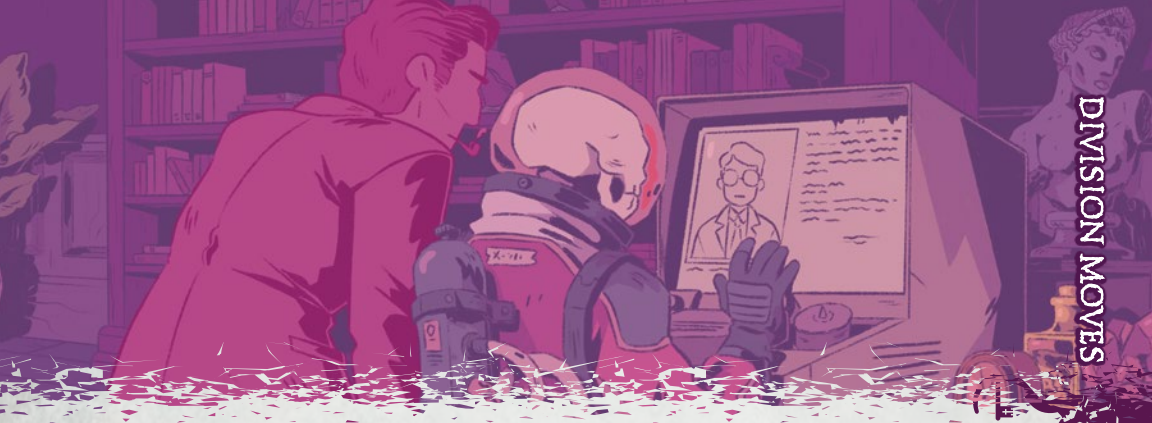
ON AN 8-10 the chains bend and the spell-tech weakens, the book recognizes you as its master. Choose two:

- The book opens to a page and reveals a welcome truth. Choose any PC (including yourself), they clear one Condition.
- Name a target. The book will consume them and hold them within its pages, for now.
- The book eerily describes current events in exacting detail and offers a revelation. Uncover a Key at great cost.
- The author of the book exists in a wretched form between death and life. Ask for their advice—they're always happy to hear from you. Gain one Bond with them.

ON AN 11+ the chains break and the spell-tech unravels, the book is free to do as it likes. Choose one from above, and one from below:

- Allow the book to change its form and escape into the world, wreaking havoc as it likes.
- Mark a Condition or Ruin to strengthen the chains and spell-tech, binding the book to you once again.

ON A 7- something or someone has tampered with the book, it opens and something terrible and harrowing uses it as a portal to come through. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.



Ghostly Agent

DIVISION has a high mortality rate—the average agent survives only a few months on the job. Some of them love the work so much, they continue to work for DIVISION, even in death. When you take this move, answer at least one of the following questions:

- *Why do you mean so much to the Ghostly Agent?*
- *What strange or mysterious death befell them?*
- *What unfinished business do you try to attend to for them?*

When you call upon the Ghostly Agent for help, draw them to your darkness and open your heart to them. Spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 they walk through the veil between the living and the dead, offering their aid. Choose two:

- Take their hand and travel through the veil, physically appearing anywhere that the veil of death can touch. To take another with you, mark a Condition.
- Ask them what they have seen through the veil as they have watched your investigation. Uncover a Key at great cost.
- Whisper into their ear and reveal a secret that has burdened your heart. Gain one Bond with the Ghostly Agent.
- Tell them how you have worked towards attending to their unfinished business, mark 1 XP.

ON AN 11+ the Ghostly Agent has witnessed a terrible portent and they have come through the veil to warn you. Choose one from above, but prepare to heed the dire warning the Ghostly Agent gives you.

ON A 7- the Ghostly Agent tries to come through the veil but they are ensnared by something dangerous and otherworldly, the Keeper will tell you what happens next.

Hero's Weapon

You impressed a hero who worked with DIVISION for a short time. They entrusted you with this weapon and its legacy. When you take this move, answer at least one of the following questions:

- *Who was this hero, and how did you impress them?*
- *What tragedy befell this hero, and how do you uphold their legacy?*
- *How did this hero become a Harbinger, and why do you still hold out hope for them?*

When you take this move, create one Bond with the hero. **When you use this weapon to protect someone**, choose:

- Describe a flashback between you and the hero, gain one Bond with them
- Describe how you embody or contradict their legacy, clear one Condition
- Describe how the weapon is corrupted by What the Darkness Demands of You, gain 2-4 Darkness Tokens

You can describe using the weapon in the field, just as you would a power of darkness. There's always a risk that the weapon will become damaged or unusable until you return to DIVISION to have someone look at it.

Holy Symbol Arsenal

DIVISION curates a collection of certified holy symbols and assigns them to agents as needed. You have shown a divine resonance with a number of holy symbols, but the priest-technicians warn you that using the arsenal may be dangerous to a monster like you. When you take this move, answer at least one of the following questions:

- *What's the story behind the holy symbol you procured for this collection?*
- *What holy symbol affects you negatively, and which agent is it assigned to?*
- *Which of the holy symbols must you never use, no matter the circumstances?*

When you dampen your powers of darkness in order to use the holy symbol arsenal tell the Keeper how much you open yourself to the divine energies of the arsenal, on a scale of 1-3. The Keeper describes a divine vision and its effects with an intensity equal to your divine vulnerability. Roll, and add your level of divine vulnerability.

ON AN 8-10 the darkness and divine energies synchronize to activate the Hymn of the Righteous. Choose a number of actions equal to your divine vulnerability. In addition, gain one Bond with the divine entity that aids you.

- Bind a target and render them helpless, for now.
- Protect a mind, heart, or soul from possession or attack.
- Create an area of divine protection—it will hold for now.
- Create a temporary divine weapon, and gift it to the worthy. Gain one Bond with them.

ON AN 11+ the divine energies turn dangerous and the Harbinger within you takes control. Choose a number of actions equal to your divine vulnerability. In addition, gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You.

- Mutilate a target and render them weak, for now.
- Call upon dark entities to take up residence in a mind, heart, or soul of your choosing.
- Create an area of wild and destructive energies—it will expand in time.
- Create a weapon of darkness, use it to immediately destroy your enemies. Mark 1 Ruin.

ON A 7- something or someone has corrupted the holy symbol arsenal, the Keeper will tell you what happens next.

Using the Holy Symbol Arsenal

This move establishes an arsenal made up of holy symbols from different religions, and introduces divine entities that the Omen may interact with. The player who chooses this move and the Keeper are encouraged to work together to establish the rules of divinity as they come up in the game. For example, the description of the move introduces the concept of "priest-technicians", but it's up to you what that means for DIVISION and your story.

This is a good time to take the Green, Yellow, and Red safety tool and check in (page 12). You may ask questions like, "How do we feel about using real life religious objects?" or "How about making up some holy symbols that only vaguely resemble what we know?"

The player is encouraged to be creative in using the arsenal, and may describe any holy symbol that could serve as a perfect item or weapon at the moment. There is no need to figure out every item in the arsenal beforehand.

Note on divine vulnerability: Instead of spending Darkness Tokens on the roll, the player instead will offer on a scale (1-3) of how much they open themselves to the divine energies of the arsenal.

For example, if a PC sets their divine vulnerability at 1, they add +1 to the roll. If the PC sets the divine vulnerability at 3, they add +3 to the roll.

Before the roll is made, the Keeper describes a divine vision and its effects with an intensity equal to your divine vulnerability. This divine vision can happen immediately, or the Keeper may reveal it at a later time during the session. Once the divine vision is described, it is recommended that the Keeper chooses a Keeper move (page 175) and acts.

The following serves as a guide for the divine visions based on the scale of divine vulnerability:

1. **A breathtaking vision.** A divine sign, or a warning of minor hardship.
2. **A delirious vision.** A confusing glimpse, a safe connection with a divine being that reveals something about the Harbinger or the door of ancient power.
3. **An overwhelming vision.** A cacophony of true divinity, frenetic messages and symbols and a direct connection with a divine being that shocks the system for a moment.

When playing out the results, the number of actions the PC can take with the holy symbol is based on the same scale of divine vulnerability. If the PC sets their divine vulnerability at 1, they choose 1 action from the list. If they set it at 3, they choose 3 actions.

The result of the roll determines if the PC can use the holy symbol arsenal safely. A perfect hit results in actions that protect and push back. On a disastrous success, the holy symbol arsenal becomes dangerous. The actions are violent and difficult to control.

Monster Celebrity

While most Omens operate in secret and must hide who they are, you are a celebrity and have become famous enough to earn honorary human status. Being "one of the good ones" is a novelty to humanity, though, and they hold you to impossible expectations. When you take this move, answer at least one of the following questions:

- *How is your public persona drastically different from who you are?*
- *What does the public expect and demand from you at all times?*
- *What must you hide about yourself from the public at all cost?*

When you take this move, create one Bond with the public. **When you hide who you are to be what the public wants you to be**, choose:

- Describe how you compromise yourself in a significant way to please the public, gain one Bond with them
- Describe how a fan reaches out to you to remind you why your work at DIVISION is important, clear one Condition
- Describe how your fear and spite towards the public grows, gain 2-4 Darkness Tokens

It is easy for your actions to tarnish your celebrity status and fragile reputation. The Keeper will tell you what the public demands to regain their trust and support.

Using Monster Celebrity

This move creates a complex and difficult relationship between the Omen and the public. As a monster, the fear humans have of the monstrous outweighs the privilege of such celebrity.

When a player triggers this move, they must be explicit in what they are hiding from the public, and why.

When this move is chosen, both the player and Keeper are encouraged to involve the public perception in the Mysteries, and to make the celebrity status of the Omen feel palpable and real.

The Keeper may decide that the consequence of another move may provoke the ire of the public, especially on a miss or when the PC suffers from a disastrous success.

The group may decide that DIVISION has an entire team dedicated to covering the tracks of the organization and its agents and keeping the details away from the public eye. The game of *Apocalypse Keys* assumes that DIVISION and its monstrous agents work in relative secrecy. The world of humans knows that monsters exist, and that DIVISION is an unwelcome truth that is needed to keep humans safe.

When this move is chosen, it is assumed that one of the Omens has managed to gain fame, and has been granted honorary human status. Meaning that for now, the world is willing to see the PC as a "human", but this is both tentative and fragile.

Your group may decide that DIVISION and its monstrous agents are already famous. The animosity between humans and monsters still exists, but perhaps it's more subtle or not as overt. In that case, whoever takes this move can instead be the most famous of all of DIVISION's agents, and be the only one officially granted the status of being human. It is likely they are the unofficial spokesperson and ambassador of DIVISION. The Keeper and player are encouraged to explore the responsibility of such a role.

Orphanage Visit

DIVISION has an orphanage and a professional set of caretakers dedicated to raising young monsters that have the potential to become Omens. You yourself grew up in this way here and/or spent time as a caretaker. When you take this move, answer at least one of the following questions:

- *Who is the lead caretaker of the Orphanage? What strong history do you share together?*
- *Which young monster are you most attached to? What high hopes do you have for them?*
- *Why are you worried about the continued operations of the orphanage?*

When you have enough time between or during investigations, you may visit the orphanage with at least one other PC or NPC. If you do, each of you describes how you care for the young monsters.

If they're a PC, you each erase one mark of Ruin. If they're an NPC, you gain two Bonds with them.

When visiting the orphanage, you may discover something that hints at the plans of a Harbinger or witness a terrible portent of what may come to pass. Describe what you find, and the Keeper will tell you its significance and hint at the Harbinger's plans.

Visiting the Orphanage

When a player takes this move, they are encouraged to describe as much of the orphanage as they like, and fill in the rest of the details in play. The Keeper and other players may contribute ideas, but ultimately it is up to the player who took this move.

A PC may have difficulty triggering this move while investigating a Mystery. Offer opportunities for the PC to return to DIVISION as they like, or have them trigger this move and play it out as a flashback.

Partly Cursed Weapon

DIVISION has a collection of cursed artifacts. On a previous mission, your soul bonded with a partly cursed weapon. Partly isn't all that bad, right? When you take this move, answer at least one of the following questions:

- *What kind of weapon is this, and what memories does it hold?*
- *How does the partial curse manifest?*
- *What does the weapon long for?*

When you take this move, create one Bond with the weapon. **When you open your heart to the weapon and let it speak directly to you**, choose:

- Describe how the weapon communicates what it desires from you, gain one Bond
- Describe how you fulfilled a desire of the weapon, clear one Condition
- Describe how the curse grows stronger, gain 2-4 Darkness Tokens

You can describe using the weapon in the field, just as you would a power of darkness. There's always a risk that the weapon will become damaged or unusable until you return to DIVISION to have someone look at it.

Using Partly Cursed Weapon

When a player takes this move, they may declare the nature of the partial curse in detail or discover it through playing the game. Explaining what makes the curse partial is a point of discussion. Has the curse eroded over time? Was the curse never fully manifested? Does it only affect specific circumstances?

This move creates a weapon that has a form of sentience. It desires something, and the player who chooses this move can help the weapon achieve what it wants. What a sentient weapon means exactly and how that manifests is up to the player.

The Keeper may decide that the consequence of another move may damage the weapon, affect the curse, or something similar. This is especially true on a miss or when the PC suffers from a disastrous success. If this happens, the weapon cannot be used again or interacted with until DIVISION or a representative can look at the weapon.

The Peacemaker

There are many **Factions** that watch every move DIVISION makes. A tense web exists between numerous Factions, all vying for power, information, and access to the doors of ancient power. You have been chosen to represent DIVISION's interests and work closely with one Faction in particular, but will the relationship compromise you one day?

When you take this move, ask your Keeper which Factions are in play (*Factions,* page 317) and choose which one you have a relationship with. Answer at least one of the following questions:

- *Who is the Faction's representative that you work most closely with? Why is your relationship complex?*
- *Why did you leave the Faction and start working for DIVISION instead?*
- *What secrets of the Faction will you never reveal to DIVISION?*

When you reach out to a Faction's representative for help, tell the Keeper how large a favor you're willing to offer the Faction in exchange, on a scale of 1-3. The Keeper describes how much the Faction can help you, equal to the scale of the favor. Roll, and add the level of favor you promised.

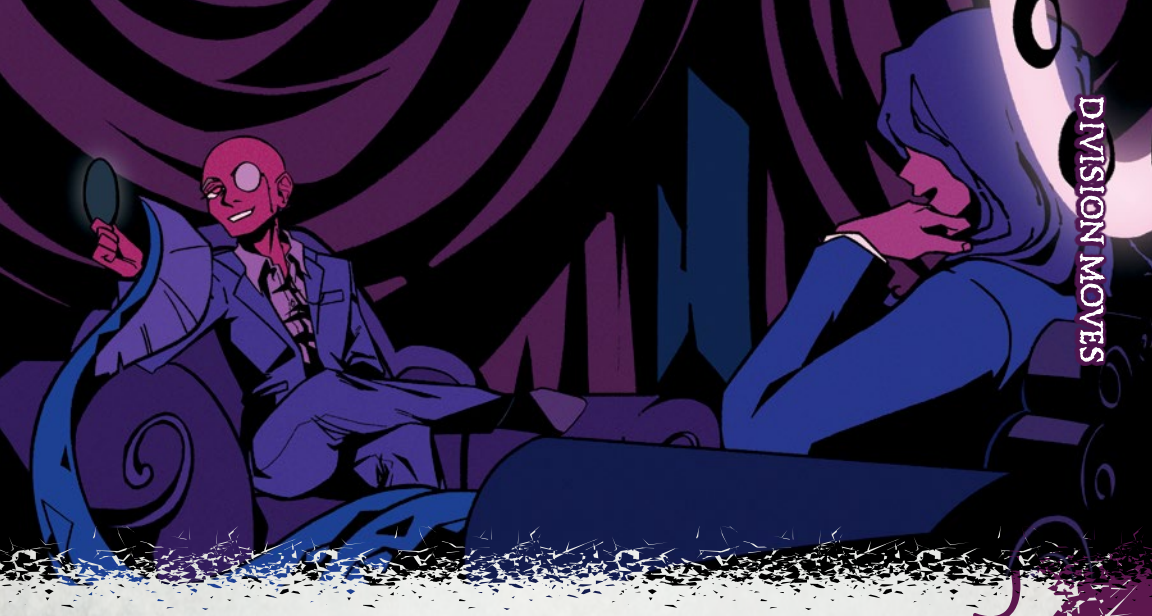
On an 8-10 the Faction will help as you ask, choose a number of actions based on the scale of the favor you promised. In addition, gain one Bond with the Faction.

- The Faction sends additional resources to assist you, describe what it is.
- The Faction offers valuable information, uncover a Key at great cost.
- The Faction will follow your orders for a time. Gain access to one Faction move, for now.

On an 11+ the Faction agrees to help, but they actively seek to compromise DIVISION and awaken the Harbinger within you. Choose a number of actions based on the scale of the favor you promised. In addition, gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You.

- Give the Faction an irreplaceable DIVISION resource. Clear one Condition.
- Give the Faction invaluable information about DIVISION that will one day be used against them. Uncover a Key and draw a line between that Key and a Facet on the Mystery Map. Declare an irrevocable truth about the Mystery.
- Allow the Faction to work towards What the Darkness Demands of You. Mark 1XP.

On a 7- the Faction is caught up in something truly dangerous that will compromise your investigation. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.



Using the Peacemaker

This move centers the relationship between the PC and Faction. When using this move, the PC or Keeper are encouraged to use any of the Faces described in the Faction, or create new Faction representatives. The Keeper is encouraged to call upon the same Faction representatives, creating a regular cast of characters and deepening the player's understanding of the Faction.

Note on the favor to the Faction: Instead of spending Darkness Tokens on the roll, the player instead offers on a scale (1-3) of how large a favor they promise to the Faction. No specific vows or promises have to be made, though the Faction may ask for something specific in the moment.

For example, if a PC sets their scale of favor at 1, they add +1 to the roll. If the PC sets the scale of favor at 3, they add +3 to the roll.

Before the roll is made, the Keeper describes the Faction representative and their power equal to the scale of the favor promised.

The following serves as a guide for which Faction representative will assist, based on the scale of favor:

1. A person of minor standing in the Faction
2. A person who wields power or influence within the Faction
3. A person with a foundational role within the Faction

When playing out the results, the number of actions the Faction grants the PC is based on the scale of favor promised. If the PC sets their scale of favor at 1, they choose 1 action from the list. If they set it at 3, they choose 3 actions.

On a disastrous success, the player may give the Faction invaluable information about DIVISION. This will uncover a Key and allow the player to connect the Key to a Facet and declare an irrevocable truth. You can find out more about manipulating the Mystery Map like this on page 207.

The result of the roll determines if the PC can work with the Faction without having to weaken DIVISION or strengthen the Harbinger within. The actions of the 8-10 result indicate the Faction working with the PC to support their investigation. On an 11+, the PC compromises DIVISION in some way or the Faction actively works to strengthen the Harbinger within.

Narratively, once a favor is promised, a PC cannot deny what the Faction asks for. The player and Keeper are encouraged to work out what the nature of the favor is, and what the player is comfortable playing out—even if narratively their character may feel beholden to the Faction.

When a player takes this move, they work together with the Keeper to establish truths about the Faction. For example, each Faction comes with two establishing questions, the player decides which PC answers each question. The PC and Keeper can also establish other details about the Faction.

On a miss, it's up to the Keeper if the Faction still holds the Omen to the favor promised and if the PC still receives at least some of the help they were hoping for.

Psychic Invokers

DIVISION has a number of psychics attuned to an agent, sending visions directly into the mind of that agent across vast distances. This connection operates within marginally safe parameters, at a high level of risk DIVISION finds acceptable. When you take this move, answer at least one of the following questions:

- *Who is the psychic invoker you have a good working relationship with? What is their specialty?*
- *Who is a psychic invoker you don't always get along with? Why do you put up with them anyway?*
- *Who was the former psychic invoker whose telepathic powers burnt out while connected to you? How do you care for them?*

When you increase your psychic vulnerability to receive information, tell the Keeper how much you open your mind to the psychic invocation, on a scale of 1-3. The Keeper describes a vision and its effects with an intensity equal to your psychic vulnerability. Roll, and add your level of psychic vulnerability.

On an 8-10 the connection between you and the psychic invoker registers within safe parameters. Choose a number of questions from the list below equal to your psychic vulnerability, and the psychic invoker will show you the answers in great detail. In addition, gain one Bond with the psychic invoker.

- What past event is directly affecting this investigation?
- What lie was born recently?
- What will most likely happen in the future based on current probabilities?
- What truth has been hidden? Declare an irrevocable truth based on this one. Rewrite or add a Facet of the Mystery that reflects this truth.

On an 11+ you and the psychic invoker fail to sync safely and the Harbinger within you forces the psychic invoker to become a temporary channel. Choose a number of questions equal to your scale of vulnerability—the Keeper reveals what the Harbinger you may become shows you. In addition, gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You.

- Who can't I trust?
- What will happen if the Harbinger unlocks the door and claims ascension?
- How can the psychic invoker help me become a Harbinger?
- What will happen if I take the door of ancient power for myself? Uncover a Key and draw a line between that Key and a Facet on the Mystery Map. Declare an irrevocable truth about the Mystery.

On a 7- something or someone has hijacked the connection between you and the psychic invoker, the Keeper will tell you what happens next.

Using the Psychic Invokers

Note on psychic vulnerability: Instead of spending Darkness Tokens on the roll, the player instead offers on a scale (1-3) of how much they open their mind to the psychic invoker.

For example, if a PC sets their psychic vulnerability at 1, they add +1 to the roll. If the PC sets the psychic vulnerability at 3, they add +3 to the roll.

The Keeper then describes a vision and its effects with an intensity equal to your psychic vulnerability. This vision can happen immediately, or the Keeper may reveal it at a later time during the session. Once the vision is described, it is recommended that the Keeper chooses a Keeper move (page 175) and acts.

The following serves as a guide for the visions based on the scale of psychic vulnerability:

1. **A disturbing vision.** A strange portent, or a preview of a minor obstacle.
2. **An intense and difficult vision.** A haunting glimpse, a symbolic dream that reveals something about the Harbinger or the door of ancient power.
3. **A nightmarish vision.** A harrowing future, disorienting images that hint at the horrors waiting behind the door.

When playing out the results, the number of questions the PC can ask is equal to their psychic vulnerability. If the PC set their psychic vulnerability at 1, they ask 1 question from the list. If they set it at 3, they ask 3 questions.

The result of the roll determines the nature of the connection between the PC and the psychic invoker. The questions on a perfect hit indicate a stable psychic connection where the PC can ask helpful but safe questions. On disastrous success, the connection awakens the Harbinger within the PC and the psychic invoker is forced to channel them. The questions are more insightful, but there is a distressing quality to the questions too.

Some of the options in this move allow the player to directly manipulate the Mystery. When the player chooses *"What truth has been hidden?"* they may rewrite or add a Facet of the Mystery (page 208). When the player chooses *"What will happen if I take the door of ancient power for myself?"* they may connect Keys and declare irrevocable truths (page 207).

Subcontractor

DIVISION works with various experts in the field and has a number of regular subcontractors. During an investigation, you may call DIVISION to request an expert subcontractor. It's hard to get good and reliable help in a pinch. When you take this move, answer at least one of the following questions:

- *Who is the subcontractor that none of you have met, but all of you fear?*
- *What terrible fate befell the last subcontractor who was sent into the field?*
- *Who is the head of operational security at DIVISION who is called in when a subcontractor compromises DIVISION?*

When you call DIVISION and ask them to send someone over, tell them who you need. Ask another player to choose from the list below and describe the subcontractor:

- **MONSTROUS:** The expert subcontractor shows up immediately, but they are also an Omen. Just like you, their Harbinger can tempt them from within, and they may fall victim to apocalyptic ruin.
- **REMOTE:** The expert subcontractor can't make it in time. Without being directly at the scene, they can only give you partial information, or a possible lead to go on.
- **SHADY:** The subcontractor is not exactly an expert, and they may not always provide reliable information or have the best scruples. But they show up immediately and offer a good lead to start with.

Using the Subcontractor

Working with a subcontractor means that an Omen will check in with DIVISION and request the services of an expert. The PC may ask for any number of forensic, religious, scientific, or folklore experts. For example, the Omen may ask for DIVISION to send over an expert on cosmic cryptography.

At this point, another player looks at the list and decides who the subcontractor is. They'll choose if the subcontractor is ***monstrous***, ***remote***, or ***shady***. From there, they can sketch out details. For example, a player will say that Professor Huang is an expert in their field, but due to an incident on college grounds last year, a cosmic being now resides within their soul and the two have learned how to cohabitate within the same body, making Professor Huang a ***monstrous*** subcontractor.

While this move is a simple choice and no roll is required, the Keeper may establish that DIVISION is unable to send more than one subcontractor per mission, or that the Omens will have to do something first before being able to contact DIVISION. However, the Keeper is encouraged to allow the player to use this move as often as they like.

Once introduced, subcontractors can be affected by future consequences. The Harbingers may target them or they may even be a Harbinger in disguise.

RUIN

ON THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS
A SYMPHONY OF CRUELTY
MY TRUE FACE REVEALED

As the PCs come closer to their ruin, they gain access to new abilities, called **Ruin moves**. Ruin moves are more powerful than the basic, DIVISION, and playbook moves. They often give the PCs the power to change the narrative or situation in significant and dramatic ways.

Ruin Moves

Ruin moves do not require a roll or spending Darkness Tokens. Instead, the PC marks Ruin to activate the abilities of the move. In many Ruin moves, the PC can mark Ruin again to strengthen the effects or act more like a Harbinger to avoid complications or cost. This represents how you will cultivate your Harbinger tendencies in exchange for more power and control.

Many Ruin moves introduce completely new themes to the playbooks—dangerous and sinister themes that hint at the Harbinger the PCs may become. The Found may find that they are no longer content to just attune to the thoughts of others, instead taking these darker thoughts and turning them into something useful, like in the Ruin move **Dark Puppet Strings**.

Other Ruin moves introduce dangerous NPCs that will help for now, but are ultimately guiding the PC to become a truly fearsome Harbinger. The Summoned may connect to their parent in **The Prodigal Child Will Return** and the Surge may call upon their **Dark Patron**.

The more a PC uses their Ruin moves, the more often they'll mark Ruin and gain new Ruin moves. This makes a PC more powerful, but doing so will bring them closer to becoming a Harbinger themselves. Should a PC ever completely fall to ruin, the player retires the character and creates a new one.

Ruin Advances

As the abyss beckons, a monster may be tempted to give in and gain power from it. The Harbinger within stirs, and the apocalypse calls out in song.

The player decides when their PC answers that call, how much closer the monster comes to becoming a Harbinger. A character marks Ruin whenever a move tells them to, or when the Keeper asks them to (*Keeper Moves,* page 175). There is also an opportunity to earn Ruin at the end of every session (*End of Session,* page 164).

When all five boxes of the Ruin track are marked, the player describes a glimpse of a possible harrowing future. What will they do as a Harbinger of the apocalypse? What will they look and act like when this future self has discarded all connection to humanity?

This is an important moment, as the player explores where their path of ruin could lead. This also helps the Keeper take notes, so that they may bring in elements of that terrible future into the story. Supporting this future, or contradicting it is exciting for the players!

When a character has earned five Ruin in total, they take a Ruin Advance and reset their Ruin track to zero. The list of Ruin Advances is found near the Ruin track on the character sheet. Once a Ruin Advance is taken, it is marked and can't be taken again.

Malika has decided that the Marquis will use a Ruin move, and in doing so, they mark Ruin again. This is their fifth box to mark, which they announce to the rest of the group. After the Marquis resolves their Ruin move, the Keeper checks in.

Keeper: This means we get to see a glimpse of you as the Harbinger you may become. We pause the scene and flash forward for a moment. What do we see?

Malika (the Marquis): Let me look at What the Darkness Demands of me... one of them is 'to fall in love with a Harbinger of the apocalypse'.

We see that my broken horns are grown back and heavy, and a black crown of roses bleeds from in between my horns. My golden eyes flash for a moment, and as the camera pulls back, we see that I'm on a throne made of blackened bone.

I look to my side, and the Mananganggal Queen stands next to me, his eyes a black starless night and his bloody wings are outstretched. I reach over and kiss him, promising him the world will be reshaped to fulfill his every desire. Then the scene fades to black.

Keeper: Awesome! I am totally rooting for you and the Mananganggal Queen. You get to pick a Ruin Advance. How about we move the spotlight to another character for now, and when we come back, you can let us know if you have an advance picked out.

When the PC has seven Ruin Advances, the player retires the PC and creates a new one. The Omen has taken the terrible path, succumbing to the worst possible fate, and has become a Harbinger. They may return to antagonize, tempt, or attack the Omens and DIVISION.

Each playbook has several options for a Ruin Advance.

Take a New Ruin Move

You can choose any new Ruin move from your own playbook. To better suit your character, you may rewrite the premise of the move.

Someone playing the Found may look at **Dark Puppet Strings**, and instead state that the Ruin move applies to their ability to interact with dreams instead, and rename the Ruin move to **Born of Dreams** instead. The Ruin move will still work functionally the same, but the narrative has been adjusted to fit better.

Take a Ruin Move from Another Playbook

You can choose any Ruin move from another playbook, incorporating those themes for your PC.

If a Ruin move from another playbook sounds like fun but you want to rework the themes a little to better suit your PC, you may rewrite the premise or reword triggers to better suit your own character. If your character does not access the world of dreams, you may take the Found's **Exalted by Dream, Crowned by Nightmare** and change it to draw energy from another source. Or you may connect to a power of darkness you have instead of **telepathy**, such as the **fae glamor** of the Fallen or the **shadow control** of the Summoned.

Permanently Mark a Condition

Choose a Condition from your playbook, and permanently mark it. This means you cannot mark or clear this Condition again in the future. You can gain Darkness Tokens whenever you embody this Condition as normal.

This Ruin Advance communicates how you are losing your ability to control your powers of darkness, and how much easier it is for you to hit your Breaking Point.

Gain a New Ruin Condition

This Ruin Condition is always marked and cannot be cleared like your regular playbook Conditions. You can gain Darkness Tokens whenever you embody this Ruin Condition, just like any other Condition.

When you take this Ruin Advance, choose from the emotions below to be your new Ruin Condition:

- ☐ Cruel
- ☐ Fragile
- ☐ Guilty
- ☐ Haunted
- ☐ Paranoid
- ☐ Possessive
- ☐ Ruthless
- ☐ Reckless

A Ruin Condition reflects how much closer you are to becoming a Harbinger, and how that affects your emotions and actions.

Retire Your Character and Become a Harbinger of the Apocalypse

When you take this advance, your character chooses to pursue the ancient Doors of Power for themselves. They join the other Harbingers and work towards ushering in the apocalypse. The character may appear in future Mysteries and directly antagonize the PCs.

When all other Ruin Advances have been marked, you must take this one. However, you can choose to take this Ruin Advance at any time—this doesn't have to be the last advance you take.

When your character becomes a Harbinger, work with the Keeper to describe what this moment looks like. Is there a direct confrontation with someone from DIVISION before you storm off? Is there an actual conflict with high stakes? Do you disappear into the shadows, seeking out your own agenda?

Once you've retired this character, pick a new playbook and make a new character.

Making Characters

Creating Monsters of DIVISION

The PCs are Omen-class monsters who work for the DIVISION. You are the only ones who can stand against other monsters, study the signs of the apocalypse, investigate mysteries with your powers of darkness, and fight the Harbingers of the apocalypse.

Making a character is done in steps:

- **Step 1: Choose a playbook** that inspires you. Pay special attention to their powers of darkness (unique supernatural abilities) and What the Darkness Demands of You (what tempts them to become a Harbinger).
- **Step 2: Bring your character to life**, using the prompts as inspiration. By the end of this you'll have a name, a physical description, an Origin, their powers of darkness, and an idea for how they may become a Harbinger of the apocalypse.
- **Step 3: Refine your abilities.** Choose one playbook move, and then either one DIVISION move or one Ruin move, depending on whether your organizational ties or your self-destructive tendencies are more central to the initial vision for your character.

  When choosing DIVISION moves, pick one that another player hasn't chosen yet—no two PCs should have the same DIVISION move at the start of the first session.
- **Step 4: Introduce your character to the other players.** Focus on your origin and What the Darkness Demands of You. Tell everyone what impulse you've chosen for now, so the Keeper and other players can help you achieve that during play.
- **Step 5: Create your starting Bonds** with the other characters and What the Darkness Demands of You.

Step 1: Choose Playbooks

A player creates the Omen they'll play by choosing a playbook. Each playbook focuses on a central emotional and supernatural theme. To get an idea of what the themes are per playbook, look at the short description and how each playbook gains Darkness Tokens.

How a playbook gains Darkness Tokens is essential. A playbook guides how your character feels, reacts, and interacts with the people around them. Gaining Darkness Tokens is easier for some playbooks compared to others. This is subjective, and tied to what's easy for someone to play out or narrate spontaneously. Being coldly logical as the Shade might come easily for you, but regularly being petty as the Hungry might not. Keep that in mind when you pick a playbook!

Then look at the origins, powers of darkness, impulses, and What the Darkness Demands of You. These are narrative influences that you can manipulate to your liking.

Once you find a few playbooks that intrigue you, read the playbook moves to understand how the Omen will feel in play. There's a lot of room for choice and interpretation in each playbook, so you can make your character feel truly yours.

Players must choose a unique playbook, one that hasn't been picked up by anyone else. Every PC you play is one of a kind. You may meet NPCs that mirror your themes and aspects, but you are still thoroughly unique.

To make sure everyone gets a playbook they're happy with, take turns reading the introductory description out loud, or take time going over each playbook. Each player should choose two or three playbooks they're interested in. Usually this is enough to ensure everyone gets a playbook they're excited about.

Step 2: Bring the Character to Life

Once you have your playbook, go over the different prompts and see what inspires you and sounds fun to play. When you find a prompt you like, underline or mark it in some fashion.

You can tweak the prompts as you like—each prompt is a starting point. The last prompt of every section invites you to create something unique while still keying into the themes of each playbook.

The prompts will give you a strong starting point for your character, while sketching out tantalizing details of a rich history. Offer as much detail as you like, but leave a lot to discover in play. Doing so makes it easier to connect your character to the world and other characters as you play.

CHARACTER PROMPTS

- **Your Name:** This may simply refer to the kind of name you pick for yourself. But it could also hint at another person, a past, a possible future.
- **Your Pronouns:** Decide what current pronoun others use to refer to your character: she/her, he/him, they/them, xe/xim, something else, no pronouns, or any combination of pronouns. Any choice is welcome, and your pronouns may change as you play. This decision informs how others will relate to your character.
- **Your Look:** Choose 1-3 options to sketch out what your character's physical appearance or demeanor is. Some are very specific, while others are open to your interpretation and hint at a history or hope.
- **Your Origin:** An important choice that ties in directly with your past and some of the central themes of your playbook. A Summoned must describe *where* they were summoned from, the Last must decide what they are the last *of*.
- **Your Unique Question:** Brings to the forefront the central theme of the playbook. Depending on the playbook, the answer to this question can signify your inner conflict, further support your origin, create narrative tension, or embody the seeds of the Harbinger within. The Found must decide what has replaced most of their *memories*, the Hungry must describe what they *feed* on and what *they leave behind*.
- **Your Powers of Darkness:** How you manifest your will, confront the apocalypse, and fight back the Harbingers. How you choose to interpret your supernatural powers, and their possible limitations, is completely up to you. The Shade's **MACHINES POWERED BY SOUL MAGIC** may be automatons or small steampunk inspired devices. The Last's **TIME DISTORTION** may be used in a purely defensive fashion or may be in the form of a mysterious voice from the future.
- **What the Darkness Demands of You:** The most important choice, and the Keeper will often refer to it during the game. Every Omen is far more powerful than the average monster, and could become a Harbinger themselves. Your choice is your initial way of exploring what will tempt you to become a Harbinger, and what possible terrible futures await you.

Step 3: Refine Your Abilities

Each playbook has a starting move, something that defines the Omen. From there, you further develop who your character is by choosing one more playbook move. Lastly, pick one DIVISION move *or* one Ruin move.

When you pick a DIVISION move, you help establish more details about DIVISION and your character's past. You can answer the questions attached to the move now during character creation, or wait until the end of the first session (*DIVISION Moves,* page 60).

When you pick a Ruin move, you start with an easy means of acquiring more Ruin moves. Ruin moves are more powerful than most moves in the game, and highlight the potential of your character becoming a Harbinger themself (*Ruin Moves,* page 81).

Step 4: Introduce Your Character

When everyone is ready, it's time to introduce your characters. To introduce your Omen, share their name and pronouns, the choices you've made during character creation, and any other interesting details that spring to mind.

Stress your origin and What the Darkness Demands of You, so that other players have a better understanding of what makes your monster who they are. There may be secrets between characters, but players should be aware of these secrets. Talk openly about these secrets, and invite your fellow players to create additional dramatic tensions and layers. They may even tie some of their secrets with yours! This ensures that none of these great ideas go to waste or become irrelevant, instead everyone can help set up great revelations and moments in the future.

Be open about what your character hopes for, what causes their heart to ache, how they might fall to Ruin and become a Harbinger. The more generous you are with this information from the start—and throughout the game—the easier it will be for the other players to help set up compelling relationships and awesome story beats.

At the start of every session, you'll choose what your PC's impulse is. Remember to share this with the Keeper and the other players, so they can help set up a moment for you to give into that impulse.

Be honest about what you want to discover in play. The Found may have a clear idea of who their creator is, or maybe only their player knows. It's also possible the player is leaving it completely blank for now, so that an NPC in a future Mystery may turn out to be their creator!

Step 5: Create Your Starting Bonds

As Omens, the PCs have intimate ties with each other. Each playbook has three starting Bonds questions. The first two establish relationships and quickly sketch out a shared history. The third binds the Omen to What the Darkness Demands of them.

Choose a starting Bond question to ask another player. Take note of their answer, perhaps adding or tweaking it as you wish, and write down the number of Bonds it grants you with their character. Then choose another starting Bond question from the list and repeat the process.

Consider the characters that have been introduced thus far. Feel free to propose a question to a specific character, or read the question out loud and ask if anyone is interested in proposing a relationship or shared history. You can offer changes to any proposal or simply say no if it doesn't feel right for the character.

Some of the questions may create a timeline. This can be addressed by establishing how long-lived monsters can be, but feel free to suggest time travel or alternative realities. Working for DIVISION can easily get very weird.

One of the questions focuses on love. Clearly establish if this is a romantic love, or the love between family or friends.

The first question in the starting Bonds section of your character sheet establishes 1 Bond with the PC you choose. The second question establishes 2 Bonds with another PC you choose. There is space on your character sheet to keep track of the Bonds that you gain and spend.

One Bond works differently from the rest. The third Bond question is the same for every playbook, ***"Why am I tempted to give into What the Darkness Demands?"*** Ask another character this question. This can be interpreted as the character having insight to the Harbinger within you, or further hint at a shared history between you. How they decide to interpret the question, it gives you a new angle to consider the Harbinger within.

After the other player answers, you take one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You (*Bonds,* page 25).

THE PLAYBOOKS

Each playbook offers a starting point for the characters. Initially, each character is defined by their powers of darkness, how they gain Darkness Tokens, and their narrative themes. Playbooks focus on specific monstrous themes and unique emotional arcs rather than specific archetypes. You are encouraged to interpret your powers and origin, while exploring the themes of the playbook.

For example, a Summoned could be a demonic prince from a hellish dimension, a highly advanced automaton built to destroy worlds, or a powerful chthonic being called through by cultists. Each draws upon powers that are blunt, aggressive, and demanding. The themes of the Summoned are prophecy, raw power, humanity, and love.

IT'S COMPLICATED!

The playbooks are organized along a spectrum of emotional and narrative complexity.

The Summoned is the most straight forward, asking a player to explore themes of monstrous violence, prophecy, and love. **The Shade** is somewhat in the middle, offering a more cerebral character who cultivates their personal relationship with death. The latter half has players engaging with nuanced themes, such as grief, hubris, and an inescapable monstrous nature.

You are still encouraged to pick and choose whatever playbook excites you the most, but keeping in mind the rising complexity of themes and emotions may help you make the best choice!

Themes and Subject Matter

The following is a summary of each playbook and their emotional themes. It's important to remember the subject matter of *Apocalypse Keys* may get dark and challenging—you will be playing imperfect characters with messy entanglements.

- **The Summoned:** A violent monster summoned from another world. Their power is blunt, aggressive, and demanding. Their themes are of violence, to struggle against prophecy, and the overwhelming desire for love. *Content warnings: unhealthy parental relationships.*
- **The Surge:** A desperate monster, barely in control of their power, seeking to share the burden with others. Their power eclipses that of other playbooks—it is explosive, uncontrollable, and alienating. Their themes are the cost of collateral damage and navigating complex and potentially toxic relationships. *Content warnings: toxic relationship dynamics.*
- **The Found:** A psychic monster who can read hearts and minds, but cannot remember their own past. Their power is inquisitive, emotional, and strange. Their themes are the intimate knowledge of the thoughts and emotions of others, and the danger of knowing what's best for someone else. *Content warnings: mind control, emotional manipulation, memory loss.*
- **The Shade:** A cerebral monster who defied death and oblivion. Their power is enlightening, intellectual, and ephemeral. Their themes are cultivating a fraught relationship with death and the price of knowledge.
- **The Last:** A lonely monster from another world who is the last of their kind. Their power is reflective, sorrowful, and hopeful. Their themes are the inescapable nature of grief, the trauma of loss, and the driving fear of repeating tragedy. *Content warnings: genocide, cultural genocide, survivor's guilt.*
- **The Fallen:** A charming monster who was once a divine being. Their power is intoxicating, damaged, and deceitful. Their themes are hubris, the double-edged sword of worship, and the destructive desire to regain what was lost. *Content warnings: unhealthy parental relationships, emotional manipulation.*
- **The Hungry:** A ravenous monster nearly consumed by their hunger. Their power is intimate, transformative, and harrowing. Their themes are body horror, the corruptive nature of their feeding, and a desperate yearning for true emotional closeness. *Content warnings: body horror, disordered eating.*

The Summoned

I WEAR THE CRUEL CROWN OF PROPHECY
I EMBODY THE PROMISE AND INEVITABILITY OF THE APOCALYPSE
MY POWER IS BLUNT, AGGRESSIVE, AND DEMANDING
MY HEART YEARNS TO LOVE AND BE LOVED

YOUR NAME *(choose 1)*

- ☐ a straightforward name
- ☐ a name that conveys strength and power
- ☐ a name that whispers of the world I come from
- ☐ a name I was given by accident
- ☐ a name I need to live up to one day

YOUR LOOK *(choose 1-3)*

- ☐ a trench coat that hides most of my monstrous form
- ☐ eyes of the brightest gold
- ☐ shattered horns
- ☐ a holy item my adopted parent gave me
- ☐ a part of my body is a weapon I'll never use
- ☐ the mark of my love who I betrayed
- ☐ an empty and tarnished locket
- ☐ something that hints at my struggle to be human

YOUR ORIGIN *(choose 1)*

- ☐ I was summoned from hell to be the final door to the apocalypse
- ☐ from the grasp of a cosmic horror that will remake us all
- ☐ from a nightmare realm that will crown me ruler of a broken world
- ☐ something else that describes the terrible world I came from and what it demands of this world

WHAT IS THE PROPHECY THAT HAUNTS YOU? *(choose 1)*

- ☐ I gather my acolytes from the weak and oppressed and turn them into the most fearsome Harbingers
- ☐ I take every nightmare that haunts humanity and paint a beautifully broken world from their fears
- ☐ I lose all my memories and emotions in order to become the weapon I was created to be
- ☐ when I fall in love for the last time an ancient Door of Power will open in my heart and destroy the world
- ☐ something else I must defy at all cost to remain human

YOUR IMPULSE

At the start of every session, choose one to explore during play. At the end of the session, answer the question—if the answer is yes, mark 1 XP or 1 Ruin.

- ***Did you fight against the prophecy that haunts you?***
- ***Did you learn something significant about your prophecy?***
- ***Did you entangle another monster with your prophecy?***
- ***Did you try to hold on to your humanity, to great consequence?***
- ***Did you give into the power of prophecy and strengthen it?***

YOUR POWERS OF DARKNESS *(choose 2)*

- ☐ Colossal Strength
- ☐ Emotion Amplification
- ☐ Supernatural Resistance
- ☐ Shadow Control
- ☐ Weapons from Elsewhere

WHAT DOES THE DARKNESS DEMAND OF YOU? *(choose 2)*

- ☐ to push away those I need most
- ☐ to yearn for a love that can never be mine
- ☐ to betray those who love me most
- ☐ to despair as an immortal
- ☐ to fall in love with a Harbinger of the apocalypse
- ☐ to embrace and strengthen my prophecy
- ☐ something else that would break my heart and leave me empty

STARTING BONDS

- You were there when I was summoned: what makes you afraid of me? *(Gain one Bond with them)*
- Why can't you tell me you love me? *(Gain two Bonds with them)*
- Why am I tempted to give into What the Darkness Demands? *(Gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You)*

GAINING DARKNESS TOKENS

As the *Summoned* I gain 2-4 Darkness Tokens when I:

- Feel unloved or abandoned
- Overreact with violence
- Ask someone to give me their best shot and not hold back
- Ask someone to love me, and only ever me
- Embody a Condition that affects me

CONDITIONS

- ☐ Raging
- ☐ Lovelorn
- ☐ Obsessed
- ☐ Despairing

BREAKING POINT

You know that this world is not your own, and you will never belong here. The dream that is humanity can never belong to you. The darkness grips your heart and the world you were summoned from bleeds into this one. You are a beacon to what has been aching to reach this world.

Describe what terrors are unleashed and how an aspect of your terrible prophecy comes to pass. The Keeper will tell you how the world is now wounded, warped by what you allowed to come through.

Playbook Moves

The starting move for the Summoned is **Sometimes, I Get Angry**. Other playbooks cannot take this move as an advance. Choose one more move.

▣ Sometimes, I Get Angry *(starting move)*

When you **Unleash the Dark** through anger and violence, take 3 Darkness Tokens before doing so.

☐ Come On, Tough Guy

When you go up against a colossal and otherworldly opponent, tell everyone how you taunt them and keep their attention. Spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 you've got 'em just where you want them. Choose two:

- You give your allies a golden opportunity, choose one ally to gain a Bond with you
- Uncover a Key at great cost
- Inflict two Conditions on them, but take one in return

ON AN 11+ you're locked in an intense battle and you cannot stop until your opponent is destroyed. Choose one from above, and you can only pull back if a player agrees to spend one Bond to reach past your rage. If they don't spend the Bond, you cannot stop fighting until your opponent is destroyed.

ON A 7- your power overwhelms you, and you take on a colossal form as your prophecy comes to bear and leaves a permanent mark on you. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.

☐ Borrowed Power

Along the walls of the world beings of twisted power await your bidding. **When you summon a creature from another world to help you**, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 the summoning wards hold and you have the upper hand for now. Choose one:

- The summoned creature is fire and rage, violence and storm. They will destroy a vulnerable target before the summoning unravels.
- The summoned creature will answer any one question truthfully, take one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You.
- The summoned creature will uncover a Key for you, at great cost to you. It shares an ominous warning before it fades away.

ON AN 11+ you barely have this creature under control, it will do as you command but the wards will shatter soon after. Choose:

- Choose one from above, but you have to exert your will and banish the creature before it can wreak havoc. Mark one Condition or one Ruin.
- Choose one from above, but the creature will escape into the world and be forever free of your control. Gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You.

ON A 7- something powerful and sinister hijacks the summoning and comes through, with no wards to control it. The forbidden comes through. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.

☐ We're Family Now

When someone spends a Bond with you to modify a roll by +1 or -1, they choose:

- The Bond instead grants +3 or a -3 bonus
- You gain a new Bond with them afterwards

☐ Everything For You, My Love

When you are about to mark your fifth box of Ruin, you may choose to declare your love for the first time, or describe how love has changed you. Tell everyone how you bare your heart for all to see, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 you hold back the Harbinger within you and your heart shines through. Erase your Ruin track and your love gains one Bond with you.

ON AN 11+ you further entangle your beloved in your prophecy. If your beloved accepts your love and the burden of your prophecy, erase your Ruin track. If they respond otherwise, or not at all, take that as a sign of rejection. Erase one Ruin and gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You.

ON A 7- the Harbinger is unleashed and turns on the one you love, the Keeper will tell you what happens next.

☐ Together We Are Destiny

When you seek to defy your prophecy, declare a new destiny. Ask each player if they will defy prophecy with you. Roll, adding +1 for each player who says yes, to a maximum of +3. You cannot spend Darkness Tokens on this roll.

ON AN 8-10 the prophecy weakens its hold on you for now, choose two:

- Declare a new truth about your prophecy
- Reveal a crucial event that is going on outside of view
- Gain one Bond with a PC or NPC that is central to the destiny you desire

ON AN 11+ destiny and prophecy intertwine. Choose one from above and one from below.

- Declare a dark secret about who you love most, they gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You
- Reveal a sinister scheme that comes to fruition
- A part of your heart whispers that you can only delay the inevitable, mark one Ruin

ON A 7- your prophecy reasserts itself and grows crueller, the Keeper will tell you what happens next.

Ruin Moves

☐ None Stand Before Me

You may at any time choose to kill an NPC who is vulnerable to you. Choose:

- Mark one Ruin, kill the NPC and describe how you visibly change to become more like the loathsome Harbinger you will become. An aspect of them will come back in some shape or form to haunt you.
- Mark two Ruin, kill the NPC and destroy their soul—they will never return. Describe the comforting lie you tell yourself.

☐ The Prodigal Child Will Return

Your true parent or creator has reconnected with you, and they bear great power. **When you ask your true parent or creator for help**, they will do as you ask if you give them the love they crave from you.

Tell them what you need, the Keeper will describe what form of loyalty or affection they require in return. Choose:

- Mark one Ruin, they will do as you ask in exchange for your act of love. Describe how you please them.
- Mark two Ruin, the Harbinger within you awakens and you force your parent to do what you want while hardening your heart. Describe how they are proud of the Harbinger you are becoming.

☐ Heavy is the Crown

You may always declare a Harbinger knows you and the terrible prophecy that awaits you. Describe what part they will play in your prophecy.

When you declare this, choose:

- Mark one Ruin, they will immediately offer you something of great value, but will demand you show through action that you are ready to fulfill your prophecy.
- Mark two Ruin, you force them to acknowledge your power and give way to you, for now. They will offer something of great value as a means of appeasing you.

☐ Humanity Was a Dream

When you would Reveal Your Heart to a PC or an NPC who may become a Harbinger, you may instead choose to describe why you are destined to become a Harbinger and how this makes you afraid.

If you do, mark one Ruin and the Harbinger within you stirs and reaches out to the other person, bringing your hearts far closer than any confession ever could. Choose two:

- Reveal a beautiful shared memory, you both gain two Bonds with each other.
- Reveal a painful shared memory, you both mark XP.
- Promise that you will always protect the other, even if they become a Harbinger. You both clear a Condition.

Then the Harbinger within you resonates with the Harbinger within them. If they mark one Ruin, they choose one:

- Reveal a hope they have for you, you clear a Condition.
- Talk about the good old times, to help you believe in the dream of your humanity. You both mark XP.
- They promise to never abandon you. They erase any number of Ruin marks you have, transferring those Ruin marks to their own track.

Playing the Summoned

The Summoned is aggressive and direct, but they love fiercely and passionately. They gain Darkness Tokens by centering violence and taking on all comers. Their powers of darkness help them be larger than life. Love is important to the Summoned, be it romantic, platonic, or familial.

The Summoned came from another world, a terrible one that hungers for the destruction of this one. Their nature is tied to a devastating fate. A prophecy hangs over their head, and the Summoned decides how they'll defy that prophecy, and for how long.

The unique question of the Summoned is ***"What is the prophecy that haunts you?"*** You don't need to outline every verse or step of the prophecy, but have a few ideas that will guide play. Prophecies are often flowery things open to interpretation and change in the face of startling revelations.

Their starting move, **Sometimes, I Get Angry**, encourages you to **Unleash the Dark** through anger and violence, making it easy to immediately pick up the Darkness Tokens needed for the roll. As the Summoned, you define what violence is and how anger can be a tool or a flaw.

The other playbook moves suit a range of different playstyles. By picking up **Come On, Tough Guy** you are signalling to your Keeper that you're interested in big fights with big monsters. **Borrowed Power** means you wish to engage with the laws and dangers of summoning others.

The Summoned also embodies the heroic act of choosing love in the face of the apocalypse. **We're Family Now** makes Bonds made with the Summoned much more potent. **Everything For You, My Love** is a heartfelt moment, the hope that a confession can hold back the Harbinger within you. The confession of love can be romantic, familiar, or whatever feels best for the character. The Summoned can be romantically in love with more than one person at a time.

Together We Are Destiny is a cinematic and powerful moment that invites everyone at the table to freeze time and step out of the game for a moment. The Summoned can briefly bask in the spotlight while declaring their new destiny. When this move is chosen, the Keeper is encouraged to play around with the ideas of prophecy, chosen ones, creating one's destiny, and have everyone at the table interact with these tropes in fresh and exciting ways.

The Ruin moves of the Summoned further strengthen the themes of violence, prophecy, and human connection.

None Stand Before Me speaks to the lethal power the Summoned has. The target of the move must be vulnerable in some fashion—the Keeper may ask the player to do something specific first to expose that vulnerability. In using this move, the Summoned also faces a choice—how thoroughly will they choose to destroy the other? How will this type of violence bring them closer to being a Harbinger?

The Prodigal Child Will Return and **Heavy is the Crown** both connect the Summoned to the Harbingers of the apocalypse in a personal and meaningful way. This creates NPCs that are intimately tied to the Summoned. Should something happen in the fiction to make using this move difficult to trigger or play out, the player is encouraged to declare a new target for the move, or exchange this move for another one.

Humanity Was a Dream creates an intimate connection between the Summoned and another PC or NPC. It offers more support in exchange for marking Ruin. What would trigger the basic move **Reveal Your Heart** may trigger this move instead.

When playing the Summoned remember:

- Define violence on your own terms
- Seek out love in all its forms
- Defy your Destiny

THE SURGE

I MUST LEARN TO SHARE MY POWER, OR BE CONSUMED BY IT
I EMBODY THE HOPE AND FEAR OF THE APOCALYPSE
MY POWER IS EXPLOSIVE, UNCONTROLLABLE, AND ALIENATING
MY HEART YEARNS TO DESTROY AND BE DESTROYED

YOUR NAME *(choose 1)*

- ☐ a mundane name
- ☐ a name that conveys flood and fury
- ☐ a name that reminds me of the life I lost
- ☐ a name someone else gave me to help me forget the past
- ☐ a name I need to let go of one day

YOUR LOOK *(choose 1-3)*

- ☐ anachronistic clothing and accessories
- ☐ a collection of holy symbols
- ☐ tattoos that respond to my emotions
- ☐ a keepsake from an ex-lover
- ☐ an ever burning cigarette
- ☐ an item from someone who died by my power
- ☐ obvious signs of how I control my desires
- ☐ something that hints at my struggle to be human

YOUR ORIGIN *(choose 1)*

- ☐ I was born with these terrible powers as punishment for something unforgivable
- ☐ someone I cared for sacrificed me to a greater power that I now embody
- ☐ I was chosen to carry this terrible burden and destroy the human world
- ☐ something else that describes the sheer magnitude of the power forced upon me and how dangerous I am to others

WHAT COLLATERAL DAMAGE DO YOU LEAVE IN YOUR WAKE? *(choose 1)*

- ☐ my powers of darkness infect those around me and leave permanent scars
- ☐ my subconscious rewrites small aspects of reality for a short time
- ☐ memories become distorted and break down in unpredictable ways
- ☐ whenever I lose control one of my doppelgangers appears in the world
- ☐ something else that reminds me I am dangerous to those I care for

YOUR IMPULSE

At the start of every session, choose one to explore during play. At the end of the session, answer the question—if the answer is yes, mark 1 XP or 1 Ruin.

- ***Did you let go and cause collateral damage?***
- ***Did you destroy something precious and beautiful?***
- ***Did you use your power to provoke or entice another monster?***
- ***Did you initiate a moment of intimacy with someone weaker than you?***
- ***Did you bargain with a Harbinger and offer a part of your power to them?***

YOUR POWERS OF DARKNESS *(choose 1)*

- ☐ Elemental Control
- ☐ Cosmic Energies
- ☐ Demon Horde
- ☐ Body and Flesh Manipulation
- ☐ Angelic Fury and Beauty

WHAT DOES THE DARKNESS DEMAND OF YOU? *(choose 2)*

- ☐ to be the downfall of those I care for
- ☐ to destroy everything around me for the slightest trespass
- ☐ to find a Scion to my power
- ☐ to never fall in love
- ☐ to serve the most powerful Harbinger of the apocalypse
- ☐ to erase humanity itself
- ☐ something else that would destroy all that I care for

STARTING BONDS

- You were there when I truly let go. What did I destroy that belonged to you? Why are you grateful? *(Gain one Bond with them)*
- I love you, but you rejected me for my own sake. Why? *(Gain two Bonds with them)*
- Why am I tempted to give into What the Darkness Demands? *(Gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You)*

GAINING DARKNESS TOKENS

As the *Surge* I gain 2-4 Darkness Tokens when I:

- Feel overwhelmed or numb
- Give into my power and let it erase my will
- Ask someone to use my power as they see fit
- Ask someone to punish me for my power
- Embody a Condition that affects me

CONDITIONS

☐ Reactive ☐ Vicious ☐ Obsessed ☐ Despairing

Breaking Point

This world cannot contain you and all of your power. You can never create, never nurture—you can only break and destroy. It's time to remember that. It's time to let go, and let someone else take this burden.

Describe how your power overwhelms you and the obscene amount of collateral damage you cause. The Keeper will tell you how a part of your power is taken by someone, how it molds and breaks them until they are a perfect vessel, ready to evolve.

Playbook Moves

The starting moves for the Surge are **My Hands Around Your Heart** and **The Heart's Eclipse**. Other playbooks cannot take these starting moves as an advance. Choose one more move.

▣ My Hands Around Your Heart *(starting move 1)*

Yours is a power that was never meant for you alone to bear. **At the start of each session, choose another PC to be your Heart and share the burden of your power with.** Say why you hope they will save you from What the Darkness Demands.

When you share an intimate moment together, either of you can mark a Condition to reflect the nature of your relationship. Choose one:

- You each gain one Bond with the other
- One of you gains a Key at great cost

In addition, ***when you hit your Breaking Point***, your Heart chooses:

- They do nothing, allowing you to hit your Breaking Point. They clear all their Conditions.
- They intervene, and describe how they hurt themselves to protect you. You clear all your Conditions, but they mark one Condition or one Ruin.

When your Heart hits their Breaking Point, you have the last option to intervene, but if you do nothing, your Conditions don't clear.

▣ The Heart's Eclipse *(starting move 2)*

Your heart is a wild thing that surges along with your power, one day your heart will break and your power will consume you. But that day is not today.

Whenever you roll a miss, you can choose to have your power surge beyond your control, causing great collateral damage around you. Choose:

- Mark two Conditions, describe how your emotions get the better of you and gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You. Treat the roll as if you had rolled an 11+ instead.
- A PC marks two Conditions and gains one Bond with you—they describe how they hurt themselves to help you. Treat the roll as if you had rolled an 8-10 instead.

☐ My Darkness is Never Leashed

When you Unleash the Dark, you can also choose one from below, even on a miss:

- Weaken them, for now
- Force them to retreat, for now
- Corrupt an aspect of their power, for now
- They will tell you more than they wanted to

☐ I Am Your Destruction

You hold on to your power with an intensity that would break most souls—you are always a single breath from shattering under the pressure. **When you allow your power to surge and cause great collateral damage, ask the Keeper what catastrophic destruction you cause.** Choose two:

- You permanently gain an aspect of the Harbinger's powers of darkness, the Keeper will tell you what it is. Mark one Ruin.
- The power within you surges to give you visions of the past, present, or future. Uncover a Key and draw a line between that Key and a Facet on the Mystery Map. Declare an irrevocable truth about the Mystery.
- You protect the one person who matters most, gain one Bond with them.
- You use the destruction to reshape your environment, creating a golden opportunity or a fleeting moment for an ally. Gain one Bond with them.

☐ Like a Moth to the Flame

When you **Reveal Your Heart** to someone, you may first tell them how you could destroy them. If you do, you choose one from below, even on a miss:

- You leave a permanent mark on their body or soul, marking them as yours. Gain one Bond with them.
- Ask them what part of them they wish you would destroy. They gain one Bond with you.
- Ask the Keeper what your darkness whispers about them. Gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You.

☐ My Little Monster

Your little monster is a constant reminder of what happens when you allow someone to get too close to you. When you take this move, describe the person your little monster used to be and how they became twisted by your power. The Keeper will describe why they still love you.

Choose three basic moves and tell the Keeper how your little monster helps you with those moves. **Whenever your companion can help you, you add +1.** If your companion ever gets hurt or is betrayed by you, mark Ruin.

If you release your little monster from their love of you, mark Ruin. Describe how you destroy them. They may return in one form or another, but for now they have found peace. Discard this move and choose a new one from your playbook.

Ruin Moves

☐ Alpha and Omega

The burden of power can be carried between two, should fate choose to be so kind. When you take this move, declare a PC or NPC you are bound to by fate. If they agree, they declare what shared fate awaits you both.

The two of you are connected always, sharing emotions, thoughts, and unable to stay away from each other for very long. **When you wish to deepen the connection between you two.** Choose:

- Mark one Ruin to have them appear by your side, defying logic or plausibility–though they may have suffered to do so.
- Mark one Ruin to change a small but significant aspect of your shared fate, to bring it closer to ruin. If you do, immediately gain one Bond with them and one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You.

☐ My Dark Patron

A Harbinger claims that they will help you, assuring you that they are working against the other Harbingers for their own agenda.

When you call upon your patron and tell them what you need, the Keeper will describe what you must do for them in return. Choose:

- Mark one Ruin to agree to their terms, and describe how your dark patron becomes stronger.
- Mark two Ruin to display your power to horrifying effect, instilling fear and respect in them. They give what you need without advancing their agenda, but you suspect this was part of their plans all along.

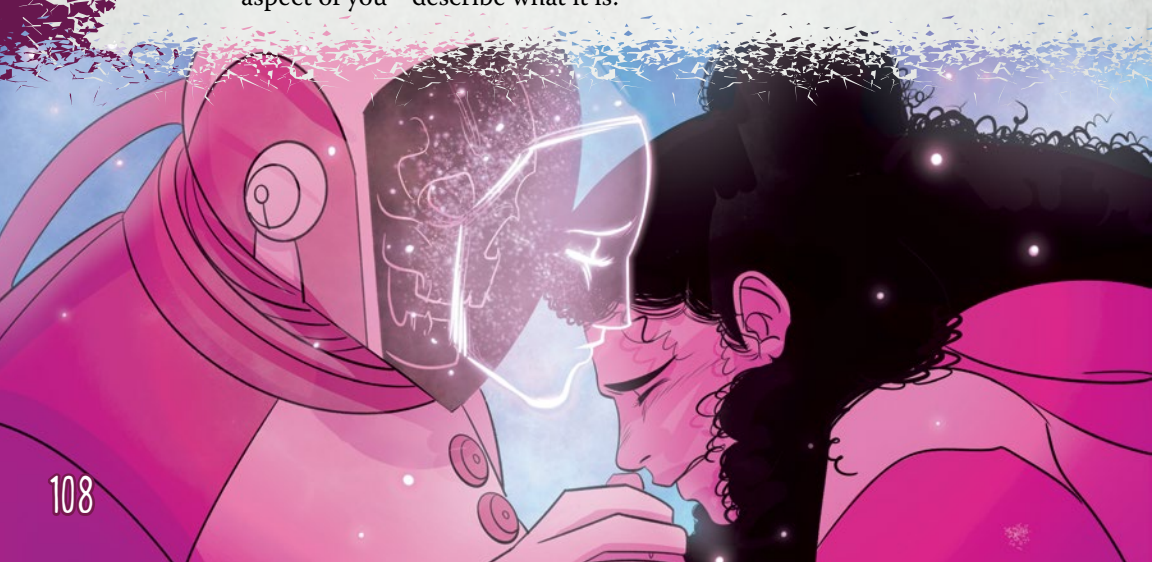
☐ This Is the Blood of My Covenant

You have created an unbreakable covenant with another Omen, in fervent and twisted hope that you can resist the abyss long enough to save each other.

When you take this move, declare which PC you create this covenant with. If they agree, both mark Ruin and bind your power together. They are now your Chosen.

When you create a sacred moment of communion with your Chosen, choose:

- Tell them how they matter more than any other. Destroy any number of Bonds you have to clear any number of Conditions your Chosen suffers from, destroying one for one.
- Whisper to the Harbinger within them and promise that you will fall to ruin first. Erase any number of Ruin marks your Chosen has, transferring their Ruin marks to your own track.
- Empower your Chosen beyond their reckoning. Mark one Ruin to permanently grant them a new power of darkness that reflects an aspect of you—describe what it is.



☐ My Anointed One

You have found someone innocent—a perfect vessel. They are willing to embody your raw power and take your place for a time. Describe who they are and why they love you.

When you take this move, create your own personal Doomsday Clock with 12 ticks and name it ***My Power Made Flesh***.

When you seek relief or comfort through your Anointed One, choose:

- Mark one Ruin, and tick ***My Power Made Flesh*** once. Your Anointed One will bear a new scar. You become mundane, and can pass for a mortal. Clear your Conditions. But your powers will violently return to you at the worst possible time.
- Mark two Ruin, and tick ***My Power Made Flesh*** twice. You and your Anointed One share a moment of intimacy, they will become more beautiful. Clear your Conditions and gain one Bond with your Anointed One.

When the ***My Power Made Flesh*** clock fills, your Anointed One is fully corrupted and consumed by your power and surges into a horrifying new form. The current Mystery is set aside. In this moment, your Anointed One has become the next Harbinger of the apocalypse, emerging from an ancient Door of Power. They wear your power with a strength of will and purity of soul beyond what you were ever capable of. Give them a new name and title befitting the destroyer of worlds they have become.

You and the other PCs must deal with your Anointed One, one way or another. Once this apocalyptic threat is dealt with, decide if you will leave DIVISION or stay. If you leave, retire this character and create a new one. If you stay, clear the Doomsday Clock ***My Power Made Flesh*** and choose a new Anointed One.

Playing the Surge

The Surge is overwhelmingly powerful and it is easy for them to cause collateral damage and hurt those they love. Their origins suggest that their immense powers were forced upon them. The Surge yearns for connection with others, but forming healthy relationships is difficult for them.

They gain Darkness Tokens by struggling with their immense power and what others want to do with that power. While other playbooks choose two fairly specific powers, the Surge chooses one power that is extraordinary. When playing the Surge, interpret your power as you like, knowing that very few things can limit or dampen your abilities.

All of this comes with a heavy burden. Such raw power draws the attention of others, those who would use the Surge for their own agenda.

The unique question of the Surge is ***"What collateral damage do you leave in your wake?"*** Collateral damage is a very real threat that haunts the Surge. The Keeper is encouraged to bring this up as a cost, complication, or consequence, especially on a miss.

Unlike the other playbooks, the Surge has two starting moves, **My Hands Around Your Heart** and **My Heart's Eclipse**.

My Hands Around Your Heart emphasizes how much the Surge hopes others will save them from their worst aspects. It's easier for the Surge and their Heart to gain Bonds with each other and uncover Keys of the apocalypse. This offers a complex and nuanced space for your relationships: will the Surge resist the path of co-dependent relationships, or will you give in as a moment of reprieve?

My Hands Around Your Heart makes it easier for either the Surge or their Heart to reach their Breaking Point. Because of this, the move offers a narrative opportunity when either are about to hit their Breaking Point. If the Heart chooses to hurt themselves to protect the Surge, the Surge clears all Conditions and no longer hits their Breaking Point. But the Heart can choose to do nothing.

My Heart's Eclipse means that the Surge will only miss on a roll if they choose to do so. Your powers are always barely under your control, and when you let go you can achieve great and terrible things. The threat of power and the promise of collateral damage are always present.

I Am Your Destruction is another way the Surge can quickly change a scene and gain power or opportunity, in exchange for causing catastrophic destruction. The Keeper decides the level of catastrophe. This can be as emotionally devastating as erasing all the memories someone had of their love for the Surge, or it can be as horrifying as destroying an entire city (or planet!). The Keeper is encouraged to follow what makes sense in the fiction and what is appropriately dramatic and interesting.

One of the options the Surge can choose is *"You permanently gain an aspect of the Harbinger's powers of darkness."* The Keeper can choose to interpret this in any number of ways: an object, a weapon, or even a new power of darkness the Surge now has access to.

The Surge can experience visions of the past, present, and future to better understand the current Mystery. Because triggering **I Am Your Destruction** causes catastrophic destruction, the Keeper may decide that this is the great cost required to uncover the Key.

Once the Surge has this Key, you draw a line between that Key and any Facet of the Mystery. This means you may declare "an irrevocable truth". Both this connection to a Facet, and the truth, should be taken into account when someone decides to **Unlock Doom's Door**. Even if the result of the move is a miss, this connection and truth remains (*Connecting Keys and Irrevocable Truths,* page 207).

Like a Moth to the Flame encourages the Surge to connect to others in meaningful ways, while highlighting how dangerous those relationships can be. **My Little Monster** creates an NPC that meets a terrible fate while trying to assist or even protect the Surge.

The Surge's Ruin moves offer a means of deepening the relationships that matter the most to them, while heightening the emotional and dramatic stakes.

Alpha and Omega and **This Is the Blood of My Covenant** both have the Surge intertwine their fate and power with another character. **Alpha and Omega** signals that this NPC should become an important character that investigates the Mysteries alongside the Surge. The Keeper should give this NPC their own nuanced desires and opportunities for growth.

My Dark Patron creates a Harbinger that isn't directly connected to an ancient Door of Power or the Mystery the Omens are investigating. Why this Harbinger is willing to help the Surge and DIVISION, is its own mystery that can be revealed over time. If something happens in the fiction that makes using this move difficult to trigger or play out, you may declare a new target for the move, or exchange this move for another one.

My Anointed One creates an undeniably toxic relationship, as the Surge benefits from the relationship in ways the Anointed One does not. Mechanically the move drives you towards one inevitable outcome: they will embody the powers of the Surge and become a Harbinger of the apocalypse (*Mysteries, Interrupted,* page 218). If something happens in the fiction that makes using this move difficult to trigger or play out, you may declare a new target for the move, or exchange this move for another one.

When playing the Surge remember:

- Struggle to define yourself beyond your power
- Love others, knowing hurting them is easy
- Share the burden with others

The Found

THE MEMORIES OF OTHERS HELP ME HIDE ME FROM MY OWN PAST
I EMBODY THE DREAMS AND CRUELTY OF THE APOCALYPSE
MY POWER IS INQUISITIVE, EMOTIONAL, AND STRANGE
MY HEART YEARNS TO KNOW AND BE KNOWN

YOUR NAME *(choose 1)*

- ☐ a strange name
- ☐ a name that conveys the depth of the unknown
- ☐ a name that reminds me of the mystery that birthed me
- ☐ a name someone else gave me to mark an auspicious date
- ☐ a name I need to decide on one day

YOUR LOOK *(choose 1-3)*

- ☐ a monstrous body that inspired horror movies
- ☐ a hypnotizing aura
- ☐ the smell of incense and flowers
- ☐ a terrifying mask that covers my beauty
- ☐ an ill-fitting costume
- ☐ scars from a time I cannot remember
- ☐ the coldest touch and warmest expression
- ☐ something that hints at my struggle to be human

YOUR ORIGIN *(choose 1)*

- ☐ I was found in an ancient tomb and wear the face of a legend
- ☐ I was found in an abandoned facility that performed cruel experiments
- ☐ I was found in an alien world and brought back against my will
- ☐ something else that describes how time forgot me and why I can't remember who I am

WHAT HAS REPLACED MOST OF YOUR MEMORIES FROM BEFORE DIVISION? *(choose 1)*

- ☐ waking dreams that corrupt or undermine my reality
- ☐ haunting shadows that mock me with distorted voices
- ☐ sharp memories of someone from another time and place
- ☐ a shivering sense of loss and a yawning abyss of nothingness
- ☐ something else that reminds me I must make new memories if I hope to outrun the past

YOUR IMPULSE

At the start of every session, choose one to explore during play. At the end of the session, answer the question—if the answer is yes, mark 1 XP or 1 Ruin.

- ***Did you reclaim a fragment of your memories?***
- ***Did you let go of one of your memories and replace it with a new one?***
- ***Did you open your mind or heart to another monster?***
- ***Did you act in a way that contradicts what you know of your past self?***
- ***Did you use the emotions or memories of another to create a cruel advantage?***

YOUR POWERS OF DARKNESS *(choose 2)*

- ☐ Telekinesis
- ☐ Telepathy and Mind Blasts
- ☐ Ancient Weapons of Magic
- ☐ Creature Affinity
- ☐ Power Absorption

WHAT DOES THE DARKNESS DEMAND OF YOU? *(choose 2)*

- ☐ to meet my cruel maker
- ☐ to destroy my friends before they destroy me
- ☐ to empower the Harbingers of the apocalypse
- ☐ to create an army of mindless puppets
- ☐ to open a permanent portal to a dark realm
- ☐ to hurt those who care for me
- ☐ something else that would make me truly alone

STARTING BONDS

- You were there when I was found. Do you pity or admire me? *(Gain one Bond with them)*
- You love me, but I don't understand love. Why won't you give up on me? *(Gain two Bonds with them)*
- Why am I tempted to give into What the Darkness Demands? *(Gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You)*

GAINING DARKNESS TOKENS

As the *Found* I gain 2-4 Darkness Tokens when I:

- Feel frustrated or scared
- React with uncertainty or cowardice
- Ask someone to listen to my wisdom
- Ask someone to open their emotions to me
- Embody a Condition that affects me

CONDITIONS

- ☐ Unreachable
- ☐ Defensive
- ☐ Introspective
- ☐ Obsessed

BREAKING POINT

Time weighs heavily on you, and there is much you have allowed yourself to forget. The puzzle box in your mind opens up, and there is no looking away from the truth.

Describe the terrible flashbacks that reveal your role in ushering in the apocalypse, and what this revelation drives you to do. The Keeper will add layers of heartbreak and despair to your memories. They will then reveal someone from your past determined to destroy you and all you hold dear. What clues do you see that reveal how close they are to tracking you down?

Playbook Moves

The starting move for the Found is **You Can't Hide Your Heart from Me**. Other playbooks cannot take this starting move as an advance. Choose one more move.

▣ You Can't Hide Your Heart from Me *(starting move)*

You are sensitive to the surface thoughts and strongest feelings of those around you. **When you deepen your senses**, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

On an 8-10 you sense more under the surface, ask two:

- What do you wish would happen?
- What are you hiding?
- What are you truly afraid of?
- Who or what do you love above all else?
- How can I make you trust me?
- What don't you realize you know? Draw a line between a Key and a Facet of the Mystery. Declare an irrevocable truth about the Mystery.

On an 11+ their mind bleeds into yours, choose one above and they will choose one to ask you as well. The Keeper tells you how their heart is corrupted by your power, gain one Bond with them.

On a 7- the darkness within you takes hold and will break the mind and heart of who you were connecting to. The Keeper tells you what price you must pay to save them from the worst of your power.

☐ Walk with Me in Dreams

You have learned how to travel through the portals that connect all dreamers. Even locations, objects, and Harbingers dream. **When you seek out insight or wisdom in dreams**, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 you find exactly what you are looking for. Choose two:

- You unearth a secret.
- You implant a suggestion that shifts reality.
- You hide something in the dream.
- You bring back something from the dream.
- Declare an irrevocable truth about the Mystery that you learn from the Dream. Rewrite or add a Facet of the Mystery that reflects this truth.

ON AN 11+ you come across something disturbing, choose one from above and one from below.

- You lose control of your powers in a terrible way, mark a Condition
- You are in the grasp of something horrifying, mark Ruin
- You endanger someone, destroy one Bond with them

ON A 7- the dream comes alive and leaks violently out into the world. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.

☐ A Man of a Thousand Faces

You have learned how to reflect the thoughts of memories of others, to help them see who they wish to see. **When you allow your form to fluctuate and take on the face of another**, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 the thoughts and memories come together in song and your form harmonizes with it, choose two:

- You look like one person who causes fear and easily intimidates others
- You look like a different person to different people, someone inconspicuous and easily underestimated
- The shape and form is stable and will last for as long as you can concentrate on maintaining it
- You gain the memories and thoughts of whoever you look like

ON AN 11+ your own thoughts and memories are discordant and the song falters for a moment, choose one above and one below:

- One of your own memories must be sacrificed, destroy one Bond
- You learn something disturbing through the thoughts and memory of another, mark a Condition
- An aspect of your subconscious escapes into the mind of another, mark 1 Ruin

ON A 7- a thought or memory bears the mark of a Harbinger, causing you to lose control of your form entirely. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.

☐ You Are Not Alone

When a PC is Torn Between and must make a choice, you may reach out to them psychically and tell them why they shouldn't be afraid.

Mark a Condition and ask them, "How do I help you believe in yourself?" They no longer have to make a choice and find a moment of clarity and calm. In addition, both of you gain one Bond with each other.

☐ The Truth Above All Else

When you Grasp Keys alone while inviting danger, take 3 Darkness Tokens before doing so.

☐ It Was Just Me for A Long Time

You spent many years alone before you were found by DIVISION. You have learned the wisdom of solitude, the strength in loneliness. Unlike other PCs you may create a Bond with yourself.

When you choose the wisdom of solitude, tell everyone how you spend time alone. What do you do? How is it calming, fruitful, or insightful? Gain one Bond with yourself. You may spend these Bonds with yourself as normal.

Ruin Moves

☐ Dark Puppet Strings

The darkness wants to be molded by you, and yearns for your control. When you take this move, create a puppet made from the dark and twisted thoughts you have collected from others over the years. Describe two emotions it can feel and understand.

When you seek to command your puppet mark one Ruin and choose one:

- It protects you or someone else important to you
- It creates a cunning diversion
- It passes itself off as someone or something else for a time
- It mirrors one power of darkness from another PC, immediately using it to great effect

Once the task is completed, the puppet wishes to escape into the land of dreams. Choose:

- Allow it to escape, knowing that it will create others like itself and infect more dreams.
- Mark one Ruin to leash it to you, for now. It will await your next command. The first time you do this, name it. It will see you as its parent.

☐ Where Do You End, Where Do I Begin?

You know that the heart is such a strong, but fragile thing. **When you know the desire or emotional state of an NPC (or a PC, if invited)**, you may touch them and alter it. Mark one Ruin and choose two:

- Deepen it
- Lessen it
- Bring it to the center
- Shift its nature
- Shift its target
- Remove it for a time

As long as you remain in control of their desire or emotion, you feel what they are feeling. You may release your hold on their heart at any time.

☐ Let Sleeping Gods Lie

Somewhere in your memories lies the truth—you were once a terrible and vengeful cosmic being, destroyer of souls and worlds, before heroes forced you into slumber. What you are now is just a dream come to life, while the real you continues to sleep, yearning for a new age of destruction.

Create your own personal Doomsday Clock with 12 ticks and name it ***The Dream Ends***.

When you reach out to your true self and take back some of your destructive cosmic power, choose:

- Mark one Ruin and tick ***The Dream Ends*** once. Cosmic dreams of terror bleed from you. The dreams cause horrifying hallucinations around you and the vulnerable are infected by corrupting nightmares. You cannot control who is harmed or the nature of their corruption.
- Mark two Ruin, and tick ***The Dream Ends*** twice. You wield cosmic dreams of terror like the sharpest weapon—infect a specific vulnerable target with horrifying hallucinations and bring one of their nightmares to life. In addition, gain one Bond with My True and Cosmic Form.

When ***The Dream Ends*** clock fills, you wake up and regain your True and Cosmic Form. Whatever the current Mystery is, it is set aside. In this moment, you become the next Harbinger of the apocalypse, emerging from an ancient Door of Power. You are whole, complete, but terrifying and beyond mortal comprehension. Give yourself a new name and title befitting the cosmic horror you are.

You are no longer part of DIVISION. The other PCs must deal with you, one way or another. Once your apocalyptic threat is dealt with, retire this character and create a new one.

☐ Crowned by Dream, Exalted by Nightmare

You have learned how to harness dreams and create great and terrible weapons from them. **When you turn dreams into a dangerous weapon**, mark Ruin and choose one:

- **It is a physical weapon.** Others can interact with it and pick it up. It can be physically destroyed.
- **It is an emotional weapon.** Only you or someone you give it to can wield it. It can be emotionally disrupted.
- **It is a weapon of darkness.** Any monster or creature of darkness can use it and see it, but the mundane and mortals cannot.
- **It is a weapon of pure nightmare.** It has a will and mind of its own. It creates itself. It is powerful, unstoppable. It is exactly what you need. It only honors your commands for a time.

Playing the Found

The Found is introspective and deeply empathic—they love while staring at the soul of another with eyes wide open. Their world is quiet and exists in between dreams. Their powers naturally lend to investigation and clarifying the context of the Mystery and the Keys of the apocalypse.

They gain Darkness Tokens by struggling to express and accept their fears, and encouraging others to express their private thoughts. Their powers of darkness are largely psychic or subtle, and their origin suggests time left them behind.

The unique question of the Found is ***"What has replaced most of your memories from before DIVISION?"*** While the Found will most likely have powerful memories and connections to DIVISION, the time before they were found is unclear. By choosing what haunts your memories, you build possible paths to what stunning revelations await you.

The Found's starting move, **You Can't Hide Your Heart from Me**, comes with a notable ability that requires no roll or trigger. The Found is always sensitive to the surface thoughts and strongest feelings of those around them. When you decide to deepen your senses, that's when you trigger the rest of the move.

The innate psychic ability of the Found provides other players a way to express their PC's inner monologue, knowing that the Found can glean some, if not all of these thoughts. Players should feel free to state that the Found cannot pick up on these thoughts, for whatever reason.

One of the questions the Found can ask is—*what don't you realize you know?* The answer to this question should inspire you, as you draw a line between a Key and a Facet of the Mystery. This must be an uncovered Key recorded on the Mystery Codex. If no Keys have been uncovered yet, the Keeper may choose to work something out with you narratively or mechanically, or simply tell you that option is not available to you right now.

Once the Found has drawn a line between that Key and a Facet of the Mystery, you may declare "an irrevocable truth". Both this connection to a Facet, and the truth, should be taken into account when someone decides to **Unlock Doom's Door**. Even if the result of the move is a miss, this connection and truth remains (*Connecting Keys and Irrevocable Truths,* page 207).

On a disastrous success, the target of the move will ask a question in turn. This means they can choose: *What don't you realize you know?* For example, if a supporting character asks this question, the Found will answer their question. The Keeper draws a line between the Key and Facet as normal, and also declares an irrevocable truth.

On a miss, your psychic powers overwhelm the target. The Keeper describes the price you must pay to save them from the worst of the consequences. If you decide to not pay the price, the Keeper will describe the worst case scenario.

Walk With Me in Dreams opens up a new plane of existence for the players to explore: the world of dreams. When you take this move, you are encouraged to define the laws and nature of dreams, and allow this to change as the story unfolds. One of the options on a roll of 8 or higher is *"Declare an irrevocable truth about the Mystery that you learn from the dream."* You may attach this truth to any Key the Omens have already uncovered, or take note of it somewhere on the Mystery Map.

In addition, the Found rewrites or adds a new Facet of the Mystery. This shows how the Found can perceive the context of the truth, or see the bigger picture. There is no limit to how much a Facet can be rewritten, or how many Facets can be added to the current Mystery. As long as it makes narrative sense to you, you are encouraged to rewrite or add as you like (*Manipulating Facets,* page 208).

A Man of a Thousand Faces gives the Found limited shape-shifting abilities, as they draw upon the thoughts and memories of those around them. If you choose both options, *"You may choose to look like one person who causes fear and easily intimidates others"* and *"You may choose to look like a different person to different people, someone inconspicuous and easily underestimated"* you can switch back and forth between these forms at will. However, the forms are not stable, and you won't have the memories and thoughts of the forms you take. If you don't choose either of those forms, the Keeper may instead tell you what form you take instead.

You Are Not Alone, **The Truth Above All Else**, and **It Was Just Me for a Long Time** all help the Found express their relationship with themselves and with others. Even if the Found can peer into the minds and hearts of others, it does not mean that they can always easily get along with the people around them.

The Found's Ruin moves show another side of psychic connection and emotional truth, and how tempting it is to control how others think and feel. These moves also introduce sinister twists and turns for the character.

When someone chooses to play the Found, it's important to ask how the other players feel about the manipulation of emotion, especially for moves such as **Where Do You End, Where Do I Begin?** Have an honest conversation with each other about it, and take note of how the move works.

In moves like **Dark Puppet Strings** and **Crowned by Dream, Exalted by Nightmare** the Found can confront what it means to create. The first move in particular asks the player to confront questions like sentience and the responsibility of creation.

Where Do You End, Where Do I Begin? gives the Found the power to subtly manipulate the state of an emotion and even the target of the emotion. The moment the Found uses this move on someone, they feel the same way unless they mark Ruin again.

Let Sleeping Gods Lie offers a shocking revelation: that the Found is a figment of a dream, and their true self is a being of pure cosmic horror. When you choose this move you are not guaranteeing that you will absolutely become an apocalyptic threat, but it does center that possibility. Remember to clearly communicate any secrets and desires with the other players.

This can sound like, "I really like this move and the power it brings, but I'm not sure if I'm going to actually end up becoming my True and Cosmic Form" or "I do eventually want to have this climactic showdown as this cosmic horror with everyone else, but I hope there's a chance for the character to be redeemed, maybe and choose a different path, before I switch to a new character" (*Mysteries, Interrupted,* page 218).

When playing the Found remember:

- Seek to understand the minds and hearts around you
- Struggle to be brave and true
- Fear the truths hidden in your lost memories

The Shade

I HAVE A SPECIAL AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH DEATH
I EMBODY THE COLDNESS AND END OF THE APOCALYPSE
MY POWER IS ENLIGHTENING, COLDLY LOGICAL, AND EPHEMERAL
MY HEART YEARNS TO GUIDE AND BE GUIDED

YOUR NAME *(choose 1)*

- ☐ a traditional name that conveys knowledge and history
- ☐ a name that reminds me of the mortal life I once knew
- ☐ a name someone else doomed me with
- ☐ a title I need to reclaim one day

YOUR LOOK *(choose 1-3)*

- ☐ a vaporous body contained by a suit
- ☐ an aura of strange glowing colors
- ☐ the smell of books and dark wood
- ☐ a face that can never settle on anything real
- ☐ a symbol that proves my soul belongs to another
- ☐ a clipped accent or sing song voice
- ☐ a ghostly companion that never speaks
- ☐ something that hints at my struggle to be human

YOUR ORIGIN *(choose 1)*

- ☐ I was a famous medium who lost my body in a terrible accident
- ☐ I got too close to the truth and died—but death would not take me
- ☐ I have no memory of my previous life and have a radioactive body with a limited half-life
- ☐ something else that describes how I lost my form to death but hold on to my soul tightly

WHAT FORM DOES DEATH TAKE TO SPEAK TO YOU? *(choose 1)*

- ☐ they wear the faces of those I failed to protect
- ☐ they freeze time and possess someone near me speaking through them
- ☐ they are the whistling wind and pouring rain and speak in broken poetry
- ☐ they wait for me in reflective surfaces and look like me before my death
- ☐ something else that shows how much Death cares for me

YOUR IMPULSE

At the start of every session, choose one to explore during play. At the end of the session, answer the question—if the answer is yes, mark 1 XP or 1 Ruin.

- ***Did you have an intimate or harrowing moment with Death?***
- ***Did you go too far in search of the truth?***
- ***Did you give into the temptation of the living and indulge in pleasure or vice?***
- ***Did you prioritize DIVISION's interests over your fellow monsters?***
- ***Did you find something or someone worth living for?***

YOUR POWERS OF DARKNESS *(choose 2)*

- ☐ Necromancy
- ☐ Let the Dead Speak
- ☐ Shadow Magic
- ☐ Supernatural Strength and Speed
- ☐ Machines Powered by Soul Magic

WHAT DOES THE DARKNESS DEMAND OF YOU? *(choose 2)*

- ☐ to fall in love with the destroyer of worlds
- ☐ to break the veil between the living and the dead
- ☐ to kill Death
- ☐ to consume every psychic in the world
- ☐ to destroy anything resembling friendship
- ☐ to reinvigorate an ancestral curse
- ☐ something else that would make me give up on my soul

STARTING BONDS

- You were there when I died. How did witnessing my death transform our relationship? *(Gain one Bond with them)*
- I love you, but I can't accept it. Why do you allow me to remain ignorant? *(Gain two Bonds with them)*
- Why am I tempted to give into What the Darkness Demands? *(Gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You)*

GAINING DARKNESS TOKENS

As the *Shade*, I gain 2-4 Darkness Tokens when I:

- Feel ignored or unimportant
- React with cold reason and logic
- Ask someone to follow my instructions
- Ask someone to ignore their heart
- Embody a Condition that affects me

CONDITIONS

☐ Lonely ☐ Distracted ☐ Vicious ☐ Obsessed

BREAKING POINT

Your delusion shatters, and you are forced to look at the painful state of your hollow soul. Death has left its mark on you—you are a twisted and miserable thing that yearns for mutual destruction. There is no going back for you, there is only the inconceivable void of this pitiful existence.

Describe how the void in your soul pulls at and weakens the life force of everyone and everything around you, hurting the innocent and the weak. The Keeper will tell you how Death gains more power through you, and how something beautiful in the world dies as a result.

Playbook Moves

The Shade's starting move is **Death Walked Here**. Other playbooks cannot take this starting move as an advance. Choose one more move.

▣ Death Walked Here *(starting move)*

Death reaches all places, and into the heart of all things. **When you seek to reconstruct events or learn something valuable in an area**, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

On an 8-10 Death shows you exactly what happened here. In addition, you draw Death close to you, ask two that Death will answer:

- What glimpse beyond these events can you show me?
- What important item or knowledge was taken from here?
- What evidence here will help my investigation?
- How can I use any of this as leverage?
- What draws Death close? Draw a line between a Key and a Facet of the Mystery. Declare an irrevocable truth about the Mystery.

On an 11+ the whispers of Death overwhelm you, choose one from above and one from below.

- Death lingers and holds you, mark a Condition
- Death shows you what you do not wish to see, mark Ruin
- You bring someone else closer to Death, destroy one Bond to no effect

On a 7- the laws of the dead and dying are compromised somehow. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.

☐ Soul Like a Steel Trap

Your cold analytical skills help you devise the perfect plan. **When you study a tense situation**, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 the plan starts to form, ask two:

- What do DIVISION files tell me about this?
- Which of our powers of darkness will be most effective?
- What weakness do I perceive?
- Who or what can help me?
- How could we best end this quickly?

ON AN 11+ ask one from above, but you come to a harrowing realization about the situation. The Keeper will ask you a difficult question that you must answer.

ON A 7- the Harbinger has prepared for this moment and a trap is sprung. Prepare for the worst.

☐ I'm the Expert Here!

When someone spends a Bond with you to receive the +1 or -1 bonus, they may ask for your expert advice. If they follow it, they may also choose one:

- They clear a Condition
- You gain one Bond on them
- They may change a detail or context about a Key

☐ Your Reputation Precedes You

When you first encounter a named NPC or Faction, you may declare that they have intimate ties with DIVISION. When you do so, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

The Keeper will tell you something significant and valuable, even on a miss.

ON AN 8-10 you know much about them, choose one:

- You have a significant connection, gain one Bond with them
- They trust you and/or DIVISION, clear a Condition
- Declare how they can help escape your doom, erase 1 Ruin

ON AN 11+ they are dangerous to you or DIVISION, the Keeper will say which. Choose one:

- You're drawn to them regardless of the danger, gain one Bond with them
- They stir the Harbinger within you, mark 1 Ruin

ON A 7- they have something on you. What terrible secret do they know about you?

☐ The Devil's Advocate

You have a mentor, someone ancient and terrifying who wears human skin. They tell you what you need to know, as long as you prove you are worth their care and interest.

At the start of each session, reflect on a moment with your mentor. Spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

On an 8-10 you flashback to a moment when your mentor was pleased with you. Their sinister riddles make sense of what is going on in the present. Choose two:

- They taught you that emotions only get in the way, clear a Condition.
- They taught you to recognize undercover DIVISION agents, name an NPC who is such an agent and gain one Bond with them.
- They taught you the cruel patterns of the apocalypse, declare an irrevocable truth about the Mystery—rewrite or add a Facet of the Mystery that reflects this truth.
- They revealed your destiny as a Harbinger, gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You.
- They tested you ruthlessly, and without mercy. Mark 1 XP.

On an 11+ you flashback to a moment when your mentor expressed their disappointment. Choose one from above, but you must prove your worth. Choose one:

- Report back information on your fellow monsters, to sate the appetite of your mentor. Destroy one Bond with a PC.
- You bargain with the Harbinger within you to gain power, mark 1 Ruin.

On a 7- you receive a dire warning or difficult orders from your mentor, the Keeper will tell you what happens next.

☐ Allow Me to Offer a Theory

When another PC is Grasping Keys, ask if they desire your expertise. If they do, work together to describe how you correct their method or line of reasoning. They roll as normal but in addition:

On an 8-10 any PC may add or change a detail of the Key the Keeper offers

On an 11+ the Keeper will provide a golden opportunity to avoid the worst of the consequences

However, on a 7- all the consequences of the roll affect you rather than the player who rolled, including the option to mark 1 Ruin in order to uncover a Key.

Ruin Moves

☐ You Can't Escape the Truth

Your hard earned knowledge can be used as a weapon, and you have learned how to sharpen the truth to its finest edge.

You may at any time reveal a dark and terrible secret of an NPC (or a PC, if invited) in a scene. Choose:

- Mark one Ruin, you speak softly and the truth hurts. They decide: give up something valuable in order to stay and fight, or preserve their own safety by fleeing or surrendering.
- Mark two Ruin, you speak in edges and cut mercilessly. They decide: they accept your words and do as you wish for now, or they offer you another truth at great cost to themselves.

☐ Death Broke Me First

When a PC is about to mark their final Condition and hit their Breaking Point, ask if they wish for you to intervene. If they agree, you summon Death to their side. You do not have to physically be present in the scene to be able to do so.

When Death comes, they ask you for something in return for their assistance. Choose:

- Mark one Ruin, and describe how Death will bridle their torment. The PC erases two Conditions. Describe how you appease and honor Death as they requested.
- Mark two Ruin, the Harbinger within you awakens and you force Death to serve you without honoring their request. The PC erases two Conditions. In addition, describe how Death noticeably marks you as a Harbinger.

☐ Death Always Leads to Life

You intimately understand that Death and Life are connected to all things. **When a person, object, or location is on the verge of death or decay**, you may choose to hold Death hostage and demand Life bargain with you.

When you hold Death hostage, choose:

- Mark one Ruin, and the ebb and flow of Life will reveal itself to you. You hold back Death for a time, the Keeper will tell you what Life demands in return.
- Mark two Ruin and shatter a part of your undying soul, the shard will imbue the person, object, or location instead. Death cannot touch them without your express permission.

☐ The Corridor of Doors

You have been with DIVISION long enough that they trusted you with a secret. Over the years, DIVISION has managed to collect ancient doors of power, and placed them within a metaphysical space of highly volatile energy. Each door exists within a fluctuating state of *open* and *not open*, *locked* and *unlocked*.

Only the most powerful in DIVISION know that the Harbinger within you can access these doors. They watch you with great interest.

When you allow the Harbinger within you to access the Corridor of Doors, unlock a door:

- The Door of the Spider Lord, of webs and cunning, of patience and guile
- The Door of the Veiled One, of spite and rage, of whisper and blade
- The Door of the Scaled Princess, of serpent and monsoon, of thunder and flood
- The Door of the Black Prince, of plague and despair, of swarm and ichor
- The Door of the Twin Moons, of gravity and stars, of darkness and void
- The Door of the Broken Mother, of oaths and strength, of war and conquest
- The Door of the Blood Queen, of pain and torture, of love and hate

When you have unlocked a door, choose:

- Mark one Ruin, whatever is behind the door is unleashed. You cannot completely control what happens next, but you are given a fleeting opportunity to bargain with whatever comes through. The door will disappear from the corridor, and reappear somewhere in the world. Cross it out from the list. When the corridor of doors is empty, lose access to this move and choose another.
- Mark two Ruin, whatever is behind the door acknowledges your power and control, and sees you for the fearsome Harbinger you will become. They will obey your commands for a time, before returning to the corridor of doors.

Playing the Shade

The Shade is strongly tied to the innate mystery of Death, and has a unique and personal relationship with Death. The Shade is caught between the living and the dead, and has learned how to observe and discern the nature of truth. This unique perspective helps the Shade clarify the context of the Mystery and the Keys of the apocalypse. They love as deeply as any of the other monsters, but may have a harder time expressing their emotions.

The Shade gains Darkness Tokens by placing logic and reason before anything else, and taking it upon themselves to instruct others. Many of their possible powers of darkness tie them closely to Death.

The unique question of the Shade is ***"What form does Death take to speak to you?"*** This helps frame Death to be someone or something the Shade interacts with, which means that you have authority on the nature of Death and how it affects the world, DIVISION, and the Mysteries.

Is Death a sentient being capable of direct conversation and bargains? Or is it a natural force beyond human comprehension, that can still express something akin to desire? Or does Death lie somewhere between the two? Whatever interpretation feels best, the Shade should be open to the idea that Death and their understanding of it may change as they play. Their understanding of Death may change depending on how they choose to interact with the world and solve Mysteries.

The Shade's starting move, **Death Walked Here**, has the Shade use uncanny insight to study their surroundings through the eyes of Death. This ties Death intimately to the narrative and Mystery. One of the questions the Shade can choose to ask is: *What draws Death close?* The answer to this will provide specific context to the Mystery, and the Shade draws a line between a Key and a Facet of the Mystery. This must be an uncovered Key recorded on the Mystery Codex. If no Keys have been uncovered yet, the Keeper may choose to work something out with you narratively or mechanically, or simply tell you that option is not available to you right now.

Once the Shade has drawn a line between that Key and a Facet of the Mystery, you may declare "an irrevocable truth". Both this connection to a Facet, and the truth, should be taken into account when someone decides to **Unlock Doom's Door**. Even if the result of the move is a miss, this connection and truth remains (*Connecting Keys and Irrevocable Truths,* page 207).

Soul Like a Steel Trap, further exemplifies how the Shade is best at observation and deduction. When the Shade suffers from a disastrous success in this move, the Keeper is encouraged to ask a question that will reveal how the Omens have shown too much of their hand or exposed a weakness. On a miss, the Keeper reveals how cunning the Harbinger of the current Mystery is.

The Shade's powers of deduction are formidable, and moves like **I'm The Expert Here** and **Allow Me to Offer a Theory** allow the Shade to directly affect the course of the investigation and how the Mystery unfolds.

The Devil's Advocate introduces a mentor the Shade has a tense relationship with. Someone in power has a vested interest in the Shade and their success, for their own cryptic reasons. They are eager to share

their wisdom with the Shade, but this information can come at a cost. If something happens in the fiction that makes using this move difficult to trigger or play out, you may declare a new mentor for the move, or exchange this move for another one.

Your Reputation Precedes You has the Shade create complex relationships for DIVISION, while displaying their considerable knowledge. This move can be triggered any time the Shade first encounters an NPC or Faction. This move can be used on an antagonist or even a Harbinger, and the Keeper is encouraged to lean into this.

The Shade's Ruin moves offer opportunities to use the truth as a weapon, and take control of the laws of Death.

You Can't Escape the Truth encourages the Shade to declare any revelation about an NPC. They can draw upon what they know about the current Mystery or circumstances, but are free to make up something entirely new and interesting.

Death Broke Me First offers the Shade a concrete way to hold back any other PC from reaching their Breaking Point. The Shade decides if they will give what Death desires in exchange for help, or if they will force Death to comply. The Shade cannot use this move on themselves to hold back their Breaking Point.

Death Always Leads to Life does have a fairly specific trigger—the Shade must be present when something or someone is on the verge of death or decay. The Keeper is encouraged to find ways to help the Shade to appear on the scene, or allow for a creative interpretation of the move's trigger so that it's easier to use the move and generate cool moments of play.

The Corridor of Doors is based on dangerous knowledge from DIVISION. While titles and names are attached to each door, it is not necessarily a being or entity that will come through the door once it is opened. At least, not in the way we understand identity and personhood. When interpreting what happens when a door is opened, you and the Keeper should draw upon the descriptions. **The Corridor of Doors** gives the Shade access to a specific set of ancient doors of power, but being able to control what happens next requires marking more Ruin. If the Shade forces the door to return to the corridor, it is assumed that it is locked again.

When playing the Shade remember:

- Hold Death close
- Hide your heart behind logic
- Decide why you chose to keep on living

The Last

I HAVE BEEN FORGED AND STRENGTHENED THROUGH TRAGEDY
I EMBODY THE GRIEF AND PEACE OF THE APOCALYPSE
MY POWER IS REFLECTIVE, SORROWFUL, AND HOPEFUL
MY HEART YEARNS TO COMFORT AND BE COMFORTED

YOUR NAME *(choose 1)*

- ☐ a temporary name I've grown used to
- ☐ a name I stole from those who destroyed my people
- ☐ a painful name I can never let go of
- ☐ a name that I need to remember one day

YOUR LOOK *(choose 1-3)*

- ☐ an alien body that cannot be disguised
- ☐ eyes that contain a galaxy
- ☐ unique skin oils that glisten and shine
- ☐ a wound I will never allow to heal
- ☐ a symbol that represents everything that was taken from me
- ☐ a litany of strange questions I ask
- ☐ a strange pet who won't leave my side
- ☐ something that hints at my struggle to be human

YOUR ORIGIN *(choose 1)*

- ☐ I am a refugee from a destroyed planet
- ☐ my people owned this Earth before humans
- ☐ I am the last of an army that was sent here to destroy all
- ☐ something else that describes why there will never be another like me in all the Universe

WHAT TRAGEDY DESTROYED YOUR PEOPLE? *(choose 1)*

- ☐ through our own ignorance and pride—we destroyed ourselves
- ☐ we were manipulated into becoming Harbingers in a series of apocalypses
- ☐ the machine gods we built to rule the galaxy turned on us
- ☐ one of our own betrayed us when we were on the brink of destroying cosmic entities of evil
- ☐ something else that speaks to how ancient and vast the tragedy is and how it can happen again to others

YOUR IMPULSE

At the start of every session, choose one to explore during play. At the end of the session, answer the question—if yes, mark 1 XP OR 1 Ruin.

- ***Did you share a story of your people and what you lost?***
- ***Did you seek solitude and turn away from hope for the future?***
- ***Did you allow yourself to find hope in the arms of another monster?***
- ***Did you compromise the beliefs and traditions of your people for the sake of someone else?***
- ***Did you find an innocent target for your grief, despair, or fear?***

YOUR POWERS OF DARKNESS *(choose 2)*

- ☐ Dimensional Phasing
- ☐ Flight and Speed
- ☐ Void Spells
- ☐ An Ancient Weapon of Destruction
- ☐ Time Distortion

WHAT DOES THE DARKNESS DEMAND OF YOU? *(choose 2)*

- ☐ to resurrect my people at the expense of humanity
- ☐ to awaken the leviathans in space
- ☐ to destroy all life on Earth
- ☐ to betray DIVISION
- ☐ to create a human vessel for a cursed god
- ☐ to betray those I love
- ☐ something else that would destroy all hope I bear

STARTING BONDS

- You know of another like me. How does keeping this secret from me protect me? *(Gain one Bond with them)*
- We loved each other, once. Why do we keep hurting each other? *(Gain two Bonds with them)*
- Why am I tempted to give into What the Darkness Demands? *(Gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You)*

GAINING DARKNESS TOKENS

As the *Last* I gain 2-4 Darkness Tokens when I:

- Feel lonely or rejected
- React with doubt or confusion
- Ask someone to tell me of their past
- Ask someone to doubt their future
- Embody a Condition that affects me

CONDITIONS

☐ Cornered ☐ Distant ☐ Merciless ☐ Despairing

BREAKING POINT

You've barely been able to keep the grief and anger at bay. It rises in you now, you feel time wither away as you relive the trauma and heartbreak. Your guilt turns you into a weapon.

Describe how you will make everyone and everything around you pay for what happened to your people, and how you go too far. The Keeper will tell you how the faintest hope surfaces before you destroy it, and who walks away to perpetuate this cycle of violence and pain.

Playbook Moves

The Last's starting move is **Ashes to Ashes**. Other playbooks cannot take this starting move as an advance. Choose one more move.

▣ Ashes to Ashes *(starting move)*

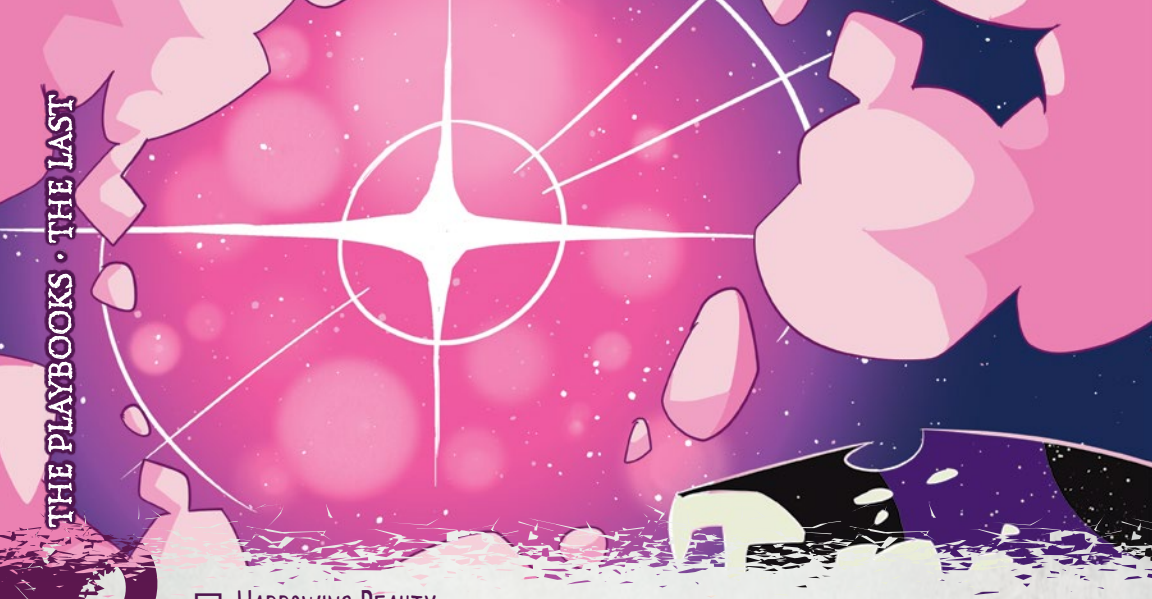
You are the last of your kind, there will never be another. **When you declare how the wisdom of your people may help in a situation**, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

On an 8-10 your wisdom shines brightly in the dark, choose two.

- **Recall ancient knowledge.** Ask the Keeper any question, they will answer it honestly and with great detail.
- **Awaken latent abilities within.** Choose another Power of Darkness from another playbook, you have access to it, for now.
- **Recognize the signs of portent hanging over your fellow monsters.** Each PC gains one Darkness Token.
- **See a fractured memory in the face of another monster.** Declare what that memory is and gain one Bond with that PC or NPC.

On an 11+ the dark of your despair threatens to consume you, choose one from above. The Keeper will describe how an aspect of your people's tragedy will be repeated, in spite of or because of your actions.

On a 7- the ashes of your people demand fire and retribution. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.



☐ Harrowing Beauty

Sometimes, your mask of humanity slips. **When you peel away at the mask of humanity**, you may mark a Condition to tear away your mask and reveal the true alien horror you are.

This will end an attack or interaction as your opponent is momentarily stunned by the revelation. Doing so will provide a fleeting opportunity before they come to their senses.

☐ Tragedy's Long Shadow

You will do whatever it takes to avoid the tragedy that befell your people. **When you're in a tense situation and see the echoes of that tragedy, tell the Keeper what you fear will happen**, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

On an 8-10 you know exactly how your friends can avoid the worst of what is to happen. Each PC around you gains one Bond with you.

On an 11+ you realize you must carry this burden alone. Add +1 to every move to avoid impending disaster as long as you are acting alone.

On a 7- it is worse than you feared, the Keeper will tell you what happens next.

☐ Reshaped by Despair

When you choose to Unleash the Dark, describe how your form changes through violence and beauty, causing those around you to despair. When you do, you may choose one from the following options, even on a miss:

- I uncover a Key at great cost
- I gain their affection and admiration
- I gain their fear and loathing
- I see into their soul and declare what I find there

☐ A Flickering Hope

At the start of each session, describe a memory you have of your people. Choose to speak with love, sorrow, or both. Say what you hope for, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

On an 8-10 your memory grants you an epiphany. Choose two:

- Describe how a fellow monster reminds you of someone from your past, gain one Bond with them.
- Describe how the tragedy of your people haunts you, gain a Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You.
- Describe the long overture of the apocalypse and how it claimed your people, uncover a Key.

On an 11+ your memory turns dark, choose one from above and the Keeper will describe a sign of terrible things to come or a significant complication.

On a 7- your hold on the memory falters. The Keeper tells you what price you will have to pay to save your memories from the Harbingers' grasp.

☐ You Are All I Have Left

You are the last, but there is an echo of the past that will never leave your side. Choose one:

- *a small machine that holds the soul of a loved one*
- *a specter who can only be seen by you*
- *a homunculus who looks exactly like someone you betrayed*
- *something that reminds you of what you lost and will never have again*

Gain one Bond with the echo.

When you spend time alone with the echo, gain one Bond with it. Tell everyone else at the table how your time together is spent. How is it lonely, sad, or moving?

Ruin Moves

☐ Tragedy Will Not Claim Another

You have grown attached to your fellow monsters and care deeply about their fates.

When a PC or NPC is in peril, mark Ruin to suddenly appear at the scene, ignoring usual limits of time, distance, or plausibility. In addition, gain one Bond with them.

If you wish to appear in a superior position or bearing a golden opportunity, mark Ruin a second time.

☐ I Carry the Hope of my People

You are determined to embody the beauty and terror of your people, no matter the cost. You will be beautiful, and all will look upon you with despair.

When you reach deep into your ancestral memory and embody the paragon of your people, choose:

- Mark one Ruin, describe how your form changes for a time, and temporarily gain another power of darkness from any playbook. In addition, gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You.
- Mark two Ruin, describe how your form changes forever, revealing more of the Harbinger you may become. Permanently gain another power of darkness from any playbook.

☐ Reaching Beyond Time and Space

You once had friends who stood and fought with you, long ago, in the light of better days. They were powerful, brave, and full of hope. They loved you enough to promise that oblivion could not hold them forever. But calling them comes at great cost to you.

When you break the sacred laws of time and space to reach one of these friends, mark one Ruin and choose one from below. Describe how your friend and their power come through for a time, they are even more powerful than you remember them being. Their time is short on this plane of existence.

- *a space-witch who died sacrificing themselves for you*
- *a shadowy creature of fear who hid their heart of gold*
- *an invincible warrior who died of heartbreak*
- *a being of pure elemental magic who gave you the last of their power*
- *a heroic leader with a dark past*
- *or someone who was seen as a hero to you and your people*

When your friend leaves, cross them from the list. The oblivion will claim them again, corrupting their soul forever and turning them into a Harbinger.

You may mark one Ruin again to offer oblivion a part of your soul instead, allowing your friend to finally find peace in the next world.

☐ Tower of Isolation

Hidden away on Earth is a fortress that was meant for your people. Now, there is no one else but you. When you take this move, choose two features of this place:

- *An aide or assistant*
- *interdimensional portals*
- *a containment system*
- *an oracle of knowledge and secrets*
- *the weapons of a great enemy*
- *mementos and artifacts of your people*
- *catacombs and all that remains of your people*
- *a sleeping god who should never awaken*
- *something else that hints at the long history lost forever to time and its treasures I must now guard with honor*

When you call upon the resources of your fortress to immediately solve a problem or address a challenge, say what you want to happen. The Keeper will tell you how your people expect you to use these resources lawfully through honor and duty. Choose:

- Mark one Ruin, call upon your limited resources and honor your people as tradition demands. The Keeper will describe how your fortress weakens, as more of your people's legacy fades.
- Mark two Ruin, ignore the traditions of your people and use your resources as you wish, feeding the Harbinger within you. In addition, gain one more feature for the tower as you learn about the secrets your people kept from you.

Playing the Last

The Last is a monster who is unlike any other—they have lost everything and must create a new path for themselves. Grief deeply touched them, and they will take the wisdom of their people to face the apocalypse. They show their love by protecting others from experiencing the same grief.

The Last gains Darkness Tokens by exploring their loneliness and giving into their doubt, despite their wisdom. They ask those around them to reflect on the nature of the past and future. Their powers of darkness echo the themes of time, and they can easily bend any laws of time and space.

This playbook shines best when a player draws upon the Last's tragic past and connects it to the current Mystery. Many of the Last's moves invite reflection, and encourage the player to declare how the present circumstances echo the tragedy that befell their people.

The unique question of the Last is ***"What tragedy destroyed your people?"*** You don't need to describe the tragedy in detail, but have a few ideas that will guide play. There will be opportunities to establish details and connect the past to the present.

The Last's starting move, **Ashes to Ashes**, asks the player to declare aspects of their people's wisdom. The Keeper may encourage the move by asking provocative questions like, "Your people had mortal enemies that resembled the dread werewolf, do you want to use **Ashes to Ashes** to recall their wisdom?" However, the Last should feel free to trigger this move on their own.

Harrowing Beauty and **Reshaped by Despair** describes how truly alien and other the Last is. In a world full of monsters, the player is encouraged to go all out in describing what could terrify another monster.

Tragedy's Long Shadow and **A Flickering Hope** both speak to the grief and tragedy that guide the actions of the Last. **Tragedy's Long Shadow** encourages the Last to bring context into a tense situation and work out with the Keeper what awaits. **A Flickering Hope** frames a more reflective moment to connect to the past.

In **A Flickering Hope**, the Last's memory of their people is at stake. On a miss, it is revealed that the memory is within the grasp of the Harbinger. What this means can be interpreted in different ways, and the Keeper is encouraged to describe what makes sense in the narrative. It could be that the Harbinger will burn away the memories forever, corrupt them, or use them to glean essential information that could spell trouble for the Omens or DIVISION.

If the Last decides to not pay the price to keep their memory out of the grasp of the Harbinger, the Keeper will describe the worst-case scenario.

You Are All I Have Left creates an NPC that is directly tied to the past and tragedy of the Last and their people. The Keeper should offer opportunities for the Last to connect to this character, and the NPC may even investigate Mysteries alongside the Last. To gain new Bonds, the Last must set aside the time to truly connect.

The Ruin moves of the Last show the twisted and despairing nature of grief, and the echoes of a shattered destiny. How far will the Last go to make sure history does not repeat itself?

Tragedy Will Not Claim Another and **I Carry the Hope of My People** allow the Last to directly and immediately help in the moment, gaining the opportunities and power necessary. When the Last permanently gains a Power of Darkness from another playbook, they should take one that hasn't been chosen by another player yet or change the context of a power to better suit their character. However, if the Last and another player want to explore the tension of bearing the same Power of Darkness, that can be very fun and interesting too.

A Tower of Isolation describes a valuable resource outside of DIVISION's jurisdiction. It gives the Last several tools to address challenges. It also establishes the traditions and duties of the Last's people. Using this move will either weaken the legacy of your people, or ignore tradition in order to gain more power.

Reaching Beyond Time and Space slowly builds a cast of NPCs who were once deeply connected to the Last, adding layers of loss to the character. The Keeper is encouraged to grant Bonds with them if it makes sense in the fiction, especially if the Last marks Ruin to keep a friend from turning into a Harbinger. Should a friend be lost to oblivion, the Keeper and players are encouraged to have them return as a Harbinger for a future Mystery.

When playing the Last remember:

- Leave your heart in the past
- Find others to create a future with
- Hold tightly to the double-edged nature of grief

The Fallen

I AM A PALE REFLECTION OF THE GLORY I ONCE WAS
I EMBODY THE HUBRIS AND VOLATILITY OF THE APOCALYPSE
MY POWER IS FADED, CRACKED, AND DECEITFUL
MY HEART YEARNS TO WORSHIP AND BE WORSHIPED

YOUR NAME *(choose 1)*

- ☐ a name god gave me with love
- ☐ a name I earned through fear and terror
- ☐ a name that can never be said out loud
- ☐ a name I need to give to someone else one day

YOUR LOOK *(choose 1-3)*

- ☐ a multitude of wings made of light and sound
- ☐ eyes that cover my entire body
- ☐ a cracked halo that bleeds
- ☐ limbs of a mythic creature
- ☐ a brand of a demon burned into my skin
- ☐ evidence of the god I once was
- ☐ mismatched clothing hastily thrown together
- ☐ something that hints at my struggle to be human

YOUR ORIGIN *(choose 1)*

- ☐ I was once a mighty god of this Earth but was killed by my worshipers
- ☐ I once claimed hell for my own but was betrayed
- ☐ I was an angelic creature destroyed by my jealous god
- ☐ something else that describes how far I have truly fallen and all I have lost

WHO ARE THE GODS WHO TAUNT YOU? *(choose 1)*

- ☐ those who I betrayed seek to destroy me once and for all
- ☐ ancient gods who have lost their power and ache for what is left of my divinity
- ☐ twisted gods I corrupted who are now monsters of myth and legend
- ☐ divine servants who grew in power as I have weakened
- ☐ something else that feeds my spite and sharpens my hubris

YOUR IMPULSE

At the start of every session, choose one to explore during play. At the end of the session, answer the question—if yes, mark 1 XP OR 1 Ruin.

- ***Did you bless the weak with the immeasurable glory of your presence?***
- ***Did you taunt or seduce those who would seek to destroy you?***
- ***Did you humiliate yourself for the intimacy you crave for?***
- ***Did you tell the truth when you shouldn't have?***
- ***Did you betray someone you love?***

YOUR POWERS OF DARKNESS *(choose 2)*

- ☐ Soul Venom
- ☐ Fae Glamour
- ☐ Fear Manipulation
- ☐ Weapons of Light and Sound
- ☐ Many Forms of Mythic Animals

WHAT DOES THE DARKNESS DEMAND OF YOU? *(choose 2)*

- ☐ to kill all the gods
- ☐ to storm heaven
- ☐ to create dark churches in my name
- ☐ to make my fellow monsters my worshipers
- ☐ to fall in love with a monster who can destroy me
- ☐ to curse the one I love
- ☐ something else that would have me fall again from greater heights

STARTING BONDS

- You made sure my fall was swift and terrible, why don't I hate you for it? *(Gain one Bond with them)*
- You long to worship me, your heart yearns for me. Why do I keep my distance from you? *(Gain two Bonds with them)*
- Why am I tempted to give into What the Darkness Demands? *(Gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You)*

GAINING DARKNESS TOKENS

As the *Fallen* I gain 2-4 Darkness Tokens when I:

- Feel others are beneath me
- React with spite or arrogance
- Ask someone to worship me
- Ask someone to betray another
- Embody a Condition that affects me

CONDITIONS

☐ Lustful ☐ Raging ☐ Forlorn ☐ Obsessed

BREAKING POINT

You were once beautiful and loved, perfect and beyond despair. You are gripped with how far you have fallen, how much of your glory was ripped away from you. You are unworthy of love, and your heart screams in anguish.

Describe how you use what little power you have left to bring you painfully close to your former divinity, and how it twists and consumes everything around you. The Keeper will tell you what horrors you birth and what twisted shadow of a god escapes quietly into the world.

Playbook Moves

The Fallen's starting move is **Call Me Master**. Other playbooks cannot take this starting move as an advance. Choose one more move.

▣ Call Me Master *(starting move)*

No one can resist the call of your dark heart, not for long anyway. **When you declare how you mesmerize onlooking NPCs with your faded power**, spend Darknesws Tokens and roll.

On an 8-10 you have claimed new worshipers. Choose two:

- They will fulfill a single command exactly as you wish
- They will grant you new powers temporarily, describe them
- They will create a place of worship and power in your name

On an 11+ you wonder if this is truly what you desire. Choose one from above and one from below:

- An old enemy takes notice and makes a move against you, mark a Condition
- Your true self emerges for a moment, destroy one Bond
- Receive a terrible vision of your future, mark one Ruin

On a 7- the song of your dark heart awakens a slumbering horror, the Keeper will tell you what dark and terrifying entity answers you call.

☐ Mother of Monsters

You have the ability to bring into the world terrifying monsters of beauty. Describe the process and what you wish to bring into the world. Spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 the child is perfect and obedient. It helps as you wish and sees you as a parent. Describe what dark powers it has.

ON AN 11+ the child is perfect and rebellious. It does as you ask for now, but it sees you as its lesser. The Keeper describes what powers it has. Choose one:

- Mark a Condition and describe how you convince them to worship you, for now
- Mark one Ruin and birth another exactly like it
- Do nothing, but know that it will become an enemy

ON A 7- something has gone terribly wrong—the Keeper will tell you what happens next.

☐ Fleeting Divinity

You have a collection of beautiful relics that were created in worship of you, and small fragments of your lingering divinity are contained within them.

After any roll you make, you can expend one of these relics to modify the result by +1 or -1. Describe the relic that you hold, and what happens as the divinity is within cracks and fades. Does it leave behind ash and blood? Glass and tears?

Whatever happens, it has been used up forever. Mark a Condition. You have at your disposal a vast supply of these beautiful relics, which may all be sacrificed at the cost of chipping away at your divinity.

☐ Honeyed Tongue and Clouded Minds

You have only survived in this wretched state because of your ability to lie and charm. **When you Unleash the Dark through lies**, you can also choose one from below, even on a miss:

- A part of my lie becomes truth
- I learn a valuable secret
- They are tempted to worship me
- They will give me temporary shelter or protection

☐ You Loved Me Once

When you first encounter a named NPC or Faction, you may declare how they loved or worshiped you before your fall. Spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

The Keeper will tell you something significant and valuable, even on a miss.

ON AN 8-10 you feel their heart open to you, choose one:

- They worship you still, gain one Bond with them
- They have what you need, clear a Condition
- The sight of them soothes your heart, erase 1 Ruin

ON AN 11+ they intoxicate you, choose one:

- Your fates are now linked in strange ways, gain one Bond with them
- They can help you seek vengeance on who wronged you, mark 1 Ruin

ON A 7- they serve those who forced your fall, their master makes a move against you immediately. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.

☐ The Lies That Serve Me

You learned through pain that secrets are a key aspect of survival. You may attempt to tap into your latent divinity to cloak reality with your lies for a time. **When you have a secret or truth you wish to conceal, describe what lie or distraction will replace it.** Spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 you encase the lie in what remains of your divinity. Choose one:

- The lie will last for as long as you wish it will
- The lie will hold up against any type of scrutiny
- The lie will not give birth to new lies beyond your control

ON AN 11+ the lie grows more powerful than you intended and your divinity cracks further. Choose two from above, but choose one below:

- Your divinity corrupts further and the Harbinger within you stirs, mark one Ruin
- Your heart buckles under the weight of the lie, mark one Condition

ON A 7- you lose control of the lie and the spark of your divinity you used to create it. The Keeper will tell you what happens next, prepare for the worst.

Ruin Moves

☐ Tremble Before Me

Your words once swayed gods and broke the gates of heaven. When you speak in your true and ancient voice, all living mortals are driven to despair.

When you Unleash the Dark and enforce your will socially or emotionally, you may choose to mark one Ruin. If you do, treat the move as if you rolled an 8-10 and choose four options instead of two.

☐ My Beloved Nemesis

The one who orchestrated your fall is out in the world, they thrive as they plot and scheme. When you take this move, tell the Keeper what grand plans they have and what power they stole from you. Explain why you still care for them. Gain one Bond with them.

When you wish to connect to your nemesis, choose one:

- Mark one Ruin: Describe a flashback that features an intimate moment between you two. How does it fuel your desire for revenge? Or do you wish for something else? Clear one Condition and gain one Bond with your nemesis.
- Mark two Ruin: They will appear on the scene, defying logic or plausibility. They will mysteriously offer to help you, for now. Gain one Bond with them and one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You.

☐ Desire Dressed as Faith

You know well that worship comes from desire, selfish and cruel. **When you touch a being, you may imbue them with an uncontrollable desire for someone or something.** Choose:

- Mark one Ruin: They do nothing else but work towards making that desire real, though they are aware that it is false, and that you did this to them. The same desire will burn within you. When the desire fades, their heart is left with a permanent void. They will attempt to fill that void by worshiping you in strange ways.
- Mark two Ruin: The desire becomes permanent for both of you, and they will spread that desire in others. In addition, gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You.

☐ I Will Rise Again

This is not the first time you have fallen. You will claw your way back up to glory and power, no matter the cost. You will do whatever it takes to rebuild what is lost, and you have a plan.

When you secretly work towards reclaiming your glory and power, mark one Ruin and choose one step of the plan below and strike it out. When you do, the Keeper will choose a consequence from the next list.

- Hide my presence and conceal my actions completely
- Create a place of power for myself
- Create a circle of loyal and powerful acolytes
- Gather an army that will serve me
- Bless my army with sacred weapons and armor
- Destroy the one weapon that can kill me
- Kill the one being who can stop me
- Prepare a new body or vessel to house me
- Remove my soul and hide it away
- Destroy my heart, that I may never be betrayed again

The Keeper describes the consequence you face for your growing power, they choose one.

- I know my memories of a PC or NPC will weaken my resolve, I must destroy all Bonds with them to no effect.
- A seed of doubt grows within me. I give a PC or NPC the means to weaken me.
- DIVISION learns of my plans and gains something similar to what I just achieved.
- A new Faction rises or grows more powerful, determined to destroy me. They will hound my every step and push back against my plan.

When all steps of the plan have been struck out, you have been reborn to your true glory and immeasurable power. In this moment, you become a Harbinger of the apocalypse, emerging from an ancient Door of Power. You inspire awe and fear as your divinity threatens to tear apart the world. A new Faction serves you to carry out your divine will. Give yourself and your Faction a new name and title befitting the god you are now.

You are no longer part of DIVISION. Describe how you disappear, and what you leave behind in DIVISION. Each PC gains one Bond with you and one Bond with your Faction. Retire this character and create a new one.

Playing the Fallen

The Fallen is a monster of charm and lies, they have plummeted from great heights. Their power lies in finding those who worship and love them, and using what faded power they have left. Their pride and hubris compromises their love, but they yearn for it just like anyone else.

The Fallen gains Darkness Tokens by giving into their pride. They ask others to reflect on worship, loyalty, and betrayal. Their powers of darkness can be more subtle than the other monsters. Their greatest power lies in their deceitful nature.

This playbook is best suited for players who enjoy social interactions and exploring tense emotional confrontations. The Fallen is entirely capable of defeating a Harbinger through sheer words and wit alone. The Fallen has strong themes of worship, making it easy for them to become a charismatic cult leader or the head of a dark church.

The unique question of the Last is ***"Who are the gods who taunt you?"*** When answering this question, consider what rivals, enemies, and horrors you wish to introduce into the ongoing narrative of the game. The Keeper is encouraged to introduce these gods into the current Mysteries, or complicate things for the Fallen when they roll a miss.

The Fallen's starting move, **Call Me Master**, allows for any number of worshippers to be gained. There's a lot of power to wield in this move, and the Keeper is encouraged to offer opportunities for the Fallen to collect more worshippers with what remains of their power. On a miss, the Keeper will create or reintroduce an entity that still wishes to worship the Fallen, but to great and terrible consequence.

Mother of Monsters provides the Fallen with the power of creation. Once the Fallen creates the child, the Keeper is encouraged to have them appear regularly, to give the Fallen a chance to play out the complex relationship between created and creator.

With **Fleeting Divinity**, the Fallen gains access to a personal collection of relics, which can be items, weapons, or artifacts. The player does not have to specify what these are. Waiting until the perfect time to declare a relic that ties in to the moment or current Mystery is a perfect way of using this move. This collection of also provides more context of the Fallen's past and what they lost.

Honeyed Tongue and Clouded Minds, **You Loved Me Once**, and **My Lovely Nemesis** all display the immense power of charm and emotional manipulation available to the Fallen.

You Loved Me Once has the Fallen declare a new lover or worshipper. This move can be triggered any time the Fallen first encounters an NPC or Faction. It can be used on an antagonist or even a Harbinger, and the Keeper is encouraged to lean into this. It should be noted that a Harbinger loving or worshipping the Fallen shouldn't impede their plans or turn them into a docile monster. This move does not disempower or change the plans of an antagonist. The Harbingers will always remain dangerous, but it can add to their motivation or desire.

The Lies That Serve Me further empowers the Fallen's supernatural ability to use lies. The move doesn't create a limit for the truth the Fallen wishes to conceal or the magnitude of the lie that will conceal it. But the lie is a wild thing that will require control. Any option that isn't chosen will compromise the power on display here.

The Ruin moves of the Fallen carry even greater powers of worship and social manipulation.

My Beloved Nemesis offers a rival for the Fallen to play against and creates a larger-than-life character. The Keeper should give this nemesis their own nuanced desires and opportunities for growth. If something happens in the fiction to make using this move difficult, you may declare a new nemesis, or exchange this move for another one.

Tremble Before Me makes the Fallen truly formidable, their words a terrible weapon. **Desire Dressed as Faith** has the Fallen explore the emotional spaces between worship and desire.

I Will Rise Again creates the long path to glory and power. If you take this move, it signals to the Keeper your desire to rise again should be central to the story, and they should offer opportunities within the Mysteries and fiction to do so. This move works best over several sessions, since it's best to use this move once a session, or twice, if the Keeper provides an opportunity to do so.

When you choose this move, you are not guaranteeing that you will absolutely become an apocalyptic threat, but it does center that possibility. Remember to clearly communicate any secrets and desires with the other players.

This can sound like, "Regaining glory and power is important to my character, but I'm not actually sure if it's the best thing for them. I'd be open to another character helping me find meaning in something else." or "I'm looking forward to this climactic showdown as a god with everyone else, but I'm not yet sure if I want them to be a true villain or not, what do you think?"

Should you choose to reach the culmination of this move, it will create a Faction that serves to carry the divine will of the Fallen. Because it takes so long to amass such power and create the Faction, it's assumed that the Fallen will describe a dramatic exit before appearing again as an NPC, alongside their Faction. However, if the players wish to play out a glorious confrontation before that happens, have at it (*Mysteries, Interrupted,* page 218)!

Before the Faction appears again in the story, work with your Keeper to create the Faction details. You can find a list of Factions on page 317 and create one based on the format on page 341.

When playing the Fallen remember:

- Weave devastation with charm and guile
- Yearn for love and power equally
- Claw your way to even greater heights

THE HUNGRY

THERE IS AN ENDLESS HUNGER THAT RAVAGES MY BODY
I EMBODY THE MENACE AND EMPTINESS OF THE APOCALYPSE
MY POWER IS INTIMATE, TRANSFORMATIVE, AND HARROWING
MY HEART YEARNS TO CONSUME AND BE CONSUMED

YOUR NAME *(choose 1)*

- ☐ a dangerous name
- ☐ a name that conveys blood and pain
- ☐ a name lovingly given to me by my victims
- ☐ a name I carved out from history
- ☐ a name that will herald my destruction one day

YOUR LOOK *(choose 1-3)*

- ☐ an unsettling grin that reveals nothing
- ☐ beautiful clothing that hides what I can never show
- ☐ long hair that moves of its own accord
- ☐ a multitude of eyes and teeth that I cannot fully control
- ☐ a scar from the one who loved me most
- ☐ evidence of the wild beast that hides and strains against my skin and bone
- ☐ a shattered collar that I will never take off
- ☐ something that hints at my struggle to be human

YOUR ORIGIN *(choose 1)*

- ☐ I was cursed by the first of my kind and chosen to be their beloved scion
- ☐ I was driven by hubris and sorrow and consumed more arcane power than I could hope to control
- ☐ I should have died long ago, but survived by desperately feeding on and consuming others
- ☐ something else that describes the depth of my terrible hunger and why it can never be sated

WHAT DO YOU FEED ON AND WHAT REMNANTS DO YOU LEAVE BEHIND?

(choose 1)

- ☐ I feed on human flesh and blood—leaving behind more that hunger like me
- ☐ I feed on desire and hope—leaving behind an uncontrollable addiction to pleasure or pain
- ☐ I feed on memory and dream—leaving behind troublesome shades of the subconscious that escape into the world
- ☐ I feed on monsters and fear—leaving behind volatile curses
- ☐ I feed on magic and secrets—leaving behind fragile cracks in reality
- ☐ something else that describes how dangerous my hunger is and how it draws in terrifying scavengers

YOUR IMPULSE

At the start of every session, choose one to explore during play. At the end of the session, answer the question—if yes, mark 1 XP OR 1 Ruin.

- ***Did you surrender to the hunger within you at the worst possible moment?***
- ***Did you find a willing victim to sate your hunger?***
- ***Did you infect another monster with hunger or desire?***
- ***Did you protect someone pure and beautiful?***
- ***Did you offer another kindness at great cost to yourself?***

YOUR POWERS OF DARKNESS *(choose 2)*

- ☐ Corrupting Touch
- ☐ Haunting Aura
- ☐ Transfiguration Through Pain
- ☐ Mystical Power I Stole From My Victims
- ☐ Weapons of Blood and Bone

WHAT DOES THE DARKNESS DEMAND OF YOU? *(choose 2)*

- ☐ to create others as hungry as myself
- ☐ to consume what lies beyond doom's door
- ☐ to corrupt what is beautiful
- ☐ to love what can never be mine
- ☐ to be feasted upon by the most powerful Harbinger of the apocalypse
- ☐ to destroy the good in those I love and care for
- ☐ something else that would consume me and leave nothing of me

STARTING BONDS

- You remember what I was like before my hunger claimed me, why do you wish to protect others from me? *(Gain one Bond with them)*
- Your heart wishes to consume me, why do we bring out the worst in each other? *(Gain two Bonds with them)*
- Why am I tempted to give into What the Darkness Demands? *(Gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You)*

GAINING DARKNESS TOKENS

As the *Hungry* I gain 2-4 Darkness Tokens when I:

- Feel a yearning for what I cannot have
- React with pettiness
- Ask someone to feed me a part of themselves
- Ask someone to give in to their hunger
- Embody a Condition that affects me

CONDITIONS

☐ Raging ☐ Lonely ☐ Lustful
☐ Hunger Condition: _____
☐ Hunger Condition: _____
☐ Hunger Condition: _____

BREAKING POINT

Whatever was pure and good in you was fed to your hunger long ago, and now you are only emptiness and malice, a mockery of life and dignity. You are nothing but ache and pain, desperation and terror. You are only your hunger, you can only bring misery and suffering to others.

Describe how your hunger ravages and cruelly transforms your body, how you lose control of the monster inside you and leave carnage and terror in your wake. The Keeper will tell you how your hunger infects and creates a multitude of monstrosities as hollow and soulless as you are.

Playbook Moves

The starting move of the Hungry is **The Gnawing Edge of Hunger**. Other playbooks cannot take this starting move as an advance. Choose one more move.

▣ The Gnawing Edge of Hunger *(starting move)*

When you surrender to the hunger within you, describe how your body transforms and what you feed on. Spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 you blunt the worst edges of your hunger and feed only as much as you need. Choose one:

- Describe how your form becomes more human, clear one Condition.
- Describe who you wish you could feed on instead, gain one Bond with them.
- Give into the euphoria of the feeding, describe how you feel and create or replace a Hunger Condition to reflect this.

ON AN 11+ your hunger grows deeper, edged with endless teeth as your humanity slips further away. Choose one:

- Ask the Keeper what the Harbinger within you screams for, gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demand of You. If you give into the Harbinger, clear one Condition.
- Give into the worst of your hunger and go too far, inviting chaos and terror. Name a new fear you have and create or replace a hunger Condition to reflect this.

ON A 7- you lose control of the hunger completely, the Keeper describes how your form twists into obscene and heartbreaking new shapes. Prepare for the worst.

☐ The Better to Eat You With, My Dear

When you reflect on the Keys uncovered thus far, you may feed on an aspect of a Key. The Keeper describes how your body violently changes in response. Mark a Condition to reflect how the transformation makes you feel.

Choose two questions to ask the Keeper, they will answer honestly and in great detail:

- What do my eyes feast on that others have missed?
- What do my teeth tear away to reveal someone else's hunger?
- How do my claws break the Key to change it into a truer shape?
- How does my blood purify the Key and lead me to another?

☐ Gaze Into My Heart's Abyss

When you Reveal Your Heart to someone, you may show them how your hunger ravages and breaks you. If you do, you choose one from below, even on a miss:

- Whisper of how you wish to feed on them and leave nothing behind, gain one Bond with them
- Ask them to reveal a vulnerability with you that they will share with no one else, if they do, they clear one Condition
- Ask them why they hunger for you, create or replace a Hunger Condition that reflects their desire for you

☐ Do Harbingers Dream of Monsters Like Me

You have acquired a taste of power that only a Harbinger can wield. Under your skin, carved into your bone, burrowing in your flesh, is what remains of the Harbingers you have consumed. **When you tear away at your skin to reveal what remains of a slumbering Harbinger**, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 your body ripples in perfect sync with what remains of the Harbinger's power. Choose what your body changes into, for now:

- A Harbinger of elemental strength and fury, immediately inflict two Conditions on a target but take one in return
- A Harbinger of jagged shadows and haunting whispers, uncover a Key at great cost
- A Harbinger of ethereal and fleeting beauty, ask who is most captivated by you and gain one Bond with them
- A Harbinger that mirrors your hidden desire and power. Create or replace a Hunger Condition

ON AN 11+ another Harbinger within you seeks to re-form itself, tearing at your flesh and remaking it in their glory. Choose one from above and one from below:

- A Harbinger breaks free from the prison of your flesh, and escapes into the world carrying an infectious aspect of your hunger.
- Mark a Condition or Ruin to allow the Harbinger to feed on you and force it to slumber again, and describe how your body twists into a horrifying new shape to reflect this.

ON A 7- a terrifying Harbinger within you awakens, one that you did not mean to call upon. They break you open, feed on your heart and mind, and toss you aside. The Keeper will tell you what happens next, prepare for the worst.

☐ Enthralled by You

The hunger inside of you yearns for the innocent, to transform mortal flesh into an endless void filled with teeth. **When you share an intimate moment with an NPC willing to become your thrall, ask them if they desire you.** If they say yes, describe the feeding. Spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 they feed on you in turn, and the hunger within you infects them slowly leaving you euphoric. Choose one:

- They are beautiful and perfect, unlike you. They will not survive the hunger for long. Gain one Bond with them and give them a single command. After they fulfill the command, they will soon perish.
- They are haunted and terrifying, like you. They will outlive you and can never be harmed by you. Gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You, they will spend the rest of their immortality working towards fulfilling What the Darkness Demands of You.

ON AN 11+ the hunger corrupts them and breaks them, reforming their shape into the seed of a Harbinger. Choose one:

- You hide the true nature of who they are and protect them. Before they vanish, they give you a Key at great cost. When they return, they will be a Harbinger seeking an ancient Door of Power.
- You turn them over to DIVISION, where the rest of your failed thralls are imprisoned. Gain one Bond with DIVISION and mark a Condition that reflects how this makes you feel.

ON A 7- something within your would-be thrall seduces the hunger, and they gain more power than you were ready to give. The Keeper describes what happens next. Prepare for the worst.

☐ I Remember the Taste of You

You've fed upon countless victims, and their remnants merged inside you to become a unique consciousness. This alien horror living under your skin will one day consume you in turn.

When you first encounter a named NPC or Faction, you may declare that the remnants within you recognize them. When you do so, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

The Keeper will tell you something significant and valuable, even on a miss.

ON AN 8-10 the remnants whisper many secrets, choose one:

- You once fed on them, gain one Bond with them
- The sight of them calms the hunger within you, clear a Condition
- They may one day consume you, erase 1 Ruin

ON AN 11+ the sight of them drives the remnants within you into a frenzy, choose one:

- You offer them a part of you to feed on, gain one Bond with them
- They will one day kill the hunger within you, mark 1 Ruin

ON A 7- they know about the remnants within you and the power of your hunger. They will immediately place you in a vulnerable position, the Keeper will tell you what happens next.

Ruin Moves

☐ The Story of You Carved into My Flesh

When you share an intimate moment with a PC, ask them if you may feed on the Harbinger within them. If they say yes, describe the feeding and choose:

- Mark one Ruin, unleash the hunger for a single moment and leave behind loving scars on them. You clear one Condition and they gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands.
- Mark two Ruin, and tear away at your skin and bone until you reveal a new aspect of your monstrosity to them. Ask the PC if the beast under your skin entices, horrifies, or both. Create a new Hunger Condition that reflects how you make them feel. They clear all their Conditions.

☐ Your Ruin on My Lips

When you share an intimate moment with a PC, ask them if they will shed their skin for a moment to show you the Harbinger they may one day become.

If they do, you feast upon their Ruin. Erase any number of Ruin marks they have, transferring their Ruin marks to your own track.

If you share What the Darkness Demands of You and how it tempts you, they may choose to feed off your Ruin instead.

☐ The Purity of My Reflection

Imprisoned within DIVISION is your reflection, purified by your hunger. They were once a person, long ago. But now they only mirror the worst aspects of you, showing on their skin what horror lies beneath the surface of you.

When you share an intimate moment with your reflection, describe how their body has changed to show what you hide from all others. The Keeper will describe why they still love you. Choose:

- Mark one Ruin, allow your reflection to feed on you. They will lovingly sift through your memories and fears. Ask the Keeper a question and they will answer it honestly and with great detail. In addition, gain one Bond with your reflection.
- Mark two Ruin and feed on your reflection with reckless abandon. Describe how they become more grotesque as you become more beautiful. Gain a new Power of Darkness permanently. In addition, gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You.

☐ Until Only Hunger Remains

You and the hunger know each other intimately—it has broken and remade you again and again over the years, leaving behind your insides changed and yearning. You know that the hunger is reshaping you to fulfill its greatest desire.

When you take this move, create your own personal Doomsday Clock with 4 ticks and name it ***Only Hunger Remains***.

When you are about to hit your Breaking Point, you can choose to give into desperation and feed on yourself instead, allowing the hunger within to grow stronger. Mark one Ruin and tick ***Only Hunger Remains*** once. Clear all your Conditions and choose three new unmarked Hunger Conditions from the list below:

- Ravenous
- Twisted
- Brutal
- Despairing
- Volatile

When the ***Only Hunger Remains*** clock fills, you are finally consumed by your hunger. Whatever the current Mystery is, it is set aside. In this moment, you become the next Harbinger of the apocalypse, emerging from an ancient Door of Power. Your bones and flesh have been reshaped to reflect the truth of who you are, displaying the exquisite pain and torture you subjected your victims to. Give yourself a new name and title befitting the grotesque horror you are.

You are no longer part of DIVISION. The other PCs must deal with you, one way or another. Once your apocalyptic threat is dealt with, retire this character and create a new one.

Playing the Hungry

The Hungry is both predator and prey. Their hunger gives them the power to hunt others and feed on them, but they are twisted and driven by the same hunger. Their power is as transformative as it is cruel, and their yearning for intimacy is palpable and dangerous. Hunger sharpens their love, but they wish for something true and lasting.

The Hungry gains Darkness Tokens by engaging with the merciless nature of their hunger. They ask others to consider what they want and to take it. Their powers of darkness are intimate and hint at a pain that the Hungry can never be released from.

This playbook is best suited for players who want to be undeniably monstrous, while centering heightened emotions and intimacy. Unlike the other playbooks, the methods of the Hungry are far more fearsome. Their hunger will push the Hungry to the point of breaking, and body horror can often come into focus.

The unique question of the Hungry is ***"What do you feed on, and what remnants do you leave behind?"*** The answer to this question will dramatically change the nature of the Hungry, and flavor every playbook move accordingly.

The Hungry's starting move, **The Gnawing Edge of Hunger**, centers feeding and how it can transform the Hungry. The hunger is ever present, but it's up to you as a player to decide how it affects your character and when you surrender to it.

The Hungry handles Conditions differently from other playbooks. The Hungry begins with three Conditions, instead of the usual four. However, the Hungry can gain up to three more, called Hunger Conditions. Several playbook moves offer opportunities for creating and replacing Hunger Conditions, and will often guide you on creating the emotional make-up of your character, which can be an ever-shifting thing.

Until a Hunger Condition is created, it cannot be marked as normal. Meaning, if you do not create any Hunger Conditions, it only takes three marked Conditions for the Hungry to hit their Breaking Point. If you create all 3 Hunger Conditions, it takes six marked Conditions for the Hungry to hit their Breaking Point.

The Hunger, as cruel and destructive as it is, helps you feel emotions more deeply before reaching your Breaking Point.

When you create a Hunger Condition, choose an empty Hunger Condition on your character sheet and name what the Condition is. When you replace a Hunger Condition, choose one that's already named and replace it with the new one.

The Better to Eat You With, My Dear has the Hungry feed on a Key to gain more information. The Keeper is encouraged to interpret these questions in any number of ways, but the Hungry may also refine the question as they choose. For example, the Hungry may choose *"What do my teeth tear away to reveal someone else's hunger?"* and further clarify, "I know we got this Key from Jen Fable, what is she truly hungry for?" or "Do I have a sense of what the Harbinger's hunger is?"

Do Harbingers Dream of Monsters Like Me has the Hungry reveal the harrowing depths of the hunger, and embodies the versatility of the playbook. On a disastrous success, the player must decide if what remains of the Harbinger will escape, or if the Hungry will hurt themselves to force the Harbinger to return to a dormant state. The narrative implications of this move are numerous, and both the Keeper and the Hungry are encouraged to lean into this.

The miss details that the awakened Harbinger will "feed on your heart and mind." What this means and its consequences are up to how you and the Keeper decide to interpret such a prompt. Are a part of your emotions now inaccessible to you? Does the Harbinger learn confidential information about DIVISION? Lean into what's fun and interesting.

Enthralled by You introduces the idea of the Hungry creating a thrall, a dangerous act with lasting consequences. This move can only be used on an NPC willing to become a thrall, and only by expressing the explicit desire for the Hungry can the move be activated. There is no genuinely good outcome for the thrall, there is only the extent to which they can serve the Hungry. Using the hunger on another being will only lead them to despair.

The Ruin moves of the Hungry show horrifying depths of the hunger and the cruel and sincere intimacies they're capable of.

The Story of You Carved into My Flesh and **Your Ruin on My Lips** offer an opportunity for both the Hungry and another PC to reveal the Harbinger they may one day become, in a moment of complex and haunting intimacy.

The Purity of My Reflection introduces a truly wretched character who is bound to the Hungry and loves them. The reflection is a metaphorical and literal mirror, who forces the Hungry to confront their monstrosity and consequences of their hunger. The Keeper is encouraged to foster a complex relationship between the reflection and the Hungry.

Because the reflection is imprisoned in DIVISION, it may be difficult for the Hungry to trigger this move while investigating a Mystery. Offer opportunities for the Hungry to return to DIVISION as they like, or have them trigger this move and play it out as a flashback.

Until Only Hunger Remains outlines a terrible end for the Hungry that comes far more quickly than their fall to ruin. Whenever the Hungry uses this Ruin move, they are ensuring they stay in a fight longer and reinvigorate themselves, but in doing so they strengthen the Hunger each time.

The Hunger Conditions you choose as a result of this move can be replaced as normal through other moves.

When you choose **Until Only Hunger Remains**, you are not guaranteeing that you will absolutely become an apocalyptic threat, but it centers that possibility. Remember to clearly communicate any secrets and desires with the other players.

This can sound like, "I definitely want to court tragedy with my character and come close to being completely consumed by the hunger, but I don't know if I actually want to go all the way there" or "I want to work towards this climactic showdown as this grotesque version of myself against DIVISION, but I really want to spend the time getting close to everyone so that the confrontation hurts that much more" (*Mysteries, Interrupted,* page 218).

When playing the Hungry remember:

- Struggle with the hunger
- Seek intimacy at every opportunity
- Confront the horror of a body you cannot control

End of Session

End of Session Questions

At the end of every session, the Keeper will ask each player questions about their PC. This is a good time to wind down, reflect on the events of the session, and think about where a character could be headed in future sessions.

A session of *Apocalypse Keys* is likely to have intense twists and turns, starting revelations, and it's easy to build up several narrative layers in just a few hours. By taking the time to review what happened together, it's a great way to highlight important moments and consider how they affected the characters.

Each player answers the following questions for their PC:

- ***Did you express your monstrous nature and/or express your humanity?*** If yes, mark 1 XP.
- ***Did you learn something significant about yourself and/or your impending ruin?*** If yes, mark 1 XP.
- ***Did you learn something significant about a fellow monster?*** If yes, mark 1 XP.
- ***Did you uncover at least one Key of the apocalypse or attempt to Unlock Doom's Door?*** If no, mark 1 Ruin.

Unpacking the Questions

Did You Express Your Monstrous Nature or Your Humanity?

This question helps the player decide for themselves what is monstrous about them and what is human. Other players may make suggestions, but ultimately the player defines for themselves what it means to be a human and what it means to be a monster.

In *Apocalypse Keys*, Ruin tracks your monstrous nature and the temptation towards becoming a Harbinger. In other words, the game illustrates the monstrous nature of the Omens. Humanity is not tracked in a similar fashion, and this is by design. The world is quick to define what it means to be a monster, and proving your humanity is difficult.

Humanity and how it is defined against or alongside the monstrous nature of the Omens is a theme players are invited to explore, a question that only they themselves can answer. Monstrousness and humanity are not dichotomous, the relationship between the two is messy and visceral.

When playing, you'll find that various monsters and humans define these themes differently. Only you can decide for yourself when you are a monster that evokes fear and when you are a human deserving of love.

When you decide if you have expressed your monstrous nature or expressed your humanity, what this looks like could change with every session, or even several times during a session. Narratively, it can be influenced by:

- How humans treat monsters
- How monsters feel about humans
- The ways a monster is denied their humanity or made to feel other
- If your Omen expressed their emotions or vulnerabilities in a significant way

If you did any of these things during the session, you probably expressed your monstrous nature or expressed your humanity:

- Your Omen often suffered from disastrous success, rolling an 11+
- Your Omen was often **Torn Between**
- You often marked Conditions or Ruin for your Omen
- Your Omen hit their Breaking Point

Did You Learn Something Significant about Yourself or Your Impending Ruin?

This question reminds players and the Keeper to introduce new aspects of their characters and what possible future awaits them. It's up to the player what counts as significant, and this is a good time for other players to offer what they thought was a cool revelation or moment.

These revelations during a session can look like:

- You revealed more of your Omen's origin or past
- Your PC had an emotionally significant moment with another character
- You explored What the Darkness Demands of You and how you are tempted to give in

If you did any of these things during the session, you probably learned something significant about yourself or your impending ruin:

- You were **Torn Between** and made a surprising choice
- You chose to **Reveal Your Heart** and revealed something new
- You spent a Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You
- You filled your Ruin track and revealed a glimpse of what your Omen could be like as a Harbinger

Did You Learn Something Significant about a Fellow Monster?

This question reminds players to interact with the world and its monsters. This can apply to other PCs and NPCs who are monsters. It encourages curiosity and interest in other players and their characters.

During a session, this could look like:

- Being present during a pivotal moment or revelation
- Engaging in meaningful moments of emotional intimacy
- Asking questions about another Omen's origin, their powers of darkness, or What the Darkness Demands of You

If you did any of these things during the session, you probably learned something significant about your fellow monster:

- An Omen **Revealed Their Heart** to you
- You spent a Bond with someone
- You erased 3 Bonds with an Omen or NPC to declare a truth about them

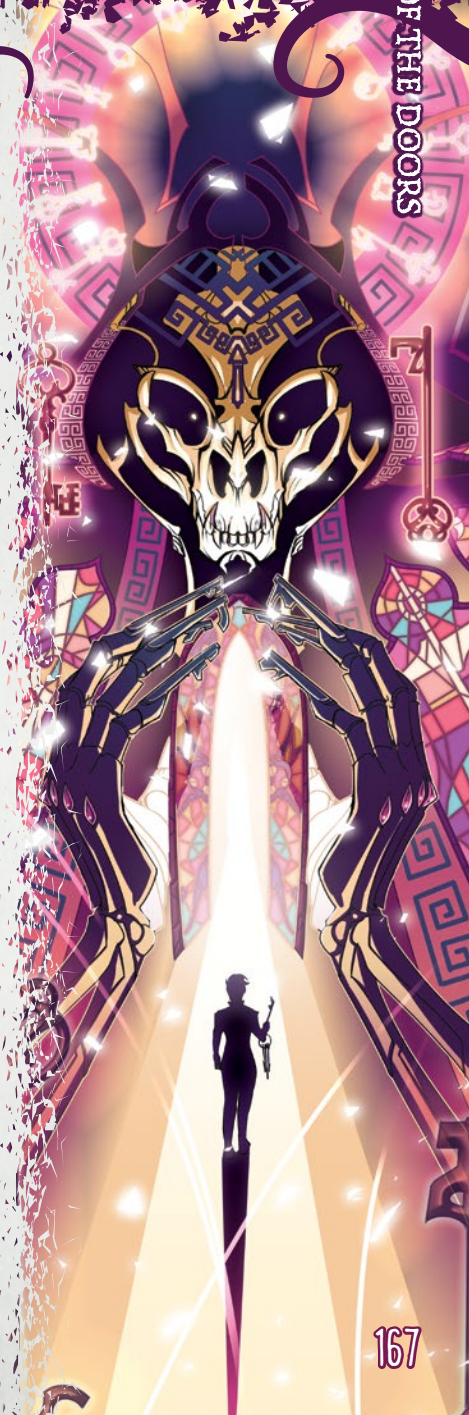
Did You Uncover at Least One Key of the Apocalypse or Attempt to Unlock Doom's Door?

This question emphasizes the urgency of the investigation and the dreaded nature of the Mystery. Time is running out. If your Omen did not uncover at least one Key or make an attempt to **Unlock Doom's Door**, they mark Ruin.

This is a reminder that as Omens, the PCs must actively resist the call of the Harbinger within them. When they are unable to take concrete action to stop the Harbinger or reach the ancient Door of Power first, their fate pulls them inexorably towards a darker path. This existential dread and cruel fate is represented by marking Ruin.

However, if another player Unlocked Doom's Door at the beginning of this session and the rest of the time was spent on the ensuing battle and aftermath, disregard this question. This also applies to sessions spent in between Mysteries at DIVISION (*In Between Mysteries,* page 192).

The Keeper of the Doors



As the Keeper of the Doors, your role is a little different from the other players. You help bring life to the world, deepen the shadows of mysteries, and provide the players with opportunities to feel deeply and defy the apocalypse.

You are a facilitator that takes note of what the players are excited about and what they engage with in the world. What powers of darkness have the players chosen? How does their origin affect their present? What does the Darkness Demand and how does it define one possible future? Allow these answers to guide the themes, experiences, and events you'll introduce during investigations.

If this is your first time facilitating a game or running *Apocalypse Keys*, it can be a little intimidating. In the same way that the players are learning to play the game, you are learning how to facilitate an evocative Mystery built on heartfelt emotion. You have at your disposal guidelines and a set of tools to help you run the game smoothly.

The Omens of DIVISION are here to investigate what the Harbingers of the apocalypse are up to. The Harbingers are manipulating things from the sidelines, using monsters and humans alike in pursuing the doors of ancient power and acquiring the means to bring forth the end of the world. What this looks like is embodied in the basic moves.

Principles

As a Keeper, the first thing to keep in mind are the **principles**. This is a general set of guidelines to help you create the right atmosphere for the game:

- **Keep the Mystery strange, foreboding, and personal**
- **Play to find out what happens**
- **Don't worry about not having the answers**
- **Offer ruin and hope in equal measure**
- **Offer dangerous opportunities**
- **Show the monstrosity of the world**
- **Be a fan of the Omens**
- **Keep it emotional, put relationships first**
- **Uphold the Rule of Cool**
- **Make DIVISION a complex home**
- **Hint at the Harbinger they may become**
- **Remind them that the world does not accept them**

Keep the Mystery Strange, Foreboding, and Personal

When an Omen uncovers a Key, cultivate an atmosphere of intrigue and growing horror. There are many subtle ways to evoke fear and dread, experiment to find out what thrills your players.

Every so often, connect a Key or an aspect of the Mystery to one of the PCs. The more personal and intimate, the better. Perhaps a ritual dagger is from the dimension the Summoned is from. Describe how the Found had seen a Key during one of their dreamwalks. The Omens come across a rotting place of worship that was once built for the Fallen.

Keep the Mystery personal. The Omens are the main characters in the story you're weaving together. Their presence and actions should affect the story in significant ways. Each Omen is a larger-than-life character. Their origin, What the Darkness Demands, and their impulse will give you a lot to draw from to connect to the Mystery.

A good rule of thumb is to focus on one Omen per session, connecting a Key, a Facet, or another aspect of the Mystery to them at least once. As you get the hang of weaving in the Mystery with the core narrative elements of your Omens, begin connecting multiple Omens to the Mystery and to each other.

Play to Find out What Happens

Apocalypse Keys is a game best played when the Keeper doesn't have a plan in place or a plot in mind. Start with what choices your players make during character creation. Follow the fiction and pick up whatever your players are putting down. Pay attention to what excites and thrills your players and keep leaning into that. Run the game from your heart, and trust your intuition. As the Keeper, you are enjoying the act of discovery along with your players.

The Mystery you draw from for each session offers you a setting, locations, a cast of characters, and Keys of the apocalypse. But nothing is set in stone and your players will always ask unique questions about the Mystery. Make things up! Go with your gut. As long as you're upholding the principles, you'll be fine.

Each Mystery has establishing and location questions, both of which bring in your players' ideas and perspectives. It's quite likely that the answers to these questions can create completely new paths and narrative possibilities—follow those and together you can discover where they lead.

Don't Worry about Not Having the Answers

The narrative of the Mystery moves along when the Omens stumble across revelations that produce more questions. As the Keeper, you never have to worry about what the answers to these questions actually are. Your only job is to provide compelling questions and signal possibilities. It is the job of your players to finalize these answers as they seek to **Unlock Doom's Door**.

This gives you the freedom to stun your players with startling revelations, introduce horrifying nuance, and basically say anything that sounds cool and mysterious. It may not make any sense to *you* as you say it, and you may not see how everything could even begin to connect to each other to create a coherent or solid theory. But you are just one person who is facilitating a complex game and keeping track of many moving pieces. If you need to cut away to another PC or call a quick break to recharge your creative batteries, do it!

Your players, on the other hand, have access to a group mind and are better able to keep track of the details in a way that you cannot. They will naturally begin to make sense of what is going on fairly easily, in ways that will surprise you.

The players also have access to the Mystery Map, and can keep referring to the Keys uncovered so far, the Facets of the Mystery, and other pertinent details. Use the Mystery Map to your advantage and don't keep all the information in your head.

As the Keeper, you'll often be thinking on your feet. Sometimes you'll get stuck when responding to a move, feel free to ask the players for their input. When the Hungry loses control and their body begins to twist into new shapes, ask them, "What does your body change into, that breaks your heart and spirit?"

Offer Ruin and Hope in Equal Measure

Refer to what each player has marked as What the Darkness Demands of Them. This indicates the kind of stories they want to experience and what devilish bargains they wish to be tempted with. At the beginning of each session, check in with your players, ask if they want to change or shift any of these demands. This way it keeps it fresh for both of you, and it will be easier to tap into during play.

Remember that ruin is only truly terrifying in the face of real hope. Offer your monsters real moments of genuine connection, fragile love, and desperate trust. Give them hope that they can outrun their ruin, for now.

Offer Dangerous Opportunities

In a Mystery, the Omens can sometimes struggle to figure out what steps they can or should take to get closer to the truth. Remind them of the complications they've encountered, the incongruities of the Mystery, and their own personal ties to the possible Harbingers. Then offer dangerous opportunities to face those challenges or learn more about the connections.

If they have just uncovered a Key, consider what implications or consequences they might have to face. If they have just overcome a challenge, consider how this can lead to uncovering the next Key or what context overcoming this challenge provided.

Show the Monstrosity of the World

There is a hidden world just barely below the surface. Monsters go about their lives as best as they can. They are ignored, exploited, or feared by humans. They are held to impossible demands and double standards. They carry a history that has been erased by those in power. Hint at this every so often and bring it into sharp focus.

Describe the sights, sounds, and sensations of the world. Pull from your own experiences and ground the Mystery in the real world, to make the supernatural and occult really stand out.

Be clear about what a character is communicating non-verbally or what they are hinting at. Don't assume your players understand the social context of a moment, or they perceive the full weight of a revelation. Briefly but clearly spell it out for them. Tell the Hungry, "The commander shrugs and turns away abruptly, but as they walk away, they catch your gaze. You can tell they have something more to tell you, but they can't say it in front of everyone else."

Center the motivations of the NPCs and describe how they support or collide with the drives and beliefs of the PCs. The characters in *Apocalypse Keys* are rarely cartoonish or simple, and as complex characters, they will rarely be outright antagonists or mindless supporters. Even a Harbinger may have an awful lot in common with an Omen.

Offer connections to the people and monsters of the world. The PCs are irrevocably tied to those around them. Invite the Omens to engage the world in ways unique to their background and powers. The more connected they are, the more they will strive to protect the world from the Harbingers and the coming apocalypse.

Be a Fan of the Omens

As the Keeper, you are here to provide the Omens with interesting challenges and opportunities for them to shine. The apocalypse is coming, the world is ending, and the darkness makes its demands. But at the same time, you are here to believe in the PCs and watch them rise to be heroes. You hope they can court their ruin without falling to it.

Provide impossible odds and terrifying scenarios, knowing that the Omens will pull upon their great and terrible powers to become the heroes they need to be. When your players come up with daring plans and desperate gambits, you are here to say yes and hope they'll succeed. Give them the narrative tools they need to trigger their moves or provide a weakness their powers of darkness can take advantage of.

The Summoned asks, "You said the shadows here react strangely—if I use my powers of darkness to control them, will it have a greater effect on the Harbinger?" You say yes, and start thinking of ways the Harbinger is susceptible to the shadows. The Hungry asks, "The diwata and I just had an intimate moment, are they willing to become my thrall?" You say, "Let's see a little more intimacy from you, something truly vulnerable, but yes they're willing."

When a player rolls a miss or disastrous success, resist the urge to minimize the Omen's actions or make them look incompetent. The Omens are holding back an apocalypse and facing off Harbingers, lean into raising the stakes in creative ways or revealing how dangerous the situation truly is. "You reach out with your hand and your corrupting touch burns away their armor. But the burned flesh transforms and the Harbinger is now a hulking monstrosity made of too many teeth."

Keep it Emotional, Put Relationships First

Apocalypse Keys shines when emotions are front and center, when the hearts of our monsters on the line. Many moves ask the Omens to reveal their inner thoughts or tune into the emotions of others. Conditions are there to be marked as the result of a miss or if it makes sense in the fiction. Remind your players to lean into the emotions of the marked Conditions.

When you embody a character that interacts with the PCs, think about their emotions. What's in their heart? What do they want? What drives them? What do they hope for? What are they scared of? Invite the PCs to build real relationships with those who live in the world.

Uphold the Rule of Cool

The players have many tools at their disposal to create intriguing and compelling characters. The powers of darkness, origins, and What the Darkness Demands of You—all of this is meant to evoke a larger than life feel to the game. Many of the playbook and DIVISION moves are evocative, loud, and hold back nothing.

There will be times when it's best to be subtle and low key, when the players need time to recover from big moments or scenes full of tension. But there will be an undeniable momentum, watch out for the build up towards the big moments. There will be times when the fiction and the moves nudge you towards going all the way. Go for it!

Describe huge fighting monsters, pull the whole city into danger, let the powers of the PCs and the Harbingers be as outrageous and cool as possible. Thrill your players with descriptions of action, lean into big and bold aesthetics, make the coming apocalypse feel real.

In return, encourage your players to push the limits of what their powers can do. The nature of their power means complications will escalate naturally, and you do not have to hold back your players.

Make DIVISION a Complex Home

The relationship between DIVISION and the monstrous agents will depend on what you and your players are excited for. At the start of the game, make this a discussion, but don't nail down too many of the specifics. You will mostly play to find out, and that's best done with breathing room for creativity.

Do ask your players how much pressure they want from DIVISION, if they'll want to engage with nuanced politics, or get into emotional entanglements with other personnel from DIVISION.

This will also be guided by what kind of DIVISION moves your players take. With every DIVISION move, players answer at least one question. Each answer brings more life and color to DIVISION and makes it more important to the story.

No matter what approach you decide on, remember that DIVISION is made of many people. They will each have their own agendas, hopes, desires, and complex feelings. Different personnel may have different hopes for the same PC—let these relationships grow naturally over time.

Hint at the Harbinger They May Become

The Ruin track and Ruin moves are there to remind them they may become a Harbinger. When you're not sure of what comes next, look at What the Darkness Demands of You and work from there.

Whenever a PC fills their Ruin track, they offer an enticing glimpse of what may come. This gives you an idea of what hints you can drop, and what themes you can introduce into the story. The future's not set in stone, but certainly there are signs it could come to pass.

Entice the PCs with power, peace, or a means to an end—but also provide opportunities and characters who are there to guide the PCs towards salvation, who reflect the better aspects of their nature.

Remind Them That the World Does Not Accept Them

As agents of DIVISION, Omens are useful. They are monsters that fight monsters and are potential Harbingers who have the power to defy the apocalypse.

But this world was not made for monsters and the fantastical. This world serves humans and the mundane. Monsters must stay in the shadows, create their own safe havens, or find ways to adapt to a world that does not care about them.

When interacting with the world, think about the PCs and their place in it. In areas where there are more monsters, the Omens may not have to minimize who they are and in order to find allies. Then again, many monsters have complicated feelings about DIVISION, and may not be happy to see the Omens.

In locations where there are less monsters, most humans will be uncomfortable with the presence of monsters. Even those who think they like the PCs may keep reminding them how "other" and truly different they are. Many humans will resort to feelings of distrust, fear, or disgust.

Some players may want to engage with these potentially difficult aspects of the story as a way of seeking catharsis or achieving self-empowerment, but as the Keeper, you should be careful about pushing this too far.

While this sense of "otherness" is a central theme of *Apocalypse Keys*, you should always be thoughtful about your approach. Be sensitive to how your words and actions are impacting others, and be willing to change course when needed. Despite your very best intentions, you don't always know how a theme or detail will impact others.

Apocalypse Keys, like any game, is always played with the well-being of your fellow players in mind (*Safety First,* page 12).

Keeper Moves

To bring the principles to life and help guide the story forward in interesting ways, you have your Keeper moves:

- **Reveal a sinister sign of things to come**
- **Hint at off-screen horrors**
- **Cut away to a Harbinger's plans**
- **Introduce an enigmatic character**
- **Deepen a relationship**
- **Inflict a Condition**
- **Impose Ruin**
- **Tick the Doomsday Clock**
- **Complicate a theory**
- **Separate the monsters**
- **Endanger the monsters**
- **Say *What the Darkness Demands of You***
- **Introduce a hard choice**
- **Intervene through a Faction**

Keeper moves are the tools of the Keeper. While the principles help you keep in mind the general atmosphere and central themes of *Apocalypse Keys*, the Keeper moves are used from moment to moment.

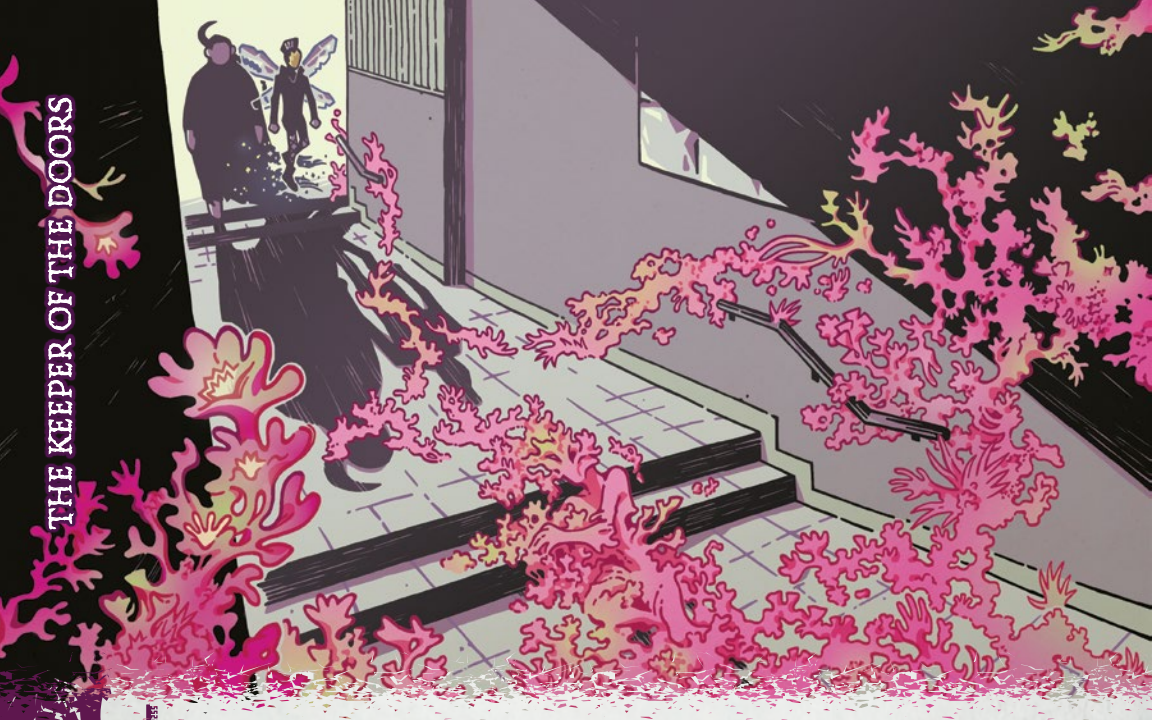
The Keeper reacts with a move to an Omen suffering from a disastrous success or on a miss, but especially when an Omen rolls a miss. A Keeper move can also be used when the story has lost some of its momentum, and the players look to you to find out what happens next.

When you use a Keeper move, note the pacing of the game. If the Omens are stuck and seem to be going in circles, interrupt with a Keeper move to push them to react or work together. If narrative tension is building up, offer dramatic release in the form of a confrontation of some kind.

Players should feel excited when the Keeper intervenes or reacts with a move. You are there to provide challenge, revelations, and thrills!

When you use a Keeper move, you don't have to announce which one you're using. Just go ahead and use the move to guide the next moment.

For example, if you decide to use the move "Introduce an enigmatic character," instead of saying "I'll introduce an enigmatic character now," say something like "You spot his long tattered cloak first, before you hear the sound of something wet and slithering underneath the rotting fabric. The softest whisper comes through from what sounds like many teeth, but it's hard to make out his features. A worm-like appendage lands on an open book, and you watch the words disappear beneath the shivering skin. The softest whisper reaches your ears, amid gentle wet sounds of consumption. 'Ahhh, hello fellow interlopers. Care for a bite to eat? Or perhaps you seek something else within the Library, *hmm?*'"



Reveal a Sinister Sign of Things to Come

Mysteries are built on intriguing signs that signal terrible things yet to come. Drop one every now and then. Make it subtle but disturbing, simple but strange. A crow that whispers a single word, an ancient manuscript that describes the events that occurred moments before, a beautiful man who wears the same face as someone from a dream.

Hint at Off-screen Horrors

It's impossible for the PCs to be present for every aspect of the Mystery. Leave behind evidence of a Harbinger's plans and manipulations. Describe how someone else got to the location first and tampered with the evidence. Reveal a victim who can't quite remember what happened, or can no longer speak of the experience.

Cut Away to a Harbinger's Plans

This move is a great one to use at the end of the session, or in between scenes. This heightens the tension and reminds players that strange and terrible things happen beyond their ability to perceive them.

Have Harbingers interact with each other intimately, describe how an enemy who was killed is now walking around unharmed, or have a cloaked figure speak cryptically while making bold moves against DIVISION. One of the Doomsday Clock ticks, Intrigue (page 213), specifically describes what could be happening somewhere else with the Harbinger. This tick is a perfect opportunity to cut away to what the Harbinger is up to, or the terrible results of their manipulations.

Introduce an Enigmatic Character

Apocalypse Keys thrives on the Omens interacting with NPCs and different Factions. It helps the players understand the complex motivations and desires of the monsters they play. You can support this by introducing characters that are darker or brighter mirrors, and Factions that support or push back against DIVISION.

Introducing an enigmatic character also applies to introducing a person of interest or any NPC. Each POI has something intriguing about them, so make sure to highlight that when you first introduce them. When you're spontaneously creating an NPC, remember to also include an interesting detail for the players to latch on to.

NPCs best support the PCs when they mirror certain aspects of the PCs. What happens when a PC meets someone who embraces similar demands of the darkness? Will it evoke anger, disgust, or empathy? When a Faction makes itself and its agenda known, will it change how the PC feels about DIVISION?

Factions only become real and interesting if there are real characters embodying the group's ideals and vision. Until that happens, the Faction is simply something read of in a dossier file or heard about in rumor. It won't have any real impact on the PCs or the story.

Deepen a Relationship

When a PC is interacting with an NPC, take the opportunity to deepen the relationship. Have characters show their suspicion, gratitude, or interest. If your players have expressed interest in romance, NPCs may flirt and fall in love with your PCs. Describe how an NPC shows their trust and need for emotional connection.

As long as you're coming from a sincere place and not expecting a specific reaction from the PC, allow the relationship to deepen and change over time. Remember to have NPCs return in future Mysteries, however briefly. An NPC that's been around for a while is often the best version of a living history of at least one PC. How much the NPC has changed and grown will always reflect how much a PC has changed and grown in turn.

If there's a significant moment of connection, such as a confession or promise made, a moment of intimacy or comfort, you may also give the Omen a Bond with the NPC.

Inflict a Condition

Asking an Omen to mark a Condition is one of the best reactions and is always a good move. This is especially true for rolling a miss, but it can often make sense in other circumstances. Inflicting Conditions regularly keeps emotions and relationships at the center of the story.

During combative situations, always inflict a Condition when an opponent gets a good hit in. It should be noted that if an Omen **Unleashes the Dark** and does not choose the option "Avoid reprisals, harm, or cost," asking them to mark a Condition is a good and standard reaction, among others.

Remember that many mechanics of the game interact with Conditions. When an Omen has a Condition marked, they can embody it to gain Darkness Tokens. When the Omen marks four Conditions, they hit their Breaking Point, which is an exciting and thrilling moment in a scene. When the Omen has several Conditions marked and they want to avoid hitting their Breaking Point, this urges them to **Reveal Their Heart**. When you ask a PC to mark a Condition, you're asking the player to engage with more narrative opportunities the game provides.

Impose Ruin

Asking an Omen to mark Ruin is another solid Keeper reaction, but how often you use this move will depend on the narrative preference and playstyle of your players.

Some players revel in *playing to lose*, or the idea of inviting tragedy and doom for their PC. The mechanics of *Apocalypse Keys* support this style of play, by drawing out the dread and excitement that comes with an Omen taking one step at a time towards unleashing the Harbinger within.

If your players want to hurtle towards the Ruin faster, ask them to mark Ruin on a miss or when they go too far with a disastrous success.

Ask an Omen to mark Ruin when they interact with aspects of their Origin, What the Darkness Demands of them, or any other time it makes sense narratively.

Some playbook and DIVISION moves offer Omens a chance to interact with Ruin, such as **Orphanage Visit** (page 72) and **Your Ruin on My Lips** (page 159). By imposing Ruin on your players and awakening the Harbinger within them, you encourage players to interact with more mechanical and narrative aspects of their playbook.

Tick the Doomsday Clock

The Doomsday Clock is a powerful tool, and something the players should always be aware of. When the pacing of the Mystery is lagging behind or moving too quickly, ticking the Doomsday Clock helps you adjust the flow of the Mystery. When the players roll a miss, it can absolutely mean that the Doomsday Clock ticks forward. At the very least, you should tick the Doomsday Clock once per session, to remind them that time is always of the essence.

Ticking the Doomsday Clock is a big moment. When you do so, remember to tick the Doomsday Clock in front of everyone, coloring in the segment or otherwise taking note of it somewhere everyone can access.

When you tick the Doomsday Clock, refer to your Mystery Codex and describe what happens next (*The Doomsday Clock*, page 186).

Complicate a Theory

Until someone is ready to **Unlock Doom's Door**, it's unlikely that your players will have a complete or solid theory. With every Key that is uncovered, every new layer of context that is revealed, your players will often think out loud, consider a connection between a Facet and a Key, or develop a tentative theory.

"It's strange how the sister of the Broken Crucifix didn't report this to their superiors," or "Have we really lost our memories, or is someone just trying to make it seem like we did?" File away these comments in the back of your mind, or write them down somewhere for you to reference later.

When it's time for you to complicate a theory, reveal something new that changes the context or opens up new possibilities. The Sister did report this to their superiors, but received difficult orders and refuses to endanger those she has sworn to protect. The PCs come across an old VHS tape and play back a recording, one of them is on it and says, "I'm about to give up my memories willingly, I just hope it will be worth it."

Complicating a theory doesn't require keeping track of what the players think is going on. When the Omens uncover a Key or investigate a Mystery, everyone in the group, including yourself, will make typical assumptions. Introduce a new truth that will threaten these comfortable assumptions, which in turn will make the players question all their other assumptions and keep the Mystery fresh.

Separate the Monsters

The Omens may feel pressured to split up and cover more ground when solving the Mystery. The game doesn't punish PCs for going their separate ways, and it's also a good move to make as a Keeper.

Have an enigmatic character show up and insist they speak to one of the PCs alone. Perhaps one of the PCs falls through a hidden panel while investigating a mysterious passage. Make sure that whatever happens, it's interesting.

Endanger the Monsters

This can mean physical or emotional danger. When one of the PCs uncovers a Key, a Harbinger may show up unexpectedly and challenge them. It may mean a fight, but the Harbinger could just as easily offer a painful truth and endanger what the Omen believes in.

Perhaps an NPC from the past shows up unexpectedly, once beloved, but they now serve as a Harbinger. Or a colossal monster shows up, ready to tear apart the entire city. Whatever the danger is, it should thrill the players and force them to react accordingly. Threaten the safety of who they care for, endanger the city, break the hearts of the Omens.

Say What the Darkness Demands of You

This is something to pay attention to when an Omen finds themselves **Torn Between**. It's also a good move when you want to tempt the PCs or show them what happens when they go too far with their powers and suffer from a disastrous success.

If the Last chose *to resurrect my people at the expense of humanity*, you might say something like "The tomb opens. Beautiful images and words are carved into the walls. At the center of the tomb lies a sarcophagus, the face and body of your beloved carved unto the surface. A handprint marks the surface of the sarcophagus, and in your mind the words of a powerful void spell starting to form. Your hand is drawn to the sarcophagus, the spell heavy on your lips.

"If you give into What the Darkness Demands of You, you could use your powers to revive them. But if you do, this will awaken an ancient curse that will plague all of humanity. What do you do?"

Introduce a Hard Choice

Things rarely come easy for monsters fighting back an apocalypse. As Omens, they will always have hard choices to face and not much time to make them.

What they need lies in the arms of an entity sealed away by DIVISION. Will the Omens free the sealed entity or waste precious time? A dangerous rival offers a fleeting opportunity but asks an Omen to compromise their pride. Will the Omens grasp the opportunity or let it slip away? Saving the town means allowing the Manananggal Queen to escape with his minions. Will the Omens endanger the town or allow a possible Harbinger to roam free?

Make sure that when you offer the hard choice that it's something truly enticing—something a player will be tempted to say "yes" to, just to see what happens next.

Intervene Through a Faction

There are many interested parties keeping track of the Mystery and investigation. This move could mean introducing a new Faction with complex goals, perhaps with a dangerous but tempting offer (*Factions,* page 317).

This move could also look like introducing another agent of DIVISION whose mission is at odds with the PCs. Remind the players to keep track of those who work behind the scenes, and to seek out those who wait in the shadows.

THE BASIC MOVES IN ACTION

The Omens **Grasp Keys** to try to figure out what the ancient Door of Power is, how to open it, and what lies beyond it.

This will usually lead to complications, resulting in PCs having to **Unleash the Dark** or **Power Through Darkness** to confront antagonists or overcome challenges.

In doing so, a PC may find themselves **Torn Between** what they must do and What the Darkness Demands. To keep going, an Omen must **Reveal Their Heart**, seeking comfort and support in moments of intimacy and sincerity.

Finally, when the PCs feel like they can use all the Keys uncovered thus far, they may attempt to **Unlock Doom's Door**. Will their theory be correct, or will the Doomsday Clock tick forward?

Advanced Keeper Moves

When a player chooses a playbook, they're interested in engaging with its narrative themes and emotional core. This is an invitation for you to center those themes and emotions.

You can make your players feel special and awesome by drawing upon their origin, unique playbook question, tempting them with What the Darkness Demands, and offering opportunities to give into their impulse. There is a lot for you to draw from, so it will take you at least a few sessions to master using everything at your disposal.

When you're ready to further sharpen your skills as a Keeper and truly hone in on what makes each playbook tick, you can use the following playbook specific moves for your players.

The Summoned

- Bring their prophecy to bear
- Introduce a violent antagonist
- Show them love they can never have

Their main themes are prophecy, violence, and love. Make the prophecy feel inescapable and threatening, like the sword of Damocles hanging over the neck of the Summoned.

Use a violent antagonist to mirror or contradict their use of violence. Support the beliefs of the Summoned or expose their hypocrisies. Remind them that violence is a tool, and what it looks like in the wrong hands.

Lastly, show the Summoned forms of love that are beyond them. This could be the form of a vulnerable character who falls in love with the Summoned and could be hurt by the prophecy. Or it could be a glimpse of love between others, distant and beyond reach.

The Surge

- Show them the consequences of collateral damage
- Create a problem they can solve by giving into their destructive power
- Threaten someone they have a Bond with

Their main themes are power, consequences, and relationships. The collateral damage they're capable of should feel ever present. Remind them of the consequences of past collateral damage. Hint at how their power will negatively affect the future.

With a Surge in the group, create problems on a scale so large that only their destructive powers can handle them. The Surge will decide if they give into their power, find a way to control the worst of it, or find another way.

The Surge has numerous ways to create Bonds—find ways to make those Bonds matter. Center these relationships and offer the Surge opportunities to navigate these relationships.

The Found

- Describe the psychic and emotional landscape
- Offer a fragment of a memory
- Reveal the undeniable truth of what their past self did

Their main themes are secrets, memory, and identity. When a Found is in the group, remember to regularly describe what their innate senses can perceive. This is a great way for all the players to connect to the scene, even if their Omens aren't privy to this information.

The tragedy of the Found is in the memories they've lost access to. Offer them opportunities to connect to memories, theirs or someone else's. A fragment of a memory can be as detailed or vague as you like, but give at least enough to entice the Found to learn more.

The mystery of their past gives you a large creative space to play with. How can their past self mirror who they are now? How can it contradict it?

The Found is a playbook that can easily become introspective, reflective, and subtle. Provide opportunities to deepen their inner world, find ways to connect it to the present and the Mystery.

The Shade

- Describe how Death's presence complicates the scene
- Have Death mark someone they care for
- Introduce a problem only they can solve

Their main themes are death and the dangerous pursuit of knowledge. Death is a constant presence, intimately connected to the Shade through numerous ways. Death's influence should be keenly felt, to give the Shade something to interact with.

Death marking someone the Shade cares for can take many forms. Is Death protective, caring, and nurturing? Or is Death corruptive, threatening, and dangerous? Death is moved by, and acts by its own laws—removed from humanity.

The Shade has several ways to gain information. Provide problems that require procuring information in challenging and satisfying ways.

The Last

- Confront them with the depth of their loss
- Show the inescapable cycle of tragedy
- Contradict the history and legacy of their people

Their main themes are loss, tragedy, and legacy. What have they lost personally? What has the world and the Universe lost now that their people are gone? Build this loss in layers, revealing far reaching effects.

Tragedy repeats itself endlessly. The cycle can be large and sweeping, or poignant and heart-breaking in its subtlety. Experiment with the scale of the tragedy.

The Last has many opportunities to define their people, their history, and the legacy they left behind. Contradict what the Last believes to be true, offering evidence, testimony, and shocking truths.

The Fallen

- Confront them with a divine rival or enemy
- Offer a worshiper who will go too far
- Remind them of how far they have fallen

The Fallen's main themes are hubris, worship, and lies. Draw from who the Fallen chooses are the gods that taunt them, and create divine rivals and enemies to sharpen their hubris against.

Having a Fallen in the group is an opportunity to explore the nature of worship, faith, and divinity. What does it mean when a worshiper goes too far? How will the Fallen respond to such devotion?

Remind the Fallen of the divinity they once had access to. Who has thrived all these years while the Fallen has despaired? What evidence of their former glory remains? Who has risen while the Fallen has slipped into new depths?

The Hungry

- Haunt them with the remnants of their Hunger
- Offer temporary reprieve that will later sharpen the Hunger
- Describe how the Hunger twists their body into horrifying shapes

Their main themes are desire, corruption, and body horror. The Hungry brings a level of intensity to a game, and both you and the player should define the nature of the Hunger that shapes and breaks them.

When the Hungry chooses what remnants they leave behind, bring this aspect into the narrative every so often. A Key or aspect of the Mystery can reflect that remnant, bear an aspect of their Hunger, and so on.

The horror of the Hunger can only truly be felt when there are moments of reprieve. Offer them peace, perhaps with a cost, but make the Hunger feel that much more inescapable. This reprieve can take the form of a physical transformation into something more pleasing, the perfect victim, or any number of things that offer escape.

Many of their moves describe how their body changes in sudden and violent ways. Build upon that, having their body betray them in strange and haunting ways.

Combat and Conditions

The Omens are powerful creatures of darkness. Realistically, tracking how much physical harm a fallen angel can take against a spider demon is difficult to gauge. This game does not track physical wounds or hit points.

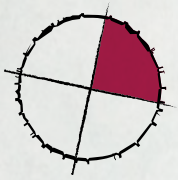
What really matters in facing down the apocalypse is how long your heart can hold out. The Omens struggle with their emotions as they buckle under the strain of keeping their powers under control. That's why PCs mark Conditions during combat to reflect the pain that they endure, and why an NPC who has had all their Conditions marked is taken out of the action or can no longer pursue their drive.

The stakes of *Apocalypse Keys* are not whether an Omen will get knocked out or suffer from wounds, though this may still happen when you ***endanger the monsters*** (page 180). Instead, the threat is whether the Omen will hit their Breaking Point, endangering everyone around them and what matters to them. The stakes are not whether an Omen can permanently defeat a Harbinger, because in the world of the supernatural they may return in one form or another. Instead, the threat is if the Omen will become a Harbinger themself.

Apocalypse Keys is interested in keeping track of this emotional narrative rather than getting caught up in the specifics of physical harm and violent confrontation. Sometimes the most horrifying truth is that a monster may live forever, and will live long enough to bring about the apocalypse themselves as a Harbinger.

The Doomsday Clock

The **Doomsday Clock** is a reminder that the PCs are racing against time. They must discern the plans of the Harbinger, track down the ancient Door of Power, and understand how to unlock it. All the while, the Harbinger already knows what they must do, they just need enough time for their machinations to come to pass.



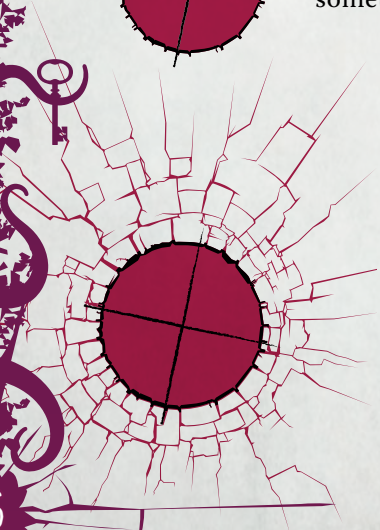
Each Mystery has a Doomsday Clock with a number of ticks. Each tick describes what happens to move the Mystery forward. The last tick of the clock describes what happens when the Harbinger unlocks the door and gains its power.

An ancient Door of Power that's relatively easy to access will mean the Doomsday Clock will only have 4 ticks. Other doors that offer more power may require the Harbinger to perform complex and difficult rituals, giving the Doomsday Clock 12 ticks.

At the start of the Mystery, the Keeper sketches out a circle that represents The Doomsday Clock, divided into the appropriate number of segments. Each segment is one tick of the clock. The Doomsday Clock should always be visible to the players, either drawn on an index card at the center of the table or in the margins of the Mystery Map.

When the Keeper ticks the Doomsday Clock forward, they fill in one of the segments. The Keeper then presents what happens and how it affects the investigation. It may be something subtle, such as a portent or a disturbing discovery. It may be something more direct, like a glimpse of what the Harbinger is doing in the shadows, or a violent confrontation.

The Keeper always has one eye on the Doomsday Clock, moving the Mystery ever forward (*The Mystery Moves Forward — The Doomsday Clock*, page 210).



The First Session

The first session is focused on players creating their characters (*Making Characters,* page 85), a few essential details about DIVISION, and meeting some of the personnel who work there. If time permits and the players are interested, the Keeper may introduce the basic premise of the Mystery that the agents have been asked to investigate.

As the Keeper you are there to give them the very basics of the premise of *Apocalypse Keys*, help players create a character, answer any questions they may have, and take notes.

Here's a guide to help you facilitate the first session:

PREP BEFOREHAND **Read the essential parts of the game.** You don't need to have memorized everything, but do take note of important sections such as *The Core Rules* (page 15), *The Basic Moves* (page 37), the *Principles* (page 168), and the *Keeper Moves* (page 175). You can always read the rest of the book after you've run the first session and have a better idea of what to expect when running the game.

PREP BEFOREHAND **Gather what you need.**

- At least two six-sided dice, but two dice per player would be best.
- A copy of the playbooks
- A copy of the basic moves, preferably one per player
- The Mystery Map, for everyone's reference
- The Mystery Codex, for your reference
- Writing materials, for when you take notes
- If you're playing online, check out the resources section of the *Apocalypse Keys* page on Evil Hat's website, or pop on over to Roll20 to see their offerings there

5-10 MIN **Player and Keeper check-in.** If you're playing with people for the first time, have each person introduce themselves by giving their name and pronouns. Check in and ask why they're playing *Apocalypse Keys* or what they're excited for.

3-5 MIN **Go over the CATS (Concept, Aim, Tone, and Subject Matter) of *Apocalypse Keys.*** Make sure your players all have a common set of expectations, and they understand the premise and themes of the game. When you introduce the CATS, it's an open discussion. Adjust based on the preferences of everyone at the table. You can find the CATS document for *Apocalypse Keys* at *http://bit.ly/AKCATS*. You should create your own copy of the CATS document and make any changes to reflect your style of facilitating the game.

5-10 MIN **Discuss safety tools.** You can use Green, Yellow, Red on page 12. You are also encouraged to use any other safety tools that best suit your group. The TTRPG Safety Toolkit by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk, which you can find at *http://bit.ly/ttrpgsafety-toolkit*, is an excellent guide.

40-70 MIN **Create Characters.** Refer to page 85 for guidance.

5-10 MIN **Take a break.** This is a good time to get up, stretch your legs, and check in with everyone.

10-15 MIN **Build DIVISION together.** Just establish enough to start the session with, you can learn more about DIVISION as you play the game. Ask any of the following questions, or make up your own. Make sure that each player takes a turn creating an aspect of DIVISION.

- *Where is DIVISION located? Are there many branches or just this one?*
- *What about DIVISION is mundane?*
- *What about DIVISION is strange?*
- *How are the monstrous agents, like you, treated differently than the human agents? How does this show in DIVISION structure?*
- *What's your favorite area of DIVISION?*
- *What area is off-limits, even to you?*

10-15 MIN **Play out a day in DIVISION.** Stick to short vignettes or moments for each character. This helps a player take on their character and feel them out. Play any NPCs, any personnel who work at DIVISION. Remember that there are very few monsters, most of the personnel will be human or human passing. When you're ready, have them gather in one space and interact with each other. Here are some prompts you can ask as a Keeper:

- *What's the first thing you do when you wake up?*
- *What is a mundane ritual that you look forward to?*
- *Why are you still recovering from the last investigation?*
- *Someone important wants to speak to you, what do you think it's about?*
- *There's one human agent who's taken a liking to you. How do you spend time together?*
- *There's a monstrous agent who has been forcibly retired. Why are you asked to check in on them?*
- *Something broke down again, why do they ask you to come in and fix it?*
- *There's an agent in training, why are you there to help out as a mentor?*

10-15 MIN **Introduce the Mystery.** You may create an NPC who assigns missions to the PCs and briefly answers any preliminary questions they may have. But stress that the PCs will only learn anything significant once they're out in the field and they meet their contact.

5-10 MIN **Take another break!** It's a good idea to take a break every 1-1.5 hours during a session.

20-30 MIN **Begin the Mystery.** You may follow the section Beginning the Mystery (page 195). Play for as long as you like, but the first session is best played in 3-5 hours total. It's okay for players to just get a taste of the Mystery and jump into it next time.

5-10 MIN If it feels applicable, go over the **End of Session** move (page 164) and answer the question associated with their impulse, but feel free to save this for the second session onwards.

5-10 MIN **Check in with your players and wind down.** This is a good time to use a tool or process like **Stars & Wishes**. This should only take a few minutes, but it's essential to gauge interest and reflect on the game so far. Ask each player to describe their Stars, aspects of the game or moments they enjoyed. Then ask each player to describe their Wishes, what they're looking forward to in the next game or what they wish went differently. Your enjoyment of the game matters too, so share your own Stars & Wishes.

2 MIN **Take some quick notes that you can come back to and expand on later.** Focus on notable NPCs, important context of the Mystery, hanging story threads, and unanswered questions.

The Second Session Onwards

From the second session, the monsters will investigate the mystery, hold back the apocalypse, and dance precariously between power and ruin. Here's a general guide to help facilitate future sessions:

5-10 MIN **Check In and Safety Tool Review.** Check in on how everyone is doing. From there, go over the safety tools you used in the last session and ask if anyone would like to tweak anything or change tools entirely.

- *Remind people that they can reach out to you in private if they're not comfortable discussing sensitive topics with the group. Every session, describe each tool briefly as a reminder, and go over any topics that are off limits and shouldn't show up in the session.*

3-7 MINS **Character review.** Ask the players if they'd like to change any aspect of their character. Each player then chooses what impulse their character will explore for the session.

- *Do they want to change What the Darkness Demands of You? Add or change a detail about their origin? Do they want to swap out a move or Advance for something else? Do they want to change their impulse?*

3-7 MINS **Review the state of the Mystery.** Remind everyone briefly what the premise and inciting incident of the Mystery is, and then review what the Facets are and any Keys that have been uncovered thus far.

- *If you're playing face to face, make sure the **Mystery Map** is within easy reach of everyone. If playing online, remind everyone where they can look to keep track of Keys and Facets.*

3-7 MINS **Ask driving questions.** Once the Mystery is fresh in everyone's minds, ask pointed questions that help the players think out loud and decide where they want to drive the investigation next. Here are some driving questions you can ask as a Keeper:

- *Who do you think is the Harbinger?*
- *What do you think the ancient Door of Power is?*
- *Which person of interest or NPC do you want to interact with?*
- *Which location do you want to revisit or visit for the first time?*
- *What lingering questions do you have? What threads do you want to follow? Where do you think they'll lead?*

2-3 HOURS **Dive back into the Mystery.** Most of the session will have the players interact with people of interest, **Grasp Keys**, and handle the ticks of the ***Doomsday Clock***.

- *Remember to take 5-10 min breaks every so often, so players have a chance to take care of themselves, grab something to drink or eat, and so on.*
- *If players wish to* **Unlock Doom's Door** *towards the end of the session, have them trigger the move and set up what happens. But save the confrontation for the next session, assuming they have grasped the truth or filled up the Doomsday Clock!*

5-10 MINS **End of Session.** Go over the **End of Session** and ***impulse*** questions, players will mark XP and Ruin as appropriate.

5-10 MINS **Check in with your players and wind down.** Take notes and go through everyone's Stars & Wishes or your Green, Yellow and Red list.

NOT ENOUGH TIME FOR AN APOCALYPSE?

You may be just about ready to **Unlock Doom's Door**, but you're coming close to the end of the session. If you have fewer than 30 minutes left, confronting the Harbinger and dealing with the ancient Door of Power might feel rushed and unsatisfying.

A better way of handling this is to be clear with your players before everyone agrees on a theory. Let them know that together everyone will craft a theory and a PC will attempt to **Unlock Doom's Door**, but you'll wrap up the session right after the results of the move are revealed. It'll be an exciting cliff hanger, and something to look forward to in the next session.

If your group is only playing one session of *Apocalypse Keys*, you can choose to end on an ominous cliffhanger that leaves players wanting more, or have the final climactic showdown be a lightning fast event—decided by a few dice rolls. Observe where your players' energy levels are at, and make the call that feels right in the moment.

In Between Mysteries

When the PCs have solved the Mystery, confronted the Harbinger, and dealt with the door of ancient power, it's time to head back to DIVISION. You may want to resolve any cliffhangers, quickly tie up any loose ends, and check in with NPCs before heading back.

In between investigations, the Omens head back to DIVISION. This is a good time to address or interact with any applicable DIVISION moves (page 60), interact with NPCs at DIVISION, and for the PCs to spend some down time together or separately.

If the group wants to report in to a superior and debrief, let them play that out. If not, PCs can focus on other social interactions instead.

Fewer of the moves will trigger at DIVISION than investigating a Mystery, and the players can focus on roleplaying their PCs as they like. This is a perfect opportunity to **Reveal Your Heart** and feel **Torn Between**.

This can take up the rest of a session if the Omens **Unlocked Doom's Door** early enough. Or you can save spending time at DIVISION for the next session, playing this out as a prologue before the next Mystery is introduced.

Some players like having an entire session dedicated to spending time at DIVISION, as a chance to play their characters where the stakes aren't so high. Alternatively, some players enjoy the idea of DIVISION having its own secrets and intrigue. What's hidden in the forbidden archives of the library? Who has unexpectedly shown up at DIVISION to offer information about the Harbingers?

Whenever the players are ready to leave DIVISION, you can skip ahead to the start of the next Mystery. Make sure your fellow players know this. They only need to linger around the break room for as long as it is interesting to do so.

The Mystery

The Anatomy of a Mystery

The Omens are here to stop the Harbingers. If they don't succeed, ancient doors will open, allowing great and terrible power to flow into the world. If enough of these doors open, it will hasten the end of days and herald the apocalypse.

So, no pressure, right?

The PCs are here to use their powers of darkness to investigate Mysteries and defeat the Harbingers. This happens through the Mysteries. *Apocalypse Keys* comes with a number of Mysteries for you to run. As the Keeper, you will refer to them as you facilitate the game, or create your own.

Apocalypse Keys offers you and your players creative spaces to make each Mystery truly your own. You'll notice that the Mystery Codex details a strong premise and starting point for the Mystery. From there, the rest of the Mystery is a colorful palette for you to draw from: people, locations, Keys, and so on. From there, natural questions will emerge, and *Apocalypse Keys* is not here to give you the answers. Instead, follow the questions that excite you and your players and go from there!

Each Mystery has been written to be evocative, to inspire your own creativity. Spaces have been intentionally designed for you and your players to do with as you please. This makes it easier for you to ***play to find out*** and ***make the Mystery strange, foreboding, and personal***.

Remember, each Omen brings with them a wealth of cool stuff to explore. The generous creative space in each Mystery gives you enough room to tap into an Omen's origin, impulse, and What the Darkness Demands of them.

Apocalypse Keys doesn't outline each detail in the Mystery or answer every possible question. I wrote this game for you to be bold and creative. I believe the Mystery you craft alongside your players is always going to be the best possible story for you to enjoy!

Each Mystery Codex follows the same general outline:

- **Title**
- **Quick Facts: Mystery complexity, Time and Place, Contact**
- **Message from DIVISION**
- **Content Warning**
- **Description**
- **Beginning the Mystery**
- **Establishing Questions**
- **Contact**
- **People of Interest**
- **Locations**
- **Keys of the Apocalypse**
- **Facets**
- **The Doomsday Clock**

Remind the players that the Mystery **COMPLEXITY** is on their Mystery Map. This helps the players keep track of how many Keys they need to uncover.

The **time** and **place** provide context for the Mystery, while the **contact** is most likely the first person the PCs will interact with.

The **message from DIVISION** outlines what the Omens are expected to do during the course of the investigation.

Before introducing the Mystery, give your players any **content warnings** of the Mystery. If any of your players express anything less than enthusiastic consent for what's listed in the Content Warnings, adjust the Mystery as needed. You may age up characters, change aspects of the premise, remove **people of interest** or Keys, and so on. If you need to set aside the Mystery and choose another one for your players, then that's good, too.

The **description** establishes anything that's important for you, the Keeper, to know about before presenting the Mystery. The description can provide further detail about the location, the monster community, the premise of the Mystery, or anything else.

The description is not intended to be read aloud to the group in full, but it should detail things the Omens should know either beforehand or when a player asks you about it. For example, the player may not know anything about the manananggal from the Philippines, but the character they play should at least have a basic understanding of who these monsters are.

It's easy to accidentally give your players too much information in one go, making it hard for them to remember everything. Instead, it's recommended that you read the description in full to yourself, and decide when and how to give out essential information from it.

Beginning the Mystery walks you through the opening moments of the Mystery. You can follow it to the letter, or change as much as you like to suit you and your players.

The first glimpse of our contact briefly describes the impression the Omens have of the contact and lists the establishing questions below.

Establishing questions tie in at least one of the PCs to the Mystery. This invites investment from the player, and gives the player a chance to create an important aspect of the Mystery. Ask both questions, but point each question to a different PC.

The **contact** is the first person the Omens will interact with for the Mystery. This includes their pronouns, a physical description, and guidance on a detailed interaction with the PCs.

People of interest (POI) are there to interact with the PCs. When you ***introduce an enigmatic character*** (page 177), draw from this selection of POI. Give your players time to connect to one or two characters before introducing another one.

As NPCs who are tied to the Mystery or Location, the POI are there to provide opportunities to **Grasp Keys** and make sense of the Keys uncovered. POI may become helpful supporting characters. Some of them could end up becoming antagonists, or may serve the Harbinger willingly or not. One of them may even secretly be the Harbinger!

Each person of interest comes with a name, pronouns, description, a starting point that outlines how they connect to the Mystery or other characters, and a quote to establish how they interact with the PCs. All of this serves as a guide, and may change depending on player input or what you feel is best in the moment.

You can create more NPCs! The POI are not meant to cover every possible character who will show up in the Mystery. The Harbinger may be one of the people of interest, or someone (or something) else entirely, depending on the declarations the players make when they **Unlock Doom's Door**.

Locations provide areas to explore, places to **Grasp Keys**, and where people of interest may be found. Each location comes with a question to ask the players. This encourages players to add something to the fiction and fine tune the tone of the Mystery.

The **Keys of the Apocalypse** are the heart and soul of the Mystery, and they are the most open to interpretation. When an Omen **Grasps Keys**, they may be able to uncover one such Key, or if another move allows them to.

There are about 20 Keys for you to choose from. Depending on which Keys you choose for the Omens to uncover and how you contextualize and interpret them, it will take the Mystery in a direction completely unique to you and your group (*Unraveling the Mystery — Keys of the Apocalypse,* page 201).

The **Facets** are dimensions of the Mystery that the player should keep in mind as the Omens investigate. When at least one Omen is ready to **Unlock Doom's Door**, they connect every Facet to an uncovered Key.

The **Doomsday Clock** offers events, complications, and leads that will help you fine tune the pacing of each Mystery. You may tweak or completely change as much of the Doomsday Clock as you like to best suit the fiction and flow of the Mystery (*The Mystery Moves Forward — The Doomsday Clock,* page 210).

A Mystery may also include any of the following:

- Custom moves
- New Keeper moves
- Factions
- Additional notes

In some Mysteries a **custom move** will be available, to help the players interact with specific parts of the Mystery or Location. Make sure the custom move is easily referenced to during the course of the Mystery, and help your players trigger the move whenever they like.

Keeper moves are added to the general ones (page 175), to help further evoke the themes and horrors of a specific Mystery.

Factions can help you understand the political machinations at play, who is involved and why, and how they might interact with the monstrous agents from DIVISION. **Additional notes** help provide further context for the Mystery.

The Flow of the Mystery

Facilitating the subtle strangeness and thrilling revelations of a Mystery can feel intimidating at first, but it will become easier each time you run a session of *Apocalypse Keys*.

A lot of the guidance you'll read here will make more sense each time you play the game. Come back and reread this chapter every so often! The context of your experience will help you understand how the Mystery mechanics fit together and how important your intuition is when running *Apocalypse Keys*.

Each Mystery begins with **the Omens at DIVISION**, interacting with DIVISION personnel and exploring it (*In Between Mysteries*, page 192). From here, the Omens receive the **briefing**, you'll present the Mystery to them and read out loud the message from the DIVISION.

The flow of the session is fairly straightforward. When the Omens study **the Mystery** at hand, they **Grasp Keys**. Along the way, they'll encounter tense moments of drama, action, and even battle—but each challenge will help them **investigate the context** of the Mystery and come closer to the heart of the truth.

When the PCs feel like they have enough information to understand what the ancient Door of power is and how to unlock it, they are ready to **Unlock Doom's Door**. The move is triggered, Keys are connected to Facets, and we see if their theory is correct.

If the theory is correct, **the door is revealed**. The Omens may get to the door first or have the upper hand when they **confront the Harbinger**. It's also possible that their theory is correct, but the Harbinger has already started opening the door.

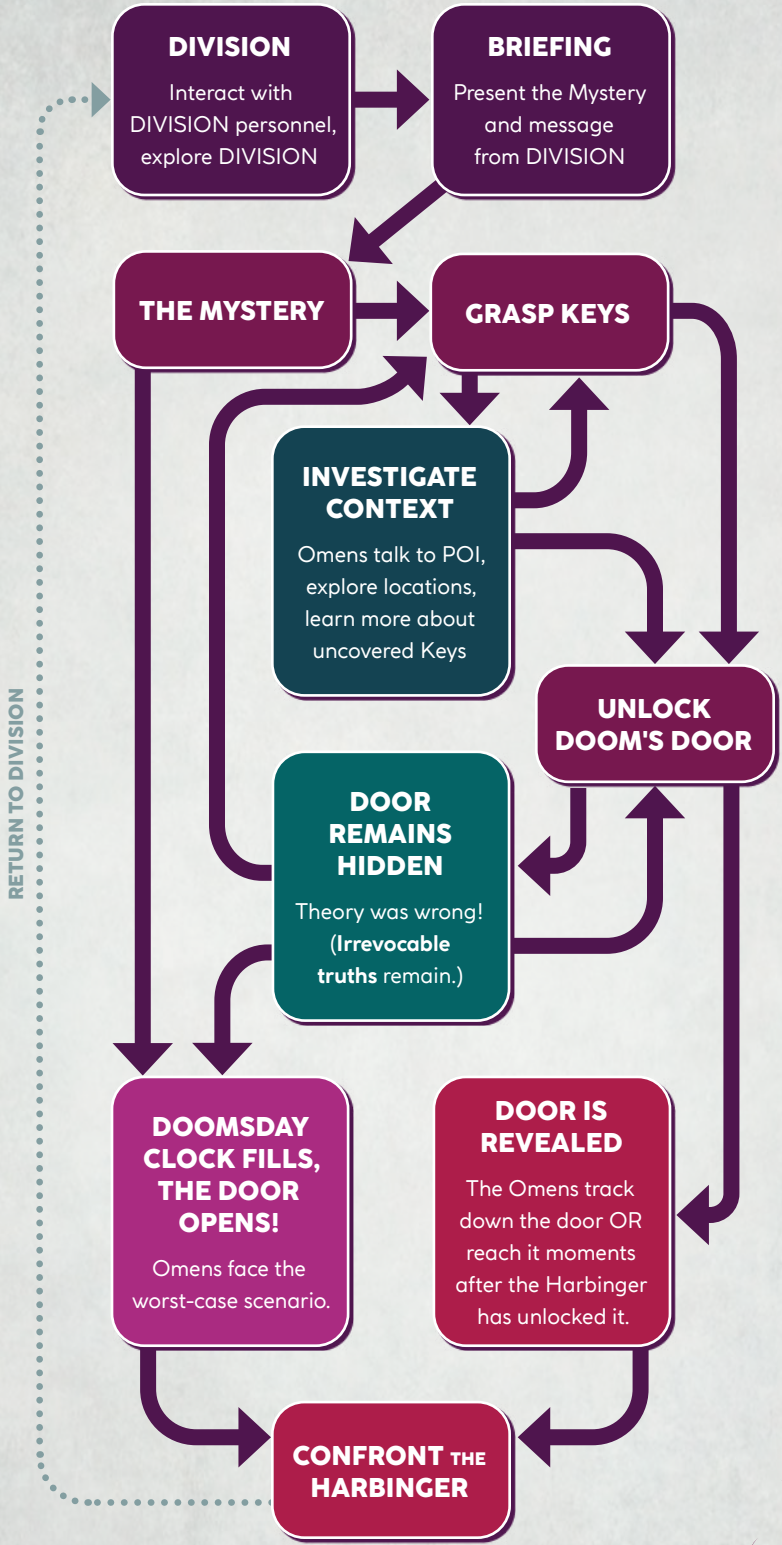
If the theory is the wrong one, **the door remains hidden**. Precious time is wasted and the Doomsday Clock ticks forward. When a theory fails, the group will have to choose how to move forward. Do they double back and continue to uncover additional Keys—more time—or will they take the risk of testing out another theory right away?

If **the Doomsday Clock fills** before the Omens have tracked down the Door of ancient power, they will have to fight through the worst-case scenario when they **confront the Harbinger**.

This book comes with prepared Mysteries—pick one that you feel would suit your group and use the Mystery Codex to guide play. If you prefer, you can create your own Mystery (page 328) instead.

Each Mystery provides a time and place, description, establishing questions, persons of interest, locations, and the Keys of the apocalypse to uncover.

This chapter focuses on the flow of the Mystery, or the core set of actions that drive the Mystery forward in most sessions.


DIVISION
Interact with DIVISION personnel, explore DIVISION
BRIEFING
Present the Mystery and message from DIVISION
THE MYSTERY
GRASP KEYS
INVESTIGATE CONTEXT
Omens talk to POI, explore locations, learn more about uncovered Keys
UNLOCK DOOM'S DOOR
DOOR REMAINS HIDDEN
Theory was wrong! (Irrevocable truths remain.)
DOOMSDAY CLOCK FILLS, THE DOOR OPENS!
Omens face the worst-case scenario.
DOOR IS REVEALED
The Omens track down the door OR reach it moments after the Harbinger has unlocked it.
CONFRONT THE HARBINGER
RETURN TO DIVISION

The Investigation

FACETS

Before the Omens even begin investigating the Mystery in earnest, they have a set of thematic signposts that guide their actions. The Facets outline the most important aspects of the Mystery.

Every Mystery has two Facets: *the Harbinger* and the *Door of Power*. When DIVISION sends Omens to investigate a Mystery, they are always seeking out the Door of Power and the Harbinger that conspires to unlock it.

From there, each Mystery has a unique set of Facets that the Omens shouldn't lose sight of as they uncover Keys and begin forming their theories. When the players are ready to collaborate and declare the truth in an attempt to **Unlock Doom's Door**, they connect each uncovered Key to a Facet to build a theory.

For example, the Omens should keep in mind the *Murder Victims* while investigating the Manananggal Murders. When exploring Island Zero's outpost, they must discover the truth behind *The Possession and Disappearance of Luna Nakahara and Hydra Omicron*.

If you have the Found or the Shade in your game, remind the players that both playbooks begin with moves that can declare, rewrite or add Facets of the Mystery.

Some playbook and DIVISION moves, if chosen, can also grant this ability.

More about Manipulating Facets (page 208) and connecting the Keys to the Facets (page 207) can be found later in this chapter.

GRASP KEYS

The Mystery can't be solved and the Door of Power can't be discovered unless the PCs are actively uncovering Keys. Some playbook moves will let a PC uncover a Key at great cost as an option, but the most reliable way is through the move **Grasp Keys**. Be generous in the interpretation of this move.

Sometimes it can be obvious: the PCs are going over a crime scene, investigating the forbidden library beneath an ancient church, questioning a witness, and so on. Or they may use their powers of darkness. The Shade will **let the dead speak** and hear what they have to say or the Hungry will use their **corrupting touch** to burn through a safe and find secrets within.

Other times, **Grasping a Key** can look very different from just investigating a scene or interrogating a person. Sometimes, other moves can also uncover Keys based on context.

If the Summoned is beating up a slimy monster in the sewers because it is clearly hiding a secret somewhere inside it, as the Keeper, you might decide that it is possible for a Key to literally fall out of it. You may ask the Summoned if they want to specifically use their powers of darkness to look for a weak point and see if it reveals its secret, which could count as literally **Grasping Keys** from inside the body of the beast.

Unravelling the Mystery

KEYS OF THE APOCALYPSE

For each Mystery, you'll track how many Keys have been uncovered so far in the Mystery Map that the players have access to.

When a PC succeeds at **Grasping Keys**, pick up your Mystery Codex and refer to the *Keys of the Apocalypse* section. Choose a Key, mark it on the Mystery Codex, and contextualize it to fit into the situation and narrative. Once you've described the uncovered Key to the players, write it down on the Mystery Map that the players have access to. As the Keeper, be as clear as possible about what the PC has found, and where it could lead to next.

As you improvise the context of the Key, provide a satisfying amount of information that's just enough to encourage the players to keep going. A Key should clearly point towards a new direction, while introducing new questions that deepen the Mystery.

Mastering the art of what is *just enough* information that pushes the Omens into new directions will take some time, but once you have a Mystery or two under your belt, it'll come naturally.

For example, the Key is *a corrupted video recording, what little you see shows disturbing images and chilling voices.* Interpret the Key as you like and describe exactly what they are able to see: a figure with glowing eyes peering into the lens, a child-like voice whispering curses, and so on. Then describe the degraded quality of the video, informing the players that if the Omens want to see the rest of the video recording, they'll have to find a way to restore the video, through mundane or arcane means. You've given the PCs plenty to work with and a possible next step, but you haven't taken away the intriguing aspects of the Key that move the Mystery forward.

Once you get the hang of offering a Key and contextualizing it, you can start making the Mystery more personal. Because you are ***keeping the Mystery strange, foreboding, and personal*** (page 169) you can best serve this principle by connecting the Keys, even tangentially, to an Omen's origin or What the Darkness Demands of them, etc.

Each prepared Mystery has about twenty different Keys to choose from. These all suit the themes and tone of the Mystery, but you may always create your own Keys as you like.

The list starts with more mundane Keys and gets stranger and more harrowing as it goes on. This helps you decide what tone to go for when offering a Key to the PCs. Do you want to start off the investigation with something straightforward, but intriguing? Or will you shock them out of the gate?

The more Keys you use from the end of the list, the more arcane, esoteric, or haunting the Mystery will be. The more Keys you use from the top of the list, the more grounded in reality the Mystery will be. You're encouraged to offer a mix of both, but feel free to tailor the tone of the Mystery to what excites you and the players.

The Keys are meant to be diverse and open to interpretation, offering many different ways the Mystery can develop. You are encouraged to change details of the Key, or create a new Key if you feel it will push the story forward in interesting directions. Remember that each Key can ***complicate a theory*** (page 179) and keep the players on their toes. This means a Key can support a developing theory, or contradict it!

A single Key will not solve the Mystery. Instead, each Key will lead to more questions, provide more leads and suggested directions, and encourage the players to take a closer look at the details.

A player may decide to study the Key further to gain more context, perhaps by using a playbook move to gather more information from the Key itself, or a person of interest. If this is the case, let them trigger the playbook move and recontextualize any details of the Key as needed. Recontextualizing or learning more about the Key will not create a new Key. Instead, you will just rewrite what is known about the Key in the Mystery Map.

As the Keeper, an important skill to develop is contextualizing the Keys on the fly. For example, if the Key is *a painting that gently bleeds, soft sighs coming from the black void in the middle of it*, the context of how the Omens **Grasp Keys** will change how the Key is uncovered. Here are some examples:

While interrogating a suspect, *the suspect suddenly starts raving about the dreams they had of a painting that bleeds, only to wake up and find their hands covered in paint and blood.*

While speaking to a witness, *the witness says they overheard someone describing a painting of an old woman covered in wounds that would bleed paint.*

While searching for clues in a haunted attic, *they find the painting itself. Covered in a dusty white cloth, with blood slowly seeping through.*

While contextualizing the Key, you also need to take into account the results of a roll. If the player rolled an 8-10, they uncover the Key without complication. The examples above work perfectly well. However, if the player rolled an 11+, that means there's a significant complication, cost, or fall out in uncovering the Key. Using the same examples above, let's change things a bit to reflect the 11+ result.

While interrogating a suspect, *they suddenly start raving about the dreams they had of a painting that bleeds. As the suspect describes the dream, they close their eyes and hold their hands to cover their face, paint and blood pour out of their eyes and they scream. "But I'm awake, I'm awake! Don't show me the void, please, please stop!" they scream in horror. If the PCs don't do something soon, the suspect will be eaten by the dream and transform into a servant of the Harbinger.*

While speaking to a witness, *the witness says they overheard someone else describing a painting of an old woman covered in wounds that would bleed paint. The witness turns to the Fallen and says, "Now that I think about it, when they described the old woman... she had hair and eyes like yours, the same markings on the skin. What a strange coincidence." You may directly ask the Fallen: How are you connected to this painting? Why do you look older in the painting?*

While searching for clues in a haunted attic, *they find the painting itself. Covered in a dusty white cloth, with the blood slowly seeping through. When the PC reaches out to pull away at the white cloth, they see a growing void at the center that pulls in the light. A terrible gurgling scream, like someone drowning, comes from the void. A hand shoots out and grabs the Omen by the wrist, pulling them into the painting!*

Remember the principle of **playing to find out**. You can ask evocative questions like, "When the suspect starts raving about the dreams they've had, why does it sound painfully familiar to you?"

Picking a Key from the list (or making one up on the fly), contextualizing it, and applying complications is a skill you'll refine over time. Take your time with the first Mystery you run. Each time you offer a Key, contextualizing in the moment will be easier and faster than the last time.

It should also be noted that the same Key can be reinterpreted, depending not only on the context, but your own improvisational skill or intuitive creativity. Here is how the Key, *evidence of a pilot that no one remembers*, can be offered during a Mystery:

If the Key is given as is, *the Omen discovers files and video recordings of a teen pilot training for battle. No one in the outpost recognizes the pilot, even when evidence shows the pilot interacting with many of the personnel.*

If the Key is reinterpreted slightly, *the Omen runs to the infirmary to find a pilot screaming in terror. She doesn't remember ever coming to the outpost or training to become a pilot. Her memories from the past three years are gone.*

If the Key is reinterpreted dramatically, *the Omen has just finished reviewing the reports of yesterday's tragic battle against the rift monsters, and the tragedy and horror of one of the pilots dying. The Omen gets a panicked call from the outpost commander—the pilot has just returned, completely unharmed. She remembers the battle differently, but there is no denying the body in the outpost morgue.*

The Keys can be offered through different contexts, and reinterpreted in any way that feels interesting and exciting. Trust your imagination and use each Key as an opportunity to sharpen your skills of improvisation.

Sometimes it can take a while to figure out how to offer a Key, especially for the first Mystery or so. If you need to, feel free to tell a player, "Okay, you uncovered a Key. Before we reveal it, let's cut to Sienna and see what the Hungry is up to." This has an added benefit of ramping up the tension and excitement for the players!

Alternatively, you are encouraged to be honest with your players and let them know when you need some time. You can say something like, "I have a Key in mind but I can't figure out how to contextualize it just yet, let's take a 10 minute break here and when we come back, let's see what the Key is and what complication you run into."

Cara, the Shade, is chasing down a hooded figure through the twisting corridors of an apartment building. Carlos wants to **Grasp Keys***, hoping that the mysterious runner will lead them closer to* **Unlocking Doom's Door***. Carlos spends two Darkness Tokens and they roll a total of 11!*

The Keeper looks at the Mystery Codex and the list of Keys. She quickly settles on "a small and crooked shrine to a forgotten god of pain and violence, who destroyed their own name."

Keeper: You push yourself and they're so close, you reach out and your fingers brush against their shoulder. You're about to reach them when they fling themselves around a corner and barrel down a narrow flight of stairs. You hear them scream, "Do not forsake me, Winged One! I am your faithful servant, we will reclaim your name and power through blood!"

You catch up to them and your footsteps echo in a decrepit basement. You stop just short of a collection of bones and dozens of lit candles collected against the wall. You realize it's a shrine of some kind, the wax and bones have been sculpted into a horrifying figure of many wings.

Keeper knows Carlos rolled an 11, which means there is significant cost, complication, or fall out. She chooses a complication.

Keeper: You see that under the wax and bone there's something like a cage...it's one of the manananggal you were talking to just earlier, Mickey. He's bound and gagged, and his eyes are full of fear. The stranger turns to Mickey, and the hood falls away. You see the stranger's face is covered in scars dripping wax, and they wear a necklace made of bones.

They take out a dagger made from sharpened bone, and they're about to stab Mickey! They say, "Wretched creature, you give me no choice! I will take the power you have squandered! All power for the Winged One!" What do you do?

While Carlos thinks about how Cara will respond, the Keeper quickly writes down the Key on the Mystery Map for everyone's reference. The Keeper writes down the contextualized Key: **A shrine of bone and wax. The shrine is made to a god of pain and violence called the Winged One.**

How could it have gone differently?

The Keeper could have contextualized the same Key differently. Instead, the stranger could have called out to the god and dropped something that leads to where the shrine is before running away. But the Keeper decided to have the shrine show up physically in the scene and set up a violent confrontation with high stakes. When do you decide when a Key warrants physical violence? When do you keep the pacing of the Mystery slow and steady instead?

What if the Keeper had reinterpreted the Key dramatically? They could have had the Winged One themselves show up, a malformed god empowered by tattered prayers. Or it could have been a shrine to the victims of the Manananggal Murders instead. When you reinterpret a Key, how can you encourage and honor your creativity?

What if the Keeper had used the same Key in a different situation? An NPC could have described dreaming of the shrine, or a PC could have come across a disturbing sketch of the shrine. When do you decide a Key is experienced directly or indirectly?

Carlos rolled an 11, so the Keeper had to provide a significant cost, complication, or fall out. The complication in this case is that Mickey had been kidnapped by this stranger and is about to get hurt. What other complications could you have offered? As a significant cost, the Keeper could have told Cara to mark a Condition, tick the Doomsday Clock (narrating what happens during or after the scene) or uncover the Key but lose track of the stranger. What kind of fallout can you imagine happening at this moment?

The Keeper chose one of the weirder Keys from the list, insinuating the stranger is a cultist of some kind. What if the Keeper had chosen the Key, "a manila envelope filled with black and white photographs of different Manananggal who live in the building, taken with a telephoto lens." What would the Keeper be suggesting instead with that Key? How would that change the tone of the Mystery?

Carlos went straight to **Grasp Keys** instead of being asked to **Unleash the Dark** first or something similar. When running *Apocalypse Keys*, it's best to trigger the move that aligns with the intentions and interests of the player. But if the Keeper wanted to introduce a conflict or confrontation before Cara can Grasp a Key, what would that have looked like?

CONNECTING KEYS AND IRREVOCABLE TRUTHS

A Key is connected to a Facet when the players **Unlock Doom's Door** and form a theory together. A theory accounts for all the uncovered Keys and how they connect to each Facet of the Mystery.

When a PC declares the full context of a Key, they explain the connection between a Key and a Facet. The player takes the Mystery Map and draws a line between the Key and Facet.

However, some moves will let players connect a Key to a Facet before **Unlocking Doom's Door**. Notably, both the Found and the Shade have starting moves (**You Can't Hide Your Heart from Me** and **Death Walked Here**) that offer an opportunity to draw a line between a Key and a Facet of the Mystery.

The Surge may also do this through their playbook move **I Am Your Destruction**, while two DIVISION moves offer the same (**Psychic Invokers** and **The Peacemaker**).

When a player connects a Key to a Facet with these moves, they explain the connection as normal and draw the line on the Mystery Map. As part of the move, they declare an *irrevocable truth*. The player writes down this irrevocable truth on the Mystery Map. Drawing this persistent line and declaring irrevocable truths demonstrates an Omen's ability to discern a core aspect of the Mystery.

This drawn line and irrevocable truth affect **Unlock Doom's Door** in three ways. First, when the players build a theory, this Key is already connected to a Facet. Second, any theory should take into account the irrevocable truth. And third, should the theory be the wrong one (which happens on a miss during **Unlock Doom's Door**), this drawn line and irrevocable truth remain even when crafting a new theory.

This means that when they **Unlock Doom's Door** again during the same Mystery, the players cannot redraw this line or disregard any irrevocable truths. The connection and truth persist between attempts.

Cara, the Shade, uses **Death Walked Here** *to reconstruct events from the past through Death's eyes.*

Carlos (Cara): The second question I'll ask is, **"What draws Death close?"**

Keeper: Oooh, nice! As you continue to study the scene unfold before you, you see evidence of the cruel death that befell one of the mananangal. Moments pass, and the dead mananangal draws in a ragged breath. You see necrotic energy collecting within the corpse, and another soul takes over the body. A prepared ritual draws Death close.

Carlos (Cara): Damn. Okay, as part of this question, I draw a line between a Key and a Facet of the Mystery. I'll connect **"a collection of mananangal hair and nails, carefully tagged and preserved"** to the Facet **Murder Victims**.

These victims aren't randomly chosen—the ritual wouldn't work on just any mananangal. The irrevocable truth I'm declaring is that these mananangal were studied by the Harbinger, the hair and nails are evidence of that.

On the Mystery Map, Carlos draws a line between the Key and the Facet they connected. They write down the irrevocable truth, "Murder victims are carefully studied and chosen for a ritual."

MANIPULATING FACETS

There is another way an Omen can affect the shape of the Mystery: manipulating the Facets of the current Mystery through specific moves.

Normally, the Facets persist throughout the current Mystery. Notably, both the Found and the Shade have playbook moves (**Walk with Me in Dreams** and **The Devil's Advocate**) that offer an opportunity to rewrite or add a Facet of the Mystery. The two DIVISION moves, **Psychic Invokers** and **Dream Future Review Protocols** also provide options to do so.

When a player chooses the option to rewrite or add a Facet from these moves, they declare what Facet they are rewriting and why, or add a new Facet to the Mystery. They make the appropriate changes to the Mystery Map. As part of the move, they also declare an *irrevocable truth*. The player writes down this irrevocable truth on the Mystery Map. Changing the Facets of the Mystery and declaring irrevocable truths demonstrates an Omen's ability to see the bigger picture affecting the Mystery.

By rewriting a Facet, the Omen establishes another perspective on what is important to consider during the investigation. For example, the player may take the Facet *The Decline of the Manananggal* and rewrite it as *The Rise of the Manananggal*. This offers a startling revelation: the Mystery is affected by the manananggal reclaiming their power in society.

A player can rewrite the Facet as much as they like, dramatically changing what guides the Mystery. In the same example, the player can instead rewrite the Facet *The Decline of the Manananggal* and rewrite it as *The Conspiracy of the Diwata*.

Even if every Mystery has the Facets *The Harbinger* and *The Door of Power*, these Facets may be rewritten. When **Unlocking Doom's Door**, both the Harbinger and the door will still have to be taken into account in some way for you to interpret the results of a perfect hit or a disastrous success. But by rewriting either Facet, the Harbinger and Door of Power become less central to the theory formed.

There is no limit to the number of Facets that can be added to the Mystery. However, in the unlikely event that the Facets will outnumber the uncovered Keys, ask the player to rewrite a Facet instead.

Opal, the Found, uses **Walk with Me in Dreams** *to seek out insight and wisdom. They have entered the dream of the Parasitic Library and explored its strange consciousness.*

Olivia (Opal): Okay I'm going to declare an irrevocable truth that I learned from the dream. I'm going for a big one: The Parasitic Library used to be an Omen that worked for DIVISION. They were on a dangerous mission, and instead of dying they became... whatever it is they are now really.

Keeper: Woah, that IS a big one. Now you also get to rewrite or add a Facet to the Mystery!

Olivia (Opal): I'm rewriting the Facet **"the secrets locked within the Library."** I think the Parasitic Library is trying to learn how to reclaim their former identity and form, and that's something we have to keep in mind. I'm rewriting this to **"The Parasitic Library's Original Identity."**

On the Mystery Map, Opal writes down the irrevocable truth, "The Parasitic Library was once an Omen." They also rewrite the Facet as they described.

The Mystery Moves Forward

THE DOOMSDAY CLOCK

The Harbingers continue to scheme and manipulate from the shadows. As they enact their machinations, the pace of the Mystery continues ever forward.

As the Keeper, it's easy to get caught up in presenting the Mystery and guiding the players as they investigate. But keep track of an important truth: the Harbinger continues their dreadful work, determined to do whatever is necessary to get to the ancient Door of Power and claim it for themselves. This happens in the background, no matter what the Omens end up doing.

Another key skill is pacing the Mystery and adapting to players who approach the investigation differently.

When facilitating the game, you may have players who are natural problem solvers. They'll doggedly go after every possible lead and clue, and proactively seek out information. This may mean they'll constantly **Grasp Keys** at every opportunity. This creates a breakneck pace and doesn't give the Mystery enough time to breathe or come into its own. Additionally, Omens that remain in one location simply to repeatedly **Grasp Keys** threaten to break the game's immersion.

On the other hand, you may have players who linger at every moment. They explore every detail of each location they enter, talk to everyone they can, and hold in-depth conversations with one another at every opportunity. They may forget to **Grasp Keys**, or may be too distracted by other matters. Even if they feel like they're understanding aspects of the Mystery better, nothing truly moves forward.

You may also have players who are unsure of what to do, and are more comfortable reacting to whatever threats, challenges, or obstacles you place in front of them. You may need to offer more guidance, be more generous in what their PCs would know, or remind them to trigger certain moves. As more reactive players, you will need to give them something to react to.

Apocalypse Keys has a built-in tool to help you pace each session, make sure the Mystery moves forward, keep track of what the Harbinger is doing off-screen, and give players something to react to. That tool is the **Doomsday Clock**.

Each Doomsday Clock has a number of segments, referred to as ticks. When you tick the Doomsday Clock, you fill in one of the segments. The number of ticks a Doomsday Clock has is equal to the complexity of a Mystery. A simple Mystery might have 4 ticks, while a complex and intricate conspiracy might have 12.

Each tick describes what happens as the Mystery moves forward. It could be something that happens off-screen, as you briefly describe a Harbinger cloaked in shadows and enacting another step of their plan. Or it could be something that happens in the location as a result of what the Harbinger does.

The Doomsday Clock is kept out in the open, for you and the other players to remember the stakes of the Mystery and the hidden presence of the Harbinger. When you reach over to tick the Doomsday Clock, it's an exciting time for everyone in the game.

Before you tick the Doomsday Clock, refer to the detailed version of the Doomsday Clock in your Mystery Codex. In the same way that you briefly study the *Keys of the apocalypse* to decide how to contextualize it for the moment, do the same for each tick of the Doomsday Clock.

Each tick comes with at least one question to help you contextualize the Doomsday Clock. You can ask this question to yourself to inspire your creativity, or ask one of the players and build on their answer.

Sometimes what happens is subtle—you tick the Doomsday Clock and narrate to the players a strange coincidence or sinister omen. Other times it will be a confrontation, loud and impossible to ignore. A tick may focus on the Harbinger's actions, which should ripple outwards and affect the investigation in some way.

Like Keys, you can change any aspect of the Doomsday Clock to better suit the situation, flow of the Mystery, and general pacing. You may replace any of the ticks entirely with your own ideas, if you feel confident doing so.

How often you tick the Doomsday Clock is something that is informed by the flow of the Mystery.

The Doomsday Clock is an excellent tool for pacing, but it is not meant to replace communication between the Keeper and players. It is absolutely valid to talk to your players and move the Mystery along to the next exciting beat!

Keeper: So we've uncovered two Keys here, it makes sense that this is all the information you can get here in this location. Where would you like to head next?

Keeper: We haven't **Grasped Keys** in a while, what leads or questions would you like to pursue?

Keeper: You both have uncovered a Key each, how about we end the scene here and cut to the Summoned and see what they're up to?

WHEN TO TICK THE DOOMSDAY CLOCK

You can tick the Doomsday Clock when you want to:

- **Complicate the flow of the Mystery**, slowing down the pace as the monsters need to address the tick.
- **Move the Mystery along**, when players are distracted or need something to react to.
- **Create appropriate consequences when a player rolls a miss.** This option is best used sparingly, perhaps 1-3 times a session, depending on how many ticks the Doomsday Clock has.
- **Move the plans of the Harbinger forward**, moving the Harbinger closer to their goal.

Because you may choose to tick the Doomsday Clock as a Keeper move, it's possible that the Doomsday Clock will tick all the way down before the PCs successfully **Unlock Doom's Door**. When the Doomsday Clock is running out of ticks, gently remind your players that time is running out. Give them an opportunity to **Unlock Doom's Door** before it's too late!

Let's break down what you can expect to see in a Doomsday Clock. The ticks of the Doomsday Clock are written to be open to interpretation, to make it easier for you to adapt them to the current situation or flow of the Mystery. Remember, you are encouraged to change any aspect of the ticks to best suit what has happened thus far in the Mystery.

THE DOOMSDAY CLOCK TICKS

There are **moments** that ***reveal a sinister sign of things to come*** or an opportunity to **Grasp Keys**, a glimpse of the Harbinger's **intrigue**, an **event** that confronts the PCs. The final tick of the Doomsday Clock always foretells what will happen when **The Door Opens**.

- **Moments:** These are short and evocative moments. Use them as they are to describe disturbing scenes and provide opportunities to **Grasp Keys**. If you wish, build upon a moment to create actual challenges and confrontations.
- **Intrigue:** A glimpse at what the Harbinger is up to, their schemes and their desires. Cut away to here and describe the scene to the players, being clear that this is something their PCs are not privy to. Or keep this intrigue to yourself, instead using it to decide what is happening behind the scenes and then extrapolate how it affects the Omens and the Mystery itself. Or the Omens may catch a glimpse of it through vision, witness report, or something similar.
- Whatever you decide, remember to keep the Harbinger themselves vague and mysterious. Cloak them in shadow, distort their voice, whatever you need to do to maintain the illusion. Gently hold on to ideas you have about who or what the Harbinger is, but be ready to let them go if the players come up with a different idea to **Unlock Doom's Door**.
- **Events:** These are direct events the Omens must deal with in some way. There are fewer of these per Doomsday Clock, to give you and the players more creative freedom in what happens during a Mystery. An event can be a confrontation of some kind, a direct challenge or obstacle to the PCs.
- **The Door Opens:** The last tick on the Doomsday Clock always details what happens if the PCs aren't able to **Unlock Doom's Door** before the Harbinger claims the ancient Door of Power. This is essentially the worst-case scenario. Take inspiration from the description of this last tick, and build upon it to create a truly catastrophic event the PCs will have to deal with. The PCs should have the opportunity to mitigate the worst of the consequences.

The Omens are walking through the twisted passages of an ancient catacomb. Opal has just uncovered a Key, but as a complication it has awakened the dead!

Keeper: Water floods the passage, putrid and dark, swirling around your ankles. In the distance, the sound of breaking bones, gnashing teeth, the wailing undead! Long black hair knots around your calves, and a skeletal hand grabs Opal, pulling them under! What do you do?

Carlos (Cara): I use my new Power of Darkness, **NECROMANCY**, and force the undead to answer my bidding instead. I **UNLEASH THE DARK** to enforce my will! I command the undead, "In accordance with DIVISION bylaws, I will enact the Necromancer Protocol—comply or face a fate worse than death!"

Carlos spends Darkness Tokens and rolls... but they have a 4 in total! The Keeper looks at the Doomsday Clock, there are 6 ticks in total and it has only been ticked twice. This is a good opportunity to tick the Doomsday Clock.

The next tick on the Doomsday Clock is a moment... but this feels more like a confrontation, so the Keeper builds on the moment.

The description of the moment details how all holy art, items, and symbols show signs of corruption as a hellish dimension draws near. The Keeper draws inspiration from that for what happens next.

The Keeper ticks the Doomsday Clock in front of everyone, ramping up the tension.

Keeper: From below the water there's a bright red light. The heat comes off in waves and the water boils all around you. The light fills up the catacombs, blinding you for a moment. The skeleton breaks through the water, bright blood pouring from their eye sockets.

Their jaw breaks open as they hiss, "We do not care for your laws, all will despair as hell reclaims the earth!" You hear what sounds like a twisted version of a church choir. The undead gather around you, singing of your demise. What do you do?

Confronting the Harbingers

UNLOCK DOOM'S DOOR

This is the climax of every Mystery! Everything will build up to this point, and easing the players and narrative into a satisfying climax with the Harbinger takes some skill and practice.

The PCs reach this confrontation by **Unlocking Doom's Door** successfully, or when the Doomsday Clock fills completely. Remind your players to make an attempt when they've uncovered enough Keys to add at least +1 to the roll, or if they're running out of ticks on the Doomsday Clock.

When a player triggers **Unlock Doom's Door**, guide the conversation between players. Make sure everyone is getting an opportunity to weigh in and be heard. If the players are stumped, you can always offer your own suggestions. When the players take turns connecting a Facet to a Key, you can contextualize and bridge the gaps between each player's contribution to help solidify the theory.

All players should be satisfied with the theory forming, so if a player isn't speaking up or expressing their opinion, directly ask them for their input. Sometimes an excited player will talk over others and dominate the conversation, gently check in with every player and have them connect a Facet to a Key.

Help the players find ways to connect every Key they've found. Encourage them to explain these leaps of inspiration in different ways: maybe the Omen has seen something like this years ago, when DIVISION sent them to the Australian outback. Maybe a PC's unique origin could help explain their insight and ability to connect a Key to a Facet. Players are encouraged to make things up and be bold in their declarations, even revealing new information in flashback if it helps form the theory.

The final theory should connect every Key to a Facet. A theory should successfully incorporate all the Keys uncovered thus far. Some of the Keys will be central and important, while the others may be tangential, minor, or simply support the other Keys or address simpler aspects of a Facet.

In most cases, the theory will reveal who the Harbinger is, what the ancient Door of Power is, and how to unlock it. This is because two Facets across every Mystery will always be *The Harbinger* and *The Door of Power*. However, it is possible to create a theory that doesn't center either, especially if an Omen has rewritten either Facet (*Manipulating Facets,* page 208).

The following are condensed versions of theories that only focus on describing the ancient Door of Power and how the Harbinger must unlock it. A full version of each theory would take into account each Key and Facet. But these examples should give you an idea of what a theory can look like.

Is the door hidden in the basement of the tenement, *and will only open once the Harbinger has forced their servant to make the required number of ritual killings?*

Is the door an old music box, *and will only open once the Harbinger has filled the old mansion with enough ghosts to weaken the wards on the old music box?*

Is the door a portal between our world and a dimension of colossal monsters, *and will only open permanently once the Queen of Monsters has come through to attack the city?*

Once everyone in the group is happy with the theory and all the Facets have been connected to the uncovered Keys, it's time to trigger the move. A PC attempts to **Unlock Doom's Door** (page 55). If the theory is correct, it's time to place the characters in a position that reflects the result.

On an 8-10 you've tracked down Doom's Door. You know exactly where it is and how to unlock it. In addition, the Keeper will present an opportunity to protect what matters most, take down the Harbinger, or otherwise drive back the apocalypse.

The Omens arrive at the basement of the tenement *and find the hidden door that leads to the ritual killing room, and interrupt a murder right before it happens!*

One of the ghosts has broken free from the Harbinger's control—*their mother created the music box and they'll tell the Omens how to destroy it once and for all!*

The Omens have found a way to travel directly to the dimension of colossal monsters, *if they can defeat or persuade the Queen of Monsters, they'll save the city!*

On an 11+ you reach the door moments after the Harbinger has unlocked it. They've begun to harness the power on the other side of the door, but there is still time to stop them. The Keeper will tell you what sacrifice or risk you will need to endure to interrupt their ascension.

When the Omens arrive, the tenement's walls are covered in blood and everyone living there is being transformed into servants of the Harbingers, *but there's still time to reverse the process!*

The wards of the old music box have broken and the entire town is falling into a deep sleep as a song-spell plays, *but the ghost has found you and will help the Omens travel into the dream realm and defeat the Harbinger!*

The Queen of Monsters is about to come through the portal, but she's resisting the control of the Harbinger. *If the Omens can destroy the control mechanism attached to her brain stem, she'll return to her dimension gladly!*

There is one other way the PCs can confront the Harbingers. If the Doomsday Clock is filled, the Harbinger has claimed the power of the door, and the Omens will face the worst possible circumstances.

By the time the Omens arrive at the tenement, *the building has become a living palace of flesh and bone, and its denizens are abominations that will attack the city and create more of themselves. Can the Omens stop them in time?*

The song-spell has reached the Omens while they were tracking down the door, and the Harbinger has trapped each of them in their worst nightmare! *Can the Omens face their fears and get to the Harbinger before the nightmares of the town escape to the real world?*

The Queen of Monsters crashes through the portal, the control chip is forcing her to attack! *Citizens are evacuating, but they won't make it out in time. Can the Omens defeat the Queen of Monsters or force her to go back into her dimension before it's too late?*

There's a big shift when the final confrontation starts. One minute, you'll be helping the players refine their theory to **Unlock Doom's Door**. The next minute, you may be narrating a fiery behemoth tearing through the fabric between worlds, as the ancient Door of Power reveals itself!

This is a moment for dramatic flair and evocative details, so be ready for it. If you feel confident in your improvisational skills, play off whatever is already happening in the scene and build on what has happened in the Mystery so far. If you prefer to plan and prepare, then make sure to keep your notes about the Harbinger handy to glance down at this moment.

If you want to give yourself 10 minutes to quickly jot down details about the Harbinger (*Creating Harbingers and Antagonists,* page 337) and how you imagine the start of the encounter unfolding, now is the perfect time to take a quick break from play.

If you've just **Unlocked Doom's Door** and are close to the agreed upon time to end the session, you could end on a dramatic cliffhanger! You'll have a few days to outline how things may unfold and craft the Harbinger. Resist the urge to plan out the confrontation step by step—you only need a few antagonists and sketched out ideas and events (*Not Enough Time for An Apocalypse?,* page 191).

Mysteries, Interrupted

In *Apocalypse Keys*, several mechanics support dramatic moments and cinematic revelations. As the Keeper, it's best to stay on your toes and remain flexible when these sudden narrative twists and turns happen. This chapter describes what design elements and mechanics you should be on the lookout for and provide guidance on how to handle them.

Collision States

Some narrative moments are triggered mechanically, and this collides with the ongoing narrative or focus of the Mystery in fun and dramatic ways!

These include the Breaking Point (page 28), **Torn Between** (page 46), marking the fifth box of Ruin to narrate a glimpse of the PC as a Harbinger (page 82), and moves that are triggered when any of the previous instances occur.

These collision states are disruptive by design, in that the Omens don't always have control over their emotions, powers, or fate. This loss of control is an opportunity to see into the heart of the monster and discover something vulnerable or horrifying. But even if the Omens lose control, as the Keeper you still gently facilitate the overall flow of the scene.

You can handle this a few different ways. ***You can play out the collision state as is.*** For example, after the Summoned marks their fifth box of Ruin, ask them to describe the glimpse of who they will become as a Harbinger. Cut back to the scene as normal, and move on to the next PC.

However, in many cases, the Omen was doing something else before the collision state was triggered, meaning they could have been in the spotlight for a while. Keeping the focus of the scene on one character for too long can leave other players feeling unimportant and bored.

When a collision state focuses on a character for too long, you can either ***pause and move the spotlight to someone else*** or ***involve the other players or Omens in the moment***. The first means cutting away to another character for a moment, in the same way a television show would do the same. The second option has you asking either players or Omens to be involved in the scene, sharing the spotlight.

When you pause and move the spotlight, *it can sound like "You're about to hit your Breaking Point. Let's pause dramatically right there and cut away to the Surge and see how their investigation is going. We'll cut right back to you after and play out how your power overwhelms you!"*

When you involve another player in the moment, *it can sound like "The Hungry, can you help me describe this Breaking Point for the Surge? What part of the Surge's power is taken by someone?" In this way, you're asking the player to co-facilitate the moment with you.*

When you involve another Omen in the moment, *it can sound like, "The Surge, a part of your power is taken by the kitsune. You see their eyes glow as your power consumes them. The Hungry, I'm going to ask you, how do you recognize the same hunger within you that takes hold of the kitsune?" You've insinuated a connection between the Surge's power and the Hungry's innate desire to feed, which can be fun to explore in play.*

There is also the special case of moves that are triggered when any of the collision states occur, such as the Surge's **My Hands Around Your Heart** or the Shade's **Death Broke Me First**. These moves change the normal flow of the collision state. These play out as normal, and you can apply any combination of the previous techniques. The only thing to consider is that the player will be interrupting another player's moment, and there should be a quick check-in to see if it's welcome.

When you check in to see if a player's intervention is welcome, *it can sound like "The Found, you want to use your move* **You Are Not Alone** *so that the Last doesn't have to be* **Torn Between**. *The Last, are you cool with that, or did you want to have this moment uninterrupted?"*

Cinematic Moments

Many DIVISION, playbook, and Ruin moves create moments where a PC steps into the spotlight. This is a highlight for the character, a moment for them to truly shine. Part of the reason you should ***play to find out*** (page 169) is that planning around these moments are impossible. *Apocalypse Keys* is designed so that the Keeper has fun being surprised and awed by the players.

You can introduce a possible Harbinger in one moment, and in the next the Fallen announces they'll trigger **You Loved Me Once**. Before the move is even resolved, the player has introduced an essential truth to the scene: this NPC loved and worshipped them. You hadn't planned on establishing a connection between this NPC and the Fallen, but here you are!

These dramatic swerves significantly change the story and relationships. Many moves are cinematic, and as ***a fan of the Omens***, you are here to encourage them to be as bold as they like with their moves.

Do keep an eye out for players who haven't had their own cinematic moment in a while. If one or more players have an easier time using their moves to stay in the spotlight, talk to them frankly and let them know you'd love to see other players have a turn.

"We haven't had a chance for the Found to take the lead on a scene, how about we check in on them first before we trigger your move?"

Some players are more passive, and you might have to take a look at the moves they've chosen and offer that they can trigger them.

"You haven't checked in with your **Ghostly Agent** *in a while, would you like to do that now?"*

Scene-Ending Moves

Many playbook, DIVISION, and Ruin moves have been designed to potentially end a scene. A lot of this depends on narrative positioning, the pacing of the scene, and what feels dramatically appropriate.

For example, instead of fighting an antagonist and having the Omens use **Unleash the Dark** again and again to inflict a Condition, the Summoned could use **Borrowed Power** to summon a creature to *destroy a vulnerable target*. As long as the narrative positioning justifies how the antagonist is vulnerable, the Summoned destroys them. The confrontation ends, and the group moves on to the next scene.

"That last hit from the Hungry definitely weakened the doppelgänger. The Summoned, tell me what it looks like when your demon of fire and rage destroys the doppelgänger!"

Other times, you'll have to choose when a move can end a scene. If the Found uses **Let Sleeping Gods Lie** to draw upon a destructive cosmic power, how effective is it? When they *wield the cosmic dreams of terror like the sharpest weapon and infect a specific vulnerable target with horrifying hallucinations and bring to life one of their nightmares*, is that enough to defeat the Harbinger and end the scene?

If it feels narratively appropriate and you want to end the scene with the move, go ahead and describe how.

"The three-headed werewolf screams in terror and falls to the ground. You catch glimpses of the terrible nightmare they are plagued with, and they let out a strangled sob. 'Enough! Opal of the Crystal Court, I bow to your power. Release me from these nightmares and I will do as you ask.' The Found, the werewolf is fearful of you and will heed you, for now. What do you do?"

If the scene had just started and you ***feel like things should play out a little more for the sake of narrative pacing***, you can describe how the Omen's powers are effective and set up an opportunity for an Omen or how the scene moves forward to the next exciting moment.

"The three-headed werewolf roars in pain as the hallucinations overwhelm them, their nightmares tear through reality. A figure made of broken hope and shattered glass holds the werewolf close. The Shade, you can take advantage of this, but the nightmare won't hold the werewolf for long. What do you do?"

Finally, *Apocalypse Keys* is a game that lends towards raising the stakes to feverish heights. ***If you feel like raising the stakes and intensifying the scene in response***, go for it.

> *"The three-headed werewolf opens all three mouths to scream, but before they can, they're completely torn apart by their nightmares. Echoes of their shattered mind are left behind, blooming into fractals. From the shards, the nightmare takes shape and steps through into this world. The Found, you recognize the face the nightmare wears. Why do you care for them, and why are you terrified to see them?"*

As you can see, *Apocalypse Keys* encourages both players and the Keeper to interpret these powerful moments in varying ways. It may take some time to confidently end a scene dramatically or raise the stakes exponentially, but it's a natural storytelling instinct that will sharpen each time you play *Apocalypse Keys*.

Setting Aside the Mystery

There is one dramatic moment where the Mystery is set aside to reveal an Omen's transformation into a Harbinger.

Some playbooks have Ruin moves that create a personal Doomsday Clock for the Omens. In exchange for great power in the moment, they mark Ruin and tick the personal Doomsday Clock. When the clock fills, they become a Harbinger.

These Ruin moves are the Surge's **My Anointed One**, the Found's **Let Sleeping Gods Lie**, the Fallen's **I Will Rise Again**, and the Hungry's **Until Only Hunger Remains**. In the case of the Fallen, rather than a personal Doomsday Clock, they have steps towards reclaiming their glory that will culminate in becoming a Harbinger and creating a powerful Faction.

These Ruin moves provide a dramatic culmination point, and an ongoing tension arcing over several Mysteries. Should an Omen become a Harbinger through these means, it's a moment that demands attention.

In most of these Ruin moves the guidance for the moment is worded as, "Whatever the current Mystery is, it is set aside." and goes on to describe how the Omen (or in the case of the Surge, their Anointed One) emerges from an ancient Door of Power.

There are several ways this can play out. By this point, you should have been facilitating *Apocalypse Keys* for some time and will have your own sense of pacing and narrative momentum. The following is general guidance, but follow your own intuition, you know your players and your game best.

First, you can ***have a quick confrontation between the Omens and the Harbinger that emerges from an ancient Door of Power, before refocusing on the current Mystery***. Let the players know that the newly emerged Harbinger has this one scene before they make their dramatic exit, taking the ancient Door of Power with them. The player becomes another Keeper for this scene and guides events alongside you. They no longer make rolls and are encouraged to declare what happens next, like the Keeper does. At the end of the scene, take a break so the player can create a new character, and then resume investigating the Mystery that was set aside.

Second, you can truly ***set aside the Mystery and completely focus on this confrontation***. This can take a couple of scenes or an entire session. The PC who just turned into a Harbinger is a Keeper like you, in charge of describing their own character and how they confront or respond to the PCs. Play this out for as long as it's fun for everyone. At the end of the session, the player creates a new character and everyone resumes investigating the Mystery that was set aside.

Third, you can ***connect this Harbinger and their ancient Door of Power to the current Mystery***. This isn't expected of you as the Keeper, since the Ruin move does specify that the current Mystery is set aside. But this can be an exciting alternative, and will require a lot of improvisation from both you and the players. This moves the Mystery forward in exciting ways! The player roleplays as a Harbinger for as long as it's fun for them, but they can create a new character whenever they like. When that happens, their Harbinger now becomes an NPC as normal.

With any of these approaches, this new Harbinger and their ancient Door of Power will likely reappear in a future Mystery, and even be part of the Final Mystery (page 226)!

I Almost Called This Game Apocalypse Kisses

Apocalypse Keys pushes characters and narrative towards emotional and vulnerable places. Much of the design and mechanics makes room for exploring feelings, relationships, and intimacy.

This means that it's likely that the characters will get distracted from the Mystery and the investigation at hand, carried away as they are by their emotions and how their characters feel for each other. This is all by design, and *Apocalypse Keys* shines when everyone explores this emotional space together. The world may be ending, but there's always time for a heartfelt confession or a stolen kiss.

As the Keeper, here is some guidance to celebrate the emotions of the game and balancing it against the diabolical plans of the Harbingers.

You can ***let the moment breathe***. Some players will enjoy these moments as much as, if not more than the thrilling action-packed Mystery-solving bits. Set aside a scene or two to let the Omens interact with each other and NPCs. These are excellent opportunities for an Omen to **Reveal Their Heart** or to find themselves **Torn Between**, among other moves that create moments of intimacy. In many cases, the players won't be able to trigger a lot of interesting moves without these moments. This includes moves like DIVISION's **Orphanage Visit** and the Hungry's **Your Ruin on My Lips**.

> *"You haven't had a chance to visit the orphanage in a while. Do you want to have a flashback scene that takes place there, or do you want to pause the investigation for a while and head back to DIVISION HQ?"*

You can tick the Doomsday Clock and remind the Omens what's at stake. Remember that the Doomsday Clock (page 186) is a pacing tool you can use to signal the ongoing manipulations of the Harbinger and the mounting pressure of the Mystery. Let the Omens have their moments of emotional catharsis and vulnerable intimacy, but at some point during the session tick the Doomsday Clock and force the Omens to react. Besides, a kiss that's interrupted by the tick of the Doomsday Clock becomes that much more exciting!

"The Shade, before you can respond to that tearful confession, you feel the entire outpost shudder and shake. You look up and dozens of monitors confirm that the rift opens violently, contradicting predictions and patterns. I'm ticking the Doomsday Clock forward."

And of course you can always ***weave emotions into the Mystery***. This requires some practice and observation. Study the emotional tendencies of the Omens, and what excites the players. From here, you can create emotional moments when offering a Key, playing the part of the Harbinger, and so on. The Omens will still have a chance to fall into messy relationships and be vulnerable, but it'll happen as the Mystery continues to unfold.

"The Hungry, as you feed on the innocent manananggal, you hear the sound of great wings. Mickey reaches out to hold you and you see a new pair of bat-like wings have emerged from his back. His eyes grow dark and empty as he whispers an aching confession in your ear. Do you want to **Grasp Keys** *here and see how Mickey is tied to the Mystery?"*

The Final Mystery

The Mysteries of *Apocalypse Keys* all build up towards one final confrontation with the Harbingers, where the final fate of the world is on the line—the **Final Mystery**.

This chapter provides guidance on looking past Mysteries and events, and building on them to create a truly epic climax.

The Final Mystery may be the last Mystery your Omens face, providing your players with a dramatic sense of closure and a thrilling end to *Apocalypse Keys*. It's best to craft the Final Mystery after your players have investigated at least 2-4 Mysteries.

Alternatively, you may use the Final Mystery mechanics to create a cinematic end to a chapter, in the same way a longer TV series will have an epic arc to end a season before a new one starts. Creating a narrative cycle for your Omens and DIVISION makes perfect sense. After all, there will always be Harbingers attempting to bring about the apocalypse.

Creating the Final Mystery may seem daunting, but by this point you will have facilitated several sessions of *Apocalypse Keys*. You and your players will have collaborated across several Mysteries and you have a rich palette of themes and ideas to draw upon. You are well equipped to create a grand finale!

Essentially, the Final Mystery is much like any other Mystery. If you've created your own Mystery (page 328), you're already familiar with the process. The main difference is the time of reflection spent beforehand, and a consideration of recurring themes naturally established among your players.

The following is a general guideline on creating the Final Mystery. This is meant to serve as inspiration and guide your creativity.

- **Check-in with your players**
- **Review the Mysteries**
- **Recollect the past**
- **Craft the Final Mystery**

Check-in with Your Players

Before you craft the Final Mystery, ask your players any of the following questions and take note of their answers:

- *Which Harbinger(s) would you like to see return?*
- *What unanswered questions do you want the Final Mystery to confront?*
- *What cool moment do you want for your PC?*

Keep these answers in mind, refer to them as you need to as you move forward.

Review the Mysteries

Go over the Mystery Maps and Mystery Codexes from previous sessions. Take note of the following, but keep the details brief. All of this is just to have a reference of strong and recurring themes on hand to inspire the Final Mystery.

WHAT ARE THE LONG TERM EFFECTS OF THE OMENS' ACTIONS?

Consider how the Omens affected the world around them and the lasting changes they've made. How were the monsters and humans affected? What changed, for better *and* for worse?

> *Did the decline of the Mananangal continue after the Omens left? What is the ultimate fate of the outpost on Island Zero? Did the Oldest House change in a way that was meaningful?*

This includes consequences, some of which no one may have considered at the time, or only occur to you now upon reflection. Each PC has access to incredible powers—it's likely that *something* weird and horrifying happened as a result.

> *When the Hungry infected another with their hunger, did the hunger take a life of its own and continue to spread? When the Summoned tore apart a rift monster, did something ancient and terrifying ooze from its rotting bones and create new life?*

WHAT UNANSWERED QUESTIONS AND HANGING THREADS REMAIN?

As you played *Apocalypse Keys*, it's likely that with each Mystery everyone became more confident in connecting Keys to Facets and seeing the bigger picture. As the Keeper, you got better at offering tantalising half-truths and hinting at possible patterns.

But in the first Mystery or two, everyone was probably still getting used to playing *Apocalypse Keys*. Some pretty big questions may have gone unanswered, huge plot holes were waved away in favor of solving the Mystery, and dangling narrative threads hung aplenty.

This is the perfect opportunity to gather any of these loose ends and have them inspire your Final Mystery. Consider how they can directly inform the POI, locations, or Keys. By reviewing these loose ends and bringing them into the Final Mystery, you create a compelling illusion of a planned narrative that exists across all Mysteries.

> *The players had a reason to suspect Franklyn Wolf at one point, but were distracted by a more enigmatic character. As the Keeper, you forgot to loop him back into the story. What if he was snatched up by the Harbingers for some reason? Or what if he wandered into the dangerous locations of the Final Mystery? What if he now works, maybe even unknowingly, for a Faction that will bring about the apocalypse?*

Recollect the Past

Next, review the following from every Mystery Map and Mystery Codex:

- ***Known Persons of Interest***
- ***Uncovered Keys***
- ***Visited Locations***

Focus on the elements of each Mystery that the PCs directly interacted with—especially if they left an impression with the players.

Choose about 1-2 known POI, 2-4 uncovered Keys, and 1-2 visited locations per Mystery. Depending on how many Mysteries your PCs have investigated, you should have about 8-16 elements from previous Mysteries.

Reconnect to the Omens

Next, review the following aspects of the PCs:

- ***Origin***
- ***The Playbook's Unique Question***
- ***What the Darkness Demands***

Consider how any of these aspects can connect to, or become an integral part of the premise of the Final Mystery. The goal is to gather and weave in at least one aspect per PC. Even a simple connection is enough to make the Final Mystery feel nuanced and compelling.

It helps if you've already laid the groundwork to such in previous Mysteries, but it's never too late to do so for the Final Mystery. Remember that you don't need to know exactly how everything comes together to reveal a complete truth, you only need to suggest a connection and let the players connect everything to the truth in play.

> *Can the tragedy that destroyed the Last's people be connected to the origin of the Surge? Can what the Hungry feeds on be connected to the Found's missing memories? How does this relate to the possible premise of the Final Mystery?*

Craft the Final Mystery

At this point you should have a good idea of what your players are excited about, what unanswered questions you have from past Mysteries, a rough idea of how important aspects of the Omens connect to each other and the Final Mystery, a collection of people, locations, and Keys.

This is a rich palette for you to draw from, and you only have to use as much as feels right for you and your players. From here you'll craft the Final Mystery.

THE FINAL MYSTERY'S PREMISE

Take a look at your notes thus far and consider what inspires you. What's a cool premise that could incorporate what you have so far, or at least tangentially connect to the most interesting bits?

Remember that the premise of a Mystery only has to establish a starting point, an instigating event, a strange place, or something similar.

CREATE THE REST OF THE MYSTERY

Crafting the Final Mystery generally follows the same steps of *Creating Your Own Mysteries* (page 328). But do keep the following in mind:

- *Is the contact someone the Omens have directly or indirectly interacted with? If they are, how have they changed from the last time the Omens saw them?*
- *How have the POI changed since the Omens interacted with them? How do they wear or embody the history of the Omens' actions?*
- *If the Omens revisit a location, how has it changed significantly?*
- *If you are using the uncovered Keys as inspiration, how do they directly relate to, or influence the new Keys?*
- *If you are reusing uncovered Keys, how have they changed in unexpected ways?*

From here, you should be able to create aspects of the Mystery: POI, locations, and Keys that will complement and support the themes from the past Mysteries. When creating new aspects of the Mystery, consider the following:

- *Can an aspect of the Mystery (a POI, location, Key) directly connect to an Omen's origin or What the Darkness Demands of them?*
- *Can an aspect of the Mystery connect to more than one Omen at the same time?*
- *Can an aspect of the Mystery reflect how the Omens have changed and grown over time?*
- *Can an aspect of the Mystery reflect what the Omens were like in the beginning of the game?*
- *Can an aspect of the Mystery connect to a Harbinger or door that affected the Omens in a significant way?*

When answering the questions, remember that even thematic answers can deepen the Final Mystery and make the players feel deeply connected to it. You are here to set up the Mystery and establish compelling hooks. You are here to inspire, set the mood, and spark the ideas of the players. When creating the Final Mystery, remember you not creating any of the answers.

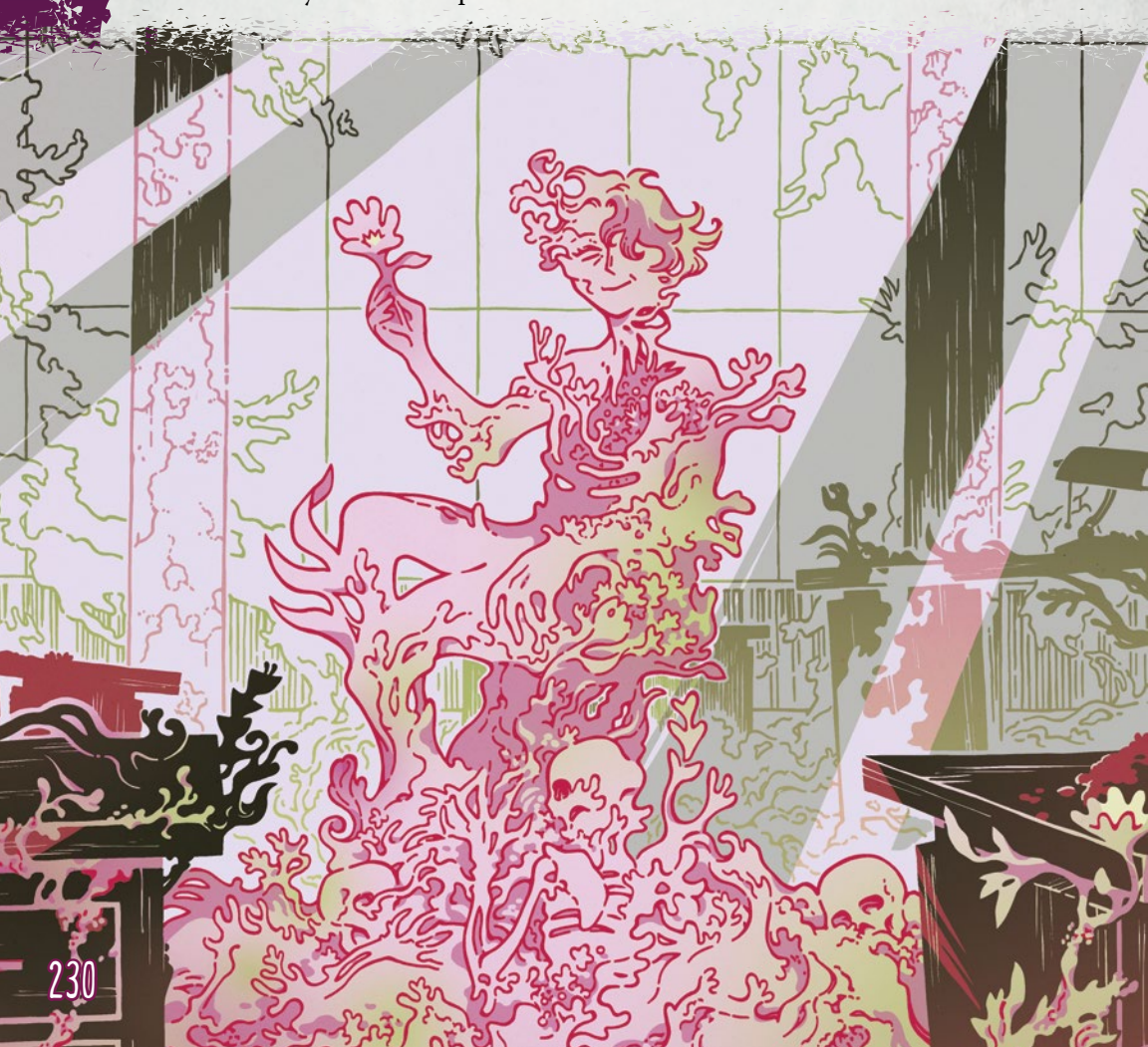
And with that, you'll have in your hands the Final Mystery!

Alternative Mechanics for the Final Mystery

You may want to experiment and create new custom moves, mechanics, and so on. That's cool, and a lot of fun! But remember that your players have earned their investigation skills and *Apocalypse Keys* is a game that takes time and effort to master.

The Final Mystery is a chance for the players to showcase what they've learned over several Mysteries, proving to themselves they truly are the monsters that can hold back the end of days. If you are going to make mechanical changes, try to keep it to one or two cool things and keep the rest of the original game mechanics intact. The narrative high stakes and the culmination of several themes will do a lot to make the Final Mystery feel truly climactic.

The rest of the chapter offers you different ideas for tweaking the mechanics of the Final Mystery. Choose one or two that you like and place them as is into your Final Mystery, or use the following as inspiration for your own unique mechanics.



AN ACCELERATED APOCALYPSE

If the Omens have failed to **Unlock Doom's Door** before the final tick of a Doomsday Clock during a Mystery, this is an excellent way to bring that into the Final Mystery.

At the start of the Final Mystery, ask each player to briefly summarize what happened during a previous Mystery. With each Mystery that filled a Doomsday Clock, choose one from the list below and briefly narrate how the Harbingers took advantage of the Omen's failure to gain more power.

- A Harbinger gains access to a DIVISION secret
- A Harbinger is resurrected
- A member of DIVISION is taken by the Harbingers
- A trusted ally betrays DIVISION
- The Harbinger takes over a Faction
- An aspect of the ancient Door of Power transforms into something unexpected
- A person of interest becomes a Harbinger
- A community of monsters falls prey to a Harbinger
- A part of DIVISION is destroyed
- A Harbinger dramatically grows in power and influence

THE FINAL DOOMSDAY CLOCK

In this version, the Final Doomsday Clock operates as normal with one dangerous addition: the PCs mark Ruin with *every* tick.

This gives you an opportunity to link every tick of the Doomsday Clock to the ultimate demise of each PC. When creating the Final Doomsday Clock, consider how each tick brings the Omens closer to becoming a Harbinger themselves.

This is a simple but effective way of showing how truly dire the stakes are. If you want to use this mechanic, keep in mind the following:

This works best for a Final Mystery of a low or mid complexity. Anything higher than a complexity 8 Mystery will mean the Doomsday Clock will have more than 8 ticks. It's quite possible that the PCs will earn two or more Ruin Advances before they're ready to **Unlock Doom's Door**.

Check-in with your players and ask them if they're excited about this mechanic. If your players are eager for their characters to possibly become Harbingers before the culmination of the Final Mystery, then go ahead. If you aren't getting enthusiastic consent and excitement for this mechanic, it's best to set it aside and try something else.

UNLOCK THE FINAL DOOR

This version of **Unlock Doom's Door** dramatically increases the tension of the Final Mystery. The Omens will have only *one chance* to **Unlock the Final Door**, as a miss immediately fills the Doomsday Clock. In addition, the PCs mark *five Ruin* instead of one. This guarantees the characters gain a Ruin Advance.

If you use this version of **Unlock Doom's Door**, inform your players at the beginning of the Final Mystery and make sure they have easy access to this version of the move. Remind them of the stakes before they trigger the move.

When you are ready to declare what the Final Door is and how to unlock it, say what you believe it to be. Connect the Keys to the Facets of the Final Mystery, describing the apocalypse that awaits us all. Roll, and add the number of connected Keys minus the Final Mystery's complexity. This roll is not affected by Darkness Tokens, Bonds, or any other move.

On an 8-10 you have tracked down the Final Door. You know exactly where it is and how to destroy it. In addition, the Keeper will present the one path to holding back the apocalypse.

On an 11+ you reach the door moments after the Harbingers have unlocked the Final Door. The end of all things will begin soon, but there is still time to hold back the apocalypse. The Keeper will tell you what ultimate sacrifice you must make to destroy the Final Door.

On a 7- the Omens are too late and the Final Door opens, unleashing the apocalypse. Every PC marks five Ruin. In addition, you played right into the hands of the Harbingers. The Final Doomsday Clock fills, and the PCs will face the worst possible circumstances.

DIVISION FACES THE APOCALYPSE

When you call upon DIVISION's considerable resources to face the end of days, mark a Condition and immediately use one of DIVISION moves. The Keeper will describe a complication or cost for DIVISION's assistance.

DIVISION

Drive: To hold back the apocalypse and act in the interests of DIVISION.

Moves:

- Reveal a weapon crafted from a forbidden Door
- Unseal forbidden records
- Call in an unpredictable Omen
- Deploy human agents
- Mobilize to protect what is vulnerable

FINAL MYSTERY PLAYBOOK MOVES

The following are playbook moves that you can offer your players during the Final Mystery. Each move is crafted to specifically address the core emotional theme and unique question of each playbook. By triggering this move, it creates a memorable and climactic moment for the character and for the Final Mystery.

- What happens when the ***Summoned*** faces the prophecy that haunts them?
- What happens when the ***Surge*** shares an aspect of their power with another?
- What happens when the ***Found*** sacrifices a new memory to regain a forgotten aspect of themselves?
- What happens when the ***Shade*** weakens the veil between the dead and the living?
- What happens when the ***Last*** shatters the laws of time and reaches into the past?
- What happens when the ***Fallen*** gambles the last of their divinity to gain a new divine form?
- What happens when the ***Hungry*** infects others with their hunger to face the end of days?

You may give the player immediate access to their Final Mystery move from the start, or when it narratively makes sense to do so. You may also have the players use their Final Mystery move just once, to further increase the drama and tension.

▣ The Summoned: The Crown of Prophecy

When you place the crown of prophecy on your brow, declare a harrowing aspect of your prophecy and how it comes to pass. Spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 the prophecy bends to your will. Choose two:

- Declare the fate of another and tie them to your prophecy. They will act in accordance with your prophecy and seek to fulfill it. In addition, gain one Bond with them.
- Declare the demise of another and doom them. Describe what power or truth they lose access to. In addition, gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands.
- Take on your true and final form, leaving behind the shell you once were. Gain every power of darkness from your playbook until the end of the Final Mystery.

ON AN 11+ the prophecy shatters and reality breaks around you. Choose one from below:

- The crown of prophecy reforms itself, each player (including you and the Keeper) will each declare one sentence to create a new prophecy for you. By the end of the Final Mystery, the prophecy will be fulfilled in one way or another.
- The crown of prophecy creates a mirror image of itself—choose another to share the burden of the prophecy with you. By the end of the Final Mystery, one of you must fulfill the prophecy—one way or another.

ON A 7- the prophecy comes to bear and will be fulfilled now, in one way or another. The world you were summoned from bleeds violently into this world, the Keeper will tell you what happens next.

▣ The Surge: Follow Me into the Dark

When you share an aspect of your terrible powers with another, ask the Keeper what catastrophic destruction you cause and how it hastens the apocalypse.

Choose one:

- Your power purifies those around you, all PCs clear all their Conditions and gain one Bond with you.
- Your power surges and leaves scars on those around you—all PCs mark two Conditions and gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of them. All PCs have access to every power of darkness in their playbook until the end of the Final Mystery.
- You destroy an aspect of your humanity for all to see and take on a form beyond mortal comprehension. Gain every power of darkness from your playbook until the end of the Final Mystery.

▣ The Found: Waking Up from the Dream

When you sacrifice a recent memory to reclaim an aspect of your past self, declare what the memory is. Spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 your former and current selves sing in harmony. Choose one:

- Some of your memories return for a fleeting moment before fading away. The Keeper offers you two Keys related to your past.
- Draw a line between two Keys and a single Facet of the Final Mystery. Declare two irrevocable truths about the Final Mystery, and explain how it is related to your present self.
- Regain all of your memories, at great cost to yourself or another.

ON AN 11+ your lost memories come flooding in and overwhelm you. Choose one:

- Your psychic abilities cause catastrophic and permanent damage. Gain every power of darkness from your playbook until the end of the Final Mystery.
- Your past self feeds on your powers and violently separates from you, becoming their own person. They will whisper a terrible truth to you before they escape into the world of dreams. Uncover two Keys.

ON A 7- your present self and the life you built are buckling under the truth of your past. Decide for yourself if your past self asserts itself, destroying your present self, or if you lose access to the past forever. No matter what choice you make, the Keeper will tell you what happens next.

▣ The Shade: In Death There Is Only Love

When you allow Death to take hold of you, weaken the veil between death and the living. Spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 both death and life hold and keep you. Choose one:

- All that you touch with your hands will wither and die, for now. In addition, every PC gains a Bond with What the Darkness Demands.
- All that you touch with your hands will flourish and heal, for now. In addition, every PC clears one Condition.
- Death and life reveal great truths to you. Uncover a Key and draw a line from it to a Facet of the Final Mystery. Declare an irrevocable truth about the Final Mystery.

ON AN 11+ Death claims what should not belong to them. Choose one:

- Death will reveal their chosen avatar and claim this place. A roiling sea of spectral entities floods the area and beyond, forever steeping it in loss and despair. You now have a new way of gaining Darkness Tokens: ***Allow Death to speak and act through me***.
- You and every PC mark two Conditions, but for a time you regain your soul and body from before death corrupted you. Gain every power of darkness from your playbook until the end of the Final Mystery.

ON A 7- Death takes hold of you and will not let go, and the veil between death and the living is sundered. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.

▣ The Last: Stolen Time

You've carried the history of your people long enough to feel the weight and weakness of time itself. **When you shatter the laws of time**, declare how you take on a new form to reflect the future that was stolen from you and your people. Spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 time starts again, the threads of your grief rebuilding the future. Choose one:

- An aspect of your people is reborn, and hope blooms. You become the paragon of your people. Gain every power of darkness from your playbook until the end of the Final Mystery.
- The spirit of your people infuses your chosen comrades. Every PC unmarks one Condition and gains one Bond with you.
- You are no longer the Last. You reach through time and pull from the past another survivor of your tragedy. Gain one Bond with them—until the end of the Final Mystery they will assist you in fighting back the apocalypse.

ON AN 11+ what you have lost overwhelms you, and grief demands your all. Choose one:

- Your grief offers revelation, you uncover two Keys. At the end of the Final Mystery, a corrupted version of your people will be reborn, seeking retribution.
- You burn brighter than any star. You no longer mark Conditions. At the end of the Final Mystery, you will leave DIVISION and meet the end of your days in solitude. When you are gone, there will never be another like you in all the universe.

ON A 7- time shatters again and again and again. You and all who are vulnerable are pulled into a time loop, the Keeper will tell you what happens next.

▣ The Fallen: Glory Be My Name

When you gamble all that remains of your divinity, describe how you become a wretched and mortal thing. Spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 your mortal skin falls away to reveal stolen divinity that is yours, until the end of the Final Mystery. Choose one:

- Take on a divine form that none may look at directly without burning away. When you **Unleash the Dark**, you completely overwhelm the senses of your target, even on a miss.
- Take on a divine form that bends reality around it in unpredictable ways. When you **Power Through Darkness**, you dramatically change your surroundings permanently, even on a miss.
- Take on a divine form that offers both horror and beauty beyond comparison. When you **Reveal Your Heart**, you and the one you open up to gain a Bond with What the Darkness Demands, even on a miss.

ON AN 11+ the heavens part and glory be your name, but your imperfect vessel can only hold this form for so long. Choose one:

- Share your glory with others. You and all PCs clear their Conditions, and all those susceptible to your glory gain a new power of darkness that reflects your glory. At the end of the Final Mystery, a violent and dangerous cult dedicated to your glory will be formed.
- Drain the divine from your fellow monsters. You and all PCs mark one Condition, and you gain every power of darkness from your playbook until the end of the Final Mystery.

ON A 7- your divinity goes dormant and you are trapped in this mortal shell, for now. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.

▣ The Hungry: The Gift

The hunger within you grows and seeks new hosts, offering you power in exchange. **When you choose to permanently infect another with your hunger**, mark a Condition and choose one:

- **Infect an Omen with the hunger:** The Omen can now use **The Gnawing Edge of Hunger** until the end of the Final Mystery, and you permanently gain one of their powers of darkness from their playbook. The Omen gains the permanently marked Condition: *Ravenous.*
- **Infect a Harbinger with the hunger:** Describe how you open your hearts to each other in a moment of cruel intimacy. The Keeper will tell you what new powers of darkness you permanently gain that reflect your connection to the Harbinger. At the end of the Final Mystery, the Harbinger will return, changed and twisted by your hunger.
- **Infect an innocent with the hunger:** The Keeper will describe how they become stronger than you will ever be. Gain one Bond with them, until the end of the Final Mystery they will assist you in fighting back the apocalypse. At the end of the Final Mystery they'll disappear, taking an aspect of the hunger with them.

Pre-assembled Apocalypse

In this chapter, you'll find pre-written Mysteries, Harbingers and Factions. Use them as-is, or adapt them to suit the story unfolding at your table, the playstyle everyone enjoys, or the themes of your game.

The Mysteries

This chapter includes the following 5 Mysteries to use in your game:

- **The Parasitic Library** (page 240) is a rogue interdimensional spatial-entity that has attached itself to DIVISION HQ. Can the Omens learn who brought the library here and why before it's too late?
- **The Manananggal Murders** (page 252) have weakened the vulnerable manananggal community in Metro Manila, Philippines. Who is stalking the monsters and how will this unlock an ancient Door of Power?
- **Weep Your Hands Clean** (page 263) brings the Omens to Albuquerque, NM where a power struggle between Factions feeds into the terror locals have for La Llorona. Can the Omens discover the truth before more innocents are drowned?
- **The Missing Link** (page 281) takes place on Island Zero, where a psychic teen pilot and her colossal monster have vanished under mysterious circumstances. Can the Omens find them before the unthinkable happens?
- **The Oldest House** (page 293) is an ancient dimension that is attacking DIVISION and consuming personnel. Can the Omens navigate the dangers while holding on to what remains of their memories?

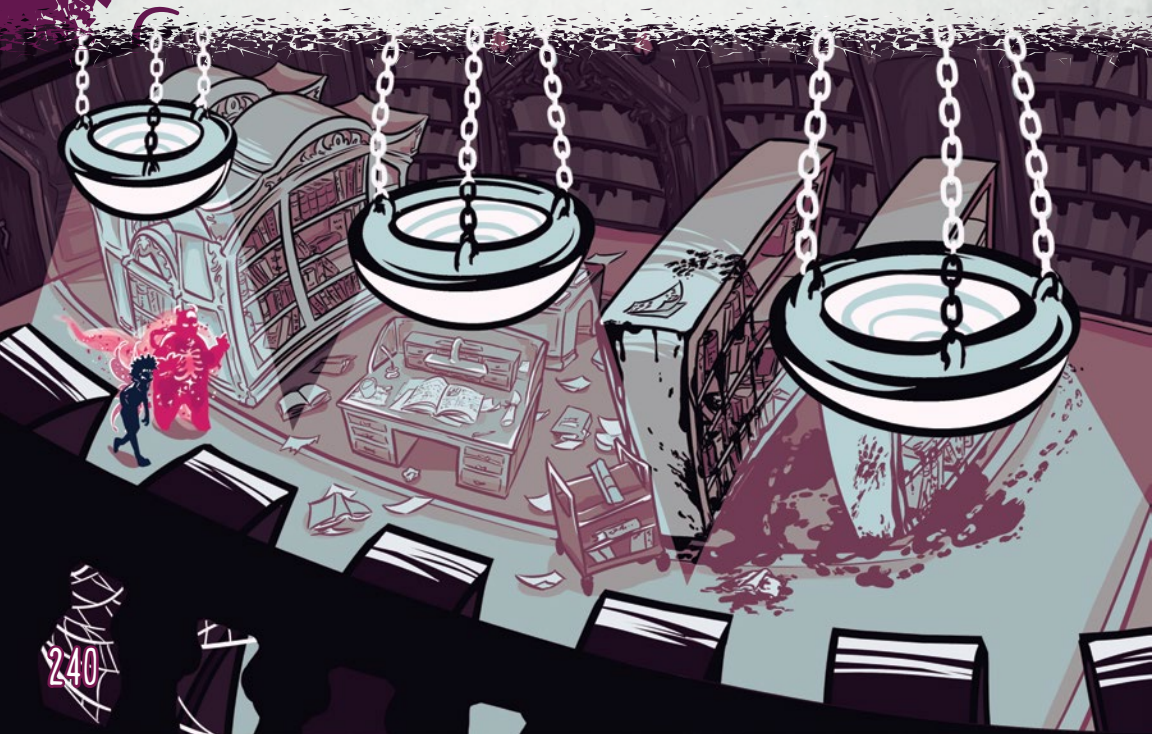
The Parasitic Library

by Josh Hittie

Complexity: 4
Location: DIVISION HQ, basement
Date: ????
Contact: Marcus Finch, Assistant Archivist (he/they)

OMEN-CLASS MONSTERS, a rogue interdimensional spatial-entity has attached itself to DIVISION HQ. Designated the "Parasitic Library," the entity has begun siphoning off valuable intel from the archives leaving voids in DIVISION's key records relating to already contained Doors of the apocalypse. HARBINGER-CLASS MONSTER involvement is suspected behind this security breach. Should whoever brought the Library to DIVISION recover the siphoned information from within the Library, they will be armed with the knowledge needed to unlock those Doors. Find out who or what led the Library here and dislodge it from DIVISION before these apocalypses have a chance to be unleashed and the Harbinger claims ASCENSION.

CONTENT WARNING: *Memory loss*



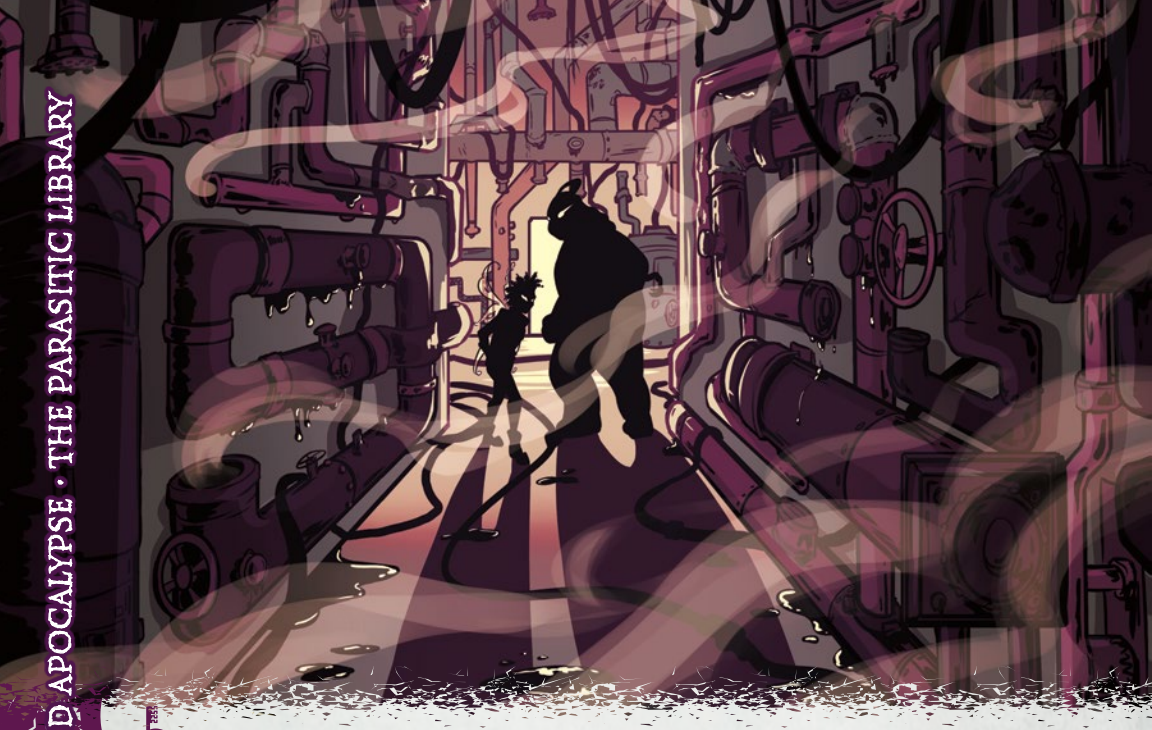
Description

The Parasitic Library is a semi-sentient, interdimensional entity that feeds on accumulated knowledge and secrets. It emerges from rifts in space-time to attach itself to locations to siphon off what it needs. Any information consumed by the Library manifests inside it, and is lost from the original source. The Library has been theorized as responsible for different dark ages throughout history as it fed on ancient sources of knowledge.

The Library adapts its form to camouflage itself. It is not known how long the Library has currently been feeding on DIVISION. The current entrance was only reported when a junior agent mentioned retrieving some files from an archive that more senior agents had no recollection of. The current entrance to the Library is unassuming, appearing identical to many standard DIVISION office doors. Inside, the Library conforms to the trespassers' expectations of what a library looks like, resembling a pastiche of libraries from across history. Wood paneling, tall bookshelves, rooms dark and cramped, others that host grand columned mezzanines. The books themselves seem to be organized, but using an unknown system that is difficult to comprehend from surface observations.

Entering the Library is dangerous. The interior of the Library is analogous to a digestive system. Individuals who spend too much time within the Library's gut may start to experience loss and fragmentation of their memories. However, anything the Library feeds on can be recovered if it is found within the records that manifest inside it. Additionally, there are other beings wandering within the Library that pose dangers. Those lost to time and space, strange beings who have specialized to parasitize the parasite, and seekers desperate enough to brave the Library's interior can all potentially become hostile if not carefully approached.

Something or someone has drawn the Library here. DIVISION HQ is warded against most incursions of the interdimensional nature. Either there is a fatal flaw in the system, or someone invited the Library in. The secrets contained within the Library pose an existential threat, being a compilation of deep occult knowledge that spans both time and dimensions. Should all this fall into the hands of one or more Harbinger, the apocalypse will be accelerated.



Beginning the Mystery

The Omen-class monsters don't need to travel far to find the entrance to the Library. The section of the archives where the Library has appeared is located deep within DIVISION HQ. The freight elevator clunks to a stop as the PCs step out into one of the seldomly frequented basement levels. At the end of the hall, flickering incandescent lights illuminate a simple windowless door. Above the door frame, stencilled onto the cold cinder block wall are the words "Auxiliary Archive - 116." Marcus Finch, the Assistant Archivist, stands next to the door looking uncomfortable and out of place, wearing ill-fitting DIVISION tactical field gear.

Establishing Questions

- **One of you has worked with Marcus Finch before.** Why did the two of you part on less than polite terms? Why do you regret the rift that grew between you, and why do you suspect they regret it too?
- **This is not DIVISION's first encounter with the Library.** It was once used to secure something incredibly dangerous, with its siphonovore nature conveniently erasing all records of the mission. One of you was involved in the mission. Why are you the only one from that ill-fated team able to recall scant fragments about the catastrophe that happened?

Contact: Marcus Finch, Assistant Archivist *(he/they)*

Wry and dry humor, nervous hand wringing, unkempt bookishness. Marcus is not usually deployed to the field, though as he assures the PCs multiple times, they do possess up-to-date field certifications. Marcus often works through plans and ideas out loud, carving a circuitous path to any solution. He always seems to have a small pocket notebook on hand for jotting down observations using a worn fountain pen.

Marcus Finch is unusually qualified to act as this mission's field liaison. A past supernatural incident has given them what DIVISION theorizes to be a resistance to the Library's anti-gnosis effects, allowing him to preserve his memories within the Library. Marcus does not know, or has perhaps lost, the exact details of the incident that gave them this ability. However, those details are most likely contained within a file somewhere deep within Auxiliary Archive - 116. Additionally, Marcus possesses an extensive knowledge of DIVISION archives and archival methods. He may not know everything contained within the texts and records of the archives, but they do have a reputation of being a walking table of contents. Also, the Chief Archivist was indisposed at this time.

Once the PCs enter the Library, Marcus will choose to stick relatively close to the entrance door and begin setting up a small base camp. He will ask some of the PCs to assist in assembling monitoring equipment; a collection of odd metal dishes on tripod stands connected with thick black cords to various readout monitors and a small generator. They also make sure to check that all members of the team are using the same communication frequency on the supplied standard issue DIVISION walkie-talkies.

Marcus will accompany PCs as they foray out into the Library if necessary, but is clearly uncomfortable and nervous, likely needing some form of encouragement to attempt more dangerous feats. A mix of fear of being in the Library, and working with a number of Omens makes him quite skittish.

People of Interest

THE LIBRARIAN *(they/it)*

The semi-independent manifestation of the Library's slumbering subconsciousness. Wears a slightly worn tweed jacket and pressed slacks. Has eyes that never settle on one person. Smells of old books. The Librarian views the PCs as curiosities, strange visitors to a place it views more of as its home than origin. They don't quite grasp that they themself are merely a small aspect of the Library, glossing over any attempts at elucidating its true nature.

They are willing to assist the PCs in their mission, but as soon as they begin to reference or enact plans against the Library, the Librarian—in a fit of instinctual defensive aggression—will lash out at the trespassing PCs before vanishing. Should the PCs encounter the Librarian again, it will not recall what happened, almost as if it is a different individual.

The Librarian appears almost human but wears a different face each time the PCs meet it, though they are always accompanied by the same distinct scent of aged books and ozone. Each face is a remnant of some devoured memory catalogued deep within the Library, some may feel strangely familiar to one or more PCs. The Librarian speaks with a staccato, lilting voice and moves as if half-marionetted through the space. Light reflects off them in strange ways.

QUOTE: *Well hello there and welcome to the Library. I do so love visitors, shame they tend not to last long. Oh well. Now, where were we? I can feel unspoken words vibrating around you like a beehive. So many secrets that are just desperate to burst out. Might I tempt you to share a few? If not, perhaps you are looking for something specific to add to your collection?*

JEN FABLE *(she/her)*

A time-lost agent of DIVISION. Frazzled and tired, has bags beneath her eyes. Rarely speaks above a whisper, but always with a sense of desperation and urgency. Jen Fable is an unfortunate clerk who stumbled into the Library several decades ago. She wears outdated office clothes, but still carries her old DIVISION ID badge, though her name has been siphoned off of it, leaving behind gibberish. She has adopted her current name because "it felt right?"

Her own memory is fragmented and scattershot. Having spent so long within the Library, much of her past is a mystery to her and the PCs—none of whom can recall anything about this individual, despite at least one of them feeling an uncanny sense of familiarity. She is desperately searching for her lost memories, having spent her time trapped inside the Library to create a somewhat reliable map of the extensive archives. She will oppose any plans to destroy or damage the Library before she finds and secures her memories, growing increasingly desperate the closer the PCs get toward any such goals.

QUOTE: *Finally, a rescue party! You are from DIVISION aren't you? You all seem oddly familiar. Perhaps we've met before? It appears I've lost more time than I thought. But it can't have been too long since I've been trapped here, right?*

HUNGRY WORM *(he/him)*

A parasite's parasite. Long, vermiform, and coiling. Constantly moving, even when standing still, always slightly writhing. Speaks with a wet curiosity. Hungry Worm, or just Worm as he first introduces himself to the PCs, is a being from another plane that resides within the Library. Worm wears a long tattered cloak that obscures a soft coiling body, and rarely speaks above a whisper. His cloak obscures a leech-like mouth, filled with sharp tooth-like projections.

Hungry Worm has been dwelling within the Library for a long time. He feeds on the books inside the Library, deriving nourishment from the countless secrets that the Library itself has already consumed. Hungry Worm is quite secretive, unwilling to draw too much attention to himself, lest the Librarian discover and destroy him. Some of what Hungry Worm feeds on, he internalizes. As such, he has amassed a vast collection of secrets and may be willing to exchange information in return for a delicious secret. Hungry Worm wishes for the Library to grow fat and happy.

QUOTE: *Ahhh, hello fellow interlopers. Care for a bite to eat? Or perhaps you seek something else within the Library hmm? I, of course, would be delighted to assist you in finding whatever that might be, but before all that, an exchange would be most delectable. Yes?*

FORMLESS ANAMNESIS BETWEEN *(any/all)*

A traveler from afar. Tall, looming, monolithic. Follows the rules of a different set of physics. Polite, secretive, non-confrontational. Formless claims to be merely a traveler, visiting the Library from somewhere else as a tourist. They are tall, standing a head above even the tallest PC present. His head and face are obscured in shadow no matter the quality of light or angle, and she speaks directly into the minds of any listener with a slow and methodical voice.

Anamnesis primarily strolls through the Library, picking books off the shelves as if casually perusing a used bookstore. Occasionally they can be seen checking things off on a written list, something that seems unusually mundane for someone clearly so strange. Some volumes they place back while others are placed into a bag, perhaps to be read later. The PCs might catch Between in conversation with the Librarian, though once they are noticed, the conversation politely, but quickly dies. Formless remains vague about its purpose within the Library, preferring to turn the questions back on the PCs, but it seems clear that they are looking for something specific. The most Anamnesis will easily divulge is that she is "picking some things up for some friends."

QUOTE: *Pardon me, might I reach past you and take that book? No no, don't pay me much mind, I'm just here for a few items. Which ones? Well hmm. Well, has anything in particular caught your eyes? I do appreciate thoughtful recommendations. And before I take my leave, have you happened upon the Librarian? There was something I needed to ask of them.*

SHADE OF WHAT WAS *(they/them)*

Fragments of lost knowledge given form. The Shade of What Was is a collection of fragmentary knowledge and secrets. Scraps that the Library was unable to digest that coalesced into a singular form. They appear in a form roughly the shape of a cat, composed of a swirling mass of scraps of paper. When referring to themself, they use "we" and "us" and their voice is like the wind.

The Shade acts listless and speaks in short bursts, as though their thoughts are pulled in many different directions. They feel a sense of emptiness and incompleteness and will ask the PCs to assist in finding the wholes that their many pieces belong to. They grow stronger, and bolder with each puzzle piece filled.

QUOTE: *Please… can you… help? I am… lost in this place. Something… many things… are missing. I can… feel them. Out there… somewhere.*

Locations of Interest

THE STACKS

The Stacks make up the largest section of the Library, its labyrinthine series of looming bookshelves seem to stretch on for impossibly long. *What evidence of habitation do you find scattered amongst the books and tomes here?*

THE LECTURE HALL

The Lecture Hall is a large circular room filled with tiered seating and decorated with warm wood paneling and depictions of unknown constellations. *What whispers of forbidden secrets do you catch floating toward you from the center of the room?*

THE LOFT

The Loft is the upper floor of the Library, accessed from a series of stairways and ladders. Its mezzanines and balconies offer a bird's-eye view of the Stacks and beyond. *Looking down, what strange pattern hidden in the spaces between shelves below do you begin to perceive?*

THE OBSERVATORY

The nerve center of the Library. Several ornate and massive telescopes hang ponderously from the domed ceiling. *Glimpsing through the telescopes, what recent past do you see from a different perspective?*

THE HEART

The Heart is a cramped room filled with an Escheresque array of pipes spreading out from the massive boiler furnace. *Embedded in the whistle of steam, and thrum of the boiler, what message do you hear from the feeding, slumbering, Library?*

Keys of the Apocalypse

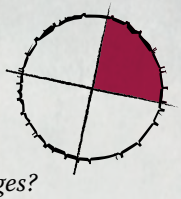
- **a DIVISION filing cabinet**, askew and unlocked
- **a scrap of paper**, categorical symbols akin to the Dewey Decimal System scrawled on it
- **a DIVISION ID badge**, marked top secret clearance
- **ink stains dripping down a shelf**, foot and handprints trail off deeper into the Library
- **a ringing telephone**, when answered, it speaks a repeating code in an old-fashioned voice
- **fragments of a DIVISION report**, one of the PC's names is cut off
- **a decades old microfiche reader**, ghostly echoes of a disturbing headline still present on its screen
- **a ripped library card**, issued in a long forgotten language, voided for excessive fines, and belonging to one of the PCs
- **a lantern**, with a flickering light that reveals secrets through sentient shadows thrown against the walls of the library
- **a worn scrapbook**, containing black and white photos with redacted faces
- **a melted down candle**, indentations in it left by strange fingers
- **case records of old and gone Harbingers**, left behind in a hurry
- **a ticking clock**, whose hands move in reverse
- **a small dusty journal**, still being written by an invisible hand in a coded script
- **a leather-bound tome**, mind-cutting sigils engraved on its cover
- **a memory split into two surfaces in a PC's mind**, one true and one false
- **an ancient scroll, its civilization erased from history by DIVISION's manipulations**—the warnings inside are alarmingly prescient
- **a beaten paperback with dogeared pages** containing branching paths of possible futures
- **stellar detritus**, twinkling matter that must have come from outside the Library
- **signs of an occult ritual**, sigils written on the ground are familiar and fresh

Facets

- The Harbinger
- The Door of Power
- The identity of who brought the Library to DIVISION
- The secrets locked within the Library

Doomsday Clock *(ticks: 4)*

MOMENT



A flurry of loose pages swirls in a momentary storm. When the pages settle to the ground, they appear to all be from different sources.

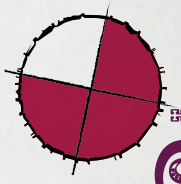
- *Who sees a terrible truth laid bare amongst these pages?*
- *What future event is written out here, framed as an inescapable tragedy?*

EVENT

Sections of shelves drag themselves into new positions. They create new passages and obscure old pathways; new patterns for new purposes as the Library begins to digest its meals.

- *Who becomes separated from the rest?*
- *What new danger is now freed?*

INTRIGUE



A page is torn from an ornate tome. Shadowed hands snap the book closed and return it to a shelf. The hands linger on the spine for a moment before reaching toward a new book.

- *What once-thought-lost source of secrets is this tome?*
- *What might the Harbinger be looking for next?*

THE DOOR OPENS

The interior of the Library rumbles and shifts, warping into a twisting convergence of all previous locations. The Library's meal rushes in and inundates the PCs in a crashing maelstrom of records and texts. Having fed, the Library was preparing to slip back into unknown interdimensional space, but the Harbinger now has different plans for it as it gains control.

- *When the door opens, what happens to all the accumulated knowledge—now dislodged from the Library?*
- *What power or wisdom does the Harbinger take from beyond the door?*

The Mananánggal Murders

Complexity: 6
Time and Place: The Apartments; Metro Manila, Philippines - July 20XX (Rainy Season)
Contact: Sister Theresa (she/her)

OMEN-CLASS MONSTERS, initial evidence suggests a Door of Power may be present in Manila, Philippines. Investigate the murders of the declining manananggal population. Former agent Sister Theresa of the Broken Crucifix has requested assistance, observation, and direct action. HARBINGER-CLASS MONSTER may be behind the murders, or encouraging violence and chaos from the shadows. Find the DOOR OF POWER and contain it before the Harbinger claims ASCENSION.

CONTENT WARNING: *Human prejudice against monsters (especially aswang), smoking, alcohol, violent murders, insects/swarming insects, and body horror.*

Pronunciation Guide

Mananánggal: Mah-nuh-nuhng-GUL
Aswang: Uh-SWUNG
Maguindanaon: Mah-GIN-da-now-un

Description

Typhoons of unusual ferocity have battered the city of Manila. Poorer areas of the city frequently flood (blocked sewers will overflow and rain water is waist high), but people persevere and make do. As the Mystery plays out, remember to allude to the heavy rains, rumbling thunder, and sudden lightning storms. When it isn't raining, the air is hot and humid.

"The Apartments" was meant to be temporary housing for migrants in the 1960s. Generations have lived here, but things are slowly falling apart. Over the years, members of the monstrous population have moved here—most monsters have difficulty finding landlords who will accept them. The biggest monster population in the complex is the ***manananggal***. Up to 10 are crammed into a single apartment that should normally house 1-2 people.

Manananggal can disguise themselves, passing as human. While they have many genders, humans often read them as being feminine. During the day they are sluggish, the warm Philippine sun usually putting them into a stupor. In the evening, they are much more active. At their most comfortable, the manananggal will open up their back and extend their bat-like wings (often stretching six feet across). If they're relaxed and feel safe, they will leave behind their lower body (waist down) in a secure location and fly off into the night to meet with friends and family.

A manananggal does not often feel safe. Myths of old describe manananggal devouring humans alive, especially pregnant women. This is not true, of course—a manananggal has a diet similar to that of humans. But the years have not been kind to the manananggal and they keep to themselves and hide their true nature from humans.

Because of their nocturnal tendencies, the manananggal often have careers that thrive on the night shift or odd hours—security, janitorial services, social media management, sex work, call centers, and work that is outsourced to the Philippines.

The manananggal are one of the oldest aswang, a Faction of monsters who once were politically powerful and owned much of the land. But that was a long time ago. Manananggal are long lived and only the very oldest remember such a time. Most elders don't live in places like the Apartments. Instead, younger generations live there. Despite the numerous attempts of the government to force the manananggal out to find housing elsewhere, the monsters are a strong community.

The murders started four weeks ago. At first, no foul play was suspected. Manananggal wouldn't come home and their lower half were found in their rooms, abandoned. But days passed and the upper halves were found, or what remained of them. It appears they were torn limb from limb, with some of their internal organs missing.

Beginning the Mystery

The Omens are flown directly to the site. They land on the roof of one of the aging residential buildings.

The sun has just set, and the city lights burn brightly on the horizon. Manananggal are waking up, most are getting ready to leave for work. The delicious smell of food fills the air, and the PCs can hear family members calling each other to eat breakfast in the distance.

It's raining hard and Sister Theresa is waiting alone. The wind pushes against her umbrella violently and her habit is caught in the wind, hiding most of her face.

Establishing Questions

Ask each one to a different PC:

- **Sister Theresa was once a human DIVISION agent, but she left the agency claiming to have found God.** You know this is not true. Why did she really come back to the Philippines? Why are the two of you still close?
- **One of you was once here years—if not decades—ago.** How have things changed for the worse in recent years? Which of the manananggal is waiting for you, eager for a reunion?

The Victims

- **Samantha Reyes** (she/her), a call center agent and aspiring novelist who had an on again off again relationship with Emily Santos
- **Lily Bautista** (she/her), a volunteer nurse and activist who was best friends with Mickey Yap
- **Gin** (he/him), a community leader and healer who was closest to Georgie

Contact: Sister Theresa *(she/her)*

Cheeky grin, knowing eyes, plump, wrinkled nun habit. Sister Theresa is in her late twenties, with dark skin and round features. She swears often and corrects herself quickly, murmuring apologies to God under her breath. She smells of cigarettes and whiskey and regularly offers the PCs a cigarette from a crumpled pack.

She quickly ushers the PCs in, walking down several flights of stairs. Most of the elevators are inoperable. The remaining few will often stop in between floors, taking hours to fix.

The apartment is humble and cramped. A crucifix, an old family photo in an ornate frame, a single newspaper clipping with a headline that hints at a secret DIVISION mission.

Sister Theresa offers whiskey, "taking out the good stuff for DIVISION guests," but launches into describing what happened. She shares what little she knows about the murders and the state the bodies were found in.

Word of the murders hasn't gotten out yet—Sister Theresa makes a small sign of the cross as thanks—the manananggal of the Apartments are still calm. But if the murders continue, she'll have no choice but to warn everyone and try to convince them to leave. Most of the monsters have nowhere else to go. Leaving will not be an option for many.

Sister Theresa is a nun who serves the Church of the Broken Crucifix. All members of the Church—regardless of gender—are called Sisters, and most are human. A Sister is sent to areas of the city with large monster populations, especially if the monsters aren't tolerated well by the humans nearby. In contrast, monsters like ***diwata*** and ***duwende*** get along with humans better, they are seen as more likable and useful to humans. Diwata and duwende also have an easier time disguising themselves and appearing human.

The Sisters of the Broken Crucifix serve as liaisons to humans and protectors of the monsters. Sister Theresa has been serving the community and leaders of the Apartments for some time.

People of Interest

SISTER DAX *(he/they)*

A nun of the Church of the Broken Crucifix. Perpetually tired. Has difficulty expressing positive emotions. Painfully clean nun habit. Pale. Young and eager to prove himself, Sister Dax was sent here when the Church learned of the murders. Like the other men of the Broken Crucifix, he assumes the title of "Sister" as he fulfills his duty. He is dedicated and wants to be useful.

He has a revolver strapped to his thigh and a holy sword hidden under their robes. They have a nervous habit of referring to the Sister's Manual, which is disguised as a bible. Sister Theresa worries about Sister Dax often, saying they are "By the Bible" and need to "lighten up a little."

QUOTE: *In section three paragraph six of the Protector Code, it is our holy duty to serve the community and maintain peace. I believe the social scripting in Appendix E should work nicely. Admittedly, I have not had much practice in its implementation.*

EMILY SANTOS *(she/her)*

A mananangal and call center agent. Shocking purple hair cut at odd angles, soft eyes that glow red in the dark, intricate tattoos. Short, with ruddy dark skin. Emily is friendly enough, but a socially awkward—she tends to default to her call center persona and professional scripting around strangers.

Emily had an on again and off again relationship with one of the victims, Samantha Reyes. She doesn't know what happened to Sam. The last time they were together, there was an intense fight and Sam needed "space" and "time to think."

QUOTE: *Gosh lovely weather we're having, huh? Is there something I can help you with, someone I can refer you to? I have to check in on my girlfriend, I mean my friend, so I'll need to end this call, I mean I have to go, bye, thank you!*

MICKEY YAP *(he/him)*

A manananggal and sex worker. Perfectly applied makeup in soft pastels, skin that glows pale blue in the dark, an easy and open smile. Mickey discovered one of the victims and believes the rest of the manananggal deserve to know. Sister Theresa has protected him and saved his life on numerous occasions, so he defers to her decision to keep things quiet, for now.

Mickey has a huge crush on Sister Dax, but his charming overtures completely fly over the Sister's head. Mickey often checks his phone to keep up with work—he has a few customers who pay for the "boyfriend experience" and he likes making them feel special.

QUOTE: *I can't believe she's gone. Lily was an absolute doll, just so lovely and charming. We were sisters, we shared everything. Clothes, boyfriends, everything. I miss her so much. She'd make fun of me for my crush on Sister Dax while still trying to help us get together anyway, you know?*

ELDER URDUJA *(no pronouns)*

A manananggal and shaman. Soft-spoken, eyes that turn to coldest steel in the dark, wears Maguindanaon robes. Elder Urduja is one of the oldest manananggal in the Philippines, and age hangs heavily on stooped shoulders. But Edler Urduja is sharp and misses nothing, and can fight better than any other manananggal. It is said that Elder Urduja was once powerful in the ways of magic and ritual, but all was given up in a terrible battle against a human warlord.

The elder has a tense relationship with Sister Theresa and is clearly frustrated with DIVISION being called in. Sister Theresa and the Elder used to be partners, working hard to improve Human-Manananggal relations. But Elder Urduja has given up on humans ever accepting the manananggal, and instead would like to live in peace, away from humanity and its cruelty.

QUOTE: *You have your ways and we have ours. I would not tell you how to attend to your work, no matter how much it pains me to see you so determined to fail. No matter, at least DIVISION did not send human agents. There is enough time for you to change my mind and impress this humble old shaman.*

GEORGIE *(they/them)*

A duwende and the Apartment's Custodian. Coveralls stained with paint and oil, a voice that turns into rust in the dark, always crunching on candy. Olive skin. The duwende are almost as long lived as the manananggal, Georgie and Elder Urduja have been friends their entire lives. Georgie left behind their first name a long time ago, and they have adapted to modern times. Georgie is happy to play to the stereotype of duwende—hardworking, protective, nurturing.

Georgie was good friends with Gin, one of the manananggal victims. Gin was an old gambling and drinking buddy despite the fact that a hundred years ago they were mortal enemies.. Georgie won't talk about Gin or the state they found him in. If pressed, Georgie breaks into tears, unable to cope with the loss.

QUOTE: *Is there something I can get you? I'm sure Sister Theresa has only offered you whiskey and cigarettes. How about I put together a real meal for ya? Have you lot tried Adobo? I make the best in the Apartments, don't let anyone tell you otherwise.*

FRANKLYN WOLF *(he/him)*

Human. Aspiring celebrity backpacker. Laughs often and loudly, social media curated casual looks, doesn't understand personal space. Painfully sunburned. Franklyn is completely out of his depth at the Apartments and refuses to acknowledge it. He is determined to become a social media influencer through his sleek videos that feature "the road less traveled."

He came to the Philippines seeking poverty porn, and was disappointed to find it isn't as bad as he expected. Still, he's determined to find a story here and share all of the gory details online.

QUOTE: *Looking good champ! I'll follow along, take notes, get you heroes on video? I've heard rumors about you monsters, say, do you eat human food? Where are you REALLY from? I think it's important that your story gets told and I'm the person to do it! My followers will absolutely love this, how about we do a quick live stream huh?*

Locations of Interest

THE COMMUNE

The largest common area in the Apartments, the Commune is bustling with activity as they set up an impromptu karaoke night. *What evidence do you see that the Commune has been rebuilt numerous times? What is it sorely lacking?*

THE ROOF GARDEN

The Roof is packed with every imaginable plant that could be used for cooking, medicine, or anything practical. *What strange project has Sister Theresa been working on?*

THE CHAPEL

The Chapel doesn't look like anything one might expect. It's open air, full of beautiful flowers, with several cozy areas built for reflection and meditation. *What holy artifacts of the Broken Crucifix are stored away?*

THE ABANDONED APARTMENT

There is one apartment that has remained empty for decades. No one will move in. *What here makes your skin crawl but invites you to come closer?*

Keys of the Apocalypse

- **pamphlets announcing new "human friendly" condominiums**, the address circled in red
- **a cheap disguise**, which only bears a passing resemblance to one of the victims
- **evidence of a secret life**, hidden away
- **a smashed cell phone**, full of desperate and angry text messages
- **a wedding dress**, cut in half at the waist
- **an obscene amount of money**, torn into small pieces and laid out in an odd pattern
- **graffiti on the wall**, announcing both redemption and punishment
- **a threatening letter**, words turning into incomprehensible sigils and runes
- **an infestation of insects**, clicking and hissing, leaving blood and gore in their wake
- **an ancient and sacred mananangal relic**, defaced and broken
- **a manila envelope filled with black and white photographs** of different mananangal residents, all taken with a telephoto lens
- **a collection of mananangal hair and nails**, carefully tagged and preserved
- **an old set of rusty keys**, each inscribed in baybayin, an ancient writing system once used in the Philippines
- **a mirror that splits your reflection in half**, one half moves of its own accord and speaks with a strange voice no one can recognize
- **a psychic vision**, a mananangal screams "please, I won't tell anyone, I swear it"
- **mananangal salt**, it's a human myth that pouring salt on the lower half of a mananangal's body will make the mananangal unable to rejoin both halves. However, there is a "salt" that can be made from the hair of the mananangal, but it's a difficult and dangerous process. It's extremely poisonous to all beings
- **a dagger with a blood red blade**, sharp enough to cut through air and sound
- **a heavy book**, when read, it begins to unwrite itself, change its own text, or whisper its words in a soft and sinister voice
- **a small and crooked shrine**, to a forgotten god of pain and violence who destroyed their own name
- **several jars full of mananangal fetuses**, they move and reach out with small bat wings, eyes never opening

Facets

- Murder Victims
- The Decline of the Mananangal
- The Harbinger
- The Door of Power

Doomsday Clock *(ticks: 6)*

MOMENT

The remnants of wings, displayed in glory. They are larger than life, a wingspan that stretches across several feet.

- *Who sees them?*
- *Who is changed by them?*

INTRIGUE

A figure covered in black veils, a shaking hand reaching out to answer a prayer. A smile that bears no mirth, a single whisper, "You will be the first to bear my wings. What will you give in exchange, my love?"

- *Who has the Harbinger given power to?*
- *How will this servant stalk or harass the PCs?*

EVENT

One of the victims returns, but they are changed. They are violent, desperate, their memories fragmented. They bear evidence of the Harbinger's rituals, and they whisper incomplete truths of what waits behind Doom's Door.

- *How can one of the PCs incapacitate the victim without violence?*
- *Who or what took their memories?*

MOMENT

The cheap paint and stained wallpaper inside the apartments peels away slowly, as if removed by an invisible hand. Secrets and prayers are written in a strange and desperate language.

- *How are the secrets related to the PCs?*
- *What comes to life from inside the walls?*

INTRIGUE

From beneath the veil are too many mouths, too many hands, too many wings. A symphony of discordant voices growl a forbidden prayer. A meek voice in the corner asks, "My liege, is this truly what you want?"

- *Who doubts the plans of the Harbinger?*
- *How will the Omens learn that a ritual has begun?*

THE DOOR OPENS

The wind howls and the sound of a great many wings fill the air. The smell of blood is overwhelming, and soon there are the screams of the innocent. The Harbinger has unlocked the ancient Door of Power.

- *When the door opens, how are the manananggal affected?*
- *What power or wisdom does the Harbinger take from beyond the door?*

Weep Your Hands Clean

by Darold Ross

Complexity: 6
Main Location: Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA
Date: August 202X (Dog Days of Summer)
Contact: Camila Cardón, La Bruja Buena (she/her)

OMEN-CLASS MONSTERS, a series of ritualistic murders in the homeless community suggests that a Door of Power may be located somewhere in the vicinity of Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA. City government has requested assistance with ascertaining the cause of these murders and bringing a stop to them. Their designated operative, Camila Cardón, will orient you to the situation and act as your go-between. ATTENTION: Be advised that a VIP may be among the people you engage with; DIVISION expects special consideration of their needs be taken into account in all engagements. HARBINGER-CLASS MONSTER is suspected of perpetrating the murders to destabilize the tense political climate. Find the DOOR OF POWER and contain it before the Harbinger claims ASCENSION.

CONTENT WARNING: *Homelessness, gentrification, class conflict, gang violence, the drug trade, transphobia, harm and death of children, teen pregnancy, death/murder of sex workers, subliminal messaging and mass mind control, colonization and cultural appropriation..*

Description

The city of Albuquerque is experiencing an intense summer heat, with days reaching the high 100's (40–42°C). Hot summers are the norm, but this heat is oppressive and the monsoons are late. As the Mystery progresses, utilize the stuffy sense of overwhelming heat and humidity, clothes sticking, the air feeling charged and ready to burst, but never quite managing to. The sun beats down constantly overhead, and clouds loom over the Sandia Mountains without approaching the city proper.

Wealth and class are drawn along property lines. The South Valley is home to the longest lineages of families, but poverty and neglect make it hard for people to succeed. Downtown is a culture clash of old and new, local diners and storefronts fighting to keep up with hip restaurants and boutique hotels amid a constant hum of bar-hopping twenty-somethings and a homeless encampment on the Historic Route 66. The Northeast Heights hide nice homes behind gated communities and frequent police patrols, itinerant transplants partaking of the city before their next move.

Ranked one of the 10 most dangerous big cities in the country, Albuquerque is a place where gangs run drugs and shed blood on the same streets that tech employees work remotely in coffee shops and go on tinder dates at craft breweries. The discrepancies between the haves and the have-nots are vast; depending on where you live and what you do, the other world can be invisible to you. With such extremes, being supernatural is hardly the worst thing that could happen to someone in 'Burque.

Two stories dominate the news in Albuquerque. A film and TV production giant is looking to establish a new studio in the city. Meanwhile, dozens of local homeless people have been found dead. The apparent cause of death is drowning, but the bodies are found in places where there is no water to drown in.

The global production studio, InstaVids, has recently been considering Albuquerque for a new expansion and sent representatives to scope the area for locations to build a new studio. Consideration of the city is sudden, and it's understood that there are likely other perks being offered to the media conglomerate in addition to the generous tax incentives.

Around the same time these rumors sprang up, mysterious deaths in its homeless population began occurring. Bodies were found in parks, on the sides of roads, or in other unexplainable places; their lungs were full of water, but nowhere near any water in which to drown. Locals fear it to be the work of La Llorona, the wailing woman of legend.

In Hispanic-American folklore, La Llorona is a legend about a woman who drowns her children and mourns their deaths for eternity, roaming the lands as a ghost. Though many tales of La Llorona exist, the general consensus is that she was a woman who had two children with a man she loved deeply. However, the man's love for her faded, and in a fit of despair and rage, she drowned the two children in the river.

For her crimes, she was denied entrance to Heaven. An angel told her she would only be admitted once she had found the souls of the children she'd murdered. Ever since, she has roamed the land in search of the children, stealing away any child she could find and drowning them when she discovered they were not her own. She would also drown any adult who stood in her way.

Beginning the Mystery

DIVISION's agents drive into the city as dusk settles. While the sprawling city reveals itself between desert valleys, the setting sun paints the Sandia Mountains watermelon pink. Arriving at the upscale Hotel Cinco in historic downtown, heat assails the team immediately as they step out of the car. Nightlife is already in full swing as people walk the streets in search of dining and dancing, avoiding the hopeful hands of homeless people who move through the crowds unacknowledged like phantoms.

The team is shown to the rooftop bar of the hotel and ushered into a private casbah. Camila Cardón, professionally known as La Bruja Buena, is waiting with another woman.

Establishing Questions

Ask each one to a different PC:

- **Camila Cardón is a fortune-teller extraordinaire.** You met a few years ago and she foretold something that shook you to your core. You have never forgotten her, nor the fact that she knows that ominous fortune. What complex feelings do you have for Camila? Why have you kept in touch with her since then?
- **You remember a tale of this place and the blood that was shed here as the pink daylight drains from the mountains.** What do you recall about She who Sleeps Under the Mountains? Who told you the tale? What did they leave behind here, and why do you want to find it?

Contact: Camila Cardón, la Bruja Buena (she/her)

Knowing eyes, stylish evening dress, understated turquoise jewelry. Camila is a mid-twenties Latina with black hair and brown eyes. Youthful and angular, she moves in a careful manner. While her makeup is fashionable, she her eyes carry the weight of ancient secrets. A whiff of lavender and honey are always at the edge of her presence. Her trade is fortune telling, and she shuffles tarot cards like a shark.

Drinks are offered, inventive cocktails in expensive glasses. The rooftop view shows the city spread around them, revealing that what Albuquerque lacks in tall buildings, it makes up for in sprawl. Camila introduces her companion, City of Albuquerque Economic Development Advisor Tomoe Takanashi. Camila explains that she facilitated this meeting with the agents on the city's behalf.

The first body was found three weeks ago. It was discovered in a conspicuous location where a famous crime show was recently filmed. After that, a new body appeared every three days, each at a movie or television filming location. The victims were always homeless people with no ties. The bodies were found with lungs full of water and dry clothes, especially strange in a major drought with the bodies never found near water.

The news runs the story nonstop, and it threatens a major opportunity for the city; they are trying to convince major media conglomerate InstaVids to build a studio in the area. The studio would bring millions of dollars in jobs and business, and raise Albuquerque's profile as a major destination in the Southwest. With the influx of revenue, the city would undergo rapid growth in a matter of a few short years. While InstaVids seems close to signing the agreement, these murders are a black mark on their negotiations.

Theories circulate that local gang Los Testamentos—The Testaments, a longstanding crime family that has its hands in the drug trade and local politics—is attempting to sabotage the deal in order to keep the city tethered to the drug trade; current revitalization efforts are hampered by local gangs with ties to the Mexican cartels. There are also accusations that such a partnership would not benefit local citizens, but only serve to make the wealthy even more so and widen economic disparities in the area. At the forefront of this push is Los Testamentos.

The PCs have arrived just in time; it is the third night again, and a body was just discovered at the Albuquerque Rail Yards.

People of Interest

TOMOE TAKANASHI *(she/her)*

City of Albuquerque Economic Development Advisor. Severe suits, severe bangs, severe manicure, it's a way of life. Tomoe Takanashi doesn't take anyone's shit and she'll decimate her enemies with a comeback so sweet and so backhanded that they won't realize how bad the burn was until they're in the hospital.

Tomoe's worked for the city for the past year, and the InstaVids deal could be her next big step. She thinks Mayor Margolis is an idiot, and knows she's doing the heavy lifting here. She'd like nothing more than to work for InstaVids VP Habiba Hoffman, but her feelings for Camila complicate things. While only recently aware of DIVISION, as a professional she takes everything in stride.

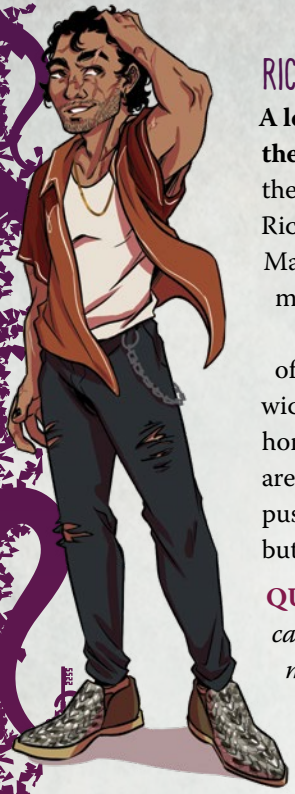
QUOTE: *The situation with the deaths really is a tragedy, but a bigger tragedy would be jeopardizing this opportunity for the city. InstaVids means more jobs, more business. We could put Albuquerque at the center of a holistic approach to bettering the lives of all our citizens.*

AZUL *(she/her, they/them)*

Sex worker. Soft feminine features, with a penchant for cherry-red lipstick and maybe a little too much highlighter. Now that she's regularly on hormones, her face is rounding out. She's been seeing the same guy, Ricky, regularly and he said he wanted to be her only client. Then her friends started dying.

She is housing insecure, and though she can usually find a place to crash, she's no stranger to Tent City. Azul knows things are tense with the city right now with the murders, rumors about a new drug, and a mayor with something to prove. The latest victim was a working girl she knew, and now she's afraid to be out at night.

QUOTE: *Jessica wasn't stupid; we learned on the streets together. We did some dumb stuff years ago, but she would never have put herself in a situation to get herself killed! Y'all may look tough, but that girl was ten times tougher than the lot of you.*



RICKY ROSALES *(he/him)*

A leader of Los Testamentos. A swaggering man with the looks of a novela star, if it weren't for the scars. As the youngest to ever become leader of Los Testamentos, Ricky Rosales is looking to prove himself to the family. Maybe if he can prove his worth, he won't care what they might say about his relationship with Azul.

Ricky is increasingly worried about rumors that some of his boys are covertly dealing a new drug with some wicked effects. He's also worried for Azul's safety as the homeless deaths get more and more persistent. Things are especially rough with his sister Raquel, who has been pushing him to get clean and get away from the family, but he's close to being promoted.

QUOTE: *Mira, it's not that easy, okay! It's not some job I can just walk away from. Tío Miguel would never forgive me. I'm surprised Mayor Matty hasn't already ended up in that gorge they're digging for the new studio, and I don't want to join him when it finally happens.*

MATTHEW MARGOLIS *(he/him)*

Mayor of Albuquerque. Dimpled smile, looks much younger than he is, even smells expensive. Matthew Margolis is in his first term and despite sky high promises, seems to be delivering. He's a very busy man, and if he's spending time with you, you'd better appreciate the dollar value of his time.

Matthew isn't as worried about the details of the murders as he is about the optics. Elections are coming and he wants to land the InstaVids deal to sweep the deaths under the rug. He expected DIVISION to take care of it without bothering him. He can't function without Tomoe, but won't give her a raise. He'll badmouth Los Testamentos any chance he gets, even to his girlfriend Raquel, a member of the gang family.

QUOTE: *I don't know why we're even discussing this. You were hired to take care of it, but you just keep asking questions Tomoe could answer. I have three minutes before I need to get to a meeting with the InstaVids rep, so is this something only the mayor can help you with?*

RAQUEL ROSALES *(she/her)*

News reporter. Conservative floral blouses, moderately tall heels, liberal pointed questions. Raquel Rosales is a hard-hitting journalist for the local news station. Spares no one, not the city—even though she's dating the mayor—and not Los Testamentos—even though her family is thick in it.

Raquel is determined to find out who is behind the murders and has the PCs in her sights. She knows how to move through different Factions, but her allegiance is first and foremost to the truth. She knows nothing about the supernatural or DIVISION, and if she were to discover the truth about the PCs it would cause more trouble than her life might be worth.

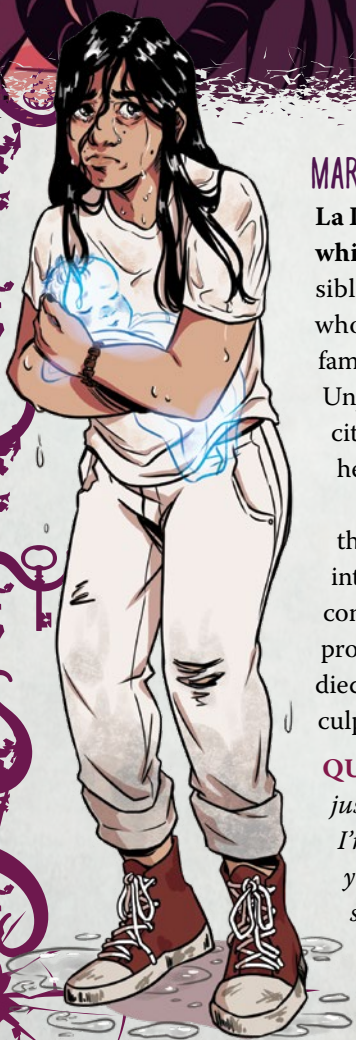
QUOTE: *These are people in my community dying in horrific ways. No one does something like this unless they're trying to send a message. I don't know who you are, but if you can help me figure this out, maybe get some justice, then I'll help you any way I can.*

HABIBA HOFFMAN *(she/her)*

Associate Vice President of North American Operations for InstaVids. Louboutins, skinny jeans, never takes her airpods out. For a woman who runs corporate operations across an entire continent, Habiba Hoffman is surprisingly down-to-earth. Classified as a VIP by DIVISION, she's more than happy to help an agent out, so long as she can count on a little help in return.

Habiba isn't concerned with the murders; her focus is on landing the deal for InstaVids. She also doesn't much care who she makes that deal with. She allows the city (and Tomoe) to court her, but will happily sit down to a meal with Los Testamentos (and Raquel) if it works to her advantage. She prefers dealing with women because they're used to getting things done.

QUOTE: *No, I don't think too much about these strange deaths. When you walk as close to the sun as I do, nothing much seems strange anymore. You just have to get the job done so you can go home, you know? Are you sure you wouldn't like something to eat? It's on me.*



MARIA *(she/her)*

La Llorona. Sopping black hair, white shirt and white jeans, red puffy eyes. The spirit "responsible" for the murders is actually a teenage girl whose life was cut short decades ago when her family discovered she was pregnant out of wedlock. Unjustly drowned in an arroyo, she wanders the city looking for the child that washed away with her body.

Maria is certainly not the spirit who originated the legend of La Llorona, but she is being forced into the role by the culprit. She doesn't know who compelled her to commit the murders, but they promised to give back the child she lost when she died. She may be ordered to attack the PCs if the culprit thinks they're getting too close.

QUOTE: *They said they'd give him back to me! I just want my little boy back, and then I can rest. I'm so sorry for the people who I had to kill, but you don't know how much it hurts searching for someone you might never find!*

Factions

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE

Drive: Use law and politics to centralize power and wealth.

Description: There is nothing quite so cutthroat as local politics and the people working for the City of Albuquerque will carve you up with a smile (mostly figuratively, but literally when necessary). Armored in pressed suits and stylish haircuts, their preferred weapon is the letter of the law and they wield it as befits their aims.

The city and its agents work hard to increase the success and visibility of Albuquerque on a state and national level. Though there are certainly true believers who work to better their community, there are plenty of people who see these efforts as a path toward more money and power. That often means that enrichment is distributed unequally, with wealthier, more desirable areas receiving far more attention than others.

The city will do anything to ensure that more money, prestige, and power flow into Albuquerque (and if some of that flows into their own coffers, well, that's just the price of doing business).

Moves:

- Reveal precautions, taken well in advance
- Disclose weighty secrets they shouldn't know
- Levy crippling sanctions to hinder action or resources
- Obfuscate and derail a conversation or line of inquiry
- Wield brute force through sheer numbers

Faces:

- **Matthew Margolis**, Mayor of Albuquerque
- **Tomoe Takanashi**, Economic Development Department Advisor
- **Jules Garcia**, Information Technology Supervisor
- **Stirling Whitecrow**, Lead Investigator
- **Camila Cardón**, consultant

Establishing Questions:

- *The city has a bounty on your head for something that was truly an accident. What did you do and who helped you escape?*
- *A past lover has taken up a post in city governance. Who are they, and why did it end? Are you avoiding them or seeking them out?*

LOS TESTAMENTOS

Drive: Take the tools to grow and thrive by any means necessary.

Description: Los Testamentos—The Testaments—have been around in one form or another almost since Juan de Oñate brought Spanish colonists to the area in 1598. Whether it is reborn in name only every few generations or the line has carried directly from the start is a hotly-contested and irrelevant matter. What does matter is that Los Testamentos is here and aims to outlast anyone who gets in their way.

The current incarnation of the gang is a long-standing family-centric organization in the South Valley of Albuquerque. Composed of multiple generations of Rosales and orphans they adopted, they have a rigid hierarchy of leadership and internal code of ethics that includes strict gender roles. When it comes to surviving in this city, you need all the help you can get.

Their present struggle centers on a shift toward legitimate business. Some want to get out of illegal markets and are willing to sacrifice power and money. Others want to expand into more dangerous trade and the accompanying benefits that brings.

Moves:

- Bargain enticing intel to look the other way
- Strike out with startling brutality
- Make a flashy escape with guns blazing
- Overpower or spring a trap on intruders to their turf
- Disorient with a mysterious substance or power

Faces:

- **Lorenzita Rosales**, Matriarch of the Rosales Family, skilled curandera
- **Paz Rosales**, Second in Command, also known as Señor Rojo
- **Ricky Rosales**, younger leader of Los Testamentos
- **Raquel Rosales**, local news Lead Reporter
- **Quan Duong**, newest adopted member of the gang

Establishing Questions:

- *You crossed arms with Lorenzita Rosales many years ago. What scar did she give you? What scar did you give her? Why can you laugh about it now?*
- *The newest member of the gang finds you fascinating. What about them secretly fascinates you too?*

INSTAVIDS

Drive: Expand product reach to complete global market saturation.

Description: Every day, hundreds of millions of people fire up InstaVids. Whether they're binging the latest original hit show, watching a blockbuster movie, or just working their way through *The Workplace* for the twelfth time, all eyes are glued to the world's number one streaming service. "Are you still watching?" Of course you are.

The global media corporation, InstaVids, has built an empire on enchanting people with its video programming. Little do most people know that "enchanting" is meant literally. InstaVids is at the forefront of digitizing the occult for fun and profit. Armed with boundary-pushing magical code and an obscene amount of Silicon Valley capital, they do as they please so long as they don't run afoul of world governments. InstaVids even provides funding to DIVISION for various programs.

Their current focus on growth and securing subscribers motivates them to continue pushing into new markets, finding cheaper and easier ways to create content, and acquiring more occult assets to be leveraged.

Moves:

- Distract from the point with words, offers, and actions
- Execute digitized spells from smart technology
- Casually wield vast sums of money
- Use artificial intelligence to predict moves
- Namedrop a much higher-ranking DIVISION member

Faces:

- **Habiba Hoffman**, Associate Vice President of North American Operations
- **Icarus**, Senior Occult Software Engineer III
- **Frej Lundqvist**, Conversation Architect for Parallel Linguistics (Enochian)
- **Prasong "Song" Wichasak**, Junior Ley Line Cartographer
- **Odile Gardet**, Personal Assistant

Establishing Questions:

- *You were an InstaVids employee for a brief period of time. Why were you unceremoniously fired? What did you give up in order to stay alive?*
- *You recognize a piece of deep magic in the newest InstaVids hit series. What key part did you play in discovering it? Who stole it from you?*

THE HOMELESS COMMUNITY

Drive: Survive.

Description: Over 1,500 men, women, and children experience chronic homelessness in Albuquerque. They move through the margins and make a living where they can, sometimes congregating in encampments like Tent City and sometimes going their own way. As people coming from all walks of life and a diverse background of experiences, the homeless "community" is not organized or tightly affiliated, and tracking an individual person can be difficult.

The ritualized murders that are occurring are yet one more problem for unhoused people to deal with on top of securing shelter, food, and general safety. Unhoused individuals understandably prioritize their survival over helping out strangers who may not mean them well to begin with. Gaining the trust of someone society has largely turned its back on will be difficult.

That being said, certain individuals have formed bonds with each other. Encampments can become places to trade for necessities, sleep in relative safety, and let off some steam. Just don't let down your guard too much.

Moves:

- Close ranks and cut off points of investigation
- Disappear untraceably into the city
- Evoke a haphazard curse with no regard for consequences
- Menace or threaten, with unpredictable fury
- Spread false information or warn others off the trail

Faces:

- **Azul**, organizer, working as a sex worker
- **Yael Omer**, mother, working as a cleaning lady and gas station clerk
- **Knox**, writer, looking for work
- **Brody Zahn**, musician, working as a kitchen cook
- **Valentine Edmonds**, working as a call center associate

Establishing Questions:

- *You discover a friend from years ago among the unhoused. Who is it and what did they do when you knew them? How does their current circumstance shock you?*
- *A loose network of informants move through encampments such as this. Who do you see wearing the crest of that network? How have you crossed paths before?*

Locations

HOTEL CINCO

An upscale hotel in the downtown strip with breathtaking views of the city. Frequented by the city's elite, beauty and privilege are the capital for buying yourself into a conversation, a private party, or an intimate moment with a VIP. *What subtle actions do the most powerful people in the room do to alienate those who "don't belong" in their presence?*

ALBUQUERQUE RAIL YARDS

Originally built to service the AT&SF Railway, these reclaimed structures have undergone various revitalization efforts. Now used as an evocative film set and the home of the Rail Yards pop-up markets, they turn a former eyesore into a new economic opportunity. *What remnants litter this area that remind you of its many past lives and uses?*

TENT CITY

A homeless encampment on the roadside right next to the Albuquerque Rail Yards in downtown. Homeless people have gathered amid the bizarre deaths stalking them, leaning on each other for safety, support, and a sense of protection. *What do the PCs witness that shows these people's vow to protect each other, even when no one else will?*

INSTAVIDS STUDIO CONSTRUCTION SITE

A sprawling empty field between the South Valley and the Sandia Mountains to the east. Construction has already mobilized, even though papers have yet to be signed. The pit where the foundations have yet to be laid seems to gape, unblinking into the sky. *Despite the deserted space, what makes you feel watched in this moment?*

LOS TESTAMENTOS HOMESTEAD

A sprawling, much-renovated family home in the South Valley on acres of land. The parking lot is always full of cars and people coming and going at all hours. Hardened men and women sit around kitchen tables as abuelitas attempt to fatten them up. *What items hint at the generations of Rosales that have called this place home?*

BRUJA BUENA STOREFRONT

Located in a chic repurposed pop-up in the Northeast Heights, Camila's shop and reading room is a social media-ready dream backdrop. Various trinkets, plants, and crystals line minimal shelves, and prismatic lighting illuminates the stark white walls. *How does the storefront tame the feral nature of magic and sanitize it for the masses?*

Keys of the Apocalypse

- **a puddle of rainwater**, despite the desert heat, it refuses to evaporate
- **a haunting story**, the name of La Llorona drips into the ear
- **a curb-side memorial**, photos, candles, and flowers scattering in the wind
- **vials of a clear liquid, assumed to be MDMA or GHB**, it gives off the aroma of salt
- **a pamphlet for new city development**, a vision of the future—clean, open, and white
- **a switchblade**, perhaps that's rust on the blade
- **a map of ley lines across the city**, crisscrossing avenues of power are circled
- **a polaroid photo of a young girl**, she's smiling, but there is worry in her eyes
- **a luxury black credit card**, no name, no number, no limit
- **a drive-by shooting**, the smell of burning rubber and gunpowder fills the air
- **a child's drawing on crumpled paper**, the childish figures are crying
- **an occult tome in Spanish**, bookmarked with a rosary and filled with marginalia
- **a digital camera with a strange video**, when played, water pours out of the screen
- **confidential incentive request documents**, water warped and blood stained
- **the desert heat causes visions**, something looks back from under the mountains
- **a Walkman playing a lullaby**, gentle lyrics that grow darker the longer it plays
- **a ring that bears the Rosales crest**, one hand included
- **a movie script featuring impossibly-drowned victims**, to begin production soon
- **codes to access the city's emergency alert system**, on city letterhead, no signature
- **a flash drive with infernal contracts**, written in occult signs that hurt to look at
- **a reliquary with a fetus floating inside**, it looks more sleeping than dead
- **an audition tape**; yours, to be precise

Facets

- The Murders of the Albuquerque Homeless
- The Raising of Maria
- The InstaVids Studio Deal
- The Harbinger
- The Door of Power

Doomsday Clock *(ticks: 6)*

MOMENT

Brackish water begins to seep through everything. No amount of cleaning can remove the salt stains or faint smell of rot.

- *What childlike pattern appears in the lines left by the stagnant water?*
- *What is the one establishment unaffected by the water?*

INTRIGUE

The broken voice of a ghostly child begs for their mother. A hand dripping in jewels covers their mouth. "There are things worse than death."

- *How is the Harbinger keeping the ghost child hostage?*
- *What maternal memories haunt the night?*

EVENT

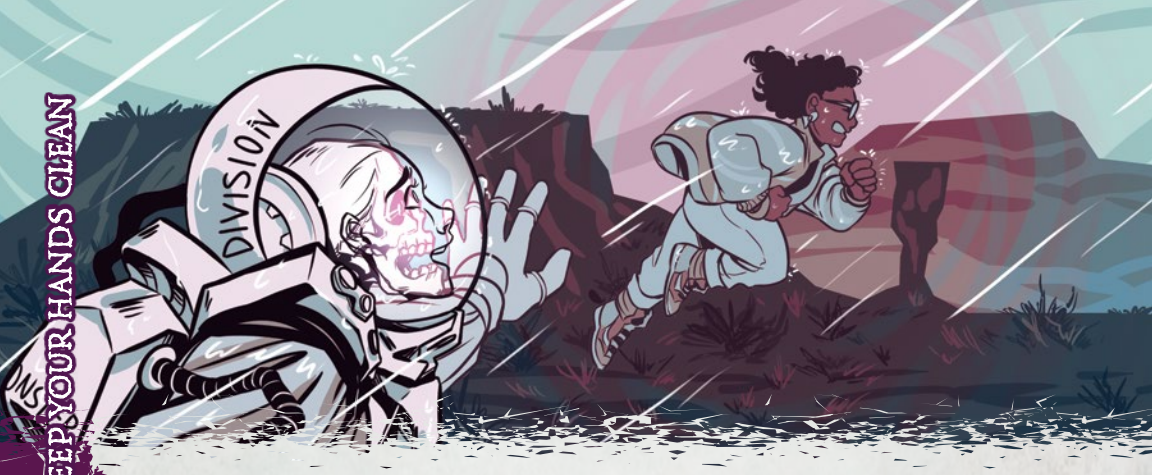
People are coughing up briny water. Those who first started coughing see their skin crystallize with salt. What was once flesh crumbles on touch, dissolves in liquid.

- *Which area is flooded and damaged?*

MOMENT

Reflections show screaming women, tearful deaths. In glass, in mirrors, in small pools of water, horrors repeating on loop.

- *What reflection contradicts what the PCs know?*

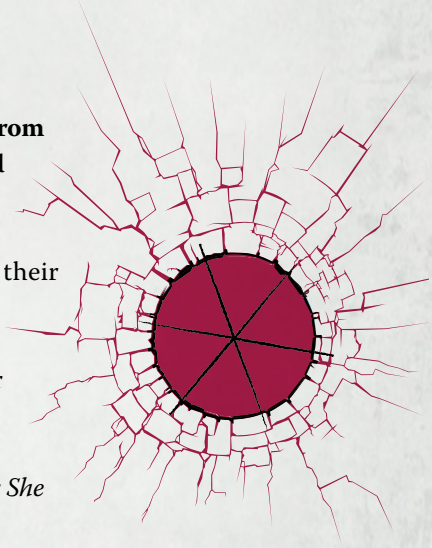


INTRIGUE

She Who Sleeps is wracked with nightmares, tears rolling down her face. The tinkle of beautiful jewelry, the smell of rain. "Let's try this again, shall we?"

- *What happens to those in town who are meant to die?*
- *How will the PCs learn that a ritual has begun?*

THE DOOR OPENS



Water pours up from the earth, down from the sky; salt tears flood every street and alley with unstoppable swiftness. She Who Was Asleep takes all these children and embraces them. The children cry, their sobs reaching a painful crescendo before a horrifying silence settles. She Who Was Asleep will not let them suffer any more. The Harbinger has unlocked the ancient Door of Power.

- *When the door opens, what form does She take to walk again?*
- *What power or wisdom does the Harbinger take from beyond the door?*

Cultural Notes and References

LA BRUJA BUENA Y BRUJERÍA

The character of Camila bills herself as La Bruja Buena, a social media-friendly reimagining of the bruja archetype from New Mexican and other Latino cultures. During the conquest of New Mexico by the Spanish, the Catholic Church made major efforts to forcefully convert indigenous peoples to Catholicism. While some indigenous practitioners adapted their work to conform with Catholic traditions, those who did not convert were ostracized and branded as brujas (witches) doing the devil's work. This tension between fidelity to one's traditions and the need to survive in a changing world is paralleled by tensions seen in our modern age.

We've seen pagan and indigenous traditions such as wicca and brujeria find an increased footing in the modern era, partially by sanitizing and commercializing these traditions. This has led to a certain "trendiness" of spiritual traditions and efforts to make them more palatable to the sensibilities of social media (for instance, the #witchstagram tag or the #bruja tag on Instagram).

Yet even in a moment where many crafts continue to grow in prominence and visibility, there is a tension between authenticity and commercialism that echoes those earlier struggles for survival. How does a craft grow, find new adepts, and expand itself if it is unpalatable to people? How does a craft stay true to itself and ensure that it is honored and cherished if it must veneer itself in respectability and aesthetic?

Camila's character serves to highlight that tension. She is a character who, for all intents and purposes, would generally be excluded from the city Faction. But because she has made herself palatable to that Faction, she can be effective. At the same time, she is not invaluable to them and cannot count on them. That tension goes hand-in-hand with the way indigenous crafts were treated by colonialist forces that invaded the continent so many years ago.

HOMELESS ENCAMPMENTS AND ALBUQUERQUE HOMELESSNESS

The homeless encampment near the Albuquerque Rail Yards was an actual long-standing encampment in 2014 and 2015. Dubbed "tent city" at the time, its close proximity to the Albuquerque Rail Yards, a location the City of Albuquerque had attempted to revitalize with an indoor/outdoor market and which has been used as a filming location for many movies and television series, caused outrage in local press and among the community that lived in the area. An aggressive campaign by Albuquerque police eventually expelled the homeless encampment.

In 2019, city voters approved $14 million in a general obligation bond election dedicated to the construction of a new 24/7 homeless shelter. As of the writing of this Mystery in the summer of 2020, the city has narrowed their search to three possible locations. City personnel are still routinely ousting people from their temporary encampments, despite current CDC guidelines to allow unsheltered or encamped individuals to remain in place to diminish the chance of spreading COVID-19.

NETFLIX STUDIOS IN ALBUQUERQUE

In this Mystery, the thinly veiled Netflix clone InstaVids is set to construct new studios in the South Valley. In real life, Netflix purchased the existing Albuquerque Studios lots east of the South Valley in 2018 for about $30 million dollars, roughly a third of what the facilities cost to build. At the time of their purchase, the studios had been valued at around $22 million, and the city estimated that Netflix occupancy, maintenance, and rehabilitation could return the studio to at least the $91M value it cost to build the facility.

In addition, Netflix is set to receive $14.5 million in government funds for the studio's purchase—$10 million from the state of New Mexico and $4.5 million from the city of Albuquerque. Furthermore, Netflix's productions in the state are eligible for a tax credit of up to 30% under the New Mexico Film Tax Credit Program.

Per Netflix's proposal, the company has committed to $600 million in direct spending related to New Mexico on or before Dec. 31, 2023, and an additional $400 million in direct and/or indirect spend related to the facility between Dec. 31, 2023, and the end of 2028. Netflix will incur financial penalties, payable to the city and state, if it falls short of those spending targets (based on the percentage shortfall).

The Missing Link

Complexity: 8
Main Location: MYS·TERIO·US Outpost — Island Zero
Date: September 20XX
Contact: Commander Fletcher Payne (he/they)

OMEN-CLASS MONSTERS, assist MYS·TERIO·US in searching for a missing HALIMAW-CLASS MONSTER and their teen pilot. Immediately rendezvous with Commander Fletcher Payne, former Halimaw Pilot and Commander of the outpost on Island Zero. Investigate the facility and island, WARNING: engage with RIFT-CLASS MONSTERS only if necessary. HARBINGER-CLASS MONSTER has left evidence of possession of Halimaw and Pilot. Find the DOOR OF POWER and contain it before the Harbinger claims ASCENSION.

CONTENT WARNING: *Teenagers facing trauma, harm (possibly fatal) to teenagers, experimentation and experimentation on teenagers, genocide via bioweapon/biological warfare.*

Description

On September 13, 2000, the unthinkable happened. Scientists and engineers experimented on an ancient monster slumbering in the heart of an inactive volcano, deep under water. Awakened from its millennia-long sleep, the monster screamed and tore through reality with its power. In the wake of its anger, a permanent wound bleeds between worlds.

This interdimensional scar is an opening into a nightmare realm. Colossal rift monsters come through, each capable of destroying entire cities within hours. These monsters can only be stopped by other monsters like them. If even one gets through, it would mean the start of the apocalypse.

Island Zero is not on any maps, and it never will be. It is an island filled with larger than life monsters and the teenagers who are psychically connected to them. It is an island that is lush and full of life, but also fraught with peril.

Together, monsters and teens must use highly experimental technology to guard the boundaries of our world and push back all threats. They are part of a war that will never end. Together they are pilots and Halimaw.

Once a teen is connected to a Halimaw, they are forever changed. When the teens become adults, they change in unpredictable ways. All lose their ability to connect to their Halimaw, thus unable to pilot. Some show signs of mutations, new abilities or physical features that can't be explained by science. Very few even become rift monsters themselves, eventually growing colossal in size, losing most of their memories and the ability to speak.

Every few years there are new recruits, new youths who must take on this burden. Despite years of development and research, only teenagers are capable of connecting to the Halimaw and piloting them. There are no other physical indicators of a teen's ability to be a pilot, nothing within their DNA or social background that determines their capabilities. MYS·TERIO·US employs skilled psionics to walk through dreams and find teens that can emotionally connect to the Halimaw.

Thus, an organization was created to ensure pilots and Halimaw would protect the world. The Mechanized Youth Squad of Tactical Eschatological Research, Investigation and Operations, a branch of United Security (MYS·TERIO·US).

DIVISION has close ties with MYS·TERIO·US. One of the pilots and their Halimaw has gone missing and signs of the apocalypse are found. MYS·TERIO·US has turned to the DIVISION for help.

Beginning the Mystery

It takes several days for DIVISION's monstrous agents to reach Island Zero. The island is protected by spell-tech—holy people from all over the world who take shifts to chant unique prayers created for the Halimaw. Engineers keep an eye on void shields that protect the island and erase any evidence of its existence.

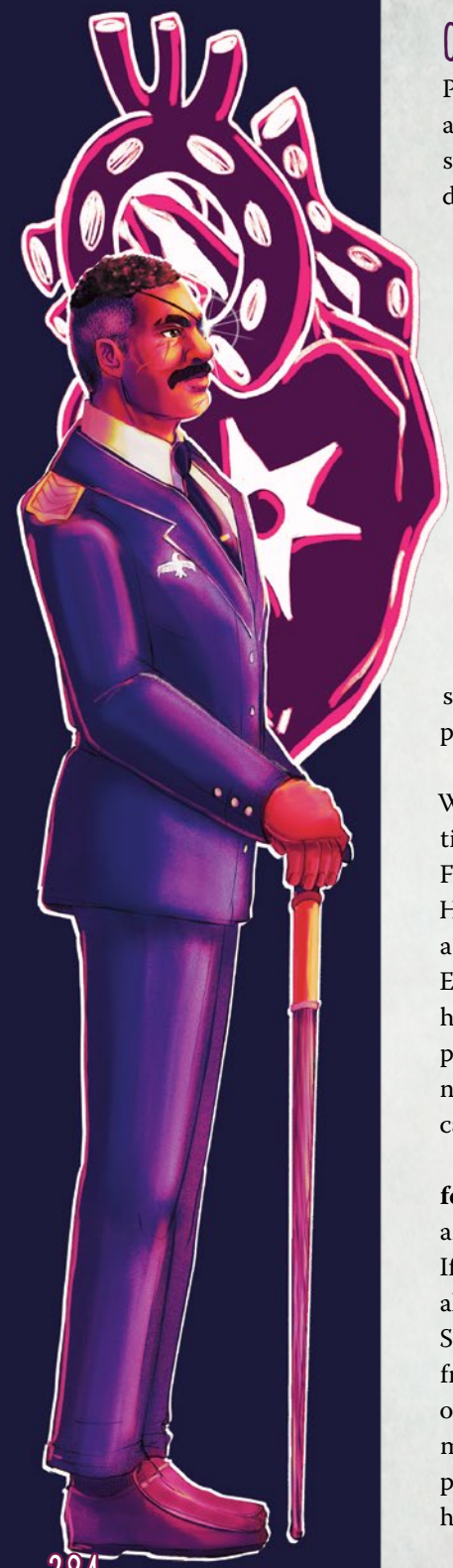
The PCs must pass several security checks and receive strict clearance before they are allowed to land on Island Zero. The jungle is teeming with alien life. Hidden within the foliage is a tunnel that leads them to the underground facility. Strange animals watch from the shadows.

Commander Fletcher Payne is there to greet DIVISION agents. Their massive physique is covered in mech-plating that resembles what the pilots wear during a skirmish. His dark skin is heavily scarred, and his eye patch has a protective rune stitched into it.

Establishing Questions

Ask each one to a different PC:

- **Fletcher Payne was the very first teen to pilot a Halimaw, but his mutation ended his piloting career.** You were there during their last mission—what did Payne protect you from? Why are you the only one who knows about their mutation?
- **One of you helped train one of the teen pilots.** Who are they, and why do you worry for them?



Contact: Fletcher Payne *(he/they)*

Payne uses a cane to compensate for a noticeable limp, has a steady gaze that studies whoever speaks, and seems incapable of smiling. He tells dad jokes with a completely straight face.

Payne escorts the Omens and waves off security teams. The commander is grateful for DIVISION's assistance. He quickly explains what some of the PCs may already know. The pilots are special teens handpicked by professional psionics, and the monsters that connect to these pilots are called **Halimaw**.

There doesn't seem to be any discernible difference between the Halimaw and the rift monsters that wish to destroy the world. All these years, and MYS·TERIO·US still doesn't understand the attacks and why some monsters from the rift wish to help protect this world.

Payne's office is near the command deck. Windows on all sides flicker to reveal statistics and reports, updated every few minutes. From here, the PCs can see the hangar bay. Halimaw sleep in huge vats of an amber colored and translucent liquid that rejuvenates them. Enormous injector tubes are nearby, each tube housing a cockpit for the pilot. Hundreds of people work around the clock—scientists, engineers, mechanics, commanders, and Halimaw carers.

In the center of it all is a beating heart, 30 feet high. It glows strange colors in the dark, and the colors shift in response to the Omens. If pressed, Payne quickly explains that this is all that remains of his Halimaw, **Electra Rogue**. She sacrificed herself, forcefully ejecting Payne from the cockpit, to save an entire city. Most of her did not survive the fight against the rift monster, but her heart refused to die. She now protects the base with what little power she has left.

Payne and his team quickly fills in the Omens with what they know:

- **Luna Nakahara** is one of the youngest teens to be recruited as a pilot. She took well to the training and bonded almost immediately with her Halimaw, **Hydra Omicron**.
- **Hydra Omicron** is a unique Halimaw, their skin covered in eyes and a dozen wings of gold and amber covering their back. They unleash sound waves and light storms. With Luna's guidance, the two can use a special sword that channels this power.
- **The two were last seen preparing for their launch sequence.** Luna went on comms to deliver an ominous message before all scanners lost the pilot and Halimaw's signature: "The apocalypse comes. Together, we will remake this broken world."
- **Payne plays back the recording of the cockpit, and the agents recognize clear signs of possession.** A Harbinger is involved somehow. The video flickers for a moment, and when it comes back, there is no sign of either Nakahara or Hydra.

CUSTOM MOVE: HELLO, LITTLE MONSTER

When you attempt to connect psychically to a Halimaw, say what vulnerable memory you offer to them, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 you drift into the consciousness of the Halimaw, your memories become one for a moment. Choose two:

- The Halimaw comforts and soothes you, clear one Condition
- The Halimaw opens their heart to you, gain a Bond with them
- The Halimaw reveals a truth to you, ask any one question about a Key you have, or uncover a Key

ON AN 11+ the Halimaw sees something in you that terrifies them, choose:

- Mark Ruin to allow the Harbinger within you to force them into compliance, and choose one from above
- Do nothing, the Halimaw will lash out in fear and anguish

ON A 7- you are about to connect to the Halimaw and see tantalizing visions. But then sirens go off and the entire facility goes into lock down. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.

People of Interest

MALIKA CONNER *(she/her)*

Pilot. Bright eyes. Pale skin. Hair dyed an aggressive red. Uses a wheelchair. The eldest of the teen pilots. Speaks in an abrasive tone.

Malika has been a pilot longer than the others. She and her Halimaw **GARNET CYCLONE** consistently outperform other pilots, but Malika has difficulty getting along with anyone who isn't Luna. Garnet Cyclone is a beast type Halimaw, and has the appearance of a large black cat with sharp tentacles and teeth dripping acid. Garnet Cyclone is one of the few Halimaw that psychically connects to any pilot, but they prefer bonding with Malika.

Malika is deeply upset about Luna's disappearance and will rarely leave the simulation room as she fights through difficult emotions. Garnet Cyclone is showing similar signs of depression.

QUOTE: *I don't know what the Commander has told you, but I need to keep training. You're a distraction, and talking to you isn't going to get Luna back. Garnet Cyclone and I are going out to look for her, and I need to be at my best.*

ASTERIO ROMANO *(he/him)*

Pilot. Easily spooked. Perpetually wide-eyed. Thin and fragile looking. Dark skin. Speaks in a soft voice.

Asterio is a pilot with inconsistent results. For the most part, Asterio barely meets the minimum requirement to continue piloting, but every so often he and his Halimaw **APOSTLE SOLAR** will synchronize past what the equipment can measure. Together, they can single-handedly defeat even the most ferocious monsters from beyond the rift.

Apostle Solar is a Titan-type Halimaw—they tower over all other rift monsters and possess incredible strength and speed. At full synchronization, Apostle Solar can move fast enough to break light speed.

QUOTE: *Uh, is this a test? Commander Payne likes having us go through random tests and I don't know if they told you, but I don't do well at tests. I should, I should go check in on Solar.*

CATALINA LEE *(she/her, he/him)*

Pilot. Naturally white hair that reaches past her waist. Dark skin. Always seen in his pilot gear. Speaks in a combination of sign language and psychic visuals. The youngest of the pilots. Catalina switches between masculine and feminine body language, to better express himself.

Catalina is often seen near Commander Payne or one of the other adults. He seems to have trouble getting along with the other pilots. Despite not training with the others, Catalina does well in combat and will often support the other pilots in ways that she cannot off the field.

AURORA COYOTE is an elemental Halimaw, embodying the raw fury and elegant precision of ice and fire. Aurora is one of the few Halimaw who can regenerate and share those regeneration powers with other Halimaw.

QUOTE: *[Catalina looks away but allows his mind to open up and reveal images of Luna and Catalina sitting together in friendly silence, watching their Halimaw regenerate.] Catalina signs, "LUNA HYDRA SOON FIND?"*

NATASHA ZAMORA *(she/her)*

Operations Director. Slicked back hair, dark skin. Old beat up leather jacket thrown over uniform, psionic-tech implants glow in both eyes. Serious at her job, but friendly and warm when off the clock. During a skirmish, Zamora issues orders, relays battle strategies, and keeps track of technicians monitoring the Halimaw.

Zamora is professional with the kids and pushes them hard to get past their fears and insecurities. But all the pilots come to her with their problems, and she's known as the Outpost Mom. When off duty she can be found counseling a pilot or drinking a beer with an older colleague.

Zamora is conflicted about the teens being pilots and fighting for all of humanity, so she pushes herself hard to care for them.

QUOTE: *I'm worried about Luna and Hydra. They were the heart of the team. They have a tendency to take risks, though. If someone took advantage of that, I'm going to make them pay.*

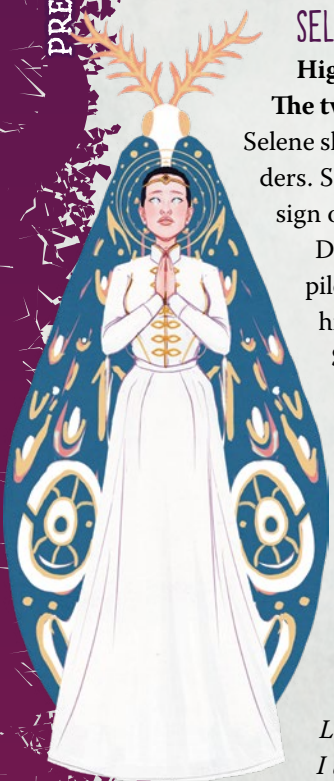
KAIYA ROSARIO *(they/them)*

Head scientist. Wears a lab coat over a bright dress. Goggles push up thick, curly hair. Dark skin, fat and round. Eyebrow perpetually raised, wide smile. Rosario oversees the care of the Halimaw, and helps create various tech to assist the Halimaw and their pilots.

Rosario was one of the first pilots on Island Zero. Their mutation randomly generates a new mirror clone of Rosario, who walks out of the interdimensional rift every so often.

Several of the clones are now fellow scientists. Each clone has their own distinct personality, but many of them enjoy working for the Outpost. Each one has a number. Currently, there are 24 clones. It was Rosario 03 who came up with the term Halimaw—the Tagalog word for monster—and helped improve pilot and Halimaw synchronization dramatically.

QUOTE: *Did you want to talk to Rosario Zero Zero? Uh yeah, "the original." Buuuuut if it's Halimaw info you're after, I'm the clone you need to talk to. Rosario Zero Three at your service. Hm, but Rosario One Six gives great life advice if you need that, their shifts ends in an hour.*



SELENE NAKAHARA *(she/they)*

High priestess. Selene looks like an older version of Luna. The two siblings are tall, pale-skinned, with milky blue eyes. Selene shaves their head while Luna's black hair reaches her shoulders. Selene is dressed in the long robes of a priestess. The only sign of their rank is a simple circlet upon their head.

Despite showing great promise, Selene refused to become a pilot. Instead, she used her potential to become the youngest high priestess. Her Halimaw, **SAKURA VANGUARD**, is an S-Class Psyker. They have moth-like features, their bioluminescent wings slowly change patterns every few seconds.

As high priestess, Selene oversees the rituals and prayers required to maintain the protective spell-tech. Selene also oversees care for the Halimaw and leads her team of psionics into battle. Sakura uses their formidable psychic energy to power much of the outpost's spell-tech components and machines.

QUOTE: *I'm sorry that MYS·TERIO·US insisted you come to Island Zero, but I assure you that my psionics will find Luna soon. I, hmm. Sakura tells me I should be more polite, I apologize. Finding my sibling and her Halimaw is of the utmost importance, let us work together instead.*

The Interdimensional Rift

At any time during the investigation, the rift may tear open and huge monsters will attack Island Zero! This may occur as a result of a miss on a roll, but it can happen anytime it makes sense to raise the stakes or shake things up.

The PCs may assist as they like. If they wish to directly engage the rift monsters and assist the pilots, give each huge rift monster 4-5 Conditions. This is a good opportunity to build colossal monsters that directly reflect the PCs, or mirror aspects of What the Darkness Demands of them.

Don't worry about how your PCs will measure up against these titans, they have their powers of darkness at their disposal. Your players will surprise you with the awesome plans they come up with. Let them have fun and encourage them to try to **Grasp Keys** during the skirmish.

Locations

The Command Deck and Hangar Bay

Hundreds of people are busy at work, studying data and caring for the Halimaw. There is one Halimaw that refuses to connect to any pilot. *Who are they, and why do you recognize them?*

The Labs

Engineers, mechanics, and psionics all work in harmony across open areas of research and study. *What big project is everyone working on?*

Living Quarters

The Living Quarters are more spacious and welcoming than one would expect. *What about the living quarters is beautiful?*

The Treatment Ward

Former pilots struggling with their mutations and retired Halimaw are cared for here. You realize one of the Halimaw is a former pilot. *When they recognize you, what psychic flashback do you see?*

The Monster Graveyard

When a rift monster dies, it's never pretty. The Outpost tries to increase the rate of decomposition, but some of these strange remains have been around for years. *Which of these fallen rift monsters embodies What the Darkness Demands of You?*

Keys of the Apocalypse

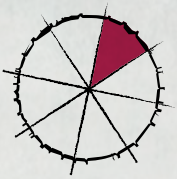
- **signs of sabotage**, barely perceived
- **a mutation**, desperately hidden
- evidence of **false memories**
- **a secret facility** that creates terrifying machines
- **strength and abilities stolen** from rift monsters
- **an old autopsy report** of someone who appears to still be alive
- **messages from Luna that were never sent**, they admit to deep-seated fears no one knew she had
- evidence that Hydra Omicron, Luna's Halimaw, was undergoing **a violent evolution**
- **evidence of a pilot** that no one remembers
- **power from the rifts** harnessed and the corruption that bleeds from it
- **secret research** to force more rifts to open around the world
- someone unlikely is psychically connected to **the Queen of Monsters** from across the rift
- **a collection of Halimaw organs**, their rift energy harvested in cruel ways
- **contaminated rejuvenation fluid** causes the Halimaw to hallucinate and lose control of their abilities
- **painful psychic flashes** that everyone in the outpost experiences at the same time
- **failed attempts at fusing humans and rift monsters** into something powerful, but uncontrollable
- detailed instructions on **how to force the Halimaw to go berserk**, killing their pilots is labeled as "acceptable collateral"
- **a prayer virus** meant to kill every psionic on Island Zero and beyond
- **discarded clones** of Luna and Hydra Omicron
- a rift monster that claims to be **a former pilot**
- **a deadly weapon** that only a human can wield—it can kill any Halimaw instantly, but is ineffective against rift monsters
- **the undying remains of the first monster** that created the interdimensional rift, and their growing power

Facets

- The Possession and Disappearance of Luna Nakahara and Hydra Omicron
- The Rift
- The Harbinger
- The Door of Power

Doomsday Clock *(ticks: 8)*

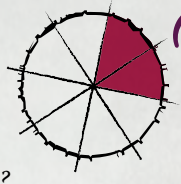
MOMENT



Something comes alive in the Monster Graveyard. It is searching, hungry, yearning, its life flickering and hanging by a thread.

- *Who stumbles into the graveyard?*

INTRIGUE



A throne made from the bones of rift monsters. The volcano rumbles, resisting what the Harbinger desires. "Soon you will have no choice, I'm afraid."

- *What instruments and tech go haywire on Island Zero?*

EVENT

The rift opens violently, contradicting predictions and patterns. The fauna and foliage of Island Zero begin to mutate wildly, and the pilots show similar mutations, years ahead of what is expected.

- *Which one of the Omens shows similar signs of the mutation?*

INTRIGUE

A rift monster trapped under cruel tools, given more power than it can handle. It tries to scream, but it has lost the ability to. A dispassionate voice speaks out, "My lord, soon the children will receive the same power, the psychic resonance will make sure of it."

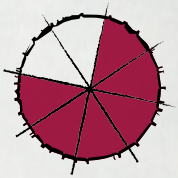
- *How is the power changing the rift monster?*
- *Who receives psychic feedback as a warning?*

MOMENT

The sound of cracking glass, as loud as thunder. The huge vats of amber liquid that house the sleeping Halimaw crack and break. The outpost is soon flooded in the liquid.

- *What is keeping the liquid from releasing the psychic dreams of the Halimaw?*

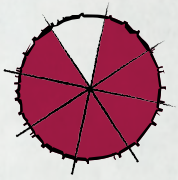
EVENT



A rift monster comes through, its size and power far surpassing anything MYS·TERIO·US has seen before. The rift monster's screams tear through the island, causing earthquakes and eruptions.

- *Which pilot and Halimaw attempt to face the rift monster alone?*

INTRIGUE



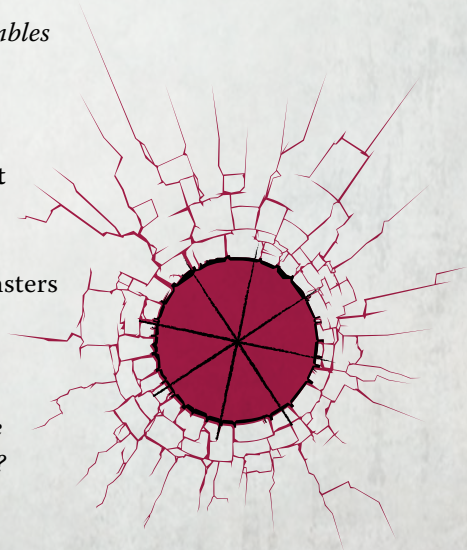
Several rift monsters scream in silent agony, they are cruelly transformed against their will. A steely voice says, "There is no coming back from this, I am sorry, my children. This is the only way."

- *Which one of the rift monsters resembles a PC?*

THE DOOR OPENS

A new rift opens, larger than the first tear. It will soon consume the island. The psychic resonance causes rifts to open all over the world, an army of rift monsters come through.

- *When the door opens, what happens to all the psychics of the world?*
- *What power or wisdom does the Harbinger take from beyond the door?*

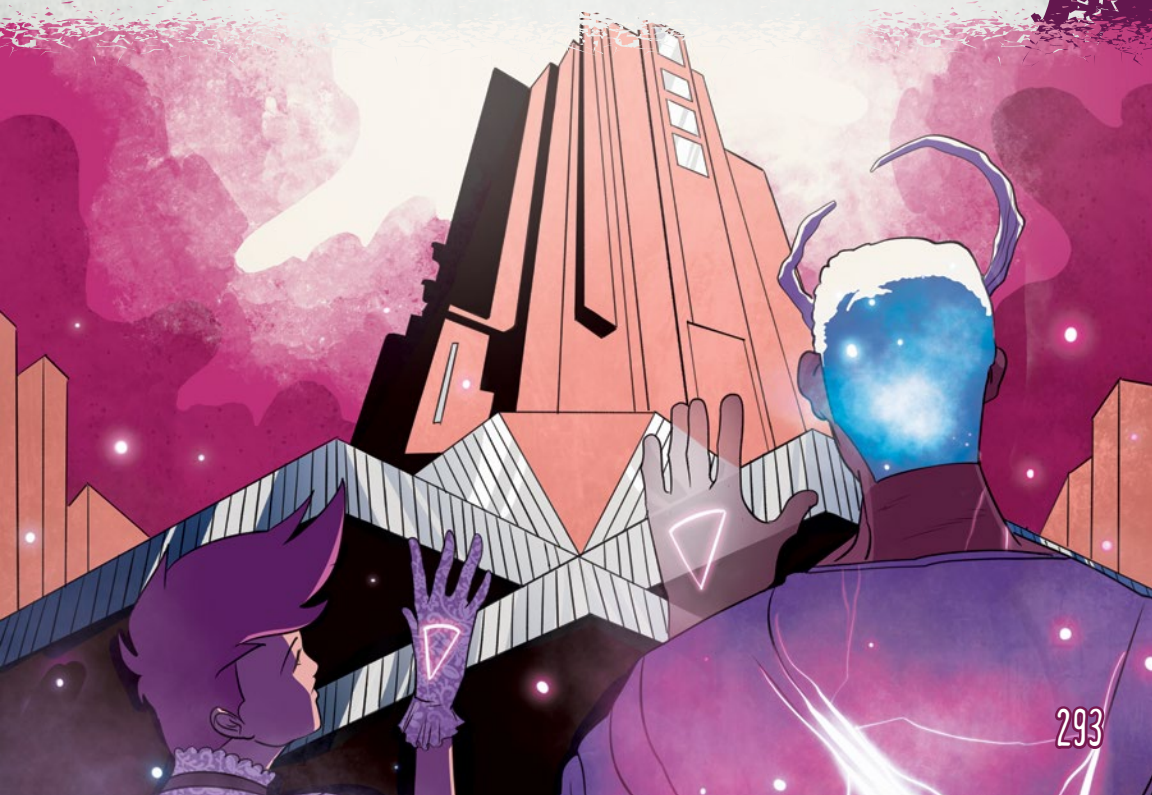


The Oldest House

Complexity: 8
Main Location: [redacted]
Date: [redacted]
Contact: the Oldest Cat (they/them)

OMEN-CLASS MONSTERS, several personnel, agents, and OMEN-CLASS monsters have been reported missing, changed, or terminated. BLACK ALERT PROTOCOLS ACTIVATED. Do not approach the Oldest House. It does not exist. Its lies are ancient and inescapable. It is hungry and cannot be sated. The Oldest Cat has come to me in my dreams and purred against what's left of my heart, but I can't remember, I can't remember what the Oldest House wants me to do, I need to disappear, I need to become changed and unchanged, body and unbody and please don't open the door don't open the door don't open the door I don't want to please please please - [END OF TRANSMISSION]

CONTENT WARNING: *Amnesia, unreliable and fragile memory, body horror.*



Description

There is a singular place that is older than the universe itself. It has taken on many forms over the millennia, both horrifying and comforting. Eventually, it named itself the Oldest House. It has its own sentience, desire, and agenda.

The Oldest House can appear anywhere. People in the area will have their minds and hearts slowly and gently rewritten. If enough time passes, they will believe the Oldest House has always been there. It will become beloved. Sometimes it appears as a quaint cottage, an old office building, a lonely hotel, or an abandoned mansion.

Then the House will begin to call out. The Oldest House is seeking something or someone. One by one, humans and monsters alike will wander into the Oldest House. Soon, the people who once knew and loved them will forget they ever existed. After a while, the Oldest House disappears. When the Oldest House leaves, it leaves behind something or someone. New monsters birthed, new folktales that somehow have always been told, new people with beautifully crafted memories that will change the world around them forever. Often, whatever is left behind by the Oldest House can be used by the Harbingers of the apocalypse.

DIVISION has been aware of the Oldest House for quite some time. Rumors have it that several key personnel of DIVISION were rescued from the Oldest House. Other rumors suggest that DIVISION owes much of its power to what the Oldest House has left behind.

DIVISION reports of the Oldest House are inconsistent, confusing, and obfuscate more than they clarify. A litany of eyewitness reports contradict each other. Evidence gone missing, or taken on new forms. Photographic and video evidence grows strange, especially if left alone and unobserved. Some DIVISION personnel have only one job—to ensure a pair of eyes are always watching the evidence and listening to its whispers.

It doesn't seem to help. Evidence remains the same, but the personnel will find themselves deeply changed and will dream of the Oldest House. Many of them disappear under mysterious circumstances, leaving behind strange letters, warnings, and manifestos.

The Oldest House has found its way into the heart of DIVISION. Its power is now tied to one of the strangest places on earth. It calls out, and several agents have gone missing. With every passing moment, DIVISION is changing into whatever the Oldest House wants it to be.

Beginning the Mystery

DIVISION's monstrous agents find themselves standing in front of the Oldest House. Their memories are hazy and nonsensical, often contradictory. When the PCs look down, they'll find they each bear the mark of the Oldest House: an inverted black pyramid that pulses under the skin. It rotates slowly when no one is looking at it.

The Oldest House has currently taken on the form of an oppressive government building—its Brutalist architecture is intimidating and larger than life.

The Oldest Cat sits patiently at the glass doors of the Oldest House. They are a sphinx cat, their hairless skin a curious shade of lavender. They watch the PCs with large eyes of amber.

Establishing Questions

Ask each one to a different PC:

- **The Oldest Cat once came into your dreams to save your life.** How did they help you? Why didn't they erase your memories of the encounter?
- **You were part of the first team sent in to infiltrate the Oldest House.** Only you survived. What are you afraid of seeing again in the Oldest House? Which agent still haunts your dreams, begging you to rescue them?

Contact: the Oldest Cat *(they/them)*

The Oldest Cat speaks in a soft and measured voice that almost sounds like a hymn. While their hairless skin appears lavender, upon closer inspection, it is clear that the cat has been tattooed in the most delicate purple inks. The layers of tattoos are difficult to decipher, but appear to be ancient symbols from cultures all over the world. Fine jewelry hangs from their neck.

The Oldest Cat beckons the monsters into the Oldest House. They ask the PCs to stay close and to not stray from the path. Whether or not the PCs choose to enter the Oldest House, they find that it will build itself around them. A wooden panel here, a grey carpet under the feet, a fluorescent office light suddenly appears above. A painting hangs behind them that reflects a recurring dream one of the PCs has.

The Oldest Cat expresses their distaste over the rudeness of the Oldest House and waits until the house has settled into its desired shape. The cat explains their own power is dwindling, as powerful infiltrators are corrupting and claiming the power of the Oldest House.

The halls are dark wood, and its walls pulsate like a beating heart. Paintings hang on either side, but every subject has their back turned—or they are covering their faces with their hands. Underneath each painting, small plaques have strange titles upon them, such as "The Garden Eternal," "The Cracked Vow," or "The Night's Scream."

The Oldest Cat brings the PCs into a room filled with outdated computers. The monitors flicker on and the keyboards softly type whatever is said, or unsaid, in the room.

The Oldest Cat cannot trust their own memories. They only know that someone or something has infiltrated the Oldest House, and it was not called or invited in. The Oldest Cat knows that this is not the first time the PCs have come here, and they suspect that they and the Oldest Cat have made several attempts to take back the Oldest House. However, they are more confident about success this time around, "Call it a cat's intuition," they'll say.

At this point, several dot matrix printers start up by themselves, and threatening messages come through. "GO NO FURTHER," "DIVISION IS OURS," "THE APOCALYPSE ON OUR TERMS," and so on.

But a few of the printers, hastily painted in thick strokes of red, print out other messages from personnel or agents from DIVISION that the PCs have worked with in the past. "HELP US," "YOU ALMOST MADE IT LAST TIME," "PLEASE DON'T GIVE UP," and similar.

CUSTOM MOVE: SERVANTS OF THE OLDEST CAT

When you attempt to follow the Oldest Cat's guidance to navigate the Oldest House, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 you wander into a welcoming area of the Oldest House. Choose one:

- You find a friendly face
- You find an object from the Oldest Cat that can help you
- You find evidence from your past self about what to do next

ON AN 11+ the Oldest House responds to your presence. Choose one from above, but the Keeper will describe what challenges or monsters you find waiting for you here.

ON A 7- the infiltrators intervene and temporarily cut off communication with the Oldest Cat. Prepare for the horrors of reality fully corrupted.

NEW KEEPER MOVES

Some new moves to consider using to best portray the strangeness of the Oldest House:

- **Rewrite a small but essential part of reality**
- **Defy physics or natural laws**
- **Trap the PCs in their dreams or their past**
- **Introduce a victim of the Oldest House**
- **Invoke the memories and secrets of the Oldest House**
- **Infuse magic into mundane technology**
- **Reveal evidence of a memory erased or altered**

NOTE

You are encouraged to offer this Mystery after the PCs have spent some time interacting favorably with DIVISION agents and personnel. Reincorporate characters who showed up in previous Mysteries. Present these characters as significantly changed by the Oldest House.

People of Interest

THE OLDEST WITCH *(they/them)*

Long bedraggled hair, blindfolded, mouths carefully placed on palms but sewn shut.

The Oldest Witch doesn't speak out loud. Instead, their words scratch and ease into your mind. When their hair parts, different faces appear each time. Sometimes the face is smooth, soft, and smiling. Other times, the face is wretched, twisted, and despairing.

The Oldest Witch speaks in riddles and part truths. But often they say something deeply intimate only the monsters would understand. It's clear they are in much pain, unable to perceive reality clearly. Their heart is the heart of the Oldest House, and they can feel the infiltrators corrupting its power without mercy.

The witch is infected by a dream of the Oldest House, which twists their tongue and makes it impossible for them to speak clearly. They hope that someone from DIVISION can shatter the dream.

QUOTE: *Have you seen the rose? Shattered by your breath? You held it in your hands, didn't you, cutting me open with your thorns? No? No? Why can't you remember, you remembered the last time you were here. Surely, an illusion you must be.*

SUSAN LOPEZ *(she/her)*

Former DIVISION agent. Thick hair pulled back into a messy bun, broken glasses, pristine suit. Agent Lopez' skin is scarred and peeling. If she breathes too deeply, a new eye appears somewhere on her body, slowly cracking a lid open. As the conversation continues, more eyes will reveal themselves, each moving independently. Some of the eyes will cry strangely bright tears.

Agent Lopez has no clear memories, and will often "reset" in the middle of a conversation. She'll stop and repeat her terse and straightforward introduction. The reset times appear to be random, but a reset often comes on if she feels agitated or upset. If someone asks about the eyes on her skin, she will look confused. She is unable to see or feel them.

QUOTE: *Agent Lopez here. Are you the new team DIVISION has sent in? I hope you'll do better than the last group they sent in, they barely survived five minutes. When we went up against the... when we saw the... and then... the screams, I couldn't look away, they wouldn't let me look away I... Agent Lopez here. Are you the new team DIVISION has sent in?*

THE HANGED MAN *(he/they)*

Applying for the position of monstrous agent at DIVISION. Painfully thin and tall. Elongated Limbs. Black suit. No face. The Hanged Man has a black noose tied around their neck. They speak in a carefully clipped accent and cheerful tone, but there is no clear indication of how they are able to speak.

When the PCs arrive, the Hanged Man is eager to help, he may even be trying to make sense of a Key. The Hanged Man explains that he came to DIVISION for the Omen application process, and he is aware of the PC's many exploits. He is quite perky and optimistic, and is under the mistaken impression that all of this is part of an exam to test their skills.

QUOTE: *Oh hello! Hello! Ahem, yes! The Hanged Man here, terribly pleased to make your acquaintance. Oh my, to meet you lot in person, to stand in the presence of such fine heroes! What fine Omens you are! Are you here to check in on the applicants?*

SISTER MIDNIGHT *(all pronouns)*

Muse, large black eyes that contain a galaxy. Soft and full bodied, dressed in exquisite finery and silks. Sister Midnight looks like she stepped out of a Renaissance painting. He smells of the forest after the rain. Sister Midnight's form subtly changes from moment to moment, appearing more masculine or feminine between breaths.

They were a muse to a painter that time forgot many lifetimes ago. Sister Midnight will leave from time to time, sometimes taking on the shape of an animal, to visit an artist in need of inspiration. She is fond of the Oldest House, even if she is technically a prisoner there.

QUOTE: *I understand that the Oldest House is dying. Such a shame, really. I don't feel alive anymore, so I suppose dying along with the house won't be too terrible. I will be sad to say goodbye to that charming agent. Walker is terribly handsome, but I daren't tell her that.*

ADRIAN WALKER *(she/her)*

Agent of the BUREAU. Slicked back red hair, a trench coat covering a badly damaged suit, goggles that glow in the dark. Agent Walker is shocked to meet DIVISION agents, and murmurs worriedly about converging timelines and reality degradation. When pressed, she will insist that "The BUREAU and DIVISION cannot exist in the same time and space."

The Bastion for Universal Research, Extranormal Affairs and the Unusual (BUREAU) is a shadowy organization from another reality, classified as a rival to DIVSION's interests. Adrian has heard the terrible things DIVISION is capable of, but is also determined to uncover every secret available to her.

Agent Walker has spent the last 20 years in the Oldest House, attempting to unlock its secrets and find the source of its power. She has not aged and is not sure why. She is desperately in love with Sister Midnight, but does not dare to emotionally entangle herself with a supernatural anomaly like them.

QUOTE: *Well, now that you're here, I suppose there isn't much else we can do but team up. But please, try to not trip through any more reality breaches or trigger any alarms. I've heard stories about DIVISION, I suppose we'll see how true they are.*

The Infiltrators

The PCs have to figure out what the infiltrators are and what they are trying to do to the Oldest House. While the PCs uncover Keys and try to make sense of them, focus on making the infiltrators be a foreboding and terrifying presence who are trying to expel the PCs.

Infiltrators often shapeshift to take on more innocuous forms. A painting on the wall, a locked chest, a mug by a computer. When the monsters least expect it, describe an infiltrator revealing itself, drawing random objects towards it and reshaping them into something sinister or haunting.

The more powerful infiltrators will use the fallen bodies of previous victims of the Oldest House and former DIVISION agents, combining several of them together to create something truly terrible.

The infiltrators are violent, deadly, and horrifying.

Locations

THE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

The halls are filled with dozens of red rotary phones. Operators place white-knuckled hands on the phones, each one patiently stands by with strained smiles. The operators never blink. *When the phone rings, what strange sounds or words do you hear? What are the voices telling you to do?*

THE CATACOMBS

The boiler room's pipes and metal give way to ancient stone and tombs. In the distance, there is the sound of metal clanging on metal, and the soft sound of a choir. *Why do you recognize the ghosts that haunt this place? What do they want?*

THE CONTROL ROOM

Bodies are suspended near the ceiling, twisting and turning gently. They are all deeply asleep, their dreams slowly leaking out of their heads. Below them is a sea of computers, spewing out floppy disks that record the dreams. *What shared dream are they all creating?*

THE HOTEL LOBBY

A grand chandelier, lush carpeting, a friendly swarm of bellboys. The concierge beckons you over and hands you your room key. The contact triggers a violent flashback. *What horrifying thing is waiting for you in your hotel room?*

THE SURVEILLANCE ROOM

Dozens of screens flicker in unison, each one showing a live feed. An empty seat is covered in blood. You see past versions of yourselves on the screens. *What do you see your past self doing that shocks you?*

THE RITUAL ROOM

Hundreds of cubicles stretch as far as the eye can see. Each cubicle houses a CRT monitor that slowly bleeds static and ichor onto the desk. *What ritual signs do you recognize? What are the computers summoning?*

THE MUSEUM

Beautifully lit exhibits feature key moments in the history of DIVISION. *How is your most harrowing moment portrayed here, for all to see?*

THE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

The office is sparse and unwelcoming, a table sits in a painfully open space. *What evidence of violence do you find here? What is the murder weapon?*

Keys of the Apocalypse

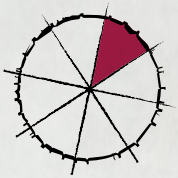
- **a floppy disk** with the words "don't forget" scrawled on it
- **an antique rotary phone** with blood splattered on it, it starts to ring
- **a phone booth built into an improbable place**, a skeleton made of obsidian rests inside
- **Post-it notes cover every available space**, each one bearing frenzied warnings
- **a corpse** wrapped in red telephone cord
- **a dossier** containing files of several members of DIVISION, revealing dark secrets
- **a group of ghosts** hovering in mid-air, swaying gently in a breeze no one feels
- **an entire room that holds a large computer,** made of hundreds of parts—reel-to-reel tapes play conversations no one remembers
- **a fax machine** prints out pages full of blank ink, ghost-white eyes watch from each page
- **a rainstorm** trapped in a single room
- **a microcassette recorder**, the PC who finds it recognizes their own voice, "Please listen to me, I don't have much time before the next reset"
- **plans of a secret underground facility** for DIVISION
- **a statue of an office worker** embracing a keyboard, their eyes closed in bliss
- **a painting that gently bleeds**, soft sighs coming from the black void in the middle of it
- **a lie detector machine** that responds to the thoughts of those nearby
- **a Victorian style baby carriage** that gently leaks suffocating smoke
- **a staircase that descends forever**, muffled sounds of pain come from deep below
- **the Service Weapon** changes form depending on who wields it—a pistol, a mythic hammer, a holy sword, a whip of chains
- **old photographs** of an abandoned bunker full of shadows, the figures move closer and closer
- **a large brain** that slowly drags itself across the floor before skittering away into the shadows
- **a towering stack of books** that detail with haunting accuracy the entire lives of the PCs
- **a Betamax tape**, its label a series of numbers and letters. When played, it shows an instructional government video that cheerfully details how to handle "a soul reassignment"

Facets

- Missing Memories
- Time Restarting
- The Harbinger
- The Door of Power
- DIVISION's connection with the Oldest House

Doomsday Clock *(ticks: 8)*

MOMENT



Dozens of projectors descend from the ceiling, displaying video footage from different timelines. There is truth in the contradictions, patterns that cannot be ignored.

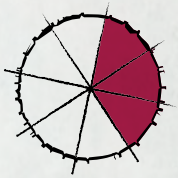
- *What cold announcement comes from unseen speakers?*

INTRIGUE

A spinning black pyramid immense and hanging upside down in the air. Distorted voices speak at different volumes, a single voice breaks through "The threads of time cannot take much more, we are running out of chances. We must proceed."

- *What do we see of the Oracle that translates what the chorus says?*
- *What are the effects of time breaking down?*

EVENT



The Oldest House begins to dream. Pathways and walls rearrange themselves into illogical patterns, gravity is an illusion. Infiltrators attack the agents.

- *A doppelgänger who wears the face of a beloved NPC appears to command the infiltrators, who is it?*

INTRIGUE

An office with the sharp smell of disinfectant stretches out into the distance. A cassette tape and gun lay next to each other on the desk. The cassette tape plays itself, and a group of voices speak in perfect unison, "The initial stage of the soul transfer has proven successful, we must follow the rest of the procedure with great care."

- *Who waits, cowering in the corner, regretting what they have done?*
- *What message is scrawled on the cassette tape's label?*

MOMENT

Paintings larger than life, faces that slowly erase themselves. Under the paint are whispers and messages, blood and blades.

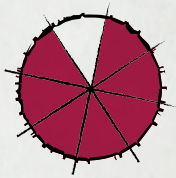
- *Who is painted to reflect a different timeline?*

EVENT

The Oldest Fears have broken past decaying seals, and they stalk the PCs. They warp reality into dagger sharp focus, and the infiltrators take advantage of the chaos.

- *What face does the strongest Fear wear?*
- *Which of the PCs is unaffected by the Oldest Fears? Why?*

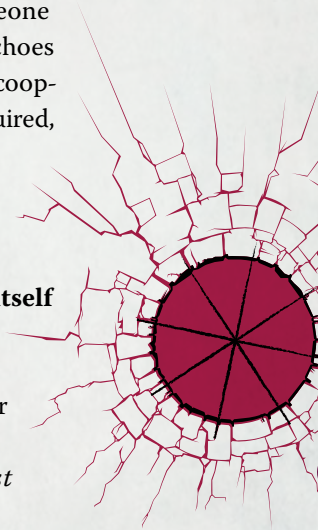
INTRIGUE



A chorus of voices stand around the Oldest Door. A red phone appears in front of the red door. The Oracle steps forward, and picks up the phone. Wherever the PCs are, a red phone appears and begins to ring. Whether or not someone picks up the receiver, a distorted voice echoes in everyone's mind, "Thank you for your cooperation. Your services will no longer be required, DIVISION belongs to us now."

- *Who recognizes the voice of the Oracle?*

THE DOOR OPENS



The Oldest House begins to fold in on itself and all of reality will soon follow. New patterns, new timelines, new realities, a new DIVISION, a new world. The Harbinger has unlocked the ancient Door of Power.

- *When the door opens, who is most affected by the timeline reset?*
- *What power or wisdom does the Harbinger take from beyond the door?*

Custom Information and Mechanics

You may feel like your Mystery needs custom information or mechanics to truly shine. This isn't essential, but here are some examples:

- *The Manananggal Murders* has a list of the victims to help the Keeper track them.
- *The Missing Link* has a custom move to encourage the Omens to interact with the Halimaw. A description of the interdimensional rift reminds the Keeper that Island Zero can be attacked by colossal rift monsters at any moment!
- *The Oldest House* has a custom move so the Omens can travel quickly between locations, and further encourages the sensation of a space that defies the laws of reality. New Keeper moves center the narrative around the corruptive nature of reality in The Oldest House. While most Mysteries can have any dangerous threat attached to them, the infiltrators further support the themes of the Mystery.

Harbingers

The following is a list of Harbingers that you can welcome into your game of *Apocalypse Keys*. These monsters come with evocative backgrounds, fascinating drives, and inspiring moves to keep your players on their toes.

You can use these Harbingers to:

- Introduce a possible Harbinger into your Mystery
- Draw inspiration to create your own Harbingers

When you introduce any of these Harbingers into your Mystery, keep in mind that the flow of the Mystery and **Unlock Doom's Door** may reveal an entirely different Harbinger. Your players may decide another character is the Harbinger seeking out the ancient Door of Power. What you offer the players—be it Keys, Harbingers, or information of any kind—is ultimately up to their creative interpretation and what excites them.

You are encouraged to portray these prepared Harbingers with care and fervor, but be willing to set aside this Harbinger for the sake of another one the players latch on to. Perhaps you downgrade your chosen Harbinger to trusted advisor, fearsome lieutenant, or desperate lackey. Alternatively, your chosen Harbinger commands other monsters and is cloaked in even deeper shadows of mystery!

There is no such thing as a wasted character or moment in a game like *Apocalypse Keys*—take note and decide how you'll bring back your Harbinger into the next Mystery.

Each Harbinger in this section comes with a set of ***establishing questions***. These should be asked of an Omen, to help tie the Harbinger intimately to one of the PCs. Ask at least one of the establishing questions. If you ask both questions, point the second question at another PC.

The Needle and Thread *(they/them, it/its)*

Content warning: Body horror.

Drive: To create monsters from fallen Harbingers and protect weaker monsters.

Conditions:

☐ Vicious ☐ Despairing

Moves:

- Bind the fate of one monster to another
- Reanimate a dead Harbinger
- Open up hidden stitches on the body to reveal minions
- Pull at strings and unmask a new face

Description: The Needle and Thread is a mysterious and wretched figure—records suggest that they were once a powerful and terrifying Harbinger struck down by DIVISION, decades before. All that remains is twisted flesh stitched together and held by bright red string, made from the sinew and blood of victims.

The Needle and Thread needs only a deft movement, strings held taut, the sharpest needles, or a whispered ritual to defy death, reshape flesh, and twist fate itself.

Establishing Questions:

- *Who do you suspect the Needle and Thread once was? Why do you desperately hope this is not the case?*
- *How do you know the Needle and Thread has bound your fate to another monster?*

Yanara, the Heart of the Mountain *(she/her and he/him)*

Drive: To recreate the liminal paths that connect all mountains to other worlds.

Conditions:

☐ Obsessed ☐ Sorrowful ☐ Raging

Moves:

- Create armor and weapons of unbreakable stone
- Destroy false mountains and corruptive structures
- Travel through rock, earth, and soil
- Use song to awaken the heart of the mountains

Description: Yanara once lived her life as a human, unaware of her powers and her connection to the mountains. But Yanara has always dreamt of the mountains that once were, and something in him knew his bones were the same bones that held up mountains. Recently, Yanara learned that when she was taken from the Heart of the Mountain at a young age, her connection and magic shattered. Yanara has spent too long among humans, but even with his diminished power, Yanara is a formidable enemy.

Yanara is determined to recreate the paths that connect all mountains to other worlds, hoping that one day he can find a time before he was taken, and return home.

Establishing Questions:

- *You were there when Yanara was taken from the magical heart of the mountain. What is Yanara's true form? Why didn't you save her back then?*
- *Why do you secretly hope Yanara will be able to recreate the liminal mountain paths? What do you hope to find?*

Janan, They That Remain *(they/them)*

Content warning: Body horror.

Drive: Recreate the godly body they once had and destroy the god-killers.

Conditions:

☐ Spiteful ☐ Haunted ☐ Raging

Moves:

- Cut down the impudent with a god-killer blade
- Call upon the spirit of their dead love to gain strength
- Form a temporary body from a shard of divinity
- Summon what remains of the dead gods

Description: Janan was once a god of love, battle, and honor. Centuries ago, the god-killers traversed the heavenly realms and killed every deity they could hunt down. Janan was slain by the god-killers, but their human lover—Ashtarae—was determined to challenge death. Ashtarae carved out Janan's dead heart and performed a forbidden ritual to create the weaker body Janan now possesses.

Time passed and Janan lost Ashtarae to the god-killers and their blades. Over the years, Janan's heart has grown twisted—their spite and blinding desire for vengeance will one day be their undoing.

DIVISION believes that the rotted and putrid remains of Janan's godly body has formed its own consciousness, and seeks to fulfill its own agenda.

Establishing Questions:

- *You were once targeted by the god-killers, why did Janan save you from the oblivion of their blades?*
- *The spirit of Ashtarae has reached out to you, again and again. What do they beg of you to do, and why are you tempted to do as they ask?*

Nariko, the Storm of Entropy *(she/her)*

Drive: To resurrect her loved ones and give them invincible bodies of lightning and thunder.

Conditions:

☐ Obsessed ☐ Righteous ☐ Desperate ☐ Guilty

Moves:

- Become a dozen bodies made of thunder and lightning
- Tear apart the skies and rain down chaos
- Obliterate a target and leave only ashes
- Create a hungry void of entropy

Description: Nariko Lee was a world-renowned scientist well known for her risky experiments. Her results were undeniable and her breakthroughs led to the invention of bleeding-edge tech. Lee and her family were all brilliant scientists, engineers, and philosophers. Together, they created modern day marvels and miracles.

One day, Nariko came across the fragments of what was once an ancient Door of Power, shattered and unusable. An unsolvable formula, a computation that would create and manipulate the very essence of entropy.

Nariko solved the impossible, and upon its application, disaster struck. The ancient Door of Power opened. Waves of entropy burst forth, and the experiment created what can only be perceived as an unending storm of lightning and thunder. Nariko's family was torn apart in seconds, and only she survived.

Nariko is determined to undo her fatal mistake, but she cannot see a way to do so without feeding the entropy and chaos that is now her soul.

Establishing Questions:

- *Nariko Lee once worked with DIVISION to help track down an ancient Door of Power and destroy a Harbinger. Why did you never tell Nariko your true feelings for her?*
- *A fragment of a soul visits your dreams and shares with you their memories of Nariko. Who are they to Nariko, and why can't you help them?*

The Skin Collector *(it/its)*

Content warning: Body horror.

Drive: To complete its collection of fine skins and pretty eyes, to create the perfect person for you.

Conditions:

☐ Obsessed ☐ Terrified ☐ Ravenous

Moves:

- See through the eyes of another
- Wear someone else's skin as its own
- Stretch thin and taut to fit into small spaces
- Create another Skin Collector

Description: There are people who wander off into the dark, the lost and the forgotten, the ignored and the forsaken. Waiting in alleys and in shadow, the Skin Collector makes an offer for their names, identity, and what remains of their pitiful lives. What would it take for you to give away everything?

The Skin Collector is an artist. It takes an eye from one person, a smile from another, a dream from someone else, a laugh from one more.

DIVISION stopped sending its agents to investigate the Skin Collector and its methods. The agents never returned, and its collection of skins simply grew.

Establishing Questions:

- *You met the Skin Collector on a mission long ago. What part of you did you give to the Skin Collector, and what did it give you in exchange?*
- *The Skin Collector wears the face of someone you once cared for. Why did you give their skin to the Harbinger?*

The Vessel *(all pronouns)*

Drive: To become one with the perfect being and end the torment.

Conditions:

☐ Vicious ☐ Ravenous ☐ Lonely

Moves:

- Pull another soul into the Heart's Void
- Feed on the emotions or memories of another
- Use a ritual blade to induce fear or love
- Disgorge what remains of a god's nightmare

Description: The Vessel was created to be perfect and beautiful, aching and empty. A forgotten cult spent years and countless sacrifices bringing him into being. After excruciating tests and painstaking preparation, the ritual to draw down a dead god and bring it back to life in the Vessel's Heart's Void began.

But DIVISION and its agents disrupted the ritual, holding back another apocalypse. The cult was destroyed, and the Vessel was brought back to DIVISION for testing and research.

DIVISION claims to not know how the Vessel escaped, and how she gained the power to control the Heart's Void and manipulate the vestige of dead gods within her.

Establishing Questions:

- *You almost convinced DIVISION to give the Vessel honorary human status, and become an Omen themself. How did you ultimately betray the Vessel and their faith in you?*
- *You know that the Vessel is becoming a god. A god of what, and why are you tempted to worship her?*

Subject 9468 *(no pronouns)*

Content warning: Unreality.

Drive: To witness the truth and record it, in order to birth the new Universe.

Conditions:

- ☐ Introspective
- ☐ Haunted
- ☐ Merciless
- ☐ Lonely
- ☐ Raging

Moves:

- Measure a soul and describe how it is wanting
- Absorb any number of powers of darkness
- Reveal the unbearable truth
- Unlock the many probable futures

Description: The nature of reality is that it can only remain true if it is witnessed and recorded in ways beyond mortal understanding. There is one being who bears the burden of witness, who watches reality and its many forms unfold and come into being.

DIVISION has made attempts to understand the nature of Subject 9468—a god from a universe that existed before this one, an ancient oracle punished for falling in love and cursed for such weakness, an embodiment of the universe's intention and yearning, a collection of unreality and untruth that has formed sentience and desire, the dream of a young psychic from the future—untethered and ravenous. All of it is true, and all of it is false, according to several records.

Establishing Questions:

- *Subject 9468 absorbed a power of darkness you used to have that you can no longer access. Why are you thankful for this?*
- *Subject 9468 unleashed a future version of you that you're terrified of. Why did you force Subject 9468 to perform this forbidden act?*

Hemlock, the Imperfect *(they/them)*

Content warning: Unhealthy family relationships (potential).

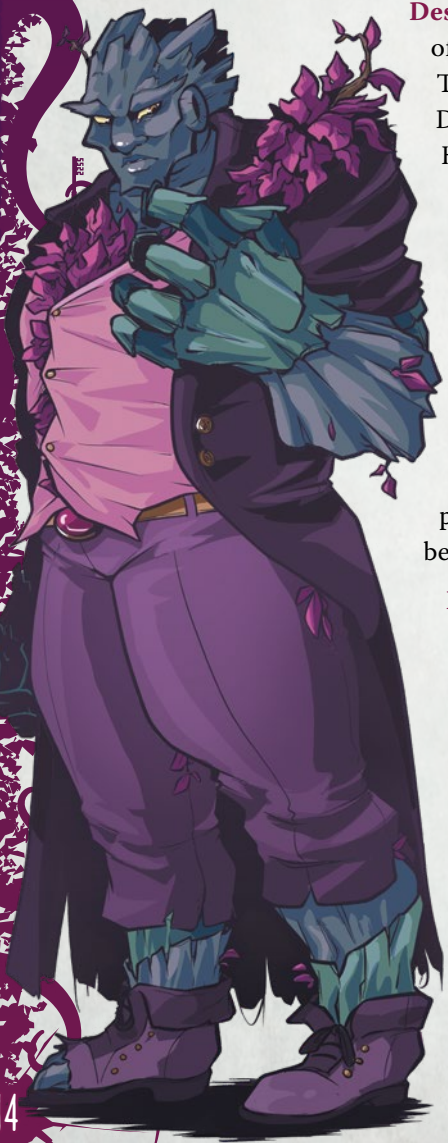
Drive: To create children strong enough to remake their maker.

Conditions:

☐ Sorrowful ☐ Spiteful ☐ Despairing

Moves:

- Let bloom the poisonous flowers beneath the skin
- Summon an obedient child to serve them
- Take on a beautiful and monstrous form
- Rot away and be regrown in a secret lab



Description: Hemlock is one of hundreds of attempts to create the perfect being. Their father and maker is unknown to DIVISION, and some suspect that even Hemlock themself is unsure of who their maker is.

Hemlock has spent many years learning to surpass their maker, creating monstrous children of their own. Hemlock is obsessed with making their children stronger, a garden of perfect monsters blooming under desperate care.

Hemlock and their children are poisonous, horrifying, and beautiful beyond compare.

Establishing Questions:

- *You rescued one of Hemlock's children. Since then, they've become an Omen at DIVISION, why are you trying to convince them to leave DIVISION?*
- *You have a complex and intimate relationship with Hemlock's maker. Why can you never tell anyone?*

Sashenka, the Singing Moth *(she/her)*

Drive: To awaken sleeping gods and save the world from itself.

Conditions:

☐ Obsessed ☐ Merciless ☐ Haunted ☐ Despairing

Moves:

- Wield magic and spell to horrifying effect
- Listen to the sleeping gods and interpret their dreams
- Reveal a forbidden ritual to gain more power
- Sing the song of death and emerge in a new cocoon

Description: Sashenka has survived across the centuries, always taking on the form of a powerful mystic or witchy advisor to the rich and powerful. Many attempts have been made to kill her, but she returns each time, stronger than before.

DIVISION has clear evidence that Sashenka's power is connected to slumbering gods from a dying universe, eager to manipulate their scion into creating a path to this world. Each time Sashenka returns from death, more of her soul is replaced by these cosmic horrors.

Establishing Questions:

- *Sashenka once worked closely with DIVISION, eventually betraying you and escaping with valuable intel. Why do you still care for Sashenka?*
- *Sashenka once saved you from destruction with her magic. What plans do the slumbering gods have for you?*

IV *(changing pronouns)*

Content warning: Identity loss, potential perceived similarity to DID and other MPDs.

Drive: To destroy DIVISION and protect monsters from the organization.

Conditions:

☐ Raging ☐ Cruel ☐ Despairing

Moves:

- Awaken I, and infect others with visions
- Awaken II, and use a forbidden DIVISION weapon
- Awaken III, and mimic any power of darkness
- Awaken IV, and die in order to be reborn again

Description: DIVISION records detailing the mission of Agent [redacted], Agent [redacted], Agent [redacted], and Agent [redacted] have been destroyed across all forms, realities, and timelines as per DIVISION Black Alert protocols.

Remaining data offers partial information on the [redacted] event that created [redacted]. The four former agents now exist within one amorphous and ever changing form, subject to [redacted]. Their stolen abilities come from DIVISION's [redacted], and must not be reclaimed, suppressed, interacted with, or directly observed.

Should [redacted] occur, [redacted] protocols will be activated.

Establishing Questions:

- *DIVISION has rewritten your memories to remove all evidence of IV's existence. What fragmented memory resurfaces from time to time?*
- *How did IV almost convince you to leave behind DIVISION?*

Factions

The following is a list of Factions that you can introduce into the political milieu of your game of *Apocalypse Keys*. These Factions come with strange histories, compelling drives, and powerful moves to create forces that will influence the world of the Omens.

You can use these Factions to:

- Introduce the agenda and actions of a Faction into your Mystery
- Draw inspiration to create your own Factions

These Factions come with a set of Faces: NPCs that you can introduce as enigmatic characters. Any NPC from these Factions have access to their Faction moves, but you may tailor this to reflect their level of power and influence.

It is entirely possible that a Harbinger may be one of these NPCs, or an entire Faction—even a group of Factions—can be actively working with the Harbingers to herald the apocalypse. Should you introduce a Faction or Faction NPC with that intention, keep in mind that this ultimately depends on what your players decide when they **Unlock Doom's Door**.

It's quite possible for the opposite to happen! You may introduce a Faction that is fighting against the Harbingers, but the players may theorize that they have been secretly working to usher in the apocalypse all along. Remain creatively flexible and have fun!

Each Faction in this section comes with a set of ***establishing questions***. These are crafted to be asked of an Omen, to help tie the Faction intimately to one of the PCs. Ask at least one of them. If you ask both questions, point the second question to another PC.

The Unbroken Circle

Drive: Hunt down dangerous monsters and protect humanity.

Description: The Unbroken Circle is an ancient order of monster hunters, with several hunters descending from an unbroken lineage of merciless predators. The Unbroken Circle claims they only hunt monsters who are dangerous to humans, but dangerous is defined in very wide and reaching terms.

Each hunter bears sacred tattoos—carried across generations, each hunter adds their own exploits and triumphs in a secret language. The hunters are highly skilled at mounted combat, and each has a sacred connection to a supernatural mount—an expression of their soul.

Moves:

- Summon an ancient mount and ride into battle
- Hunt and harry prey marked by the Circle
- Weaken a monster with ancient rituals
- Reveal a secret that implicates monsters
- Recruit a human who bears potential

Faces:

- Jin-Ae Min, the executioner
- Dolores Santos, the sacred daughter
- Raven, the winged herald

Establishing Questions:

- *You had an intimate relationship with a hunter of the Unbroken Circle. Why are things different now?*
- *You worked with the Unbroken Circle to hunt down a truly dangerous monster. Why are you quick to trust most hunters now?*

The Black Pyramid

Drive: Protect humanity from accessing corrupting secrets.

Description: The Black Pyramid is an ancient structure that is all that remains of a shattered dimension. Those chosen by the Black Pyramid undergo a cruel and difficult ritual, and most don't survive the process. The few that live are marked to operate beyond the chains of fate and the laws of reality.

Members embody the will of the Black Pyramid and discard names and physical forms. They are shifting dreams, given nebulous substance. The Black Pyramid are obsessed with collecting, organizing, and categorizing the secrets of the world, but their primary function is to destroy all secrets that corrupt humanity. They see themselves as custodians of humanity, guiding mortals to walk the path of destiny.

Moves:

- Unleash minions marked by the powers of the Black Pyramid
- Enact a ritual that drastically changes the stakes
- Force chaos to bend to order through any means necessary
- Destroy dangerous information and warp reality
- Steal a secret and erase all evidence from this timeline

Faces:

- The Bleeding Eye, the reformed oracle
- Falling Waters, the guardian between worlds
- She of the Shattered Rain, the demon killer
- They of the Crimson Dawn, the newborn

Establishing Questions:

- *You rescued a human who was almost destroyed by the initiation rituals of the Black Pyramid. Why were your transgressions forgiven, and why are you now exalted by the Black Pyramid?*
- *You have been categorized as a corrupting secret, and a handler from the Black Pyramid was assigned to you. What is your relationship with the handler complex?*

The Wizards of Time

Drive: Shatter all false timelines until only the true timeline remains.

Description: The Wizards of Time are an ancient order from a people that existed on Earth before humanity came into being. The wizards are insectoid creatures, wearing elaborately jeweled masks over rotting cloaks.

The wizards serve one they call the Queen of Time—an immortal wizard who has mastered the magic of reforming her chitinous flesh to defy death and decay. She has one decree: to find all magical artifacts that can manipulate the flow of time and access other timelines.

The Queen is determined to find a home for her hive—a timeline where humanity never came into being.

Moves:

- Summon the hive from cocoons under the earth
- Use a magical artifact to shatter time
- Tear away mask and cloak to reveal a more dangerous form
- Retreat to safety and leave behind an exoskeleton
- Erase a single entity from the current timeline

Faces:

- Kozla, the brood mother
- Lee'kra, the moon ritualist
- Raktin, the grand vizier
- Gizrok, the ascendant wizard

Establishing Questions:

- *You were once dragged down to one of the hives hidden deep under the earth, and cocooned in their foul magic for a time. Which wizard helped you escape, and why?*
- *The wizards are determined to erase you from several timelines. What horrifying message did one of your time remnants give you?*

The Unavowed

Drive: To free all monsters from their chains.

Description: For as long as there have been humans who lusted for power, there have been monsters forced to serve such cruel masters. No one knows for sure who was the first to break their chains and gather the Unavowed, but the ragtag group of masterless monsters have operated in the shadows ever since.

Recently, the Unavowed have broken off into smaller Factions, as several monsters disagree on the best way to fight against the subjugation and oppression of monsters. Some members are willing to work with DIVISION, while others see the Omens as serving an organization that is ultimately dedicated to human interests.

Moves:

- Bind or destroy a dangerous human
- Protect a monster from harm
- Reveal a human weapon strengthened by powers of darkness
- Convince a monster to fight for their freedom
- Retreat to the shadows and fight another day

Faces:

- Ira, an aswang and arcane demolitionist
- Kagami, a spider-woman and new Faction leader
- Mandana, a half-jinn and establisher leader
- Ashes, a demon and spell breaker

Establishing Questions:

- *DIVISION once asked you to infiltrate the Unavowed. What Faction secret have you kept hidden from DIVISION?*
- *You worked with an Omen who left DIVISION to join the Unavowed. Why is your current relationship complicated?*

The Church of the Broken Crucifix

Drive: Serve monstrous communities and advocate for them.

Description: The Broken Crucifix was secretly established during Spanish colonial rule in the Philippines. All who serve the Broken Crucifix take their vows and become Sisters, regardless of gender and background.

Most Sisters are human and are sent to city areas with dense monster populations. A Sister serves many functions, caring for their monster communities, serving their best interests, and operating as a liaison for nearby humans.

Not many know that each Sister is trained in spell combat, holy weaponry, and binding rituals. Mother Superiors bear the Witch Gate, a living spell that protects and strengthens monsters against human attackers.

Moves:

- Reveal a holy weapon
- Bind a dangerous entity
- Heal a monster and strengthen them through spell
- Make a great sacrifice to protect what matters most
- Pray and receive an undeniable miracle

Faces:

- Lorenzo, spirit healer
- Gabriella, Mother Superior
- Carmen, combat trainer
- Emiliano, channeler of souls

Establishing Questions:

- *You helped establish a church for the Broken Crucifix in an unlikely place. Where is it and how were you honored for your help?*
- *You trained one of the few monsters who is a Sister of the Broken Crucifix. How did you heal their crisis of faith?*

The Beloved

Drive: To use the worship of humans to gain more power and prestige.

Description: Some monsters walk among us, their horror breathing just under pretty flesh. Some wear the skin of humanity well and walk in silvery shadow like gods awaiting worship. Red painted lips hiding the sharpest teeth, luxurious clothing covering demonic sigils, the mesmerizing movement of a predator coming close to its prey.

They are the Beloved, spoken only in whispers, gathering power, prestige, and riches over the centuries. They have existed in one form or another for millennia, their monstrous power in ancient times granting them the crown of divinity that humans longed to worship. Now they have found new ways to be loved above all else, though they linger in the shadows or hide in plain sight.

Many of the Beloved create secret territories in underground clubs and exclusive speakeasies. Others display their glory and beauty under blistering stage lights, using the guise of celebrity and performance. Worship comes in many forms, and they would have it all.

Moves:

- Entrance and possess with romance and beauty
- Destroy the facade to reveal the true monster beneath
- Release a drove of thralls and tear apart the opposition
- Reveal an ancient truth to heart breaking effect
- Dazzle and distract before vanishing

Faces:

- Ishaan, the soul vendor
- Zada, the Red Conqueror
- Lestat, the First Loved
- Vincenza, idol and reality TV star

Establishing Questions:

- *You destroyed one of the Beloved. Who among the Beloved owes you a favor for this and who seeks to destroy you in turn?*
- *One of the Beloved defected to DIVISION. What were the terms of their betrayal and how were you involved?*

The Council of Prayers

Drive: To break the world's shell and bring forth the new gods.

Description: All things die, even gods. For many gods, their faithful continue to worship them long after they are gone. These prayers—shivering and desperate, searching in the dark—feed on what remains of these dead gods.

Over time, these prayers gained sentience, desire, hope, and a terrible understanding. The world and the reality we inhabit is but a shell, one that must be broken in order to birth paradise and a new age of gods.

The Council of Prayers search the world for others like them—shards of gods impaled in the heart of monsters. Should the Council collect enough shards and gather enough prayers, it will be enough to break this false world and enter paradise.

Moves:

- Bend reality through desperate prayers
- Draw strength from stolen spell-tech
- Wield the power of a shattered god
- Find a shard of a god in a monster
- Hijack the prayer of an innocent and escape

Faces:

- The Rat Prophet, the keeper of prayers
- The Dawn's Promise, the first god fragment
- The Sapphire-Eyed, the spell-tech architect
- The Rose Bride, the first god's betrothed

Establishing Questions:

- *You once held within your heart the shard of a god. Why did you give it to the Council of Prayers? Who did the shard become?*
- *The Council of Prayers stole valuable spell-tech from DIVISION. How does it emulate one of your powers of darkness?*

The Living Temple of Lahtym

Drive: To protect the roots of Lahtym and deliver her justice.

Description: Long ago, the temple of Lahtym—goddess of justice and protection—was a beacon of hope. Her sentinels served her and the faithful, embodying her justice and protecting the vulnerable. The forest of Lahtym was strong and bountiful, offering shelter and peace.

Tragedy struck and Lahtym was fatally wounded by a forgotten god. DIVISION's records suggest that Lahtym used the last of her strength to curse the god and erase their memory from their worshippers.

As Lahtym died in the arms of Abelas—her most devout sentinel—her tears formed the well of sorrows. DIVISION has conflicting reports on the form the well takes, but somehow the sentinels are able to transport it. The sentinels are all that remain of Lahtym's wisdom, and they see themselves as her Living Temple. They travel the world, seeking out injustice.

Centuries have passed and more sentinels are forced to slumber—only able to awaken rarely in order to enforce Lahtym's justice. They only force themselves to wake when a grave injustice occurs, endangering many. But one day soon, the sentinels will slumber and never awaken again.

Moves:

- Awaken the slumbering sentinels
- Enforce Lahtym's justice and destroy the unjust
- Drink what remains from the water of wisdom and see all
- Bind a monster to the desire of Lahtym
- Spread the roots of Lahtym and travel through them

Faces:

- Ameridan, the commander of the seekers and despair of Lahtym
- Abelas, the leader of the sentinels and sorrow of Lahtym
- Nyssa, spellblade and hope of Lahtym
- Shaevra, dreamwalker and cruelty of Lahtym

Establishing Questions:

- *You once met the goddess Lahtym herself. What do you know about her that you can never tell her faithful sentinels?*
- *You once fought alongside the sentinels of Lahtym. Who among them did you develop complicated feelings for? Why have they resisted the call of slumber for you?*

The Quantum Breachers

Drive: To honor an unknown force in order to change history for the better and find the way back to their own time.

Description: The Quantum Breachers come from a far future—scientists and researchers on the verge of unlocking the secrets of time travel. Test #4265 was catastrophic, resulting in time spiraling out into fractals. The Breachers learned that a prior apocalyptic-level threat had left cracks in time, making time travel without dire consequences impossible.

The Quantum Breachers can no longer safely access their time, locked away as it is behind a shatter point. Every attempt to return to their time has resulted in destroying the future.

The Quantum Breachers travel from one crack in time to another, studying anomalies in time and setting them right through any means necessary. And so, the Quantum Breachers find themselves leaping from time to time, striving to put right what went wrong. Each time hoping that their next leap will be the breach that leads them home.

Moves:

- Create an opportunity with highly advanced tech
- Temporarily change the laws of time and space
- Replace someone with a version of them from another time
- Reveal what went wrong in this timeline
- Breach through time and leave behind echoes

Faces:

- Beckett, an AI formed from a dead quantum breacher
- Al, project observer
- Seo-Jun, Chief Scientist
- Shiver, a time echo

Establishing Questions:

- *You were once displaced in time by the Quantum Breachers. Why do you suspect that you're still not in the right time?*
- *The Quantum Breachers went back in time to change a terrible thing you did. Who among the Breachers are you most grateful to?*

The Unseen

Drive: To protect the realm of dreams from an invading force.

Description: The Unseen are a people whose name and origins are lost to time. DIVISION records show evidence that most of the Unseen were lost to a prior apocalyptic threat. To survive, they used their psychic abilities to escape into the realm of dreams.

The Unseen exist in a liminal space, claiming they have access to the collective unconsciousness and can manipulate it. Why the Unseen would control the collective unconsciousness—and to what end—remains a mystery.

DIVISION suspects that the Unseen are at war with an unknown force. The collateral damage of this war is the burnt husks of humans and monsters, and what little remains of their psychic energies shows the remains of a battlefield. DIVISION specialists theorize that soon the war will spill into the dreams of cities, galaxies, and gods.

Moves:

- Blur the boundaries between dream and waking
- Create a power of darkness based on a dream
- Trap someone in their perfect dream
- Use the world of dreams to show the truth
- Escape into a dream and wake up somewhere else

Faces:

- Call On the Wind, a dying leader
- Echo In the Dark, a nightmare tamer
- Tear On Petal, a child of dreams
- Light On Blade, a dream assassin

Establishing Questions:

- *You met one of the Unseen on a mission long ago. Why did you allow a Harbinger to take a door of ancient power to protect the Unseen?*
- *One of your dreams shelters a runaway Unseen. Who are they and why won't you tell DIVISION about them?*

Craft Your Own Apocalypse

The best kind of apocalypses are the ones of our own making. When you're called to craft your own Mystery, Harbinger, or Faction, this chapter will guide you through the process.

Creating Your Own Mysteries

Apocalypse Keys is a game where the supernatural and danger lurk around every corner, where reality breaks down to reveal how fragile the world truly is. Writing your own Mystery is a creative and exciting way to truly make this game your own!

Explore horrifying wonders or introduce sinister truths in the world you're familiar with. Center your own folklore and reinvent your local monsters to reveal their innate humanity. Rewrite the urban myths you grew up with and see what thrilling secrets your players discover.

Create the following to craft your own Mystery, but feel free to skip around as you like. For example, you may want to start with the Doomsday Clock and Facets before creating anything else.

1. Complexity of the Mystery
2. Time and Place
3. Message from DIVISION
4. Description
5. Beginning the Mystery
6. Establishing Questions
7. Contact
8. People of Interest
9. Locations of Interest
10. Keys of the Apocalypse
11. Facets of the Mystery
12. The Doomsday Clock
13. Content Warning

Complexity

Mysteries have a complexity of 4, 6, 8, 10, or 12.

How long it takes to solve a Mystery depends on several factors—how proactive the players are and how aggressively the Keeper ticks the Doomsday clock, among other things.

It takes about 2-3 sessions to solve a complexity 4 Mystery. Mysteries with a complexity of 6-8 take 4-8 sessions to resolve. Mysteries of a larger scale, a complexity of 10-12, will take 6-10 sessions to resolve. The more complex a Mystery, the more sessions it will take to **Unlock Doom's Door** or fill the Doomsday Clock.

Most players aim to roll +2 or a +3 when they **Unlock Doom's Door**, so keep that in mind when writing your Mystery. This means that when facing a complexity 4 Mystery, players aim to grasp 6-7 Keys before **Unlocking Doom's Door**.

Time and Place

Each Mystery has a starting point, or a general area where the Mystery takes place. It's unlikely the Omens will leave this area for very long.

This can be a place that exists in the real world—such as Manila in the Philippines or in the suburbs of California in America. Players always enjoy visiting new places in the context of a game, or exploring an alternative reality of the hometown they know where the supernatural exists. If you write about a place you're familiar with, this may help you as the Keeper when you're improvising and facilitating the session.

The Mystery could take place in an entirely surreal and bizarre location, such as a living Parasitic Library attached to DIVISION, or the dreamscape of a dying god.

The Mystery might take place in an eerie blend of the two. A university your players are familiar with—but an abandoned building has become the hunting ground of something supernatural and terrifying. A museum that displays stolen artifacts from vulnerable cultures is now the site of a complex ritual to summon something from beyond the veil.

You are encouraged to write about a place you are familiar with (if the Mystery takes place in the real world), or create a place that is immediately evocative of the supernatural. *Apocalypse Keys* nominally takes place in the present—20XX—but if you'd like to go for a period piece or something else, go for it!

Contact

Name and pronouns for the contact go here. More information about the Mystery's contact can be found later in this chapter on page 331.

Message from DIVISION

This is a direct message from DIVISION to the PCs. The PCs are always referred to as OMEN-CLASS MONSTERS. The message gives a brief overview of the Mystery and its instigating event, what the Omens are expected to do, lists the contact, and a reminder that they must find the ancient Door of Power and stop the Harbinger.

OMEN-CLASS MONSTERS, initial evidence suggests a Door of Power may be present in Manila, Philippines. Investigate the murders of the declining manananggal population. Former agent Sister Theresa of the Broken Crucifix has requested assistance, observation, and direct action. HARBINGER-CLASS MONSTER may be behind the murders or encouraging violence and chaos from the shadows. Find the DOOR OF POWER and contain it before the Harbinger claims ASCENSION.

Description

The description covers the general information everyone knows about the place, the premise of the Mystery, and/or the instigating event. As the Keeper, if you're not sure about what to do or where to go in a Mystery, this is what you re-read to inspire you or remind you of the core of the Mystery.

The first sentence of each paragraph is bolded and should be enough to cover the essential points of the Mystery—The Manananggal Murders summarizes everything known about the Manananggal, The Missing Link describes essential events across the timeline, The Oldest House establishes the past and present of the Oldest House.

Beginning the Mystery

This helps you transition from DIVISION to the Mystery itself and provides the first glimpse of our contact. This should flow like the establishing shot of a film or the evocative first scene of a TV episode.

Establishing Questions

The establishing questions of a Mystery connect the contact and/or Mystery to one or more of the PCs. These questions are crafted to give the players a chance to shift the narrative of the Mystery into new directions.

There are always two establishing questions. The first question ties one of the PCs to the contact—establishing trust, history, connection, making the contact feel like a real person, etc. The second question ties one of the PCs to the history of the place, events, a group of NPCs, or the instigating event behind the Mystery. In general, you are encouraged to have the second question tied to a group of NPCs if possible.

> **Sister Theresa was once a human DIVISION agent, but she left the agency claiming to have found God.** *You know this is not true. Why did she really come back to the Philippines? Why are the two of you still close?*
>
> **One of you was once here years—if not decades—ago.** *How have things changed for the worse in recent years? Which of the manananggal is waiting for you, eager for a reunion?*

Contact

The contact is always the NPC that has the most detail, since the Omens are guaranteed to interact with them. The first sentence is a brief description for you to quickly refer to in play.

The contact section sets up how the Omens first interact with the contact, and also establishes a starting location.

This section also includes what the contact knows about the Mystery, and what information they can share with the Omens.

People of Interest

You are encouraged to have more than half of your POI be monsters. Many of the themes of *Apocalypse Keys* will point towards PCs interacting with other monsters. The game works best when the Omens interact with several types of monsters. From everyday folk who are doing their best to survive in the world that doesn't care for them, to those who have power and ambition on the scale of the fearsome Harbingers.

When you create the POI, remember to leave room for who they may become as the Mystery unfolds. Some of the POI may become helpful NPCs, unwittingly serve the Harbinger, or secretly be the Harbinger all along!

Even as the writer of the Mystery, this truth is ultimately not up to you. The POI only need to be interesting characters that inspire the players and their theories. When you create the POI, only describe simple motivations or desires. Each POI should have enough narrative space for things to shift in play.

The format for each POI description is:

NAME *(pronouns)*

Position/background/role/important detail

Description

QUOTE: *Quote*

The first sentence of the POI is bolded, and is always a brief description that you can refer to when describing the character and roleplaying them.

The bulk of the POI description is 1-2 short paragraphs about who they are, their connection to an aspect of the Mystery, and any other important details. Try to not make them too complex. It will be difficult for you to remember everything and you want to give them room to grow organically in the scene and narrative.

A POI always has something interesting for the PCs to latch onto immediately and pique their interest. For example, Sister Dax serves the Church of the Broken Crucifix and is trying to prove themselves to Sister Theresa, Kaiya Rosario has several clones, and the Hanged Man thinks this is part of the application process to become a monstrous agent. A sparking detail will help players remember the POI and make them distinct in their minds.

Each POI description ends with a quote—a starting point for when the PCs interact with the NPC. A good quote establishes an aspect of the NPC's personality, what's interesting about them, or how they feel about the Mystery. Sister Dax is painfully by-the-book, Kaiya is personable and quickly establishes the existence of their clones, the Hanged Man is starstruck by the Omens.

A Mystery is best served by having about 6-8 POI, though you may have more if you want a Mystery to feature a complex social web of characters. The PCs will only get really attached to a few of those, and players can remember only so many NPCs. The Omens may not even meet every POI!

SISTER DAX *(he/they)*

A nun of the Church of the Broken Crucifix. Perpetually tired. Has difficulty expressing positive emotions. Painfully clean nun habit. Pale. Young and eager to prove himself. Sister Dax was sent here when the Church found out about the murders. Like the other men of the Broken Crucifix, he assumes the title of "Sister" as he fulfills his duty. He is dedicated and wants to be useful.

He has a revolver strapped to his thigh and a holy sword hidden under their robes. They have a nervous habit of referring to the Sister's Manual, which is disguised as a bible. Sister Theresa worries about Sister Dax often, saying that they are "By the Bible" and need to "lighten up a little."

QUOTE: *In section three, paragraph six of the Protector Code, it is our holy duty to serve the community and maintain peace. I believe the social scripting in Appendix E should work nicely. Admittedly, I have not had much practice in its implementation.*

Locations

Create 4-6 locations for your Mystery. Unlike POI, keep these as brief as possible: 1-2 sentences and one interesting question to ask an Omen. This answer will inspire you and the players, while creating immediate connections and creative investment.

Omens won't get to most of the locations and may not spend much time in them. A Mystery where the physical space or exploration are central themes may have 7-9 locations, such as the Oldest House. A Mystery with a complexity of 10-12 should have about 10 locations, since it will take several sessions to **Unlock Doom's Door**.

The Abandoned Apartment

There is one apartment that remains empty. No one will move in. What here makes your skin crawl, but invites you to come closer?

Keys of the Apocalypse

Create 20-25 Keys for the Mystery. Remember that the Keys start out mundane and relatively straight forward—though still evocative—and get weirder and more horrifying towards the end of the list. This helps you tailor the weirdness and horror of the Mystery.

For most Mysteries, Omens will only uncover a number of Keys equal to four plus the Mystery's complexity. That means the narrative will go in wildly different directions depending on the Keys you offer during the Mystery. This is in addition to the varying context of each Key and how the PCs choose to connect it to a Facet when they **Unlock Doom's Door**. With that in mind, create Keys that encourage different directions, interpretations, and possibilities.

A part of the Key is bolded—preferably the first few words—to help you when you are skimming through the list and choosing a Key.

Keep the descriptions brief, unless you're introducing a unique item or artifact. Such Keys should be kept to a minimum. Provide narrative room for contextualizing the Key for a Mystery.

Facets

Facets are what players will connect the different Keys to in order to **Unlock Doom's Door**.

Each Mystery starts with the following Facets: *The Harbinger* and *The Door of Power*. Provide 2-4 more Facets for the Mystery that align with the themes and central aspects of the Mystery.

The Facets help players remember what to focus on as they investigate the Mystery and make sense of the Keys. The higher the complexity of the Mystery, the more Facets you create.

For example, in the Manananggal Murders, an important aspect are the victims, so one of the Facets is *Murder Victims*. In the Missing Link, Luna and her Halimaw are essential to the Mystery, so one of the Facets is *The Possession of Luna Nakahara and Hydra Omicron*.

Facets shouldn't be too detailed—players are encouraged to interpret each Facet as the Mystery unfolds. For example, the same Facet—*Murder Victims*—can be interpreted as *how were the Murder Victims chosen or what ritual are the deaths fueling* when the players are connecting Keys.

Murder Victims
The Decline of the Manananggal
The Harbinger
The Door of Power

The Doomsday Clock

The Doomsday Clock has the same number of ticks as the complexity of the Mystery. A Mystery with a complexity of 6 will have a Doomsday Clock with 6 ticks.

There are four types of ticks on the Doomsday Clock: *Moments, Intrigue, Events*, and *The Door Opens*. The last tick on the Doomsday Clock is always *The Door Opens*.

- **Moments:** These are short and evocative moments. Use them as they are to describe disturbing signs of the coming apocalypse and provide opportunities to **Grasp Keys**. You should be able to build on these to create actual challenges or confrontations.
- **Intrigue:** A glimpse at what the Harbinger is up to—their schemes and their desires. This should feel like a brief but intriguing scene in a film or TV episode.
- **Events:** These are direct events that the Omens must deal with, in one way or another. There are fewer of these per Doomsday Clock, since these will be more difficult to contextualize on the fly. An event can be a confrontation of some kind, a direct challenge, or obstacle to the Omens.
- **The Door Opens:** The last tick on the Doomsday Clock always details what happens if the Omens aren't able to **Unlock Doom's Door** before the Harbinger claims the ancient Door of Power and ascends. This is essentially the worst-case scenario. This serves as inspiration to create a truly catastrophic event that the Omens will have to face.

When writing up the Doomsday Clock, keep each tick brief. When you facilitate the Mystery, you will likely recontextualize aspects of the tick, so make it easy to do so. Each tick serves as inspiration for you, reminding you that the Harbinger's plans are moving along, and that time is of the essence.

Each tick comes with 1-2 questions to help you contextualize it. This may be directly related to the tick, or it may create a new layer of nuance.

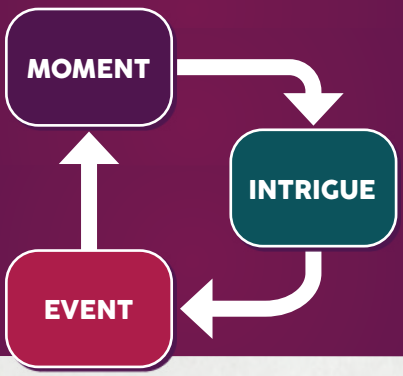
The last question for The Door Opens is always "What power or wisdom does the Harbinger take from beyond the door?" Because if the PCs haven't **Unlocked Doom's Door** successfully, as the Keeper you now decide what's behind the door and how it affects the Harbinger.

INTRIGUE

From beneath the veil are too many mouths, too many hands, too many wings. A symphony of discordant voices growls a forbidden prayer. A meek voice in the corner asks, "My liege, is this truly what you want?"

- *Who doubts the plans of the Harbinger?*
- *How will the Omens learn that a ritual has begun?*

The ticks of the Doomsday Clock follow this pattern, which repeats until the last tick of the Door Opens.



Content Warning

The last, but essential, factor to consider are the Content Warnings of your Mystery. This section details any potentially difficult subject matter that players should be aware of. Review your Mystery a few times and carefully consider the themes and content. Refer to your group's Green, Red, and Yellow (page 13) list, or similar safety tool, and make any changes needed.

Creating Harbingers and Antagonists

Creating a Harbinger or other antagonists for the PCs is an opportunity to support the themes, tone, and story you want to focus on for your game.

Harbingers are actively working towards finding the ancient Doors of Power, accessing untold power, and ushering in the apocalypse. They are important in the fiction, and require simple steps and some care to create.

Sometimes, a character may simply be an antagonist, a puppet of the Harbingers, or something similar. If someone simply opposes the PCs, or if an NPC becomes antagonistic, you may follow the same rules here to create an antagonist.

When creating a Harbinger or antagonist, it's important to answer three questions:

- **DRIVE:** Why do they want to usher in the apocalypse? In the case of antagonists—why are they opposed to the PCs?
- **CONDITIONS:** How much can they endure?
- **MOVES:** How do they instill fear and terror?

Leave a lot open for interpretation. Remember that your players bring a lot to the game when they interact with the Harbingers. Many playbook moves give the players the ability to declare connections and truths about the Harbingers, so leave some creative space for that to play out. You only need a core concept to bring the Harbinger into play.

Drives

A drive will help you decide how a Harbinger or antagonist will react to a PC, what they will do off-screen, and how they will change their goals to compensate for the actions of DIVISION. A drive should humanize the Harbingers or antagonists as much as possible, and provide a starting point to add depth and nuance. Rather than "to rule the world," a Harbinger could hope to, "punish the Reyes family for what their ancestors did to my people."

A few examples of Drives include:

- To bring my love back from the dead
- To punish the world for destroying my family
- To take back what was stolen from me
- To create a new world that will accept me
- To seize the power to change things
- To serve at the pleasure of my lover
- To fulfill a prophecy forced upon me
- To unleash the fury of the wronged
- To find the way back home
- To protect the weak

Conditions

Like the PCs, Harbingers and antagonists possess a number of Conditions. The more Conditions they have, the more punishment they can take, and the more deadly they will be in turn. Like the PCs, they have their own unique set of Conditions. Create a palette of emotions that will support the drives and concept of the Harbinger or antagonist.

Choose how many Conditions they will have, from one to five. Give each Condition a name that reflects one of the emotions or desperations that they might descend into, like ***spiteful*** or ***existential torment***.

When choosing the number of Conditions, consider the following guide:

- **1 Condition:** a strong lackey or servant
- **2 Conditions:** a formidable lieutenant or leader
- **3 Conditions:** a terrifying creature twisted by the apocalypse
- **4 Conditions:** a mastermind, a dangerous and destructive creature, a being of prophecy
- **5 Conditions:** a scion of the apocalypse, a cosmic nemesis of one of the PCs, an awakening god

Dangerous Harbingers and antagonists will immediately react when a PC forces them to mark a Condition. You may use one of the moves you created for them, one of the Keeper moves, or embody the Condition they just marked.

Most Harbingers and antagonists will rarely fight to the death or until they are incapacitated. Harbingers in particular have their plans and are determined to see them through.

When a Harbinger finds themselves overpowered, they will do everything they can to turn the tables—offering dark bargains, revealing secrets that pit the PCs against each other, or vanishing into the shadows. But even if a Harbinger is killed or destroyed, an aspect of them is likely to return in one form or another.

Also consider that a PC should not have to force a Harbinger or antagonist to mark all their Conditions in order to defeat them. They may be convinced through charm or wit, they may be willing to bargain, or the PCs may outsmart them in some way. Reward your players for creative thinking and follow the fiction, and don't drag out confrontations longer than what is fun or necessary.

Moves

The final step is to create 3-5 moves. Make them descriptive and interesting. They should also significantly change the fiction or flow of the story.

The moves of a Harbinger or antagonist are not as complex as that of a PC, and you don't need to roll for them. They look more like Keeper moves, just tailor made to bring the Harbinger or antagonist to life and give them unique qualities.

A Harbinger or antagonist triggers a move in response to a PC going too far or falling short, to shift the stakes of the scene, or when it makes sense in the fiction. A Harbinger or antagonist may also trigger their moves when they aren't directly confronting the PCs—events may happen off-screen.

A few examples of moves include:

- Summon a demon horde
- Create a portal through space and time
- Bleed chaos magic everywhere
- Reveal a dark secret
- Transform the faithful into monstrous forms
- Call up a telekinetic storm
- Summon a massive swarm of vermin
- Activate the soulspark machine
- Enact a ritual to wake an Old God

The last session ended in the middle of a Mystery. The Keeper has a chance to prepare a possible Harbinger. These details could change, depending on what happens when the PCs **Unlock Doom's Door**, *but throwing a contender into the mix sounds fun.*

Opal hasn't had the spotlight for a while, so the Keeper creates a Harbinger related to their origin—a Harbinger who was also a fae prisoner in a laboratory.

The Keeper adds the drive, ***"To rebirth the magic of the fae by any means necessary."*** *She doesn't know what that means yet, but she will play to find out. She thinks the fae was a herald, a position of power in the fae world. She'll ask Olivia about the powers and responsibilities of heralds later.*

The fae creature should be formidable—they were freed from the laboratory by the Harbingers, and they blame Opal for leaving them to a terrible fate. The Fae herald is **desperate, angry,** *and* **driven**. *That's three Conditions, a terrifying creature twisted by the apocalypse sounds about right.*

The Keeper can drop a Condition or add another during play, depending on the flow of the Mystery. It might make sense for them to just be a lieutenant, or maybe the mastermind behind the entire Mystery. The Keeper notes that she'll drop the Condition **driven** *if needed, and if she'll add another, it will be* **lovelorn**. *She may reveal that the fae herald is in love with someone... someone Opal knows, or maybe even Opal!*

The Keeper considers the Fae herald's moves. They were experimented on, so perhaps like Opal, their powers were corrupted. She reflects Opal's **power absorption**, *a side effect of the experiments. The Keeper chooses the move* ***"Absorb and corrupt the innate magic in all things."***

The Keeper writes down two more moves, ***"Overwhelm hearts with fear and rage"*** *and* ***"Reveal a dark secret."*** *The first is a result of the experiments—the fae power of charm made sinister. The second sounds fun—the herald could reveal secrets about Opal, the laboratory, why they were experimented on, the nature of fae magic, or whatever is exciting in the moment of play.*

The Keeper leaves three moves for now. She can add another one based on what Olivia describes heralds to be, or how the Mystery unfolds.

Later, during the session, an NPC takes an antagonistic position against the agents. Mistress Glib is a respected elder of the Bottled Spirits community, a group of magical beings who once granted wishes for humans and were discarded when their magic weakened. She won't cooperate with DIVISION, since the organization has a bad reputation with magical beings.

Things escalate, and Tiana chooses to **Unleash the Dark**. *Mistress Glib is a powerful monster and unwilling to do what Tiana wants, so the move is definitely triggered.*

The Keeper needs a drive, Conditions, and moves for Mistress Glib. While the player is describing their actions and rolling dice, the Keeper quickly settles on the most important details.

Mistress Glib's drive is ***"To ensure the safety of the Bottle Spirits."*** *She's a leader of her community, with two Conditions—***defensive** *and* **vicious***—emotions she needs to survive in the world. The two moves she creates are* ***"Bleed chaos magic everywhere"*** *and* ***"Summon other Bottle Spirits to hold back an enemy."*** *This is enough to play out* **Unleash the Dark** *and see what happens next!*

Creating Factions

Factions deepen the world and create connections between the Omens, DIVISION, and Harbingers. When you're ready to create a map of intrigue, create a Faction or two or three…

Creating a Faction is similar to creating a Harbinger or an antagonist. Consider the following questions to guide your creativity:

- **Drive:** What guides the actions of the Faction? How does this reflect DIVISION's assessment of the Faction?
- **Description:** How do they interact with the public or the world? What is their history?
- **Moves:** What is the nature of their power and influence?
- **Faces:** Who embodies the drive of the Faction and reflects its will?
- **Establishing Questions:** How are the Omens entangled with the group?

Apocalypse, Abbreviated

Apocalypse Keys is best played across several sessions, as many of the arcs and mechanics support narrative culmination and emotional catharsis. However, you may want to run a single session of the game, as a special event or a way for your players to feel out if they'd like to play more.

This chapter offers a Mystery, *The First Door* (page 344), created specifically for a single session. Four pre-created Omens (page 355) are included to make it easy for players to jump into the game.

The pre-created Omens are ready to go, except for one final step. Once players choose which Omen they'd like to play, have everyone introduce their characters and generate Bonds.

Here are some general tips for running Apocalypse Keys in a single session.

Play Hard and Relentless

With only a single session of play, there is no holding back. Make the threat of the apocalypse feel real and suffocating—antagonists and Harbingers should hit hard and often. Offer only brief moments of respite before pushing the narrative forward.

Be very clear with what is expected of the Omens. They're here to solve a Mystery, and they can only do this by uncovering Keys and pushing to **Unlock Doom's Door**. Spell this out at the start of the session to set expectations. Let them know that you'll be confronting them with threats and hard choices to keep up the pace, so the players can do their part to support that.

Center Messy Emotions

Introduce the people of interest for the players to interact with, the POI of *The First Door* have been written to induce strong emotional responses from the Omens.

Remind the players they can **Reveal Their Heart** to each other or to an NPC anytime they choose to.

Players can only pick up Darkness Tokens when they engage with the emotional and narrative themes of their playbook, remind them of this every so often.

Leave Thrilling Questions Unanswered

Even if the Omens successfully **Unlock Doom's Door** and solve the Mystery, many questions will remain unanswered. Play up this aspect of the Mystery, and resist the urge to tie everything neatly into a bow.

You'll have enough to focus on as you facilitate a single session, and leaving such questions hanging in the air will embody the themes of *Apocalypse Keys*. You may even be able to continue playing with the same group, and connect those unsolved questions to the next Mystery!

The First Door

Complexity: 2
Location: DIVISION BASE 0001 in [redacted]
Date: September, Equinox
Contact: Angel Gorimel (they/them)

OMEN-CLASS MONSTERS, monstrous agent trainer VEX and new recruit MR. KNOCK have both gone missing. Our psychics have deciphered a distress signal from decommissioned DIVISION BASE 0001, where the First Door is secured under maximum security protocols. These security measures have been compromised, and are now ineffective against HARBINGER-CLASS monsters. Find VEX and MR. KNOCK. If either, or both, have succumbed to the Harbinger within them, you have direct orders to eliminate them. Find the DOOR OF POWER and contain it before the Harbinger claims ASCENSION.

CONTENT WARNING: *Body horror, cruel experimentation, cult behavior, evidence of mental illness from trauma.*

Description

DIVISION has existed, in one form or another, for hundreds of years. The world has always existed on the very edge of apocalypse, the smallest light in an endless dark. For as long as there have been monsters, humanity has leashed them to secrecy and service, to hold back the Harbingers and their dreams of destruction.

DIVISION has had many names, faces, and countless incarnations. DIVISION has been destroyed and reborn across sacred rituals, secret societies, and top secret government agencies. Even when this incarnation of DIVISION ceases to exist, it will resurface in another place and time. As long as there is a world to protect and an apocalypse to hold back.

Vex is an Omen that has served DIVISION for a long time. Vex is the child of the kraken, and has led other Omens in unlocking and containing several ancient Doors of Power. After losing dozens of recruits to the Harbingers, Vex retired from active field duty and became a trainer. For decades, Vex worked with recruits to give them every possible edge, every hope for survival. The hunger of the apocalypse is endless, and the Harbingers are relentless. DIVISION continues to lose monstrous agents—many of them becoming Harbingers in the process—but Vex is determined to make each loss mean something. Anything.

A few weeks ago, DIVISION began the Ascension Project. A highly experimental process meant to strengthen Omen recruits to levels never before recorded. Rumors persist that DIVISION is extracting power from ancient Doors that remain in the organization's possession, and grafting the unstable and highly volatile power to the new recruits. There has been no proof that DIVISION is making use of such dangerous methods, but they have a reputation for pushing boundaries.

Bella is the star recruit of the program, undeniable evidence that the Ascension Project is viable. Before recruitment, Bella's power levels were measured to be 3000% lower than the minimum to be classified as an Omen. Bella was haunted by a monster under the bed as a child, the supernatural entity only known as Michael. Bella and Michael formed a strange and symbiotic relationship, and both volunteered to take part in the Ascension Project. As a result of the program, both Bella and Michael infused into one being, their powers growing exponentially. Together, they outclass most active monstrous agents of DIVISION. Their combined being is now known as Mr. Knock.

Three days ago, an altercation between Vex and Mr. Knock occurred. Several eyewitnesses and security footage show the two shouting at each other before the confrontation became physically violent. After tearing down several walls and destroying DIVISION property across five floors, Vex forcibly escorted Mr. Knock off the premises. When DIVISION personnel attempted to intervene, Vex used his full abilities as a kraken to escape. DIVISION was unable to reacquire the location of either Vex or Mr. Knock.

Today, a distress beacon was activated in DIVISION BASE 0001. The base was once the central headquarters of DIVISION—decommissioned decades ago. The distress beacon's psychic-monitors are outdated and barely functioning, but several of DIVISION's psychics confirm the data. The security protocols have been compromised. Vex and Mr. Knock are both in DIVISION BASE 0001.

The only thing you know about DIVISION BASE 0001 is this: the First Door is locked away deep within the maze of its corridors and failed experiments. Moving the ancient Door of Power was deemed far too dangerous, and instead maximum security lockdowns were enacted. With this breach in security, there is nothing left to hold back a Harbinger.

There are no records of what the First Door actually is. All digital information has been deleted, and no physical records remain. Any information about the First Door has been scrubbed from DIVISION's records.

Beginning the Mystery

The Omens have been flown directly to DIVISION BASE 0001. A prior apocalyptic threat compromised specific aspects of reality, and reaching the decommissioned base takes incredible resources. DIVISION makes use of approved portal activations, and finely tuned spell-tech machinery is required to make sure the agents do not overshoot the target.

The entrance to the base is massive, with huge doors made of layers of bespelled metal standing three stories high. The doors are torn wide open and a path of destruction leads into the abandoned headquarters.

Standing in the snow with their long white hair tied back in a ponytail is a DIVISION agent, Angel Gorimel. The angel throws a dying cigarette onto the concrete, crushing it under the heel of an expensive shoe.

Ask each one to a different PC:

- **You and Angel Gorimel were partners once.** Whenever anyone asks them how they fell from heaven, they offer a different story each time. Why did Angel Gorimel tell you the truth? Why won't you tell anyone else?
- **You were here at DIVISION BASE 0001 when an apocalyptic threat forced you all to abandon it.** Who did you leave behind? Why do you suspect they may still be alive?

Contact: Angel Gorimel *(they/them)*

Long white hair, glasses, a tailored suit, an unnatural smile that holds an unlit cigarette. Angel Gorimel is an ageless creature whose folded wings are taller than most monsters. As soon as the Omens appear, Gorimel waves them in, both determination and fear clear on their face. They immediately contact DIVISION to inform them that the operation is underway.

If asked, Angel Gorimel tells the Omens what they know. But the abandoned base is dangerous, and the angel will only have so much time to speak before the Howlers appear.

- **Vex is a tough, but fair trainer who fiercely loves her recruits, and took every loss personally.** She could never accept the high mortality rates of DIVISION.
- **Vex believed the Ascension Project was unsafe,** but she had no actual proof.
- **Mr. Knock worked hard to succeed in every measurable way.** The recruit followed DIVISION's orders to the letter, and took every risk to prove their loyalty.
- **Gorimel doesn't believe Vex or Mr. Knock has turned into a Harbinger**, not willingly at least.
- **The angel leads the Omens through the twisted corridors, carefully avoiding rotting structures and entire sections that have fallen away to reveal the labyrinth of caves below.** The wind howls through sections of the base, and a permanent chill permeates everything.
- **The howling wind soon becomes twisted, and a single keening wail overwhelms the Omens.** Each Omen can feel the sound tear through them, leaving behind burning after images of caves, tunnels, and the horrifying creatures tearing each other apart in the depths.

Dozens of Howlers fall from the ceiling—several of them descend upon Angel Gorimel to tear them apart. If the Omens don't do anything, the angel will suffer severe—if not lethal—wounds.

Howlers

Drive: To be free of the pain that tears them apart, and inflict that pain on others.

As a group the Howlers have the following Conditions:

☐ Raging ☐ Sorrowful

Moves:

- Slash and rake with claw and teeth
- Envelop a victim and rewrite their flesh and bone
- In time come back from death, by decree of the First Door

Description: The Howlers are DIVISION personnel and agents who were abandoned years ago when DIVISION BASE 0001 was shut down. They possess tattered clothes, haunted flesh, and howling screams, with extra limbs and eyes and teeth.

The presence of the First Door has corrupted the Howlers over the decades, rewriting the reality that ties them to this plane of existence. This created indescribable and unending pain.

Howlers cannot be truly destroyed—they have already tried doing that to each other and themselves. Instead, after some time, the First Door will reform them in even more painful ways.

Establishing Questions:

- *You recognize one of the Howlers. Who were they?*
- *One of the Howlers wields a version of your powers of darkness. How did DIVISION acquire your power and why has it never been successfully grafted onto another being?*

People of Interest

THE PROFESSOR *(she/her)*

DIVISION personnel, presumed dead. Wears goggles with dozens of colorful lenses that move on their own. Notes, reminders, and discoveries haphazardly tattooed onto her olive skin.

The Professor has somehow survived all these years, and even a casual inspection will show how the First Door has infected her. The Professor leaves behind brightly colored after images of herself in her wake, but each one looks slightly different because they come from different realities. She talks to herself and constantly writes down notes on her skin. Later, she'll tattoo these notes onto herself to make sure she won't forget anything important.

To cope with the years of solitude and perpetual threat to her life from the Howlers, the Professor has become obsessed with taking care of the experiments and prisoners held within the base.

QUOTE: *Did you see Abrahim on the way in? I make it a point to change his water every three... I want to say days, but the concept of a day feels like such a novelty in here. I'd ask you to help, but I'm sure you're another figment of my imagination. I say, my imagination has gotten more creative. Abrahim is your typical aquatic humanoid telepath but lately he's been so quiet, so reserved... well he might have died a few years ago, but what's death in this place? I've died a few times myself and I'm fine! Fine! Absolutely fine.*

ABRAHIM AQUATICA *(he/they)*

DIVISION experiment, actually dead. Amphibious humanoid, bright cyan and fuchsia skin, flesh hangs off skeletal remains. Speaks in a hollow voice that echoes through the mind.

Abrahim was discovered in one of the caves, an abandoned laboratory that already existed in the mountains long before DIVISION built their headquarters here. Abrahim is kind and patient, and wears the obvious scars of one who has been poked and prodded by cruel scientists for decades.

Abrahim died many years ago, but the First Door has kept him in a twisted state between life and death. They learned to accept this wretched existence, and are thankful for the opportunity to check in on the Professor. Abrahim has been madly in love with the Professor for many years, but has never confessed his feelings.

QUOTE: *Visitors! Well, that can't be very safe, now can it. It's been many years since I've seen an Omen-Class monster, but I recognize that sheen of power about you all. I will do my best to assist you on your mission, but I dare ask, could you possibly rescue the Professor as well? She hasn't allowed herself to entertain the possibility of escape after countless attempts, not for the last decade at least.*

MICHAEL, FORMERLY MR. KNOCK *(he/him)*

Former Omen, of the Ascension Project. A long and twisted shadow that can only exist along walls or across floors, glowing red eyes, contradicts light sources.

Michael is in a panicked state and is searching for Bella. The monster is in obvious distress, and is badly wounded from being forcibly separated from Bella. His memories are in tatters and he has difficulty communicating anything substantial or comprehending anything.

Michael can hear the First Door singing to him, teasing him, promising power and pain.

QUOTE: *Bella? Bella? Bella? The song, Bella, I can hear the song again, it's singing, the Door, it's singing please Bella it hurts please are you safe Bella please I need to protect you please Bella answer me Bella I'm sorry I'm so sorry I'm sorry Bella please.*

Locations

THE CAVES

The Caves have existed here before DIVISION came, and they will exist here long after. Howlers scream in the distance, and the wind here whispers in the language of faded memories. *What horrifying revelations do you see scrawled on the wall in an ancient language?*

THE RESEARCH CENTER

While most of the facility is inaccessible or rotted away, the Professor has kept many experiments running at minimum capacity. *In the decaying remains of the labs, what do you find here that is linked to your destiny to become a Harbinger?*

THE SHRINE

The Howlers have built a shrine to the First Door. It is made up of rust, rot, and skeletal remains. It is colossal and reaches up many stories and down below into the depths. *What do you find in the shrine that shocks you?*

THE NERVE CENTER

Decades old equipment beeps and clicks under a thick layer of dust. Many files are in disarray—when personnel evacuated, they salvaged what little they could. *You find the last base-wide command flickering on an old screen. Why does it disturb you?*

Keys

In any Mystery, you are encouraged to link Keys to a PC's origin, What the Darkness Demands of them, their powers of darkness, or anything similar. You are also encouraged to link Keys to specific NPCs the players have interacted with.

In this Mystery—to help you quickly create evocative context—the Keys have been partially linked. **General Keys** evoke themes from the Mystery. Some are connected to specific persons of interest. The **Omen Keys** link to the PCs generated for this Mystery.

There's still a lot of room for interpretation and specificity, especially with the Omen Keys. Be creative and boldly declare haunting revelations and evocative details!

GENERAL KEYS

- **the remains of a Howler**, sanctified and posed in a sacred position
- **an old pop song**, the lyrics changed to warn of the apocalypse
- **the song of the kraken**, captured in an old device
- **evidence of Bella's childhood**, recorded decades before she was born
- **one of the Professor's after-images**, but so close to being real
- **a cruel DIVISION weapon**, used to kill Abrahim

OMEN KEYS

- **a detailed map of constellations**, none exist in the sky above Earth
- **precise instructions on how to neutralize a specific PC**
- **an aspect of Death**, captured and categorized
- **documentation of an experiment**, the subject closely resembles one of the PCs

Facets

- The Abandonment of DIVISION Base 0001
- The Harbinger
- The Door of Power

Doomsday Clock *(ticks: 2)*

Because there are only two ticks on the Doomsday Clock, clearly communicate to your players that filling the Doomsday Clock will mean the Harbinger has claimed the power of the Door, and the PCs will face the worst possible circumstances.

You can use the Doomsday Clock by ticking it the first time naturally halfway through the allotted time you have for the session. Doing this will mean the players only have one chance to **Unlock Doom's Door**, since a miss will result in filling the Doomsday Clock.

It's recommended that you leave the last tick for the player's attempt to **Unlock Doom's Door**. However, if you're close to the end of the allotted time for the session, you can warn the players they're running out of time. If they don't **Unlock Doom's Door** soon, the Doomsday Clock will fill, triggering the worst-case scenario.

Event

The Caves erupt into high-pitched screams and howls. Howlers pour through, hundreds of them screeching as they carve a path of chaos.

- *The Howlers scream the name of a PC, what are they begging them to do?*

The Door Opens

The First Door exerts its will and floods the base with pain, blood, and power. The Harbinger has unlocked the door of ancient power.

- *The base engages one last security measure—how does it threaten the PCs?*
- *What power or wisdom does the Harbinger take from beyond the door?*

Advancement in a Shorter Game

When playing just one session of the game, players take one extra Advance halfway through the game, after a short break. The Keeper announces this before the break, so players have time to reflect on their PC and what Advances interest them. When players take this extra Advance, it does not erase XP.

When playing a short series—4 sessions or less—rather than an ongoing game, players can earn an Advance in between every session.

For either of these situations, choosing the Advance "Change Your Playbook" is not recommended, but do what feels best for your story.

Pre-created Omens for *The First Door*

You may use the following playbooks to play through *The First Door*.

The Marquis: The Summoned

I WEAR THE CRUEL CROWN OF PROPHECY
I EMBODY THE PROMISE AND INEVITABILITY OF THE APOCALYPSE
MY POWER IS BLUNT, AGGRESSIVE, AND DEMANDING
MY HEART YEARNS TO LOVE AND BE LOVED

YOUR NAME

A name I need to live up to one day—**The Marquis**

As one of the two thousand princelings of the twelve hells, the Marquis (she/her) was given a title fitting of her station. It is a title that may be stripped from her, if she weakens her family's political power in the hell dimension.

YOUR LOOK

Eyes of the brightest gold, shattered horns, a part of my body is a weapon I'll never use

The Marquis has bright golden eyes that bear the summoning sigils required for her to stay moored to the earthly plane. The Marquis' horns were shattered on her last mission, and remain a sore point for her pride.

Instead of a right arm, the hellish noble has an eerily beautiful clockwork machine of demonic design. When activated, the arm turns into a gun and draws upon every soul in the vicinity, destroying them and remaking them into bullets. Unlike most nobles of hell, the Marquis actually bears a soul. Using the weapon would destroy her last remaining connections to her humanity.

YOUR ORIGIN

I was summoned from hell to be the final door to the apocalypse

The Marquis' family entered a pact with a secret society from the human world, promising them power in exchange for one thousand human souls. Over the decades, the souls were dutifully collected. After the 988th soul was captured, the Marquis was summoned to ensure the collection of the final 12 souls.

Once the final dozen are consumed by the Marquis' family, they will overthrow the Hell Court and claim earth for themselves. In order to weaken Earth, the family expects the Marquis to honor her duty to family, and sacrifice herself and become the final door to the apocalypse.

The Marquis has delayed collecting the final dozen souls. She has instead chosen to work with DIVISION, though she suspects that even this may all be part of her family's plans for her.

WHAT IS THE PROPHECY THAT HAUNTS YOU?

When the Marquis falls in love for the last time, an ancient Door of Power will open in her heart and destroy the world.

IMPULSE

At the start of every session, choose one impulse to explore during play. At the end of the session, answer the question.

- **Did you learn something significant about your prophecy?** If yes, mark 1 XP.

YOUR POWERS OF DARKNESS

- ■ **Emotion Amplification**—*Because she bears a soul, the Marquis can seek out specific emotions and amplify them in a being or a crowd.*
- ■ **Shadow Control**—*The Marquis' family can twist the shadows into any shape they desire. The Marquis specializes in creating chains and guns to* **Unleash the Dark**.

WHAT DOES THE DARKNESS DEMAND OF YOU?

- ■ To fall in love with a Harbinger of the apocalypse
- ■ Embrace and strengthen my prophecy

STARTING BONDS

Ask each question to a different Omen:

- You were there when I was summoned—what makes you afraid of me? *(Gain one Bond with them)*
- Why can't you tell me you love me? *(Gain two Bonds with them)*
- Why am I tempted to give into What the Darkness Demands? *(Gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You)*

GAINING DARKNESS TOKENS

As the *Summoned* I gain 2-4 Darkness Tokens when I:

- Feel unloved or abandoned
- Overreact with violence
- Ask someone to give me their best shot and not hold back
- Ask someone to love me, and only ever me
- Embody a Condition that affects me

CONDITIONS

☐ Raging ☐ Lovelorn ☐ Obsessed ☐ Despairing

BREAKING POINT

You know this world is not your own, and you will never belong here. The dream that is humanity can never belong to you. The darkness grips your heart and the world you were summoned from bleeds into this one. You are a beacon to what has been aching to reach this world.

Describe what terrors are unleashed and how an aspect of your terrible prophecy comes to pass. The Keeper will tell you how the world is now wounded, warped by what you allowed to come through.

PLAYBOOK MOVES

▣ SOMETIMES, I GET ANGRY *(starting move)*

When you **UNLEASH THE DARK** through anger and violence, take 3 Darkness Tokens before doing so.

▣ COME ON, TOUGH GUY

When you go up against an opponent that is colossal and otherworldly, tell everyone what you say or do to taunt them and keep their attention on you. Spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 you've got 'em just where you want them. Choose two:

- You give your allies a golden opportunity—choose one ally to gain a Bond with you
- Uncover a Key at great cost
- Inflict two Conditions on them, but take one in return

ON AN 11+ you're locked in an intense battle and you cannot stop until your opponent is destroyed. Choose one from above, and you can only pull back if a PC agrees to spend one Bond to reach past your rage. If they don't spend the Bond, you cannot stop fighting until your opponent is destroyed.

ON A 7- your power overwhelms you, mark Ruin. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.

RUIN MOVE

▣ THE PRODIGAL CHILD WILL RETURN

Your true parent or creator has reconnected with you, and they bear great power. **When you ask your true parent or creator for help**, they will do as you ask if you give them the love they crave from you.

Tell them what you need, the Keeper will describe what form of loyalty or affection they require in return. Choose:

- Mark one Ruin, they do as you ask in exchange for your act of love. Describe how you please them.
- Mark two Ruin, the Harbinger within you awakens and you force your parent to do what you want while hardening your heart. Describe how they are proud of the Harbinger you are becoming.

TIANA: THE SURGE

I MUST LEARN HOW TO SHARE MY POWER, OR BE CONSUMED BY IT
I EMBODY THE HOPE AND FEAR OF THE APOCALYPSE
MY POWER IS EXPLOSIVE, UNCONTROLLABLE, AND ALIENATING
MY HEART YEARNS TO DESTROY AND BE DESTROYED

YOUR NAME

A name someone else gave me to help me forget the past—**Tiana**

Tiana (they/them) was born with a different name, but we don't use that name anymore.

Tiana grew up in a remote village that was the heart of a dangerous cult. Tiana managed to escape as a teen, and spent many years on the road staying one step ahead of the cult that was determined to hunt them down. One day, DIVISION intervened, taking away the ancient Door of Power that the cult leader had in his possession. Determined to make the most out of their powers of darkness and the terrible way they procured them, Tiana joined DIVISION. The Omen was given a new name and a chance to leave their past behind.

YOUR LOOK

Anachronistic clothing and accessories, a collection of holy symbols, an item from someone who died by my power

Tiana is obsessed with the bright and garish pop 80s fashion and refuses to wear anything from any other decade. They wear dozens of colorful and cheap-looking bracelets, necklaces, and hair clips. But closer inspection will reveal DIVISION-certified holy symbols, all of which are used to dampen Tiana's powers so they can operate outside of DIVISION safely.

Tiana has one gorgeous piece of jewelry—a lovely locket that can no longer open. It belonged to their younger brother, who died in exchange for Tiana's powers.

YOUR ORIGIN

Someone I cared for sacrificed me to a greater power that I now embody

Tiana's mother wholly believed in the cult and the comforting faith it offered. Tiana's older sister tried to escape with the other two siblings, but she was discovered and exiled from the village.

Tiana's mother became desperate to prove her loyalty to the cult. Using the fragment of an ancient Door of Power—in the form of fire that could never be quenched or put out—both Tiana's mother and the cult leader sacrificed both Tiana and their younger brother to the volatile energies of the door, allowing the flames to consume something only the door could perceive.

To this day, Tiana is not sure what the fire took from them. They only know what the door gave in return: a wild and dangerous connection to the elements of water, wind, fire, and earth.

Tiana never saw their younger brother again. Presumably, he was consumed wholly by the fire, but what if something else happened?

WHAT COLLATERAL DAMAGE DO YOU LEAVE IN YOUR WAKE?

My subconscious rewrites small aspects of reality for a short time

Tiana left the cult long ago, but a part of their mind still believes they haven't escaped. When Tiana loses control of their powers, their subconscious rewrites the faces and places around them. The people around them will wear the faces of the cultists, or their surroundings will look like the eerie village they escaped from.

IMPULSE

At the start of every session, choose one impulse to explore during play. At the end of the session, answer the question.

- **Did you let go and cause collateral damage?** If yes, mark 1 XP.

YOUR POWERS OF DARKNESS

- ☐ **Elemental Control**—*The fragment of the ancient Door of Power remains inside of Tiana—a spark, a flame. Tiana only has to ignite it with their mind in order to call upon the other elements. DIVISION has long assumed that there are other doors that Tiana can connect to, which explains the difficulty in controlling such power.*

WHAT DOES THE DARKNESS DEMAND OF YOU?

- ☐ *To find a Scion to my power*
- ☐ *To never fall in love*

STARTING BONDS

- You were there when I truly let go. What did I destroy that belonged to you? Why are you grateful? *(Gain one Bond with them)*
- I love you, but you rejected me for my own sake. Why? *(Gain two Bonds with them)*
- Why am I tempted to give into What the Darkness Demands? *(Gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You)*

GAINING DARKNESS TOKENS

As the *Surge* I gain 2-4 Darkness Tokens when I:

- Feel overwhelmed or numb
- Give into my power and let it erase my will
- Ask someone to use my power as they see fit
- Ask someone to punish me for my power
- Embody a Condition that affects me

CONDITIONS

☐ Reactive ☐ Vicious ☐ Obsessed ☐ Despairing

BREAKING POINT

This world cannot contain you and all of your power. You can never create, never nurture, you can only break and destroy. It's time to remember that. It's time to let go, and let someone else take this burden.

Describe how your power overwhelms you and the obscene amount of collateral damage you cause. The Keeper will tell you how a part of your power is taken by someone, how it molds and breaks them until they are a perfect vessel, ready to evolve.

PLAYBOOK MOVES

▣ My Hands Around Your Heart *(starting move 1)*

Yours is a power that was never meant for you alone to bear. **At the start of each session, choose another PC to be your Heart and share the burden of your power with.** Say why you hope they will save you from What the Darkness Demands.

Heart:_____

When you share an intimate moment together, either of you can mark a Condition to reflect the nature of your relationship. Choose one:

- You each gain one Bond with the other
- One of you gains a Key at great cost

In addition, ***when you hit your Breaking Point***, your Heart chooses:

- They do nothing, allowing you to hit your Breaking Point. They clear all their Conditions.
- They intervene, and describe how they hurt themselves to protect you. You clear all your Conditions, but they mark one Condition or one Ruin.

When your Heart hits their Breaking Point, you have the last option to intervene, but if you do nothing, your Conditions don't clear.

▣ The Heart's Eclipse *(starting move 2)*

Your heart is a wild thing that surges along with your power—one day your heart will break and your power will consume you. But that day is not today.

Whenever you roll a miss, you can choose to have your power surge beyond your control, causing great collateral damage around you. Choose:

- Mark two Conditions, describe how your emotions get the better of you, and gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You. Treat the roll as if you had rolled an 11+ instead.
- A PC marks two Conditions and gains one Bond with you—they describe how they hurt themselves to help you. Treat the roll as if you had rolled an 8-10 instead.

▣ I Am Your Destruction

You hold on to your power with an intensity that would break most souls—you are always a single breath from shattering under the pressure. **When you allow your power to surge and cause great collateral damage, ask the Keeper what catastrophic destruction you cause.** Choose two:

- You permanently gain an aspect of the Harbinger's powers of darkness—the Keeper will tell you what it is. Mark one Ruin.
- The power within you surges to give you visions of the past, present, or future. You uncover a Key at great cost and draw a line between that Key and a Facet on the Mystery Map. Declare an irrevocable truth about the Mystery.
- You protect the one person who matters most—gain a Bond with them.
- You use the destruction to reshape your environment, creating a golden opportunity for a fleeting moment for an ally. Gain one Bond with them.

DIVISION MOVE

▣ Hero's Weapon

You impressed a hero who worked with DIVISION for a short time. Before they returned to their life of glory and prestige, they gave you a weapon.

Mesmer was a popstar of the 80s, and for a short time she was an Omen working with DIVISION. While chasing down a Harbinger, Tiana fell through a crack in time and resurfaced in 1983, and partnered up with Mesmer to capture the Harbinger. Before returning to the present, Mesmer gifted Tiana her krystal staff, an alien device that can channel the elements.

When Tiana returned to their time, they were devastated to learn that Mesmer had become a Harbinger. Tiana holds out hope that if they ever meet again, they might get through to Mesmer and help her recall the time of heroism and hope they shared.

When you use this weapon to protect someone, choose:

- Describe a flashback between you and the hero—gain one Bond with them
- Describe how you embody or contradict their legacy—clear one Condition
- Describe how the weapon is corrupted by What the Darkness Demands of You—gain 2-4 Darkness Tokens

You can describe using the weapon in the field, just as you would a power of darkness. There's always a risk that the weapon will become damaged or unusable until you return to DIVISION to have someone take a look at it.

Cara: The Shade

I HAVE A SPECIAL AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH DEATH
I EMBODY THE COLDNESS AND END OF THE APOCALYPSE
MY POWER IS ENLIGHTENING, COLDLY LOGICAL, AND EPHEMERAL
MY HEART YEARNS TO GUIDE AND BE GUIDED

YOUR NAME

A name that reminds me of the mortal life I once knew—**Cara**

Cara (she/they) was once a humble forensic scientist who loved her job. Unbeknownst to her, an ancient Door of Power was brought into her lab, in the form of skeletal remains found in an unmarked grave. Coming in contact with the skeleton marked the beginning of the end, and Cara only had a few days left as a mortal.

YOUR LOOK

A vaporous body contained by a suit, an aura of strange glowing colors, a face that can never settle on anything real

In what Cara will only call "the incident," her physical body was destroyed. Cara still isn't sure how her soul remained intact, but she knows the skeleton must have had something to do with it. The skeleton is the only thing anchoring Cara, and she can now move the skeleton as if it were her own body.

DIVISION created a suit that safely contains the skeleton and what remains of Cara's soul. The soul can be seen by the naked eye as effervescent colors, with a vague and ever moving impression of Cara's face floating on the surface of the skull.

YOUR ORIGIN

I got too close to the truth and died, but death would not take me

In the last days of her mortal life, Cara swore she could hear the skeleton speaking to her in a voice that sounded almost familiar. The skeleton promised truth, secrets, knowledge, and the power to change reality. Cara refuses to describe in detail what happened next, only that she felt she had to take matters into her own hands and study the skeleton's strange relationship with death.

When pressed, and perhaps only when Cara is truly in a vulnerable and forthcoming state, she'll admit that she learned a harrowing portion of the truth. Cara was not the first curious soul the bones have claimed, and she will not be the last.

WHAT FORM DOES DEATH TAKE TO SPEAK TO YOU?

They wait for me in reflective surfaces and look like me before my death.

IMPULSE

At the start of every session, choose one impulse to explore during play. At the end of the session, answer the question.

- **Did you go too far in search of the truth?** If yes, mark 1 XP.

YOUR POWERS OF DARKNESS

- ■ Let the Dead Speak—*Cara can sense spirits in the area, and channel them through her bones. The colors of her soul will change, taking on the emotions and weight of the channeled soul.*
- ■ Shadow Magic—*Cara is aware that the skeleton that anchors her soul has supernatural abilities it has taken from its previous victims. For now, Cara is only able to safely access shadow magic, and she uses it as a means of teleportation, scrying, defense, and attack.*

WHAT DOES THE DARKNESS DEMAND OF YOU?

- ■ *To fall in love with the destroyer of worlds*
- ■ *To break the veil between the living and the dead*

STARTING BONDS

- You were there when I died. How did witnessing my death transform our relationship? *(Gain one Bond with them)*
- I love you, but I can't accept it. Why do you allow me to remain ignorant? *(Gain two Bonds with them)*
- Why am I tempted to give into What the Darkness Demands? *(Gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You)*

GAINING DARKNESS TOKENS

As the *Shade* I gain 2-4 Darkness Tokens when I:

- Feel ignored or unimportant
- React with cold reason and logic
- Ask someone to follow my instructions
- Ask someone to ignore their heart
- Embody a Condition that affects me

CONDITIONS

☐ Lonely ☐ Distracted ☐ Vicious ☐ Obsessed

BREAKING POINT

Your delusion shatters, and you are forced to look at the painful state of your hollow soul. Death has left its mark on you, and you are a twisted and miserable thing that yearns for mutual destruction. There is no going back for you, there is only the inconceivable void of this pitiful existence.

Describe how the void in your soul pulls at and weakens the life force of everyone and everything around you, hurting the innocent and the weak. The Keeper will tell you how Death gains more power through you, and how something beautiful in the world dies as a result.

PLAYBOOK MOVES

▣ DEATH WALKED HERE *(starting move)*

Death reaches all places, and into the heart of all things. **When you seek to reconstruct events or learn something valuable in an area**, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 Death shows you exactly what happened here. In addition, you draw Death close to you, ask two that Death will answer:

- What glimpse beyond these events can you show me?
- What important item or knowledge was taken from here?
- What evidence here will help my investigation?
- How can I use any of this as leverage?
- What draws Death close? Draw a line between a Key and a Facet of the Mystery. Declare an irrevocable truth about the Mystery.

ON AN 11+ the whispers of Death overwhelm you, choose one from above and one from below.

- Death lingers and holds you, mark a Condition
- Death shows you what you do not wish to see, mark Ruin
- You bring someone else closer to Death, destroy one Bond to no effect

ON A 7- the laws of the dead and dying are compromised somehow. The Keeper will describe what happens next.

▣ SOUL LIKE A STEEL TRAP

Your cold analytical skills can help you devise the perfect plan. **When you study a tense situation**, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 the plan starts to form, ask two:

- What do DIVISION files tell me about this?
- Which of our powers of darkness will be most effective?
- What weakness do I perceive?
- Who or what can help me?
- How could we best end this quickly?

ON AN 11+ ask one from above, but you come to a harrowing realization about the situation. The Keeper will ask you a difficult question that you must answer.

ON A 7- the Harbinger has prepared for this moment and a trap is sprung. Prepare for the worst.

DIVISION MOVE

▣ Ghostly Agent

DIVISION has a high mortality rate—the average agent survives only a few months on the job. Some of them love the work so much, they continue to work for DIVISION, even in death.

At some point in its strange past, the skeleton that Cara is attached to claimed the soul of a DIVISION agent. The agent can't remember much, as most of his memories have been eaten away and fed to the bones' strange rituals and spells. He simply goes by Agent Scott. Cara suspects the agent must have been working for DIVISION in the 60s, based on Agent Scott's manner and dress.

Agent Scott can dimly remember he was once a human who assisted Omens, and was a human handler that went out into the field. After many such human handlers, including Agent Scott, died consistently gruesome deaths, DIVISION changed handler protocols. But Agent Scott is still fiercely protective of all Omens under his care, including Cara.

When you call upon the Ghostly Agent for help, draw them to your darkness and open your heart to them. Spend Darkness Tokens and roll:

ON AN 8-10 they walk through the veil between the living and the dead, offering their aid. Choose two:

- Take their hand and travel through the veil, physically appearing anywhere that the veil of death can touch. To take another with you, mark a Condition.
- Ask them what they have seen through the veil as they have watched your investigation. Uncover a Key at great cost.
- Whisper into their ear and reveal a secret that has burdened your heart. Gain one Bond with the Ghostly Agent.
- Tell them how you have worked towards attending to their unfinished business, mark 1 XP.

ON AN 11+ the Ghostly Agent has witnessed a terrible portent, and they have come through the veil to warn you. Choose one from above, but prepare to heed the dire warning the Ghostly Agent gives you.

ON A 7- the Ghostly Agent tries to come through the veil, but something dangerous and otherworldly ensnares them. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.

Astra: The Last

I HAVE BEEN FORGED AND STRENGTHENED THROUGH TRAGEDY
I EMBODY THE GRIEF AND PEACE OF THE APOCALYPSE
MY POWER IS REFLECTIVE, SORROWFUL, AND HOPEFUL
MY HEART YEARNS TO COMFORT AND BE COMFORTED

Your Name

A name I stole from those who destroyed my people—**Astra**

Astra (he/they/none) was born to be a vessel of the gods. Astra was born with no name, and on his planet the vessels were named after the conquerors who barred the path to the gods: the Astra.

Astra was but a child when the temple priestess spirited him away, placing him in an escape-ship and sending him to earth. To this day, Astra is not sure why the priestess saved him, and none of the other children.

Your Look

An alien body that cannot be disguised, eyes that contain a galaxy, a wound I will never allow to heal

Astra stands close to nine feet tall and his seven eyes are filled with the endless stars of the galaxy he left behind. A halo-like bone grows from his temples and from under sheer flesh the lights of his thoughts flicker and glow.

When the temple priestess stole Astra from the sacred pools, they were chased by both warriors and god-drones. The priestess was lethally wounded, and with the last of their strength they ensured Astra could escape.

Astra fell into the star-sleep in order to survive the journey to Earth, but when he awoke, the same wounds of the temple priestess suffered from pulsed across his chest. To honor the sacrifice, Astra has never allowed the wound to heal nor solved the mystery of how it came to be.

Your Origin

I am a refugee from a destroyed planet

When Astra arrived on Earth, he was taken in by DIVISION and raised among the other monstrous orphans. It took many years and a significant amount of DIVISION's resources to track down Astra's home planet.

All that was left was space debris. The few psychic fragments that DIVISION's instruments and personnel could make sense of told a clear story: the planet was torn apart by war, which triggered an environmental cataclysm.

WHAT TRAGEDY DESTROYED YOUR PEOPLE?

We were manipulated into becoming Harbingers of a series of apocalypses

Over the years, Astra has learned that very few of his people made it off the planet, but all who did became Harbingers. Each one orchestrated an apocalypse that destroyed an entire galaxy.

Astra does not know how his peaceful planet became the seeds of such destruction, but he is determined to stop the cycle of violence.

IMPULSE

At the start of every session, choose one impulse to explore during play. At the end of the session, answer the question.

- **Did you share a story of your people and what you lost?** If yes, mark 1 XP.

YOUR POWERS OF DARKNESS

- ■ Dimensional Phasing—*Astra can phase in and out of several bands of reality, giving him the ability to phase through solid matter and briefly visit other planes of existence.*
- ■ Time Distortion—*Astra's escape-ship travelled through several space anomalies, and the repeated exposure has given him limited time manipulation. Astra can slow down, speed up, rewind, and forward time. But the results are not always predictable.*

WHAT DOES THE DARKNESS DEMAND OF YOU?

- ■ *To resurrect my people at the expense of humanity*
- ■ *To awaken the leviathans in space*

STARTING BONDS

- You know of another like me. How does keeping this secret from me protect me? *(Gain one Bond with them)*
- We loved each other, once. Why do we keep hurting each other? *(Gain two Bonds with them)*
- Why am I tempted to give into What the Darkness Demands? *(Gain one Bond with What the Darkness Demands of You)*

GAINING DARKNESS TOKENS

As the *Last* I gain 2-4 Darkness Tokens when I:

- Feel lonely or rejected
- React with doubt or confusion
- Ask someone to tell me of their past
- Ask someone to doubt their future
- Embody a Condition that affects me

CONDITIONS

☐ Cornered ☐ Distant ☐ Merciless ☐ Despairing

BREAKING POINT

You've barely been able to keep the grief and anger at bay. It rises in you now—you feel time wither away as you relive the trauma and heartbreak. Your guilt turns you into a weapon.

Describe how you will make everyone and everything around you pay for what happened to your people, and how you go too far. The Keeper will tell you how the faintest hope surfaces before you destroy it, and who walks away to perpetuate this cycle of violence and pain.

PLAYBOOK MOVES

▣ ASHES TO ASHES *(starting move)*

You are the last of your kind, there will never be another. **When you declare how the wisdom of your people may help in a situation**, spend Darkness Tokens and roll.

ON AN 8-10 your wisdom shines brightly in the dark, choose two.

- **Recall ancient knowledge.** Ask the Keeper any question, they will answer it honestly and with great detail.
- **Awaken latent abilities within.** Choose another power of darkness from another playbook, you have access to it, for now.
- **Recognize the signs of portent hanging over your fellow monsters.** Each PC gains one Darkness Token.
- **See a fractured memory in the face of another monster.** Declare what that memory is and gain one Bond with the PC or NPC.

ON AN 11+ the dark of your despair threatens to consume you, choose one from above. The Keeper will describe how an aspect of your people's tragedy will be repeated, in spite of or because of your actions.

ON A 7- the ashes of your people demand fire and retribution. The Keeper will tell you what happens next.

▣ HARROWING BEAUTY

Sometimes, the mask of humanity slips. **When you peel away at your mask of humanity**, you may mark a Condition to tear away your mask and reveal the true alien horror you are.

This will end an attack or interaction—your opponent is momentarily stunned by the revelation. Doing so provides a fleeting opportunity before they come to their senses.

RUIN MOVES

▣ TRAGEDY WILL NOT CLAIM ANOTHER

You have grown attached to your fellow monsters and care deeply about their fates. When a PC or NPC is in peril, mark Ruin to suddenly appear on the scene, ignoring usual limits of time, distance, or plausibility. In addition, gain one Bond with them. If you wish to appear in a superior position or bearing a golden opportunity, mark Ruin a second time.

Inspirational Media

I trust your creativity and intuition when you play *Apocalypse Keys*, and designed the game to offer you opportunities to do so. I encourage you to create any character you like, and play to find out what happens during a Mystery! However, you may enjoy knowing what my initial inspirations were. From these seeds, each playbook and Mystery blossomed to offer a wide range of possibilities.

Playbook Inspirations

The Summoned

Inspired by Hellboy, from the comics but especially the films. Hellboy is a character who struggles with his strong emotions, his desire for closeness, and attempts to create a family in the B.P.R.D. In this playbook I wanted to explore what it means to bear prophecy, and give players the opportunity to interact with that prophecy on their own terms.

- **Comics:** *Hellboy: Seed of Destruction, Hellboy: Wake The Devil*
- **Films:** *Hellboy, Hellboy II: The Golden Army*

The Surge

Inspired by Elizabeth Sherman, from the comics but especially the films. There's a lot to love about Liz, but she was often depicted as a damsel in distress, used for her power, a vessel, again and again. In this playbook I wanted to honor the extreme power Liz had, her difficult relationship with others, and imagined giving Liz more freedom to be her own person.

- **Comics:** *Hellboy: Wake The Devil* (part three, when Liz meets Roger and makes a terrible decision about her powers), *B.P.R.D.: Plague of Frogs, B.P.R.D.: Hollow Earth & Other Stories*
- **Films:** *Hellboy, Hellboy II: The Golden Army*

The Found

Inspired by Abraham Sapien, from the comics but especially the films. Compared to the Summoned and the Surge, I leaned heavily into the films. Abe's telepathic powers and its implications are the core of this playbook. From the comics I drew upon the painful revelation of Abe's past and origins.

- **Comics:** *B.P.R.D.: The Dead*
- **Films:** *Hellboy, Hellboy II: The Golden Army*

THE SHADE

Inspired by Johann Krauss, from the films of Guillermo del Toro. Johann in the films, compared to his characterization in the comics, was more driven by an inquisitive nature and had a strong relationship with the B.P.R.D. The dedication to truth and knowledge is reflected in this playbook. From the comics, by Mike Mignola, I drew upon Johann's strained relationship with death.

- **Comics:** *B.P.R.D.: Hollow Earth & Other Stories*
- **Films:** *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*

THE LAST

Inspired by Martian Manhunter and Superman, especially their depiction in the DC cartoons. I first wrote this playbook because one of the early playtesters, Leandro Pondoc, has mastered the art of playing sad characters. I thought about creating a playbook focused on grief and sadness, which made me think about the loss both of these characters have had to deal with.

- **Cartoons:** *Justice League*, and *Justice League Unlimited*. Specific episode of note is *For The Man Who Has Everything*.

THE FALLEN

Inspired by Hecate from the *Hellboy* comics by Mike Mignola. When I read *Wake The Devil* again, I realized that Hecate, a fallen goddess, would exactly be the kind of character I'd like to play in a game of *Apocalypse Keys*. Exploring divine horror was a lot of fun!

- **Comics:** *Hellboy: Wake The Devil, Hellboy: Conqueror Worm, Hellboy: Darkness Falls*.

THE HUNGRY

In the creation of the playbook I drew upon the themes of the vampire while laying bare its true monstrosity. But the original and core inspiration of this playbook was, of all things, Doctor Strange Supreme from the *What If...* cartoon series.

Apocalypse Keys draws upon the genres of urban fantasy and supernatural horror quite heavily, but at its heart it is a game of comic book heroes. The comics I've loved delve deeply into the mystical and horrific. Doctor Strange Supreme, and his tragic story, felt too much like an *Apocalypse Keys* character to ignore. I made sure that you could absolutely play the character with this playbook.

- **Cartoon:** The *What If...* series, specifically the episodes *What If... Doctor Strange Lost His Heart Instead Of His Hands?* and *What If... The Watcher Broke His Oath?*

Mystery Inspirations

THE MANANANGGAL MURDERS

This was the first Mystery I wrote, and I grounded the urban fantasy genre in what I knew. This was inspired by the stories of the Manananggal, and the unfortunate classism present in Philippine society. In my game design I often draw upon the myths and legends I grew up with, and humanize these supernatural beings of folklore. Our local stories represent the fears of our society, but they also bear the weight of our colonial influence. In an act of personal decolonization, I reinterpret these stories through my personal experience and identity.

This is why the Manananggal exist outside of the gender binary, a truth of pre-colonial Philippines that was rewritten through colonial oppression. In particular I acknowledge how Catholicism was used as a tool of control, and push back against it with the creation of the Church of the Broken Crucifix. All of this reflects my personal reality as a non-binary transgender masculine person, perceived as femme, growing up agnostic and spiritual in a country with strict religious views.

- **Books:** The entire *Philippine Folk Literature* series by Damiana L. Eugenio, but especially *Book 3: The Legends; Bottle of Stormclouds* by Eliza Victoria
- **Comics:** *Tabi Po* by Mervin Malonzo, *After Lambana* by Eliza Victoria and Mervin Malonzo, *Mythspace* by Paolo Chikiamco, Koi Carreon, Paul Quiroga, Jules Gregorio, Mico Dimagiba, and Christina Rose Chua.

THE MISSING LINK

This was the second Mystery I wrote, and I went in a wildly different direction. I believe in the creative potential of *Apocalypse Keys*, and Keepers are free to create their own Mysteries within various genres.

Missing Link is mainly inspired by two things: the film *Pacific Rim* and the anime *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. The idea of huge monsters, a colossal reflection of the player characters, was so much fun to explore. Many of the Persons of Interest directly line up with characters from their inspirations, but were interpreted through my own personal lens.

- **Anime:** *Neon Genesis Evangelion, Godzilla Singular Point, RahXephon, Gate Keepers*
- **Films:** *Pacific Rim, Shin Godzilla, Godzilla: King of the Monsters*

THE OLDEST HOUSE

This time the Mystery was inspired by two different video games: *Control* and *Prey*. Additional inspirations were specific horror stories that can only be found on the internet. This includes *creepypasta* that focuses on the supernatural and the hidden entities that investigate them.

Memories and their fragile nature feature in varying weights in my game design, due to my own tentative relationship with my memories. Playing characters who face memory loss is often a cathartic experience for me.

- **Video Games:** *Control, Prey*
- **Internet Collaboration and folklore:** *SCP Foundation, Creepy Pasta, Slenderman, Monstrum: How The Internet Created a Monster*

THE FIRST DOOR

I created this Mystery to highlight the original inspiration of this game: *Hellboy*. Especially the comics, which featured many strange and ancient places and abandoned facilities. There is usually an overwhelming sensation that the immortal entities of the Universe linger beneath the surface, and will survive and thrive in darkness long after we are gone.

- **Comics:** *B.P.R.D.: Hollow Earth & Other Stories*

GRATITUDE

Special thanks to Matthew Arcilla, for loving me even at my most monstrous, and for creating the amazing backronym for the DIVISION, MYS·TERIO·US and BUREAU!

Special thanks to Josh Hittie, for his quiet strength and indescribable kindness. Thank you for believing in *Apocalypse Keys*, and in me.

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Thank you to every single person who expressed their interest and excitement for *Apocalypse Keys*!

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Thank you to the elite Keeper Team, Misha Panarin, Thomas Manuel, and Lowell Francis.

Many thanks to the Gauntlet Community for helping me become a better player, facilitator, and game designer. I am especially grateful to Sherri Stewart and Lowell Francis for welcoming me with open hearts.

The game design of *Apocalypse Keys* is based on the Powered by the Apocalypse (PbtA) engine created by Meguey Baker and Vincent Baker. Several other PbtA games have directly inspired or introduced specific mechanics. They are:

Changeling: The Lost (PbtA fanhack), by Lowell Francis and Sherri Stewart. This was the game that planted the seed of *Apocalypse Keys*, with its beautiful take on the magical horror of the original game.

Brindlewood Bay by Jason Cordova for its "meddling" and "theorize" moves, which created the core of the Mystery gameplay loop in this game. The Mystery structures of *Brindlewood Bay* also directly informed how the Mysteries are presented in *Apocalypse Keys*. The original "search for clues" and "theorise" move was first created by Oli Jeffrey ("Apocalypse by Moonlight") and can be found in *Codex: Moonlight*.

Hearts of Wulin by Lowell Francis for its move Inner Conflict and Bonds mechanic, which centers emotional roleplay and connections with other characters.

Libreté by Vivien Féasson, for its use of tokens instead of stats, and the means of picking up those tokens that focus on roleplay and emotion.

Urban Shadows by Andrew Medeiros and Mark Diaz Truman, for its Corruption track and Corruption moves, which you see here as Ruin and Ruin moves.

Pasión de las Pasiones by Brandon Leon-Gambetta, for its stunning Meltdown mechanic and how it is tied to Conditions.

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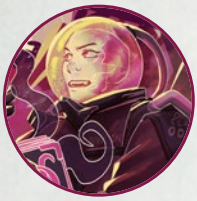

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Final Mystery, the, 226-238
The final confrontation against the Harbingers, the climax of a long running game of Apocalypse Keys.

First Door, The, 344-353
first session, the, 187-189
Fleeting Divinity, 146
Flickering Hope, A, 137
Follow Me into the Dark, 234
Forbidden Archives, The, 66
Found, The, 112-121, 183
A playbook, a psychic monster who can read hearts and minds, but cannot remember their own past.

G

Gaze into My Heart's Abyss, 156
Ghostly Agent, 67
Gift, The, 238
Glory Be My Name, 237
Gnawing Edge of Hunger, The, 155
Grasp Keys, 49-51, 201
gratitude, 371

H

Harbingers, 7, 9, 11, 23, 222-223, 306-316, 337-341
The main antagonists the PCs will face during each Mystery. DIVISION has categorized Harbinger-Class monsters to possess the most dangerous Powers of Darkness. Each Harbinger has fallen completely to Ruin, and seeks to unlock ancient Doors of Power to usher in the apocalypse.

Harrowing Beauty, 136
Hero's Weapon, 68
Heart's Eclipse, The, 105
Heavy is the Crown, 98
hint at off-screen horrors, 176
Holy Symbol Arsenal, 69-70
Honeyed Tongue and Clouded Minds, 146
Humanity Was a Dream, 99
Hungry, The, 152-163, 185
A playbook. A ravenous monster nearly consumed by their hunger.

I

I Am Your Destruction, 106
I Carry the Hope of My People, 138
I Remember the Taste of You, 158
I Will Rise Again, 149
I'm the Expert Here!, 126
impose Ruin, 178
impulse, 88, 94, 190-191
At the start of each session, the player chooses an impulse that explores a theme from their playbook. At the end of the session, answer the question.

in between Mysteries, 192
In Death There Is Only Love, 236
inflict a Condition, 178
information flows freely in Apocalypse Keys, 52
A reminder that the Keeper should be generous with giving information to the PCs, and a roll shouldn't be made to do so.

intervene through a Faction, 181
intrigue, 213, 335
introduce a hard choice, 181

introduce an enigmatic character, 177
irrevocable truths, 207
A fact the player declares, which is then attached to a Key or Facet. An irrevocable truth cannot be changed. Special moves grant the player the ability to declare an irrevocable truth.

It Was Just Me for a Long Time, 117

K

Keeper, 10-11, 167-185
The facilitator of the game, presents the Mystery, offers challenges, crafts and roleplays supporting characters.

Keys of the apocalypse, 9, 32, 196, 201-207, 334
Clues, discoveries, moments, and slivers of truth that relate to the Mystery. PCs must **Grasp Keys** to uncover Keys, and when **Unlocking Doom's Door**, a Key must be connected to each Facet. Each Key adds +1 to the roll when **Unlocking Doom's Door**.
contextualizing Keys, 202-204

L

Last, The, 132-141, 184
A playbook, a lonely monster from another world, who is the last of their kind.

Let Sleeping Gods Lie, 118
Like a Moth to the Flame, 106
Lies That Serve Me, The, 147
locations, 196, 333
A component of the Mystery Codex. Areas to explore during a Mystery.

M

Man of a Thousand Faces, A, 116
Mananggal Murders, The, 252-262
manipulating Facets, 208-209
Special moves grant the player the ability to rewrite or add a Facet to the Mystery.
Marquis, The: The Summoned, 355-357
message from DIVISION, 195, 330
A component of the Mystery Codex. A message containing orders from DIVISION, to remind players of the goals of the Mystery.
miss, 17
A result of a roll, a 7 or lower. Not necessarily a failure, but fate intervenes and the PC is in a dire situation. The perfect time for a Keeper move to be used.
Missing Link, The, 281-292
moments, 213, 335
Monster Celebrity, 71–72
Mother of Monsters, 146
moves, 4, 15, 19-20
Most of the time, players narrate the actions of their PC and the Keeper responds. When the outcome is uncertain, or the task is clearly dangerous or difficult, this is a moment of tension. A PC then makes a move and rolls dice or makes a choice. The Keeper also has moves at their disposal, but they are simpler and do not require a roll or choice.
moves, *continued*
basic moves in action, 181
consequences, 17
DIVISION moves, 16, 19, 30, 60-80
Grasp Keys, 49-54
Harbinger, 339
Keeper moves, 175-185
Power Through Darkness, 41-43
Reveal Your Heart, 44-45
Ruin moves, 20
scale, 18
scene-ending moves, 221-222
Torn Between, 23, 46-48
trigger conditions, 15-16
Unleash The Dark, 38-40
Unlock Doom's Door, 55-58
My Anointed One, 109
My Beloved Nemesis, 148
My Dark Patron, 108
My Darkness is Never Leashed, 106

My Hands Around Your Heart, 105
My Little Monster, 107
Mystery, 10, 34-35, 51, 195-199
> An instigating incident produces a Mystery the PCs must investigate on behalf of DIVISION. The goal is to discover what the Door of Power is and get to it before the Harbinger.

Mystery map, 35
> What the players reference as their PCs investigate the Mystery. This is where they write down notes, the Keys they have uncovered, fill in the Doomsday Clock as it's ticked, and connect each uncovered Key to a Facet (either as part of a special move or when **Unlocking Doom's Door**). Each Mystery comes with a Mystery Map.

N

non-player characters, 7, 9, 11, 23, 177, 196, 306-316
> All of the other characters, aside from the PCs. The Keeper roleplays the NPCs.

None Stand Before Me, 98
not enough time for an apocalypse?, 191

O

Oldest House, The, 293-305
Omens, 7, 9-10, 15
> DIVISION has categorized Omen-Class monsters to be almost as dangerous as Harbingers. This is another name for the PCs. Though other Omens may exist as NPCs.

Orphanage Visit, 72

P

pacing and the Doomsday Clock, 211
Parasitic Library, The, 240-251
Partly Cursed Weapon, 73
perfect hit, 17
> A result of a roll, between 8-10. The PC is able to achieve what they want with precision and control. The perfect time for the Keeper move to grant narrative opportunity or mechanical benefit.

playbooks, 86, 90-163
> Each player chooses a playbook to build their player character. Playbooks focus on specific monstrous themes and unique emotional arcs rather than specific archetypes.

changing, 31
it's complicated!, 90

Peacemaker, The, 74-76
people of interest, 196, 332-333
> A component of the Mystery Codex. NPCs to interact with during a Mystery. Any or none of these supporting characters may be serving the Harbinger, or the Harbinger themself!

Power Through Darkness, 41-42
powers of darkness, 21, 31
> The supernatural abilities the PCs have access to, as Omen-Class monsters. The powers of darkness provide context of how the PCs interact with the world and use some moves.

principles, 168-174
> A general set of guidelines to help the Keeper create the right atmosphere for the game.

Prodigal Child Will Return, The, 98
Psychic Invokers, 77-79
Purity of My Reflection, The, 159

R

Reaching Beyond Time and Space, 138
Reshaped by Despair, 136
retiring a character, 84
rewriting Facets, 208-209
reveal a sinister sign of things to come, 177
Reveal Your Heart, 25, 29, 44-45
rolling dice, 16-17
Ruin, 16, 24, 32, 81, 178

> Ruin is a means of tracking how close a PC is to becoming a Harbinger of the apocalypse, reflecting their fall into darkness.

Ruin Advances, 28, 82-84

S

safety, 12-14

> An understanding that in order to fully enjoy a game, everyone in the group takes care of each other. Safety tools help support this social contract.

say What the Darkness Demands of You, 180
second session, the, 190-
separate the monsters, 180
Shade, The, 122-131, 184

> A playbook. A cerebral monster who defied death and oblivion.

Sometimes, I Get Angry, 95
Soul Like a Steel Trap, 126
stars & wishes, 14

> A social tool used for review and providing feedback at the end of a session.

Stolen Time, 236
Story of You Carved into My Flesh, The 159
Subcontractor, 79-80
Summoned, The, 92-101, 182

> A playbook. A violent monster summoned from another world.

Surge, The, 102-111, 183

> A playbook. A desperate monster, barely in control of their power, seeking to share the burden with others.

T

This is the Blood of My Covenant, 108
Tiana: The Surge, 358-362
tick the Doomsday Clock, 179
Together We Are Destiny, 97
Torn Between, 23, 46-47
Tower of Isolation, 139
Tragedy Will Not Claim Another, 138
Tragedy's Long Shadow, 136
Tremble Before Me, 148
Truth above All Else, The 117

U

Unleash the Dark, 38-39
Unlock Doom's Door, 55-57, 207, 215-218
unlock the Final Door, 232
Until Only Hunger Remains, 159

W

Waking up from the Dream, 235
Walk with Me In Dreams, 116
Weep Your Hands Clean, 263-280
We're Family Now, 97
What the Darkness Demands of You, 23-25, 89

> What tempts and influences the PCs to act more monstrous, but also frames the strength they possess to resist these demands. A narrative tool that provides character context and guides the Keeper.

Where Do You End, Where Do I Begin?, 118

Y

You Are All I Have Left, 137
You Are Not Alone, 117
You Can't Escape the Truth, 128
You Can't Hide Your Heart from Me, 115
You Loved Me Once, 147
Your Reputation Precedes You, 126
Your Ruin on My Lips, 159